

MUSEUMS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA DURING THE COVID-19
PANDEMIC: CONTINUING TO ENGAGE THE PUBLIC ONLINE

By

Eva Gribbon

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic forced British Columbia museums to close to the public for a period of time in 2020. As traditional museum engagement takes place in person at museums, many B.C. museums transferred some engagement to be delivered virtually. This research paper explores past literature that has statistically analyzed museums' use of Instagram as an engagement tool and discusses four surveys of museums' experiences during the pandemic. Three case studies of B.C. museum professionals' experience doing online engagement during the pandemic were conducted and found that a key success to online engagement is trying and learning as you go. The quantitative analysis determined that B.C. museums increased the number of Instagram posts published during the pandemic; however, medium/large museums increased their Instagram activity when compared to small museums. Further, in the quantitative analysis types of Instagram posts were analyzed to determine that Call to Action posts gain more engagement than Promotional posts. Call to Action posts were further analyzed through speech act theory to find that these posts require a deeper level of consideration and targeting to have an effective perlocutionary response from the audience. This research concludes that online engagement is important for museums to continue to connect with their audiences and that consideration of the type of Instagram posts published is needed to ensure they foster meaningful engagement.

Key Words

Museums, Pandemic, Instagram, Engagement, COVID-19, Social Media

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Introduction

The vast majority of museums had to close for a period of time in 2020 due to COVID-19 lockdowns, with estimates ranging from 90-99% of museums temporarily shut down worldwide (AAM 2020; ICOM 2020; UNSECO 2020; NEMO 2021). Analysing museums' online engagement is timely as the pandemic lockdowns abruptly shut museums' doors, with online engagement a key tool employed to stay connected with their audiences (ICOM 2020; AAM 2020; UNESCO 2020; NEMO 2021). Now is a crucial time in disciplines such as public cultural heritage, anthropology, public archaeology, science communications and museum studies to study and reflect on how to enhance meaningful public engagement using online platforms.

BC Museums Association, the organization that supports museums in British Columbia, embraces a broad and inclusive definition of museums that includes not-for-profit organizations which display art, culture, heritage, science, history, plants, animals, and archives, among a variety of other organizations (BC Museums Association 2021). It is imperative to recognize the importance of all the different types of museum and educational organizations that contribute to a community of education, learning, learnership, influence, and dialogue in British Columbia with British Columbians and visitors (BC Museums Association 2021). For the purpose of this honours thesis, museums include not-for-profits museums, cultural or heritage organizations, and science education centres, which have exhibits for public engagement, education, and learning. Museums are important for shaping knowledge, promoting learning about the past, present and future, and providing a way for people to connect through objects, displays, images, written text, photographs, paintings, hands on exhibits, and other creative exhibits and activities (Hooper-Greenhill 2007).

“In order to remain relevant in the digital age” museums have adapted the use of social media to “disseminate information, promote their programs and interact with their publics” (Jarreau et al. 2019: 2). Social media use has increased considerably over the past couple of years, particularly since 2013 (Budge 2017: 67). Of the many social medias and online platforms, “Facebook and Instagram now dominate the social media use landscape” (Budge 2017: 67). While both Facebook and Instagram are useful to museums to stay connected with their audiences, “Instagram as a highly visual social media, stands centre stage as a platform” through which visitors share their museum experiences and interact with museums (Budge 2017: 70; Jarreau et al. 2019: 2). Instagram is well-suited for use by museums and museum professionals as it is inherently visual and provides a platform to “meet audiences where they are” (Jarreau et al. 2019: 2). While online engagement through Instagram has great potential, Jarreau and colleagues (2019) found that many museums are not using it in a way that encourages meaningful engagement with an audience. In light of COVID-19, many museums have indicated that they want to reassess their online engagement strategies (ICOM 2020; NEMO 2021). Research conducted on online engagement, such as Jarreau and colleagues’ (2019) research on museums’ use of Instagram, can be considered as a way to identify and implement effective online strategies. For those B.C. museums that are on Instagram, my research explores if there are differences in Instagram use between small and medium/large museums; if museums have increased the number of posts they published during the pandemic; and effective ways that museums can use online platforms. Researching the use of Instagram by museums is of current urgency as the COVID-19 pandemic has forced many museums to close for a period of time, with some still closed in spring 2021 and many continuing to experience low in-person visitation (AAM 2020; ICOM 2020; UNSECO 2020; NEMO 2021).

The COVID-19 Pandemic in British Columbia

In December of 2019 a new and infectious coronavirus was first identified in Wuhan, China and began to spread (CBC 2020). The first presumptive case of the coronavirus in British Columbia (B.C.) was on January 28th, 2020 (CBC 2020). On February 11th, 2020 the World Health Organization announced that the coronavirus had been named COVID-19. A month later, on March 7th, B.C. declared its first care home outbreak, and physical distancing (of 2 meters) began to be recommended to slow down the spread of COVID-19. A few days later, on March 11th, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic. Following suit, on March 17th B.C.'s Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry declared a public health emergency and on March 18th a provincial state of emergency was declared. March 16th to 22nd saw classes cancelled for students, the general public was told to work from home if they can, strict physical/social distancing was in place, no gatherings, many businesses were directed to close, and many restaurants began to offer take-out only (CBC 2020).

The following months saw events cancelled, the state of emergency extended, site outbreaks, financial aid programs, and fluctuating levels of restrictions. On May 19th, 2020 B.C. began to reopen non-essential businesses (restaurants, retail stores, etc.) and by June 24th, 2020 the restrictions were relaxed further (CBC 2020). While restriction had relaxed, life was not “back to normal.” Social/physical distancing, mask wearing, and limiting outings to essentials remained in place for much of the rest of 2020 and into 2021, with restrictions fluctuating depending on the severity of the pandemic at the time. As of April 2021, life in B.C. is still not yet “back to normal.”

“COVID-19”, “lockdown” and “pandemic” are used interchangeably throughout this honours thesis to refer to the COVID-19 pandemic in British Columbia. For the purpose of the

research, the start of the pandemic in B.C. refers to around March 17th and 18th when the public health emergency and provincial state of emergency were declared, non-essential businesses shut, and British Columbians began working from home.

Thesis Argument

The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the way museums engage with their audiences. British Columbia museums' adoption of online engagement varies widely; small museums have not been able to pivot their traditional in-person offerings to alternative online forms of engagement to the same degree as medium/large museums. Moreover, regardless of museum size, some museums are not using Instagram to its full engagement potential. For example, promotional type Instagram posts do not gain a high level of engagement (likes) compared to educational or entertaining type of Instagram posts. While a sizable number of small museums have not adopted or increased online engagement during the pandemic, I found examples of small museums in addition to medium/large museums that have done incredible work to meaningfully engage their audiences online, despite the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The sudden onset of a COVID-19 lockdown in spring of 2020 required the vast majority of B.C. museums to close. Some museums closed only for the government-mandated period, while others continued to be closed even when they were allowed to open again. Not being able to physically welcome visitors into museums became an issue for engagement and dissemination. Some museums promptly started to offer new events through online platforms such as Zoom and Crowdpuir (the latter an online trivia game) (Boyko 2021; Garner 2021). Online engagement is by no means a top priority for all B.C. museums. Many other issues have

taken precedent during the pandemic; however, museum professionals with whom I spoke considered online engagement to be high on their priority list during the pandemic (Boyko 2021; Garner 2021; Worthing 2021).

Overall, both small and medium/large museums to some degree have increased the number of posts they published on Instagram during the pandemic compared to before the pandemic; however, a higher percentage of medium/large museums increased their Instagram postings. Instagram is a great engagement tool, albeit one that needs to be used in a way that engages, educates and entertains the audience. Conducting a typology study similar to Jarreau and colleagues (2019), I argue that promotional Instagram posts get less engagement compared to educational, entertaining, or engaging Instagram posts. Through speech act theory I argue that Calls to Actions need to be crafted deliberately to encourage audience engagement and that passive questions are not effective Calls to Action. Further, I explore three case studies of museums professionals' experiences using online engagement during the pandemic to argue that a key success to doing online engagement is to just try and learn along the way.

Public Archaeology and Museums Online Representation

Disseminating cultural heritage through digital media is not a new practice. For example, some 15 years ago Missikoff (2006) pointed to the potential of mobile phones and TV shows as vehicles for meaningful dissemination of cultural heritage. Given that an individual's interaction with cultural heritage creates an experience (Missikoff 2006; Jarreau et al. 2019), it is not surprising that social media is a popular tool used by museums and scientists involved in public engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic (Jarreau et al. 2019; ICOM 2020; AAM 2020;

UNESCO 2020; NEMO 2021). Moreover, NEMO (2021) found that 59% of museum visitors find social media to be the most interesting of museums' online engagement offerings. In short, there is demonstrated public interest in archaeology and other forms of cultural heritage disseminated for public consumption through museums, webpages, TV programs and social media (Missikoff 2006; Smith 2006; Jarreau et al. 2019; NEMO 2021).

Archaeology has a history of being popular with the general public and has been featured in TV shows and movies and, as new online platforms emerged, archaeology made its way into media such as video games (Campbell 2016). Archaeology, among other forms of cultural heritage, should not compromise itself for the benefit of creating entertaining media (Campbell 2016). However, archaeologists and museums have a responsibility to disseminate their findings to the public in a way that respects descendent communities, shows its process of investigations, and demonstrates thoughtful and creditable representations of the past (Smith 2006; Jarreau et al. 2019; UNESCO 2020). The public looks for information that is reliable yet convenient, with social media being an example of an informal and accessible platform on which to learn (Missikoff 2006; Jarreau and Porter 2018; Jarreau et al. 2019). The public wants cultural heritage information that is easily accessed, demonstrates a scientific process instead of a static artifact, is accessible and shared using simple language, based in interaction between the consumer and educator, characterized by engaging presentations, and the option to engage and interact with the information and researchers (Missikoff 2006; Jarreau et al. 2019; UNESCO 2020).

Museums on Instagram

Instagram is a popular social media platform centred around sharing images and invites user engagement through “likes” and “comments”. Being primarily visually focused, it provides an avenue for museums to engage with and share museum-related content informally to their audience. Jarreau and colleagues (2019) argue that there is scope for museums to enhance how they interact with their publics through this platform.

“Instagram and the science museum: a missed opportunity for public engagement” by Jarreau and colleagues (2019) use a quantitative approach to consider how science museums use Instagram to engage with the public and suggests ways to enhance their approach. Previously there has been research conducted on museums using social media as an engagement tool; however, this study addresses an area that had not yet been quantified: how museums use social media to represent their work and staff, provide informal education, and interact with the public (Jarreau et al. 2019). The quantitative data used in the study was collected by coding 1,080 museum Instagram posts using 28 variables (Jarreau et al. 2019). This study used statistical analysis in order to determine what types of Instagram posts gained more ‘likes.’ Among their findings, they found that promotional posts have less engagement while interactive, educational, and personable posts have more engagement (Jarreau et al. 2019).

One of Jarreau and colleagues (2019: 4) key findings is that museums are posting content on Instagram that perpetrates the 19th-century perception of museums as object-centred rather than demonstrating museums as active participants in the scientific process and continued learning and discovery. During the 19th-century, museums became to be places where artifacts collected dust on shelves (Jarreau et al. 2019). Only recently the narrative has changed to view museums and their work as a process of ongoing scientific research and discovery. Jarreau and

colleagues research demonstrates that, while it might be true that museums are actively involved in scientific investigation, continued public education and research, their Instagram use falls flat. It takes the form of one-sided communication without interaction or is used to promote something which does not attract public interest (Jarreau et al. 2019: 3).

The article provides useful yet manageable suggestions for museums' Instagram use. Their study established the need for a quantitative analysis of the ways that museums engage on Instagram with the public and how these different ways can be beneficial or hinder museum engagement (Jarreau et al. 2019). The authors included access to their codebook and 28 coding variables and clearly explain their sampling methods in such a way that another study could reproduce their work. Jarreau and colleagues (2019) discuss key mistakes that museums are making using Instagram, with simple adjustments suggested to better engage their audience.

The study by Jarreau and colleagues (2019) provides an overview of the importance of the topic that I have explored for my honours thesis; offers clear suggestions on ways that museums can improve the meaningfulness of their online content; and provides a model for quantitative research which can be enriched through interviews in future research.

Museum Engagement During COVID-19

Multiple surveys have been conducted to understand the impacts of COVID-19 on the cultural heritage sector by museum associations and organizations that support museums and museum professionals (AAM 2020; ICOM 2020; UNESCO 2020; NEMO 2021). These include the American Alliance of Museums' (AAM) whose mission is to support museums in knowledge sharing, networking, nurture excellence and create opportunities for museum professionals and

volunteers (American Alliance of Museums 2021). The Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO) represents over 30,000 museums in 40 European countries (Network of European Museum Organisations 2021). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is an “international cooperation in Education, the Sciences and Culture” (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization 2021). Similarly, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) is an international museums organization that is dedicated to cultural heritage research, conservation, persistence and dissemination (International Council of Museums 2021). While the AAM (2020) survey focused on American museums, the surveys conducted by ICOM (2020), UNESCO (2020) and NEMO (2021) reached many countries across the world. AAM (2020), ICOM (2020) and NEMO (2021) had comparable sample sizes: AAM (2020) had a maximum of 760 respondents; ICOM (2020) had nearly 900 (of which 9.1% are from North America); and NEMO (2021) surveyed 600 museums spread across 48 countries. UNESCO (2020) took a more general globalized approach and their sample sizes varied depending on the survey question. All surveys identified that during the lockdowns the majority of museums provided: educational resources (school aged, college students, and adult audiences); online activities/entertainment; virtual lectures/presentations; and digital interactive opportunities (AAM 2020; ICOM 2020; UNESCO 2020; NEMO 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic in B.C. saw early and rapid closures of non-essential businesses, including museums. The response from museums varied across institutions and world locations; however, in general, in the spring of 2020 there were widespread lockdowns (including museum closures). As months wore on, museums began to slowly reopen as restrictions allowed; however, there were waves of the pandemic which resulted in fluctuating restrictions. For this reason, when and where the surveys were conducted are important variables

to consider. AAM (2020) and UNESCO (2020) conducted their survey in June and May 2020 respectfully, while ICOM (2020) collected data September-October 2020 and NEMO (2021) surveyed October- November 2020. The ICOM (2020) and NEMO (2021) reports are both the follow up surveys from their respective May 2020 reports. The follow up surveys were required to further explore how the COVID-19 pandemic was impacting museums institutions (ICOM 2020). Due to the rapidly changing circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the variability between locales, there is understandable variation between the results of these studies. Nonetheless, key findings related to digital platform uses were similar across all reports.

The studies found that the majority of museums increased their social media use during COVID-19 lockdowns. Of North American museums in the sample, 55.6% increased their social media use during lockdown (ICOM 2020). In addition, NEMO (2021) found that 93% of museums increased (or started) their online engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic with 67% increasing their social media use specifically. In addition to social media, general increase and usage of webinars and digital presentations increased as well (AAM 2020; ICOM 2020; UNESCO 2020; NEMO 2021). An important finding of the ICOM (2020) report was that museums enhanced their online activities between their first survey in May 2020 and the second survey in September-October 2020. This included an increase in use of social media, online presentations, and educational programs delivered online. While the UNESCO (2020) survey took place in the spring of 2020, early on during the pandemic, they also found that many institutions increased their social media use during lockdown.

Museums have increased their online engagement during the pandemic and are thinking towards what their future online engagement will look like. At the turn of the 21st century, research suggested that 95% of cultural heritage institutions (in Europe) lacked the financial

resources, staff, skills, and technology to participate in digital dissemination (Missikoff 2006). In the past two decades, museum institutions have greatly adapted and enhanced their online dissemination, and research by NEMO (2021), ICOM (2020) and AAM (2020) all demonstrate that a significant number of museums used online platforms prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and have increased their digital services during the pandemic. However, even though many museums have been using social media prior to the pandemic, the pandemic has increased the importance of online engagement. The ICOM survey (2020) found that 76.6% of museums want to reconsider their digital platform strategy after the pandemic and similarly, 78% of museums surveyed by NEMO (2021) intend to increase digital platform strategies. Furthermore, museums have identified that they do not have all the skills to do this. 83.2% of museums surveyed by NEMO (2021) noted a skills gap and identified the need for assistance in transitioning to and managing digital platforms. Providing digital services is important to evolve with an increasingly digital world and encourages the presentation of museums as a process and not static (Jarreau et al. 2019; NEMO 2021). Another key concern raised by museums centres on the low visitation levels and how to encourage in-person visitation once the pandemic is over. ICOM (2020) identified that 38.7% of museums surveyed perceive losing contact with their community as a threat and, similarly, NEMO (2021) found that the majority of museums believe their most significant challenge in the near future will be to attract visitors back inside the museums.

Of the four surveys highlighted in this section, NEMO (2021) was the only one to consider the differences that large versus small museums experience in creating digital services. NEMO (2021) found that 81% of large museums and 47% of small museums increased their digital involvement as a result of the pandemic. Furthermore, 9% of large museums and 37% of small/medium museums stated a need for digital support. NEMO (2021) suggests that large

museums are more likely to have an employee in charge of digital accounts, whereas a small or medium museum may not.

AAM (2020), ICOM (2020), UNESCO (2020), and NEMO (2021) all focus their conclusions heavily on the importance of online engagement during COVID-19 and speculate on what its role will be in the future of museums.

Theoretical Approach

For this research I used an integrated, anthropological approach, drawing on work in public archaeology, cultural anthropology and linguistic anthropology. Methods for this research project were a mix of qualitative and quantitative in order to answer my research questions.

My analytical approach for my quantitative research drew heavily upon the research conducted by Jarreau and colleagues (2019) as I adapted their methods to create a similar quantitative study. Moreover, Jarreau and colleagues (2019) identified that a limitation of their research was that they did not conduct interviews with museum professionals. In my research I have conducted three interviews which are presented as case studies. Key concepts used by Jarreau and colleagues (2019) are a “uses and gratification” theoretical perspective and “media complementarity” theory (Jarreau and Porter 2018). Both of these theories relate to how a user engages with media and gains knowledge from media (Jarreau and Porter 2018). Uses and gratifications theory can be used to “assume that audiences have certain needs that dictate the types of media” that they use and seek information on (Jarreau and Porter 2018: 144).

Additionally, the media complementarity theory asserts that an online user often depend upon various platforms to gain information on a topic of interest, for example a user may use “both

traditional and new media as complementary sources of information” (Jarreau and Porter 2018: 147). Both the uses and gratification and the media complementarity theories are important to consider when analyzing social media engagement as past research has shown that social media users seek educational information on the platforms that they are already on (Jarreau and Porter 2018:144-147).

Public archaeology helped inform and frame my research. I considered Bonacchi’s (2017) broadcasting versus participatory approaches of dissemination. This separation of broadcasting versus participatory is centred around the delivery of information to an intended audience. The broadcasting approach includes all forms of one-way communication (Bonacchi 2017: 66). This approach is defined by a content creator communicating a message to an audience by the use of a medium (such as social media, mainstream media, websites, etc.). It does not provide a means for two-way communication and engagement (Bonacchi 2017: 66). The broadcasting approach can be implemented by archaeologists and heritage organisations, among other professionals and organizations and has a wide variety of uses (Bonacchi 2017). In contrast, the participatory approach for communication invites engagement from the audience with the content creator (Bonacchi 2017: 68). Within the participatory framework, there are four levels of participant involvement, each having more participatory involvement (Bonacchi 2017: 68). The broadcasting approach is efficient as it only requires one content recreator and has the potential of reaching a wide audience, which can be useful to small museums or museums with limited staff and resources. The participatory approach requires one-on-one engagement, or a somewhat personable and engaging level of involvement. While Bonacchi (2017) does not explicitly consider social media, I have applied Bonacchi’s (2017) theoretical framework to Jarreau and colleagues (2019) research. Based on Bonacchi’s (2017) definitions, social media

would be considered to be a broadcasting approach of engagement; however, with the consideration of Jarreau and colleagues' (2019) research (specifically Call to Action type of posts), I consider Instagram to be both a broadcasting and a participatory medium. I have found Bonacchi (2019) and Jarreau and colleagues' (2019) research to be helpful in understanding cultural heritage social media use. Bonacchi's (2017) research in particular allowed me to consider the effort that is involved in participatory engagement, which I had not fully appreciated.

In preparing for and conducting my interviews, I reviewed the work of Campbell and Lassiter (2014: 97-108). Interviews are all around us in our daily lives: in the news, on the radio, job interviews, and so on (Campbell and Lassiter 2014: 87). Interviews are powerful tools, the way they are conducted and the questions asked have underlying "powerful ideologies about and assumptions behind what is considered meaningful and true" (Campbell and Lassiter 2014: 88). It was important for me to consider the goal of my interviews and to acknowledge that museums are facing many challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic and that online engagement is not a priority for all. In short, an assessment of online engagement does not fully capture a museums' COVID-19 experience.

I have explored speech act theory in a focus on Instagram posts that demonstrate a Call to Action (mobilizing, engaging, asking a question, inviting to comment, etc.; Drotner et al. 2017). This was imperative to my research because I was interested in why Call to Action type posts are effective for Instagram engagement, as Jarreau and colleagues (2019) demonstrated statistically. Using speech act theory allowed me to understand the ways in which speech acts are successful and to see how museums are or are not using Calls to Actions for effect engagement through Instagram. Speech act theory falls within the area of pragmatics in linguistics (Kissine

2008:1189). As described by Kissine (2008: 1189), there are three types of speech acts: locutionary; illocutionary; and perlocutionary acts. To analyze Calls to Actions, I am interested in the perlocutionary act. The “perlocutionary acts refer to the relation between the utterance and its causal effects on the addressee” (Kissine 2008: 1189). Perlocutionary acts have some sort of reaction or response from the addressee; “perlocutionary acts are ‘what we bring about or achieve by saying something’” (Austin 1975:109 quoted by Kissine 2008: 1191). A perlocutionary act can be thought of as requiring two parts, first the utterance from the speaker, and second, the reaction or response from the audience (Chairani et al. 2020: 414; Kissine 2008: 1191). For example, if I ask you “do you know what kind of artifact this is?” and you respond “yes, that is a piece of pottery,” together these parts represent the perlocutionary act. However, what is most important is the fact that you responded to my utterance (Chairani et al. 2020: 414). The perlocutionary act is interested in the response to a request, question, persuasion, etc. (Chairani et al. 2020: 414). Furthermore, recent research has used speech act theories to analyze YouTube videos to understand the illocutionary acts used by the YouTuber and the perlocutionary act responses from their followers (Chairani et al. 2020). In applying the perlocutionary speech act to Call to Action types of Instagram posts, I am interested in whether museums’ audiences respond to their call for engagement.

Research Questions

How have museums in British Columbia used online engagement throughout the COVID-19 pandemic?

Quantitative Research Questions

1a. Do B.C. museums have Facebook and/or Instagram accounts? And 1b. which platform has more museums on it, Facebook or Instagram?

2. Have B.C. museums increased their frequency of publishing Instagram posts during the pandemic as indicated by comparing the number of posts in June 2020 against June 2019, and those in January 2021 against January 2020.

3.a What type(s) gain the most engagement (likes or comments) based on a sample of 12 B.C. museums in March 2021, measuring the 10 recent posts on and after March 1st, 2021?

Following a typology adapted from research by Jarreau and colleagues (2019) that categorizes Instagram posts according to four types, what content types are posted by B.C. museums on Instagram? The content types are:

- Educational (goal of the post is to inform/educate),
- Entertaining (funny, silly, joking, etc.),
- Promotional (posts that promote an event, exhibit, sale/deal, etc.), or
- Call to Action (invitation to engage, asking a question, asking for a response/comment, etc.).

3b. Informed by a linguistic approach, why are calls to actions an effective way of getting an audience to engage?

Qualitative Research Questions

1. Do museum professionals feel they have the skills needed to use online platforms for engagement? How much time do museum staff spend creating and/or doing online engagement?
2. How have museum staff engaged online with their audiences during COVID-19? How do these forms of engagement relate to pre-COVID-19 practices and creatively expand on them (e.g., through interactive Instagram story quizzes, ‘meet the curator’ webinars/cocktail hours, virtual exhibits, among other possibilities)?
3. Will museums continue to use online platforms to engage with their audiences post pandemic when life is “back to normal?”

Quantitative Data

Microsoft Excel was used to collect, store and process the quantitative data generated to address research questions 1 and 2. A list of 258 museums in British Columbia was compiled from Wikipedia (2021: List of Museums in British Columbia) as it appeared to be the most comprehensive list. I refined the list through Google searches to remove galleries and organizations that are not museums. From the list of 258 museums, 60% (n=156) were sampled for the study. Of these, 84 museums had an Instagram. Of the 84 museums with an Instagram, 75 had an Instagram account dating to or before June 2019. To address Research Question 2, a museum needed to have an Instagram account dating to or before June 2019 in order for me to use June 2019 as a comparator for June 2020. For this list, I considered the number of Instagram posts published in the following months: June 2019, January 2020, June 2020 and January 2021.

Sampling to address research question 1 focused on the period between February and April of 2021. A total of 2,174 Instagram posts were counted from the 75 B.C. museums' public Instagram (2021) accounts that comprised my sample.

The following data were recorded for each 156 museums (Instagram information only recorded for museums that had Instagram accounts): name of museum; if they use Facebook; if they have an Instagram account, if the Instagram account dates to before the pandemic (date used: February 2020); number of Instagram followers; number of posts published in June 2019 and 2020 and January 2020 and 2021; and whether or not the museum is small or medium/large. All data recorded was quantitative except for determining the size of a museum, which was determined through qualitative analysis. The key factors used to determine a museum's size were: if they identified as being small or medium/large; whether they close over the winter or are open all year around; have less than 10 staff or more than 10 staff; mostly part-time or full-time staff; visual images of the museum where the size can be estimated; limited hours of operation or open most days of the week for 7+ hours a day; and social media following.

June 2020 and 2019 and January 2021 and 2020 were selected to capture what museums' use of Instagram was like early in the pandemic (June 2020) and later when things were more settled into "normal" pandemic life (January 2021). I selected June and January to follow a model similar to the ICOM (2020) and NEMO (2021) surveys. Both surveys were originally conducted in May 2020, with a follow-up survey conducted in the fall of 2020. As indicated in responses to the early May-June 2020 surveys, there was a fair amount of uncertainty in the early months of the pandemic. June was chosen as a sample date over April or May 2020 to allow some of the uncertainty to wane and life early pandemic life to settle, while still capturing what museums were doing at this early time. As the winter season tends to be quieter for small

museums, with many closing for the season, I was interested to see if there would be an increase in Instagram use in a typically low-traffic month. January was picked to be the winter month as it was equidistant from June, allowing me to sample a summer and winter month.

To sample for Research Question 3, 12 museums with Instagram accounts (from Research Question 1) were randomly sampled selected using Excel. The 10 Instagram posts on and following March 1st were analyzed for all 12 museums, giving a total of 120 Instagram posts analyzed. If a selected museum did not have 10 posts to analyze after March 1st, they were excluded. The choice to analyze 10 posts per museum Instagram account was the same as the methods used by Jarreau and colleagues (2019). Sampling took place in April 2021. I recorded number of likes and comments for each post, the number of followers the museum's Instagram account has, and the classification of the type of post (Promotional, Call to Action, Educational, or Entertaining). Number of followers may be seen as 'potential likes' as the museum's post will show up on a user's feed, providing them the opportunity to like or comment on the post. Thus, if a museum has 12,000 followers compared to 120 followers on Instagram, there is a drastic difference in the "potential likes." In order to control for the disparity between number of followers, I generated a Percentage of Engagement as a basis for analysis. The Percentage of Engagement represents the percentage of that museum's followers who liked the post. Percentage of Engagement was determined for each individual post by dividing the number of likes by the number of followers on the museum's Instagram account, multiplied by 100 to provide a percentage of the followers that liked that individual photo. This allows for small museums to be compared against medium/large museums as the number of followers on a museums' Instagram account has been controlled for. Percentage of Engagement ranged from 0.20% to 10.23%, the median being 1.45% and the mean being 1.86%.

Results

Figures 1 and 2 represent results from the 156 museums that were sampled. Figure 1 shows that of small museums, 51% (n= 71) do not have an Instagram account and 49% (n= 69) do. For medium/large museums, Figure 1 shows that 6% (n= 1) of medium/large do not have an Instagram account while 94% (n= 15) do. This demonstrates the notable difference in Instagram use between small compared to medium/large museums. Figure 2 demonstrates that a similar pattern is seen in museums having a Facebook account. Figure 2 shows that 79% (n= 110) of small museums and 100% (n= 16) of medium/large museums have a Facebook account. While more B.C. museums sampled (n=156) have a Facebook account (n=126, 81%) compared to an Instagram account (n=84, 54%), Instagram is nonetheless relevant for analysis of use and engagement.

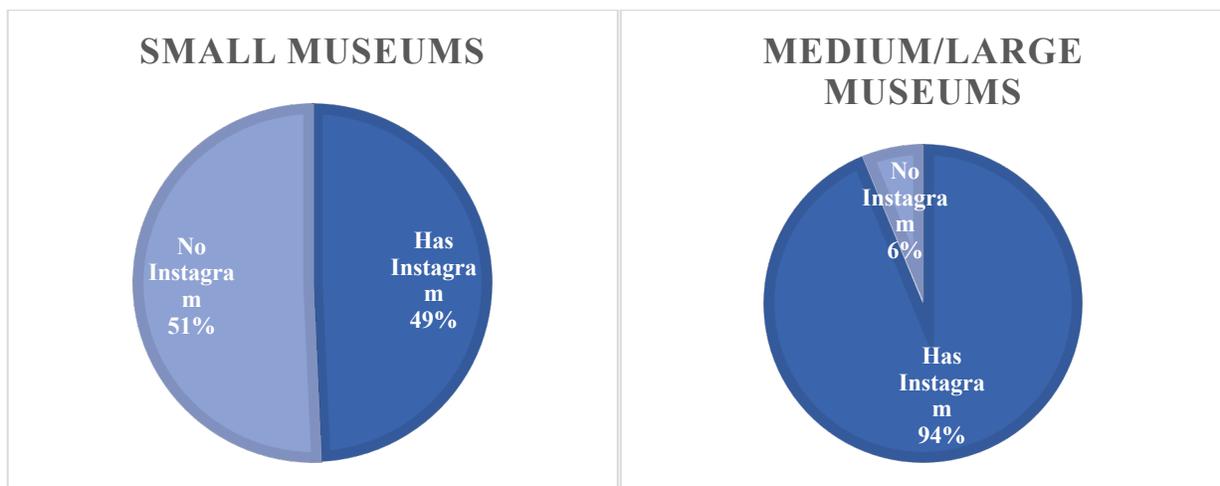


Figure 1. Presence of an Instagram Account: Percentage of small and medium/large British Columbia museums that have and do not have an Instagram account.

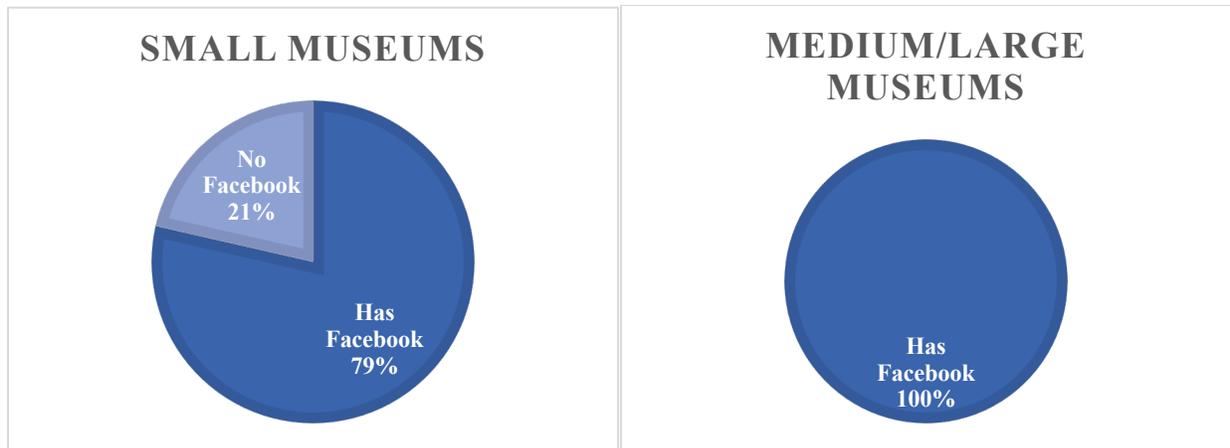


Figure 2. Presence of a Facebook Account: Percentage of small and medium/large British Columbia museums that have and do not have a Facebook account.

Of the 84 museums sampled that had an Instagram account, nine of the museums' Instagram accounts did not date to before June 2019 and thus, were not included in the following analysis. Of the nine museums that did not have an Instagram account before June 2019, six of the museum Instagram accounts were created after the start of the pandemic (March 2020). All six of the museums that started an Instagram account during the pandemic were small museums. Figures 3-5 and Tables 1 and 2 represent the results from the 75 museums which did have an Instagram account dating to or before June 2019.

Figure 3 and Table 1 show June 2020 (during COVID-19) compared against June 2019 (pre-COVID-19) for number of Instagram posts published for small and medium/ large museum. Figure 3 shows that 60% of medium/large museums and 30% of small museums increased the number of Instagram posts they published in June 2020 compared to June 2019. Figure 3 and Table 1 show that 8% (n=5) of small museums had no change in number of posts published in June 2020 compared against June 2019 (for example, 8 posts published in both June 2020 and 2019 would result in No Change). Moreover, 17% (n=10) of small museums published zero

posts in June 2019 and again published zero posts in June 2020 (Figure 3 and Table 1). This means that 17% of small museums were not posting pre-pandemic (June 2019) and did not start posting again during the pandemic (June 2020). To contextualize, from a qualitative review of some of the museums' Instagram accounts that had a result of zero posts in both months (June 2020 and 2019) (Figure 3), it was determined that they used their Instagram account to publish posts prior to June 2019, such as in 2017, but had not posted to Instagram since then or had published intermittently but not in June 2020 or 2019.

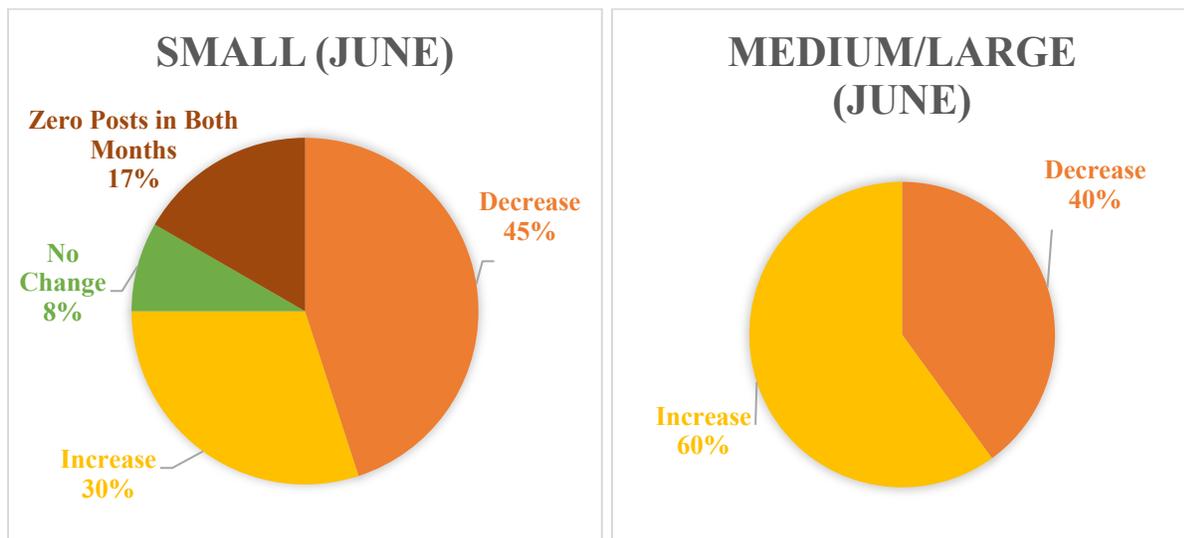


Figure 3. June Instagram Use: Small and medium/ large British Columbia museums' number of Instagram posts published in June 2020 compared to June 2019.

Table 1. June Instagram Use: Small and medium/ large British Columbia museums' number of Instagram posts published in June 2020 compared to June 2019.

Size of Museum	Decrease	Increase	No Change	No Posts	Grand Total
Medium/large	6	9			15
Small	27	18	5	10	60
Grand Total	33	27	5	10	75

Figure 4 and Table 2 show January 2021 (during COVID-19) compared against January 2020 (pre-COVID-19) for number of Instagram posts published for small and medium/large museums. Similar to what was found in Figure 3 and Table 1, Figure 4 and Table 2 demonstrate that the majority of medium/large museums (n=10, 67%) and 30% of small museums increased the number of Instagram posts published in January 2021 compared to January 2020. In January 2021 compared against January 2020 (Figure 4), 30% (n=18) of small museums published zero Instagram posts in both January 2021 and 2020, whereas in Figure 3 comparing June 2020 against June 2019, 17% (n=10) of small museums published nothing in both June 2020 and 2019. The increase in the number of museums not posting in January (n=18, 30%) compared to June (n=10, 17%) is likely due to a portion of small museums being closed during the winter season. Medium/large museums tend not to close over the winter season (or are closed for a shorter period of time), which could be why there were no medium/large museums (n=0) that published zero posts in both January 2021 and 2020.

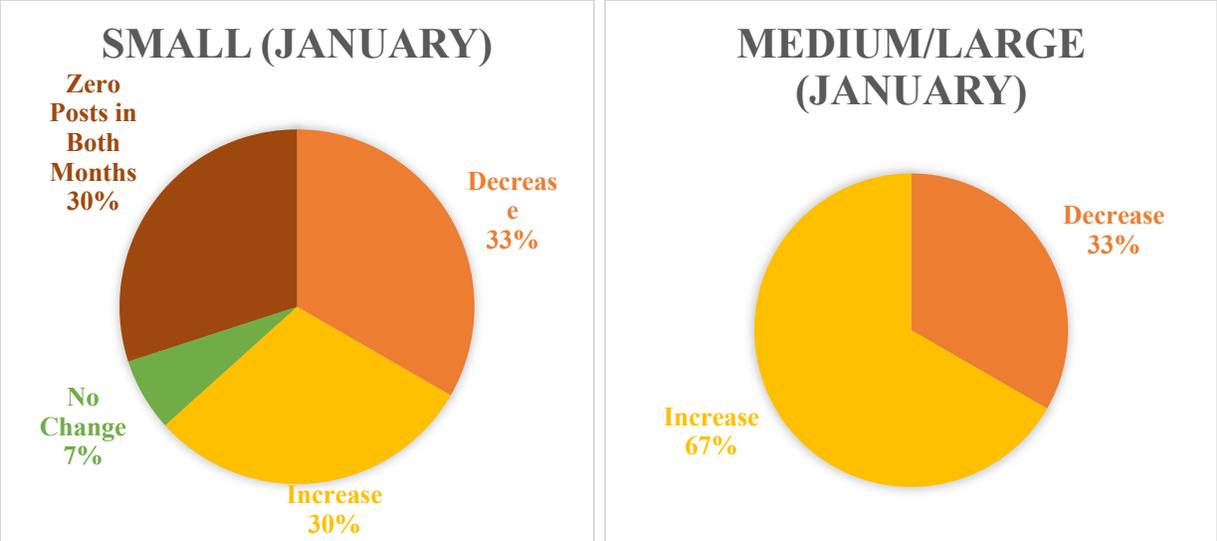


Figure 4. January Instagram Use: Small and medium/large British Columbia museums’ number of Instagram posts published in January 2021 compared to January 2020.

Table 2. January Instagram Use: Small and medium/ large B.C. museums’ number of Instagram posts published in January 2021 compared to January 2020.

Size of Museum	Decrease	Increase	No Change	No Posts	Grand Total
Medium/large	5	10			15
Small	20	18	4	18	60
Grand Total	25	28	4	18	75

Figure 5 shows the average of the results of June 2019 and January 2020 (pre-COVID-19) compared to the average of the results of June 2020 and January 2021 (during COVID-19) for number of Instagram posts published for small and medium/ large museum. For the average (Figure 5), we can observe that, while small and medium/large museums decreased similarly (39% and 37%, respectively), they differed in regard to what percentage they increased, with

30% of small museums and 63% of medium/large museums increasing the number of posts during the pandemic compared to before the pandemic.

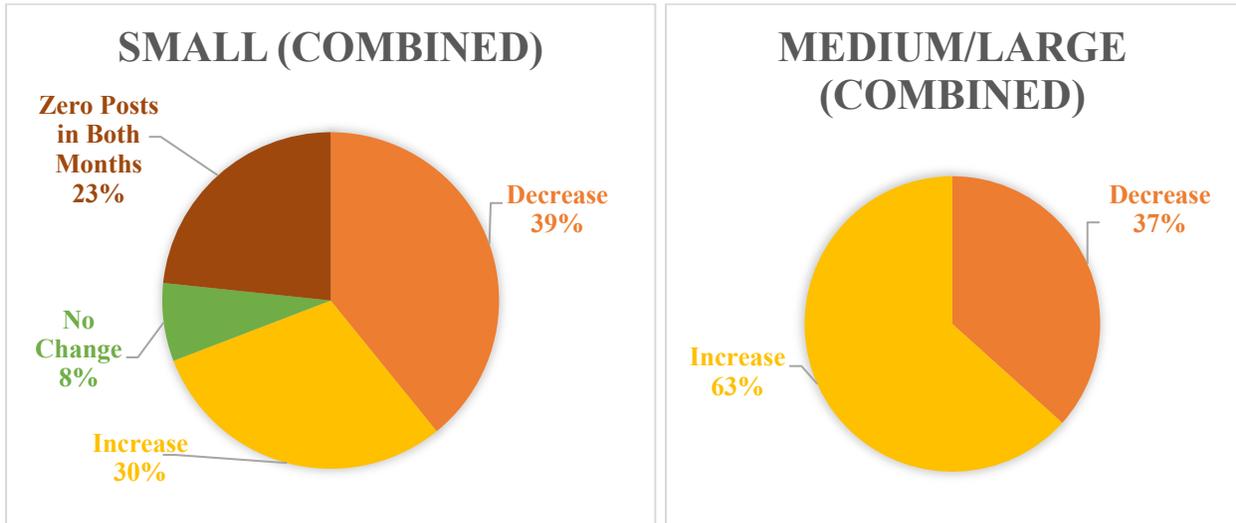


Figure 5. Average Instagram Use for June and January: Small and medium/ large B.C. museums' number of Instagram posts published pre-COVID-19 (June 2019 and January 2020 averaged) compared to during COVID-19 (June 2020 and January 2021 averaged).

Pertinent to research question 3a, Figure 6 and Table 3 show the number of each type of post (Call to Action, Educational, Entertaining, or Promotional) and the Percentage of Engagement (percentage of followers that liked the post) that those posts received. In Figure 6, each of the four pie charts represents one of the types of Instagram posts (Call to Action, Educational, Entertaining, and Promotional). Within the individual pie charts, the green gradient represents the breakdown of the Percentage of Engagement received on those posts (exact numbers seen in Table 3). The size of the pie charts in relation to each other is to approximately represent the different sample sizes in each category, as they range from 7 posts (Call to Action) up to 53 posts (Promotional).

Seen in Table 3 is the count for each Percentage of Engagement category of each type of Instagram post. The percentage of Engagement ranged from 0.20% to 10.23%, the median being 1.45% and the mean being 1.86%. A higher Percentage of Engagement can be interpreted as being a more effective post for engagement.

In Figure 6 and Table 3, Educational (n=45) and Promotional (n=53) type of posts have the largest sample sizes from the sample of 120 Instagram posts. If we consider the categories “between 3% and 4%” as well as “over 4%” together, there was only one Promotional post (Table 3) that received a ‘higher’ Percentage of Engagement. In contrast, considering the same categories (Between 3% and 4% as well as Over 4% together), there were nine Educational posts (Table 3) that received a ‘higher’ Percentage of Engagement. While the Entertaining (n=15) sample is considerably smaller than the Educational (n=45) and Promotional (n=53) samples, considering the same categories (between 3% and 4% as well as over 4% together), there were six Entertaining posts that received a ‘higher’ Percentage of Engagement. Even though the Education (n=45) and Entertaining (n=15) samples are smaller than the Promotional (n=53) sample, significantly more Educational and Entertaining posts gained a higher Percentage of Engagement compared to Promotion posts (Figure 6 and Table 3).

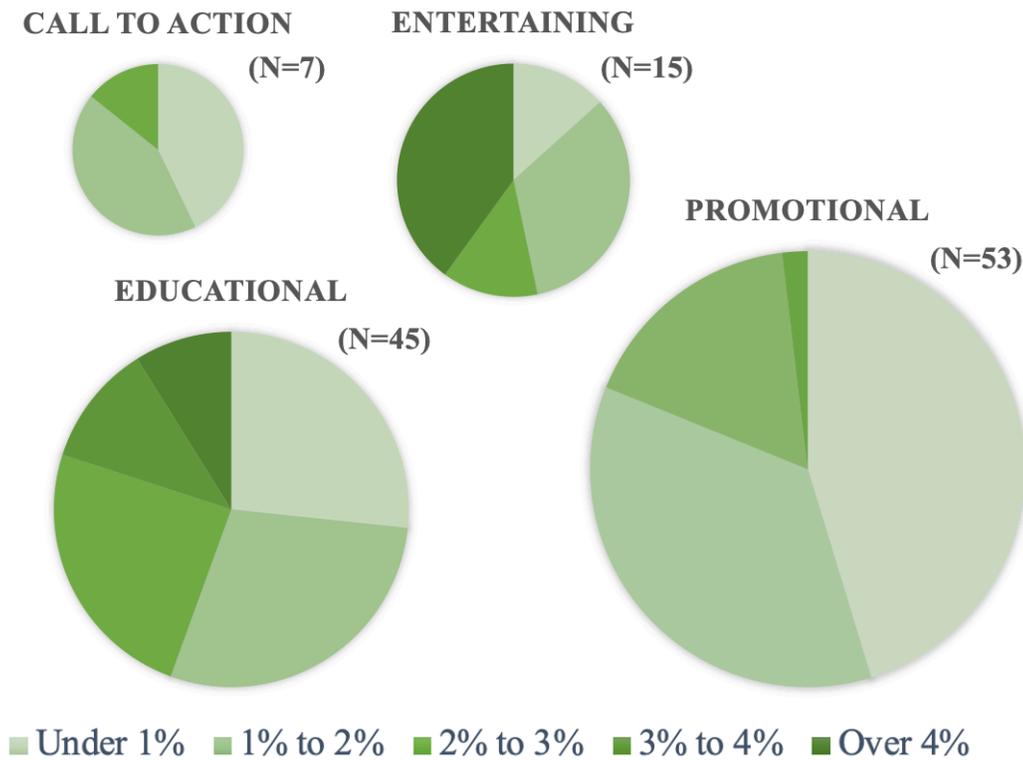


Figure 6. Distribution of Post Type Engagement Levels: Each type of Instagram post (Call to Action, Educational, Entertaining, and Promotional) as represented by pie charts. The visual size of pie chart and sample size (indicated by N=) show the different sample sizes of the Types of Instagram posts. The green gradient (key at the bottom of Figure) in the pie charts presents the distribution of the Percentage of Engagement (percentage of followers that liked the post) that are within that type of Instagram post. Table 3 (below) presents the numerical breakdown. The darker the gradient, the higher percentage of the follower based liked that photo.

Table 3. Distribution of Post Type Engagement Levels: The distribution of the Percentage of Engagement on each type of post in the 120 sample. The types of posts (Call to Action, Educational, Entertaining, and Promotional) are shown with the number of those posts that received the varying Percentages of Engagement (1% or under and up to over 4%).

Type of Post	1% or under	between 1% and 2%	between 2% and 3%	Between 3% and 4%	Over 4%	Grand Total
Call to Action	3	3	1			7
Educational	12	13	11	5	4	45
Entertaining	2	5	2		6	15
Promotional	24	19	9	1		53
Grand Total	41	40	23	6	10	120

Interestingly, Call to Action posts (Figure 6 and Table 3) did not achieve any posts that had a Percentage of Engagement in the categories 3%-4% and Over 4%. This could be due to the small sample size as only seven posts out of the 120 sample were Call to Action posts (see Figure 7 and Table 4). However, if we consider number of comments, instead of the percentage of followers that liked the image, the results of engagement are drastically different. The number of comments on individual posts was collected and there were 118 comments in total for the 120 posts analyzed. If there is no relationship between the type of post (Call to Action, Educational, Entertaining, and Promotional) then in a general sense, you may expect to see approximately one comment per post. Figure 8 and Table 5 demonstrate that this is not the case. While Call to Action posts made up only 6% (n=7) of all types of posts, 33% (n=39) of all comments are specifically on Call to Action Instagram posts. Moreover, Promotional type posts account for 44% (n=53) of the 120 posts sampled, yet they only account for 24% (n=28) of the total

comments in the sample. When it comes to comments, Calls to Action posts gain disproportionately more comments and Promotional posts gather less comments.

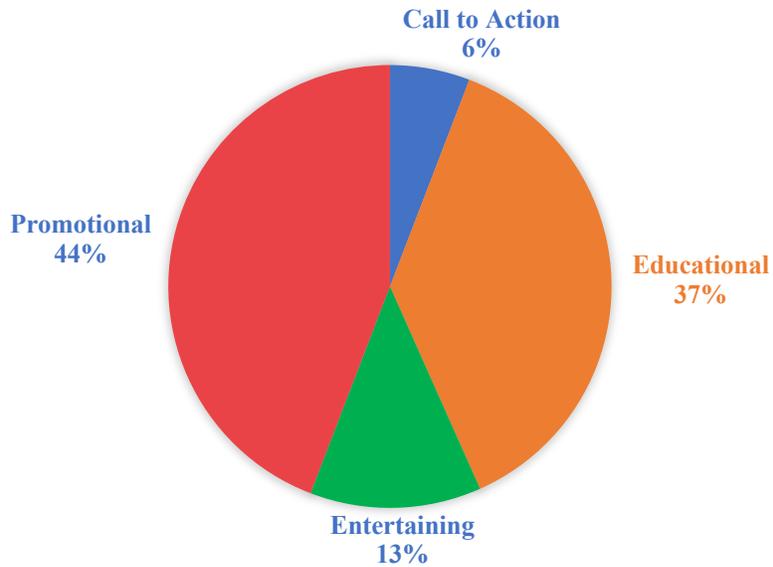


Figure 7. Prevalence of Each Type of Instagram Post: [Call to Action (n= 7), Educational (n= 45), Entertaining (n= 15), and Promotional (n= 53)] in the sample of 120 posts.

Table 4. The Prevalence of Each Type of Instagram Post.

Type of Post	Sum of Posts
Call to Action	7
Educational	45
Entertaining	15
Promotional	53
Grand Total	120

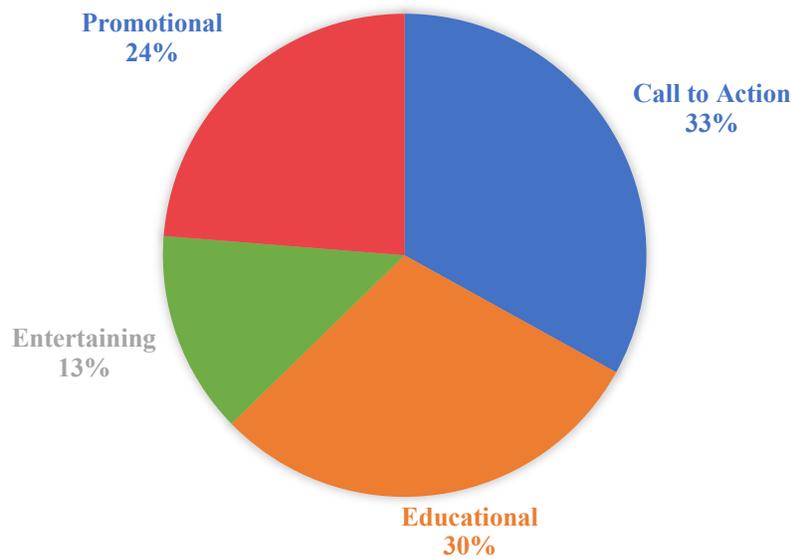


Figure 8. Prevalence of Comments on Each Type of Instagram Post: [Call to Action (n= 39), Educational (n= 35), Entertaining (n= 16), and Promotional (n= 28)] in the sample of 118 comments counted from 120 Instagram posts.

Table 5. Prevalence of Comments on Each Type of Instagram Post.

Type of Post	Sum of comments
Call to Action	39
Educational	35
Entertaining	16
Promotional	28
Grand Total	118

The methods for collecting data relevant to quantitative research question 3 was a blend of quantitative and qualitative methods. As mentioned previously, the typology study (Research Question 3a) is adapted from the study done by Jarreau and colleagues (2019). Jarreau and colleagues (2019) identified that Instagram posts with a Call to Action (asking a question,

inviting to talk, asking for responses, etc.) gain more engagement (measured through likes and/or comments). I am interested in why Calls to Actions are an effective means of gaining engagement with followers on Instagram. While Jarreau and colleagues (2019) did not use speech act theory to assess Call to Action posts, I found it to be a useful theoretical framework to consider why Calls to Action posts gain more engagement.

While collecting the data for question 3a, I further analyzed the use of the Call to Action as perlocutionary acts, which focuses attention on the audiences' response to an utterance. An utterance in this case is in the form of the caption of an Instagram post, for example "Who's ready for this week's artifact guessing game?! This week we have this interesting artifact- do you know what it is or what it was used for?" Because Instagram is a visual platform, the Call to Action is typically linked to what is pictured in the accompanying photo. To answer the question I have asked above, you must see the image in order to effectively respond. Imagine in this example a stoneware hot water bottle. After seeing the image and reading the accompanying text, which invites a comment, you might respond, "Oh I know what that is! That's a stoneware hot water bottle, I used to have one growing up at the bottom of my bed on cold nights." This hypothetical example is similar to effective Calls to Actions used by museums on Instagram. There are also Calls to Action posts that fall flat. These tend to ask a question as a 'hook' or to invoke thought rather than to incite meaningful responses and open a dialogue. An example would be a museum posting a photo of their new Lego exhibit with the following caption, "Who likes Lego? Come down to check out our Lego exhibit starting this Saturday." While this caption does ask a question, these types of questions tend to gain limited to no perlocutionary responses; museum audiences do not tend to comment "ME! I love Lego." Moreover, the example of a Lego exhibit post could also be categorized as a Promotional type of Instagram post since the

primary purpose is to promote the Lego exhibit, not to know which of the followers like Lego. As shown in Figures 6 and Table 3, Promotional Instagram posts tend to get a low engagement compared to (effective) Calls to Action, Educational, and Entertaining posts.

I argue that Calls to Action posts can be effective if the museum content creator considers what the desired perlocutionary response is and if it is reasonable that followers will make that response. It is not enough to simply ask a question, as seen in the Lego exhibit example. Rather, the museum content creator should plan the Instagram content to invite a deeper level of engagement or participation from the followers, such as the stoneware artifact guessing game example. As Jarreau and colleagues (2019) demonstrated statistically, Calls to Action posts gain more engagement as measured by number of “likes” and comments. Considering this and the mechanisms of speech act theories, Calls to Action posts can be targeted to an audience to welcome and encourage meaningful interactions and engagement.

Qualitative Data

To answer my qualitative Research Questions, I conducted three interviews with select British Columbia museum professionals. Prior to inviting participants to participate and conducting interviews, approval from the University of Victoria Research Ethics Board was secured. A total of seven B.C. museum professionals were contacted to gauge interest in participating in an interview. Three of the seven museum professionals responded, indicating an interest in participating. Museums professionals were selected to interview based on the researcher finding an online engagement method that they began to offer after the COVID-19 pandemic began in British Columbia in March of 2020. The following three case studies are not meant to capture or

represent all B.C. museums' experiences with online engagement during the pandemic; rather, they exemplify how specific museums and their dedicated staff have adapted to the pandemic. The case studies may also provide encouragement for other B.C. museums to try new online engagement platforms, regardless of their prior skill or experience.

The case study interviews were conducted using methods from cultural anthropology. Campbell and Lassiter (2014) as well as my experience in cultural anthropology research methods courses was used to formulate framing of interview questions, interview format, and how to conduct interviews. Interviews had guiding questions, yet participants were welcome to speak to experiences during COVID-19 with online engagement that was not captured in the interview questions. Interviews were conducted over Zoom and ranged from 25 minutes to 50 minutes long.

Case Study: Lee Boyko, Sooke Region Museum

Lee Boyko, the Executive director of Sooke Region Museum, spoke with me about his and the museum's experience with online engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic. Sooke Region Museum is a small museum located in Sooke on Vancouver Island, British Columbia. The team consists of a couple staff, volunteers and a Canada Works intern. For Sooke Region Museum, online engagement is a priority although not their main focus. During the start of the pandemic, they recognized that they were not going to be able to create new exhibits for the summer of 2020 as their exhibit space is not suited for socially distanced visitation, so they decided to spend more time on collections management. This included some collection digitization, in addition to creating virtual engagement activities.

At Sooke Region Museum there is a mix of people who do online engagement; however, the programs employee does the majority of it. For the program employee, the time spent creating and doing online engagement has increased since the start of the pandemic. Sooke Region Museum primarily uses Facebook (including Facebook live), YouTube, Crowdpuurr and Zoom for their online engagement with the public. Facebook is the medium where Sooke Region Museum attracts the most engagement and it has been an effective mechanism for getting people involved.

Lee acknowledged that he and his staff still have some gaps when it comes to providing online engagement. Lee made the point that, while most of us have taken a photo or recorded a video on our smart phones, we may not have shot and edited a professional video. While Lee has a strong background in film, he still finds it a learning process to understand what the best systems, equipment and software are to use. There are constantly new social media and online platforms being created and used by the public, and learning how to use each new platform is a continuous process. Moreover, as a small museum it is not feasible to be on every online platform. According to Lee, Sooke Region Museum thinks critically about which platforms they invest their time into.

Lee explained that their school programs have not been adapted to online platforms as they are heavily focused on the in-person experience and interaction with the exhibits. Lee mentioned that at this time of year (early March) their programs employee would usually be hosting many in-person school programs at the museum. While Sooke Region Museum was unable to adapt their school programs to be available through an online platform, they have still done incredible work to connect with their local community online during the pandemic.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in B.C., Lee acknowledged that there was total uncertainty about what to do, given that their organization is very event- and workshop-oriented and staff were not sure how to relate those activities to virtual platforms. Around the time that the lockdown started, Sooke Region Museum was to have a chef teach a vegan cooking class. The cooking class had to be cancelled; however, other events, such as book reading by an author or a lecture were well suited to transition online.

One of the first online engagement offers Sooke Region Museum did was hosting a weekly trivia game on the platform Crowdpuurr. Some of the staff had previous experience using Crowdpuurr and it was an activity they could easily and quickly do when the museum was closed to the public. They advertised the trivia nights in their newsletter and on their Facebook page, where they gained a fair amount of interest in the events. Lee was impressed with the turnout from the community; they were clearly interested in connecting virtually with their local museum during the pandemic during which they were not able to visit in person. Once they were able to welcome visitors back into the museum, they stopped the weekly trivia nights; however, Lee says they are interested in starting them back up again. Sooke Region Museum learnt along the way while hosting these weekly trivia nights, for example they learned how to integrate photos within the questions, and they are looking at a way to incorporate a live DJ aspect to trivia nights when they start them back up. They recognize that having a live DJ host the trivia game would allow them to interact more with the participants and provide more context to the questions being asked.

Online engagement has been beneficial during the COVID-19 pandemic, enabling the museum to continue to be involved in and with the local community while visitation levels are low. While Sooke Region Museums is a small museum, they have been able to adapt to the

COVID-19 pandemic by offering museum-related engagement through the use of online platforms, Facebook, Zoom and CrowdPurr and intend to continue to continue online engagement in the future.

Case Study: Jeannine Worthing, Point Ellice House Museum & Gardens

Jeannine Worthing, Visitor Experience and Programming Coordinator at Point Ellice House Museum and Gardens spoke with me in March 2021 about her and her colleagues' experience doing museum engagement online during the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the start of the pandemic, Jeannine's job title was Visitor Services Coordinator. During the pandemic her job title and roles shifted as she focused more on museum programming and less on welcoming visitors onto site.

Point Ellice House is a small museum with three part-time employees and one full-time employee. It is run by the non-profit Vancouver Island Local History Society on behalf of the Province of B.C. as the museum is a provincial heritage site. Point Ellice House is on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, in addition to having a website and blog. Over the COVID-19 pandemic they have increased their online offers. Jeannine noted that Facebook is where they have the largest following; however, due to participating in a giveaway on Instagram, their Instagram following increased in a short time frame.

Point Ellice House briefly opened up to public visitation August-October 2020 and hopes to open again in the spring of 2021, following public health guidelines and restrictions. One of the challenges for Point Ellice House having guests visit the site is the limited ability to physically distance within the Visitor Centre and rooms of the house. Jeannine recognizes the

importance of online engagement, but stresses the significance of in-person museum visitation as she strongly believes you gain a different understanding and appreciation of history when you are physically immersed in it. While Point Ellice House has been open for a limited time during the COVID-19 pandemic in B.C., online engagement has allowed them to continue to stay connected to the public and share some of the many stories of Point Ellice House.

Point Ellice House is associated with wide-ranging stories including the settler history of Victoria and wider British Columbia, as well as the generations of the O'Reilly family who lived there (108 years). During the pandemic, the Point Ellice House team has created a new YouTube channel where staff share these stories. The YouTube channel has been a team effort. Jeannine often works on the scripts and narrates the videos. Another great online resource that Jeannine has created are free educational programs for teachers to use. These consist of worksheets for students, a teacher's guide, a PowerPoint presentation, and YouTube videos can be used as a supplementary resource. During the pandemic, Point Ellice House also started a transcription project where volunteers can help transcribe the 8 meter shelf of documents housed at the BC Archives from the O'Reilly family. These resources are available to the public through their website. Point Ellice House has adapted to the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, online engagement and educational programs providing examples of how Point Ellice House is persevering during this difficult time.

The most important skill that Jeannine identified she has used not only during the pandemic but in her museum career, is the skill of creativity. Being a small museum and having a small professional team behind Point Ellice House, it is extremely important that staff are creative. Jeannine mentioned that while they do not have the time, funding and resources to create and host large webinar events, engaging on social media, writing blog posts, and creating

YouTube videos is within their creative wheelhouse. Moreover, the actual creation of online engagement is a rewarding creative process, for example, deciding which O'Reilly story to tell, how to tell it, what medium to tell it on, and getting the message out to the public that this resource exists. While larger museums may have the time, staff, funding and resources to create substantial online engagement, small museums are mighty and creative forces that can use online engagement in meaningful ways as Point Ellice House proves.

Jeannine described the online engagement that Point Ellice House is doing as an expansion of the methods and ways that they engaged with the public prior to the pandemic. For Point Ellice House, online engagement is not a temporary replacement to fill the void of in-person visitation; it is a priority on which they want to move forward post-pandemic. Jeannine believes that there will always be an online engagement aspect to what they do, even after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Case Study: Jennifer Garner, Kelowna Museums

Jennifer Garner, Head of Programming at Kelowna Museums, met with me to discuss what her staff, colleagues and herself have done for online museum engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic. Kelowna Museums, which is comprised of three museums, is relatively large compared to their neighbouring museums in the interior. They recognize that, compared to other museums, they have more staff, resources, and funding.

Jen acknowledged that prior to the pandemic, online engagement was not on her radar or part of her role at the museums. This changed considerably since the start of the pandemic, during which Jen has done a substantial amount of online engagement and it has become an

important component of her role and a key activity of Kelowna Museums. As Head of Programming, Jen's position before COVID-19 involved connecting with different audiences, communities and students within Kelowna, particularly bringing them into the museums to have memorable and meaningful museum experiences. With the rapid onset of COVID-19 lockdowns in B.C., Jen's role of bringing people into the museum was impossible; however, the part of her job that focused on connecting with students and different communities in Kelowna was still relevant, or as she suggested, even more relevant in some ways.

Social media was actively used by Kelowna Museums prior to the pandemic. Kelowna Museums use a wide range of social media platforms, with Facebook being the platform through which they get their most engagement. While they had been using social media prior to the pandemic, during lockdown they began to offer new online engagement activities.

Within two weeks of the March 2020 lockdown in B.C. Kelowna Museums started offering free virtual school programs over Zoom. Kelowna Museums offered the Zoom presentations for free as they recognized that teachers were under a lot of pressure and also because at the time, the museum staff did not fully know how to use Zoom. The point of the Zoom presentations was not as a revenue opportunity; instead, it was to provide a fun and educational museum experience and stay connected with the students and teachers, even if that meant having the engagement delivered online. Along with the Zoom programs, there are accompanying worksheets which require an in-person visit to fill out. Kelowna Museums welcomes students who have had a Zoom presentation to come in person with their COVID-19 bubble to explore the museum more. In 2020 (during April-June and October-December) Kelowna museum hosted 266 Zoom programs for schools, each Zoom program being 30-45 minutes long. In addition to school programs, they have offered public programming over Zoom.

For example, they hosted a workshop for International Women's day with a great turn out from the community. Kelowna Museums were very quick to adopt the use of Zoom for virtual museum engagement, which allowed them to learn along the way as they continued to engage their audiences during the pandemic.

In addition to Zoom, Kelowna Museums also started using Instagram Live during the pandemic. Similar to their experience with Zoom, they were not familiar with all the functions and options; however, they jumped into it and learned as they went along. The Instagram Live content was able to be transferred over to their YouTube channel, allowing more people to view the content and for it to continue to be available in the future. Not all of the Instagram Live sessions could be transferred over to YouTube as the odd time there was a technical or audio issue. However, this was not terrible as the point of the Instagram Live is not necessarily to preserve it. Rather, having it archived on YouTube is an additional way that they can make the content available.

At the beginning of the pandemic Jen had few skills for online engagement and mentioned that she had never heard of Zoom or Instagram Live. Without the skills to use these online engagement platforms, Jen stated she just had to learn by watching YouTube and playing around on the various platforms. In reflection, a year later Jen feels fairly comfortable and confident in her skills and understanding of the platforms. Although she feels comfortable using these platforms, she does not describe her skills as at a highly professional level. Jen and Kelowna Museums demonstrates that you do not need to be an expert at an online platform before you start using it. They have demonstrated through their swift incorporation of Zoom and Instagram Live that you can still do meaningful engagement without knowing all the functions of

a platform. While Kelowna Museums are larger organizations, their method of learning-as-you-go for online engagement can be useful for smaller museums.

In Jen's experience, online engagement takes about the same amount of time as hosting groups in the museums. Pre-COVID-19, thousands of kids visit Kelowna Museums every year, which requires a lot of preparation time. While a school class may only visit the museum for an hour, there are several hours of work to prepare for their visit. For Jen, this has been similar to creating and delivering online engagement. For both Zoom educational programs and other online engagement, such as a 10-minute Instagram Live, it takes several hours to prepare for those virtual engagements. While visitation levels are fairly low, online engagement has provided an avenue to continue to tell the stories of the museums. There are also other advantages of temporary low visitation levels, such as being able to completely redo or improve areas of exhibits and collections that would not have been possible if visitation levels were normal.

Looking towards a future post-pandemic time, Jen acknowledges that while they have enjoyed doing a high level of online engagement, it may not be practical to continue it with the same intensity when they will have numerous school groups and increased public visitation at the museums. The staff who have done online engagement during the pandemic will likely shift their roles back to welcoming, assisting, and educating the public physically in the museum. In a perfect world, they would be able to continue the same online offers while returning to the support visitors at the museums. Doing museum online engagement during the pandemic provided an opportunity for collaboration across all departments of the museums to showcase the many stories of the museums.

Discussion and Conclusion

The COVID-19 lockdown happened abruptly in March 2020, disrupting “normal life” in British Columbia. Museums, who traditionally engage with their audiences through in-person interactions and experiences, had to rapidly pivot their approach to engaging their audiences through online platforms.

Demonstrated through the case studies and by NEMO (2021), not all museums professionals have the skills needed to use online platforms, yet that should not stop them from learning as they go. All three museum professionals interviewed identified new forms of online engagement that were developed in response to the pandemic as a means of staying connected with their audiences. However, they shared that they did not have the skills to use online platforms or knowledge of how they worked prior to the COVID lockdown. Yet, they have successfully mastered these online platforms (e.g. Zoom) that have been made popular by the pandemic. Time spent doing online engagement varies between museums, with some museum professionals finding that online engagement takes about the same amount of time as in-person engagement, while others find it time consuming and feel the need to prioritize other museum tasks. But as my quantitative data and case studies demonstrate, museums, both small and medium/large museums increased what they were publishing on social media and started using a variety of new online platforms. Some museums had used common platforms like Facebook and Instagram previously, but other platforms were adopted only after the onset of the pandemic, with examples including Instagram Live, YouTube, Zoom, and Crowdprur.

The experiences of the museum professionals interviewed have the potential of being useful and inspiring other museums that are considering offering engagement online. One of

their crucial COVID-19 responses was their quick adoption of online platforms. An overarching aspect to the success of all three case studies' online engagement was their willingness to try out new online platforms and not wait until they fully understood all aspects of it to launch an initiative. Museums want to engage with the public and contribute to the continuous learning about the past, present, and future of British Columbia; during the pandemic, online platforms have provided them with the opportunity to continue to do what they love. Jeannine Worthing Visitor Experience and Programing Coordinator at Point Ellice House Museum and Gardens captures the ethos perfectly:

“We [museum professionals] are not precious about our ideas. We want everybody to engage, and if there is another museum that can learn from what we are doing, then power to them, that is what this industry is all about-sharing knowledge with each other and the public.”

My research found that small and medium/large museums differed in the extent to which they increased posts to Instagram during the pandemic compared to before the pandemic. As suggested by NEMO (2021), small compared to large museums were affected differently by the pandemic, with large museums already having the skills, tools, and staff to adapt swiftly. Nemo (2021) found that 81% of large museums and 47% of small museums increased their digital involvement as a result of the pandemic. Similarly, I found that that a higher percent of medium/large compared to small museums increased the amount they posted to Instagram during the pandemic compared to before the pandemic. I found that 63% of medium/large museums and 30% of small museums increased the number of Instagram posts they published during the pandemic (Figure 5). Furthermore, NEMO (2021) found that more small museums have identified a need for support when it comes to online engagement. NEMO (2021) found that 37%

of small/medium museums and only 9% of large museums stated a need for digital support. NEMO (2021) suggests that large museums are more likely to have an employee in charge of digital accounts whereas a small or medium museum may not.

While it was demonstrated that more museums have a Facebook account than they have an Instagram account (see Figures 1 and 2), Instagram is well suited for use by museums and museum professionals, given that it is inherently visual and provides a platform to “meet audiences where they are” (Jarreau et al. 2019: 2). Promotional posts accounted for 44% (n=53) of the 120 Instagram posts in my sample from 12 British Columbia museums (see Figure 7 and Table 4). In contrast, Call to Action posts only account for 6% (n=7). Yet, Call to Action posts gather significantly more engagement as measured by posted comments (see Figure 8 and Table 5). Moreover, Educational and Entertaining Instagram posts gain more “likes” compared to Promotional posts and can be considered to gain a higher level of engagement with the audience.

Just as museums love to share the stories of the past, present and future, museum audiences respond to that type of content and want to see interesting, funny, educational, and engaging Instagram posts. British Columbia museums have demonstrated resiliency in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic through their swift adoption and increase of online engagement.

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