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Medical Sciences 4300A: Addressing
Healthcare Misconceptions Using Scientific
Inquiry

Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry:
Community Engaged Learning

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Increasing Civic Engagement and Awareness of Poverty & Homelessness Through Social Media (Project Hope London)

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INTRODUCTION

- As of 2018, 62% of individuals in the London community were experiencing chronic homelessness and this number continues to rise (*London Homelessness, 2018*).
- Project Hope London (PHL) is a grassroots organization founded by Kait Symonds who recognized a need to help individuals experiencing homelessness and acted on it.
- Through the help of Kait and her team, PHL helps homeless individuals regain a sense of dignity through providing hot meals, toiletries, and warm clothing to meet their basic needs.
- As a grassroots organization, PHL depends on the material and monetary donations from the community and has focused on raising awareness through Facebook.
- With the rise of technology and visual media, they have been unable to utilize Instagram to its fullest potential.
- Successful social media strategies have involved posting relatable or personable content (Klassen, 2018). More specifically, appealing to emotions and sharing personal stories were found to be underused but highly effective strategies (Gao, 2016).
- In broadening its reach through Instagram, PHL has the potential to reach the Western University community to gain more awareness and volunteers to help their cause.

PROJECT AIMS:

- The goal of this project is to increase awareness of Project Hope London's mission and gather donations from the London community.
- We hope to do this by expanding the organization's social media presence through creating eye-catching and inspiring posts and increasing engagement through boosting follower counts.
- We also aimed to create a connection between the Western University community to further increase awareness of the organization and its goals with a new target audience. Additionally, it can also increase the potential for gaining donations and volunteers.

METHODS

REVAMPED INSTAGRAM PAGE

- Converted to a business account to access the analytics feature
- Changed Instagram bio and created themed Highlights cover photos
- Created a LinkTree to organize existing links into one space
- Created new Instagram graphics on their new Canva account with a modern aesthetic and archived or recreated old posts (Klassen, 2018)
- Followed many Western University students to hone in on the younger adult population
- Communicated with community partner through text, email, and weekly meetings for approval on certain posts, feedback, and updates

TOILETRIES DRIVE

- Gained insight from PHL on specific items in need by the community
- Determined a timeframe for the drive from planning to execution of the drive over 2 weeks
- Emailed, messaged, and held meetings with multiple campus connections to set up boxes for collection of donations
- Set up bins in 6 first-year residences, FIMS and Nursing Building, Medical Sciences Building, and Elborn College
- Created a social media campaign and reached out to Western Students via various platforms (ex. Microsoft Teams, Facebook "Must Knows")

MEASURING OUR IMPACT

- Logged specific Instagram metrics shown to be effective (West, 2021) before the start of the project and after the project ended
- Counted the number of donations received in each box and converted to monetary savings for PHL to complete their weekly outreach

DELIVERABLES

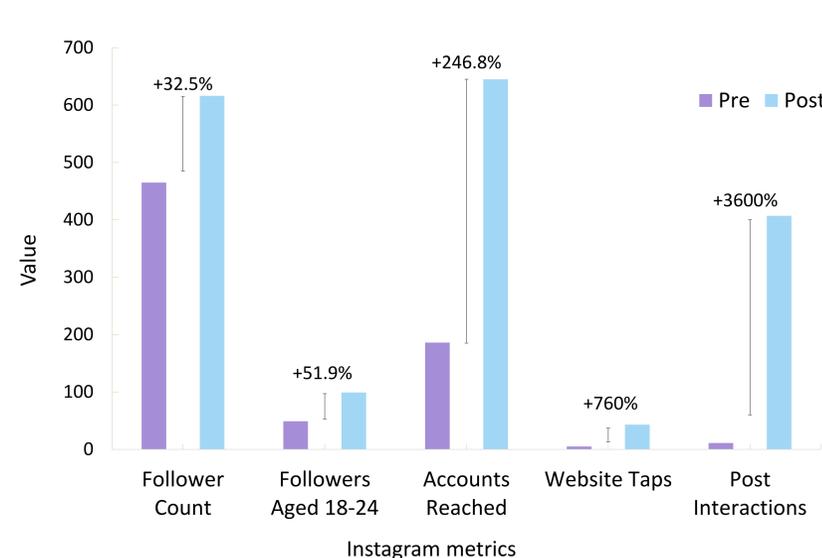


Fig. 1. The percentage change in metrics including follower count, followers aged 18-24, accounts reached, website taps and total content interactions from Pre-campaign (Sept 17-Oct 17) to Post-campaign (Oct 17-Nov 17)

CAMPUS PARTNERS

Organizations that connected with PHL for the toiletries drive



WFNSA • RezLife • GrassroOTs
UWO • Medical Sciences Building

TOILETRIES DRIVE

In total, the donations saved PHL



IMPACT

REVAMPED INSTAGRAM

- A professional page would be viewed as one that does impactful work and increases the likelihood that viewers would become followers and empowered to take action with their new knowledge.
- Creating and thoughtfully timing themed posts helped to organize the page to be easily navigated by existing and new followers. Doing so helped the community to understand the goals and mission of PHL.

TOILETRIES DRIVE

- Donations helped fill PHL's need for toiletries, reduced the burden of spending extra money, and provided a means for the homeless to support their personal hygiene.
- The drive used Instagram to boost engagement of Western University students in PHL's mission.

IMPACT

- Increases in follower count, post engagements, new volunteer interests, and new partner collaborations.
- Increased support of PHL would enable them to provide individuals experiencing homelessness with a sense of dignity.
- Helping raise awareness about PHL's mission to an expanded audience would increase donations and volunteers to maintain support beyond our project.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- To ensure PHL's Instagram presence persists, we have created multiple templated posts on their new Canva account for the team to use.

FUTURE PROJECT IDEAS:

- Focus on **reaching out to local London organizations**, such as bakeries, restaurants, and clothing stores who would be able to donate to help PHL on their weekly outreach and in return PHL could boost their business on their Instagram.
- Instagram lives** following specific volunteers, such as those who cook the hot meals or those who help pack items at the storage unit.
- Humans of Project Hope** - Future posts could potentially feature individuals who were previously homeless or are currently homeless and whom PHL has helped.
- Some **barriers** to consider with Humans of Project Hope is gaining informed consent from interviewed individuals. Respecting the privacy and vulnerable situations of these individuals will be important.
- Due to privacy reasons, **limitations** include the extent of transparency we could provide to those donating to our cause, as they may not be able to directly see the impact of their contributions.

LITERATURE CITED & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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