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## Social Media: An Effective Leadership Tool

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**SOCIAL MEDIA: AN EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP TOOL**

By Major P. TURCOTTE

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) counts over 700 registered social media (SM) sites on various platforms. Effective communication is an important leadership component at both the strategic and tactical level of command. This paper analyses the use of SM by the CAF through the case study of various CAF SM sites. The analysis found that user-generated content and the will of users to interact with each other were two attributes contributing to the attractiveness of SM. It exposed key limitations: SM introduces gender, age and social biases, as well as being a source of online hate and harassment. The analysis revealed that for strategic communications, SM reach allows to effectively connect with a wide audience but is not a substitute to official communication means at the tactical level. It argues that the CAF could improve the effectiveness of their SM utilization by implementing an integrated SM strategy and increasing engagement through interactions and dialogue with users.

## SOCIAL MEDIA: AN EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP TOOL

*“What is interesting is the power and the impact of social media... So we must try to use social media in a good way”*

- Malala Yousafzai, 2014

### INTRODUCTION

In today’s connected and digital landscape, Social Media (SM) have revolutionized the way people communicate, interact and access information.<sup>1</sup> The evolution of mobile device and availability of broadband high-speed internet have both contributed to this phenomenon. Initially a mean to connect people together, SM evolved to become a news source, a marketing tool for businesses, and more recently, a part of the communication strategy of most governments and public administrations.

In the past decade, governments have turned to SM to increase transparency and interaction with citizens.<sup>2</sup> The Government of Canada (GC) has established a significant social media presence, counting almost 900 official GC channels.<sup>3</sup> The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and its subcomponents tally over 700 registered SM sites on more than 10 different SM platforms.<sup>4</sup>

Effective communication is an important leadership tool for commanders in the CAF. At the institutional level, it is critical to mission success, enabling the

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<sup>1</sup>David A. Campbell, Kristina T. Lambright, and Christopher J. Wells, “Looking for Friends, Fans, and Followers? Social Media Use in Public and Nonprofit Human Services,” *Public administration review* 74, 74, no. 5 (2014): 655–63, <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12261>.

<sup>2</sup>Staci M. Zavattaro and Arthur J. Sementelli, “A Critical Examination of Social Media Adoption in Government: Introducing Omnipresence,” *Government information quarterly* 31, 31, no. 2 (2014): 258, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2013.10.007>.

<sup>3</sup>Service Canada, “Social Media,” *Canada.ca*, 7 December 2015, <https://www.canada.ca/en/social.html>.

<sup>4</sup>Derek Clouatre to Philippe Turcotte, “RFI - JCSP 47 Student - Thesis,” 31 December 2020.

“establish[ment] of strategic direction and goals.”<sup>5</sup> At the tactical level, maintaining good internal communication enhances team performance and cooperation.<sup>6</sup> With the recent pandemic and the CAF establishing a work-at-home posture following the activation of Operation LASER<sup>7</sup>, commanders have faced new challenges, especially with regards to communicating with their subordinates.

At the institutional level, the CAF leverages SM for both management communication and public relations. Hallahan et al. describes that the purpose of management communication is “to facilitate the orderly operations of the organization . . . and to supply information needed in day-to-day operations.”<sup>8</sup> The CAF used Facebook and Twitter to broadcast pandemic related information to all CAF personnel, like the Chief-of-Defense Staff (CDS) information letters or the publishing of pandemic related Canadian Forces General Orders (CANFORGEN). This was particularly useful since they are normally only available on the Defence Team Intranet and not readily accessible.<sup>9</sup> With only a small proportion of members, mostly officers, having remote or mobile access to their government e-mail, SM allowed rapid dissemination of critical information to CAF members.

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<sup>5</sup>Department of National Defence, “A-PA-005-000/AP-004, Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Conceptual Foundations” (Kingston, ON: Canadian Defence Academy — Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2005), 48, [http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2013/dn-nd/D2-313-2-2005-eng.pdf](http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2013/dn-nd/D2-313-2-2005-eng.pdf).

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 91.

<sup>7</sup>National Defence, “Operation LASER,” Canada.Ca, 24 November 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/current-operations/laser.html>.

<sup>8</sup>Kirk Hallahan et al., “Defining Strategic Communication,” *International journal of strategic communication* 1, 1, no. 1 (2007): 3–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15531180701285244>.

<sup>9</sup>National Defence, “Canadian Forces General Messages (CANFORGENS),” Canada.Ca, 30 October 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/canforgens.html>.



The CAF also employs SM to meet the strategic communication objectives of public relations, with the purpose “to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with key constituencies,”<sup>10</sup> in this case, the Canadian population. For instance, the CAF used SM to inform the public about the military response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the support provided to civil authorities.<sup>11</sup>

At the unit level, some commanders created or used pre-existing unit-level SM accounts to do the same and posted locally relevant information, while others leveraged private group using SM app tailored for group communication like WhatsApp or Slack, filling the void created by lack of workplace interaction. In the current pandemic context, it is safe to assume that a certain level of tele-work will be maintained for an extended period and efficient communication will remain a challenge in the work environment.

This paper looks at the current employment of SM by the CAF and answers the following question: are SM used effectively by CAF commanders to communicate with personnel at both the strategic and tactical level? In the negative, how can the CAF improve its utilization and maximize the potential of SM? What can the CAF do to improve their use of SM and better achieve their communication objectives?

To be considered effective at the strategic level, CAF use of SM needs to first address the CAF public affair communication priorities and be part of an overarching media strategy. Second, SM communications need to reach the CAF targeted audience, be inclusive, consider diversity, and generate feedback and interactions.

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<sup>10</sup>Hallahan et al., “Defining Strategic Communication,” 6.

<sup>11</sup>Department National Defence, “Military Response to COVID-19,” Canada.Ca, 6 October 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/campaigns/covid-19-military-response.html>.

At the tactical level, SM will be considered effective if it reaches all unit members, facilitates information distribution, and enables members internal communication. SM also need to meet criteria of inclusivity, diversity, and promote respect in the workplace.

With such an established presence on various SM platform, the question is not about using them or not. Drawbacks like operational security, and online intimidation need to be considered and mitigated, while benefits need to be maximized to outweigh the potential side effects.

This paper argues that the use of SM by the CAF at both the strategic and tactical level could be more effective. The research indicates that the use of SM in public administrations presents significant limitations that affect the communication potential as a leadership tool. First, SM are not inclusive as they present gender, age, and racial biases through their design and selective algorithm. Second, SM lack accountability that can lead to misinformation and online harassment. Additionally, SM users lack authority over the platform, limiting control over the way information is presented.

This paper then argues that the CAF communication strategy lacks a SM component that would provide synchronization between the various component and lower level of command, maximizing the effect of SM. Lastly, this paper argues that the unidirectional use of SM by the CAF negates the benefits of feedback and interaction provided by SM platforms.

The case study will show how the CAF use of SM addresses communication priorities set by the Department of National Defence (DND) and that some platforms like Facebook and Twitter provide an effective communication channel, reaching a

considerable proportion of the Canadian population. It will also show that at the tactical level, online social service platforms like Facebook do not reach all members of a unit and should not be considered a substitute to official communication means.

The paper is broken down in four chapters. In the first chapter, communication as an essential component of the CAF leadership framework is explained, as well as the importance of effective communication at both the strategic and tactical level. This section also lays and explains DND's communication priorities.

In the second chapter, social media is defined and broken down into its main attributes: interaction with user-generated content, accessibility, multi-functionality, relationship enabler and borderless audience. The factors contributing to the attractiveness of SM and the performance measurement metrics are explained. Finally, this chapter provides a description and an overview of the evolution of the main SM platforms currently used by the CAF. This will highlight the role, attributes, and audience of the various platform. It will also expose some critical limitations which should be considered when selecting a SM platform.

In the third chapter, a case study of the CAF utilization of SM as a method of strategic and tactical communication is presented. Using analytic data and a sample of publications, I will analyze the performance and use of the main CAF Facebook account, the Canadian Army (CA) Instagram and the JCSP47 Facebook site. I will also look at how the CAF uses the other SM platforms, like YouTube, to engage with the Canadian population and the members of the CAF. The result of this analysis will yield recommendations on how strategic and tactical CAF commanders can benefit from SM to connect with their intended audience.

The last chapter presents the findings of the research project. The limitations of SM as a communication channel for public administrations and government agencies like DND are discussed. This section presents the argument that the unidirectional use of SM by the CAF and lack of overarching SM strategy does not leverage the reach, interaction, and feedback potential of SM. It concludes that SM use by the CAF has the potential to become effective when combined with other communication means.

## CHAPTER 1: COMMUNICATION AND LEADERSHIP

### Strategic communication tool (Looking Outward)

For this research, two components of CAF strategic communication are taken into consideration: public affairs and internal strategic communications. DND defines *national public affairs* as “activities designed to inform the public about government decisions related to DND and/or CAF policies, programs, services, activities and/or operations.”<sup>12</sup> There is a requirement to inform the Canadian population about the CAF’s mandate, its operations both nationally and abroad, its people and public funds expenditures.

DND’s communication department is headed by the Assistant Deputy Minister (Public Affairs) (ADM(PA)) office which counts 283 civilian and military employees. Mandated to “provide communications advice, guidance, services and products in support of the Government and its defence priorities,”<sup>13</sup> its annual budget for fiscal-year 2019-20 was approximately \$32.4 million. The office, located at the National Defence Headquarter in Ottawa, enables close and direct communication with all the CAF commands and the Defence Team.

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<sup>12</sup>Department National Defence, “DAOD 2008-4, Public Affairs, Military Doctrine and Canadian Forces Operations,” Canada.Ca, 13 November 2013, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/2000-series/2008/2008-4-public-affairs-military-doctrine-canadian-forces-operations.html>.

<sup>13</sup>Department National Defence, “Assistant Deputy Minister (Public Affairs),” Canada.Ca, 3 April 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/transition-materials/defence-101/2020/03/defence-101/adm-pa.html>.

ADM(PA) top issues and communication priorities are influenced by Canada's defence policy, *Strong, Secured, Engaged* (SSE)<sup>14</sup> published in 2017. The five issues listed are<sup>15</sup>:

- a) Personnel
- b) Operations
- c) Recruitment, advertising, and attractions
- d) Perception of procurement
- e) Perception of defence spending

As presented in the first chapter of SSE, ADM(PA) highlights its communication challenges relating to personnel as issues about: “transition to civilian life, mental health, . . . sexual misconduct, diversity and inclusion, and hateful conduct”.<sup>16</sup> The CAF has struggled since the war in Afghanistan to vehiculate the mental health services available to members and veterans.<sup>17</sup> SM can be an effective conduit to open the discussion on the matter, demystify post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and increase awareness and understanding of the issues. The same can be said regarding sexual misconduct in the CAF. Operation Honour was the CAF mission created in response to the Deschamps Report<sup>18</sup> to address sexual misconduct in the CAF. The operation, terminated at the start of 2021, had four lines of effort, all of them relying heavily on effective communication throughout the

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<sup>14</sup>*Strong Secure Engaged* (Ottawa, Canada: National Defence, 2017), <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/canada-defence-policy.html>.

<sup>15</sup>Defence, “Assistant Deputy Minister (Public Affairs).”

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Carmen Chai, “Invisible Wounds: If Mental Health Help Is There, Why Aren't Soldiers Getting It?,” Global News, accessed 22 April, 2021, <http://globalnews.ca/invisible-wounds/1254729/invisible-wounds-mental-health-resources-for-canadian-soldiers>.

<sup>18</sup>Marie Deschamps, “External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces” (National Defence and the Canadian Forces, March 2015), <https://deslibris.ca/ID/246420>.

organization.<sup>19</sup> The operation concluded with mixed reviews after both General (retired) Jonathan Vance<sup>20</sup> and his replacement, General Art McDonald, face allegations of sexual misconducts weeks from each other.<sup>21</sup> Following the event, the CAF PA office and chain-of-command has remained relatively quiet in the aftermath and is letting the medias write the narrative of the story.

With regards to CAF operations, the office of ADM(PA) recognizes issues with the lack of information distributed to the Canadian public about the CAF contribution domestically and abroad. Not only is it important to keep the public informed to showcase the organization, but SM, especially Twitter, has also become a major source of open-source intelligence (OSINT) which “has required governments to pay more attention to their own official social media accounts.”<sup>22</sup> Amateurs increasingly report on SM the sightings and actions of military assets. Medias monitors the SM platforms for those reports and then publish stories regarding those events. Ensuring their accuracy and rectifying the information if required is essential to maintain understanding.<sup>23</sup> As Dr. Steven Metz<sup>24</sup> mentions in his paper on the future of strategic leaders, “what matters most is not how

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<sup>19</sup>Department National Defence, “About Operation HONOUR,” Canada.Ca, 9 April 2018, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/benefits-military/conflict-misconduct/operation-honour/about-operation-honour.html>.

<sup>20</sup>Mercedes Stephenson, Marc-Andre Cossette, and Amanda Connolly, “Former Top Soldier Gen. Jonathan Vance Facing Allegations of Inappropriate Behaviour with Female Subordinates: Sources,” Global News, 3 February 2021, <https://globalnews.ca/news/7614063/jonathan-vance-sexual-misconduct-operation-honour/>.

<sup>21</sup>Murray Brewster, “Campaign to End Sexual Harassment in Canadian Armed Forces Shut down | CBC News,” CBC, 24 March 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/operation-honour-closed-down-1.5962978>.

<sup>22</sup>Tony Roper, “Military Use of Social Media Accounts Widens,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review* 33, 33, no. 1 (1 January 2021): no. 1, [https://janes.ihs.com/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=FileName&ItemId=fg\\_3807257&pubabbrev=jir&Edition=2021](https://janes.ihs.com/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=FileName&ItemId=fg_3807257&pubabbrev=jir&Edition=2021).

<sup>23</sup>Steven Metz, “The Future of Strategic Leadership,” *Parameters* 50, 50, no. 2 (2020): 61–67, <https://search-proquest-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/scholarly-journals/future-strategic-leadership/docview/2412999715/se-2?accountid=9867>.

<sup>24</sup>Dr. Steven Metz is a senior research professor at the Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, and nonresident fellow at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft.

many of the enemy are killed or how many targets destroyed but how audiences understand and react to military actions.”<sup>25</sup> SM can play a vital role in shaping the narrative, either positively or negatively. Dr. Metz argues that formal medias are not appropriate anymore to effectively communicate in a world where information is instantaneous and spreads rapidly. Although not the focus of this paper, we can assume that other nations intelligence agency monitors the CAF SM accounts to extract information regarding CAF capabilities and disposition, and operational security (OPSEC) can be a concern.

CAF PA is also playing a significant part in the promotion and recruitment effort. The strategy highlights the difficulty presented by low unemployment rates and the challenges of attracting “qualified and motivated applicants in the 18 to 34 range”.<sup>26</sup> The analysis of the SM account analytic will allow us to verify if that demographic age-group is effectively reached by the platforms used by the CAF. Gender analytic data will also be used to observe the efficiency of SM at reaching women and other under-represented groups.

The fourth and fifth communication priorities for the CAF are to influence the Canadian public on the complex and highly politicized topic of procurement and defence spending. The CAF is currently simultaneously faced with large capital expenditure projects and SM is a useful source of feedback (and critics) that can be used to orient messaging and information gaps.

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<sup>25</sup>Steven Metz, “The Future of Strategic Leadership,” 63.

<sup>26</sup>National Defence, “Assistant Deputy Minister (Public Affairs).”



## Strategic Communication – Looking Inward

The second component of the CAF strategic communication is directed internally, targeting current CAF personnel. The *Leadership in the Canadian Forces – Conceptual Foundations* manual lists the functional responsibilities of Canadian Forces (CF) leaders that contributes to effective leadership from a military point of view. At the institutional level, *Mission Success*, the primary outcome of the CF effectiveness framework (Figure 1-1), is attributable to the leader’s ability to “establish strategic direction and goals.”<sup>27</sup> It is supported by three enabling outcomes: member well-being and commitment, internal integration, and external adaptability.

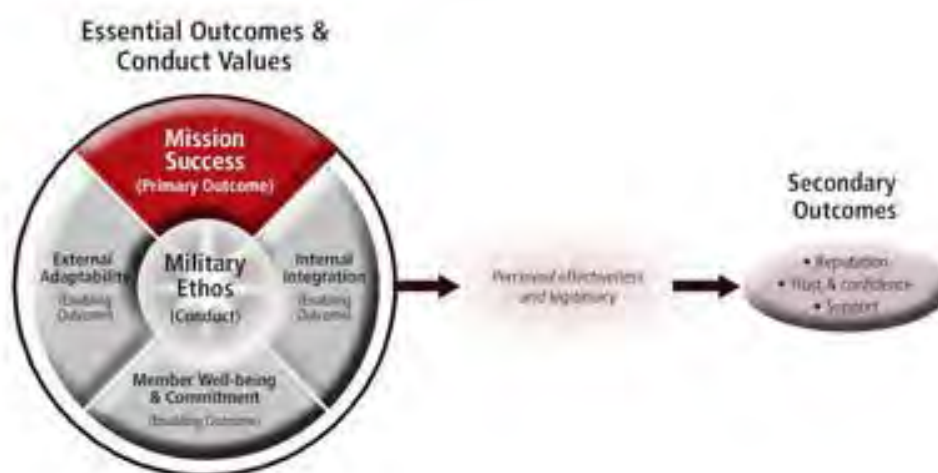


Figure 1-1: CF Effectiveness Framework

Source: Department National Defence, *Leadership in the CF*, 48.

Member well-being impacts various level of the organization and needs to be highly valued. The manual highlights that “serious or chronic dissatisfaction with conditions of

<sup>27</sup>Department National Defence, “A-PA-005-000/AP-004, *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Conceptual Foundations*,” 48.

military service may not only have an adverse effect on performance, ... but is known to erode morale and commitment to serve.”<sup>28</sup> The consequence is increased personnel attrition, increased training cost, and in the end, a tired workforce. Effective communication can improve personnel understanding of the organizational policies and positively affect member well-being. Feedback provided by serving CAF members or veterans on SM can be a valuable source of information to understand the frustrations of members. SM present the potential for the creation of a bilateral communication channel between CAF officials and members.

The ability to accomplish the mission is also attributable to *Internal Integration*, the ability of the leader to coordinate efforts by “integrating recurring practices into a coherent machinery, sharing information and enhancing internal communication to promote a common picture of reality.”<sup>29</sup> It enables the institutional leader to convey his or her intent and interpretation of the mission objectives. It allows subordinate commanders to have a collective understanding of the task at hand, contributing to unity of effort, increasing teamwork and unit cohesion. Although not a publicly available platform, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) has put in place a virtual *Café* where both supervisors and subordinates can discuss policies, share concerns, or propose innovative ideas to increase organizational performance and effectiveness. Providing an outlet like SM where members of the organization can bring their skills, and abilities to the forefront can only contribute positively towards mission success. The platform encourages openness,

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 21.

transparency, and subordinate participation in the discussions. When used in such manner, SM becomes a force multiplier and an enabler.

Traditionally, the CAF strategic message is broadcast through the chain-of-command. Senior officers meet a few times a year to discuss key items and provide directions, and the rest of the communication happens by other means, like one-on-one phone conversation, tele-conference, and e-mails. Subordinate commanders will then distribute the information down the chain-of-command, to the personnel. The information travels vertically from the top-down. Bartels et al. research found that “employees’ identification with the organisation . . . rests more on their appreciation of the communication from and with top management.”<sup>30</sup> Vertical communication allows commander to filter and shape the message at each level, which can be both an advantage and a disadvantage. Some essential elements can be misinterpreted and like the telephone game, the result can be far from the initial message. On the other hand, it does enable each commander to tailor the message to their own personnel, sometimes allowing emphasis to be placed where the unit needs it the most.

At rare occasions, the CDS or the element commanders will visit some of the installations and conduct town-hall meetings, where all the personnel are mandated to attend, gathers in a large auditorium or aircraft hangar, and the commander communicates directly with everyone at once. These meetings are normally used to discuss personnel related issues, present awards, promotions, and underline some of the work done by the units. A question-and-answer period normally concludes the session. These are often very

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<sup>30</sup>Jos Bartels et al., “Horizontal and Vertical Communication as Determinants of Professional and Organisational Identification,” *Personnel Review* 39, 39, no. 2 (2010): 210–26, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org.cfc.idm.oclc.org/10.1108/00483481011017426>.

informative and appreciated, but only the courageous ones will ask questions, those that are able to get up in front of the crowd and not afraid to ask the commander directly. This type of information distribution is often described as *horizontal communication*. In their research, Bartels et al. argue that “horizontal communication has a positive influence on professional identification.”<sup>31</sup> This type of communication also contributes to team building and cohesion, making personnel feel like they are equals.

We can consider SM as a type of horizontal communication. The message coming from an institutional level account is broadcasted to all recipient simultaneously, without additional level of interpretation. In a comparable way to town-hall meetings, SM offers a way to react to the message, and provide feedback. It can also generate discussions in the same manner. The analysis of the case study will be used to assess if CAF strategic communications using SM effectively allow CAF members engagement, discussion and can positively contribute to professional identification.

### **Tactical communication tool (unit-level internal communications)**

At the tactical level, the same framework applies. External adaptability “is achieved through lateral communications, liaison and the exchange of information.”<sup>32</sup> SM use by unit-level commander can be an effective horizontal communication tool, being mindful that every member of the units need to be reached and understanding the inclusivity and bias limitations of SM platforms.

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 214.

<sup>32</sup>National Defence, “A-PA-005-000/AP-004, Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Conceptual Foundations,” 6.

Lower-level commanders and supervisors “make a direct contribution to effectiveness through the immediate effects they have on people and their performance.”<sup>33</sup> Communications at that level can be direct, unambiguous, and meet objectives that are specific to a unit or group. Effective communication at the unit level contributes to the maintenance of discipline and morale. Through transparency and dialogue, leaders can “enhance individual and collective performance, such as a professional culture and identity, cohesion, [...and improve] human resource programs and services that support members and ensure their fair treatment.”<sup>34</sup> In other words, SM can provide an informal platform to discuss unit specific issues, explain decisions. Using this type of horizontal communications, the commander may appear closer, more approachable, and it may provide an opportunity for some subordinate to directly communicate their concern or ideas to the commander. Adversely, there is little privacy to be expected which is one aspect that would prevent others to engage and interact on a SM platform.

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER 2: SOCIAL MEDIAS

### Definition & characteristics

SM are rather new players in the communication world. Defining *Social Media* is important to understand the unique characteristics of the media and the role they play in today's communication landscape. McCay-Peet and Quan-Haase analyzed and compared several definitions from various scholastic sources, defining SM as follow:

“Social media are web-based services that allow individuals, communities, and organizations to collaborate, connect, interact, and build community by enabling them to create, co-create, modif[y], share, and engage with user-generated content that is easily accessible.”<sup>35</sup>

DND defines the term SM similarly in the Defence Administration Orders and Directives (DAOD) 2008-8 as “a set of web-based tools and services that permit participants with distinct user profiles to create, share and interact with user-generated content, including text, images, videos and audio.”<sup>36</sup> Both definition highlight four main characteristics of SM: interaction, user-generated content, multi-media capacity and accessibility.

SM exist in the online environment, and the interaction occurs using digital technologies and applications.<sup>37</sup> Increase in computing power, rapid expansion of cellular

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<sup>35</sup>Luke Sloan and Anabel Quan-Haase, *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media Research Methods* (London: SAGE Publications, 2017), 709, <http://sk.sagepub.com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/reference/the-sage-handbook-of-social-media-research-methods/i605.xml>.

<sup>36</sup>Department National Defence, “DAOD 2008-8, Official Use of Social Media,” Canada.Ca, 18 September 2018, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/2000-series/2008/2008-official-use-social-media.html#def>.

<sup>37</sup>Chiara Valentini and D. Kruckeberg, “New Media versus Social Media: A Conceptualization of Their Meanings, Uses, and Implications for Public Relations,” *New media and public relations*, 2012, 6.

network, bandwidth, and more importantly, portable devices popularity and accessibility all contributed and enabled SM to occupy the place it does in our life today.

A characteristic that differentiates SM from traditional media is the higher level of interaction. SM “allow continual motivated choice and response by the users [...where] interactivity has developed from a simple reaction possibility to the creation and supply of content.”<sup>38</sup> They provide the user with an opportunity to participate with its own user-generated content in the form of comments or reactions. Wirtz et al. presents social motivation, “the motivation to have social interaction with the respective SM page”<sup>39</sup>, as one the factors contributing to the attractiveness of a SM account. SM enables bi-directional communication between the content creator and the user, exploiting the people’s common interests and motivation towards a topic, organization, person, or brand, but not necessarily a common ideology and opinion. This opportunity to voice one’s opinion is both a strength and weakness of SM, where it sometimes brings the best out of people, but also the worse.

SM platforms are accessible. Although a device with internet connectivity is required to access the services, the process of creating a user account is easy and most of the time, free. The interfaces, either web-based or mobile, are extremely user-friendly and require limited technical knowledge to understand. The most popular platforms rapidly adapt to innovative technologies, medias, and social demands. For instance, through the years, Twitter added pictures and videos to its platform. Instagram, following social

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<sup>38</sup>Denis McQuail, *McQuail’s Mass Communication Theory* (London: SAGE Publications, 2010), [https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/\[SITE\\_ID\]/detail.action?docID=480096](https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/[SITE_ID]/detail.action?docID=480096).

<sup>39</sup>Bernd W. Wirtz et al., “Antecedents and Consequences of Public Administration’s Social Media Website Attractiveness,” *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 86, 86, no. 1 (2020): 41, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852318762310>.

pressure, removed the number of likes in some area of the world to reduce SM induced pressure, especially on younger audience.<sup>40</sup>

Congruent to the rapid evolution of information technologies, especially mobile devices, SM platforms have multiplied, and new functionalities emerged. Koukaras et al. mentions that “along with the rise of the number of SM and their users, the ambiguity of their features rises, too.”<sup>41</sup> For example, Facebook has evolved from an Ivy league university social networking site to a full communication and marketing suite being used daily by millions of individuals, businesses, and government agencies throughout the world.

SM enables the creation of “channels of communication and information for establishing relationships among individuals and organizations.”<sup>42</sup> This is one of the characteristics that is particularly interesting for public administration and government agencies. Using algorithms and powerful search tools, SM platforms link as many users as possible together and make that connection effortless. The information conduit created is instantaneous and can reach a large amount of people without borders. The content becomes available to anyone with a mean to connect and the will to adhere to the media. Traditional medias like television and radio have also embraced SM and made them an integral part of their communication ecosystem. Almost every shows, hosts, or public personalities have a site. This adherence to SM by artists has given thrust to the popularity

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<sup>40</sup>Emily Blackwood, “Instagram Removing Likes,” MacPaw, accessed 12 April 2021, <https://macpaw.com/how-to/instagram-removing-likes>.

<sup>41</sup>Koukaras Paraskevas, Tjortjis Christos, and Rousidis Dimitrios, “Social Media Types: Introducing a Data Driven Taxonomy,” *Computing.Archives for Informatics and Numerical Computation* 102, 102, no. 1 (2020): 295–340, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org.cfc.idm.oclc.org/10.1007/s00607-019-00739-y>.

<sup>42</sup>Valentini and Kruckeberg, “New Media versus Social Media: A Conceptualization of Their Meanings, Uses, and Implications for Public Relations,” 6.



of each platform, with user's following the sites of their favorite singer, actor, or public figure.

The targeted audience of social media is borderless and diverse. The audience ranges from unique individuals, to whole communities, organizations, or businesses. In the context of the CAF and depending on the type of communication, an individual may be any person in the world, a Canadian resident, a CAF member, or a CAF family member. Individuals may belong to a particular age, gender, and ethnic group. Examples of community could be residents of a particular geographic region, CAF members belonging to a specific element (RCAF, Royal Canadian Navy, CA), or a specific unit, like the *Royal 22e Régiment*. Organizations can be different government departments, defence related businesses or non-governmental organization. Understanding and considering these groups are essential for selecting the right SM for the intended communication goal of an organization.

Finally, SM sites have different purposes. Some are designed to entertain (YouTube, TikTok), and some are particularly good to distribute information (Twitter, Facebook). In their research, Gundecha et al. proposed nine types of SM, each with specific characteristics (Figure 2-1).<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Pritam Gundecha and Huan Liu, *Mining Social Media: A Brief Introduction*, New Directions in Informatics, Optimization, Logistics, and Production (INFORMS, 2012), 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.1287/educ.1120.0105>.

Type	Characteristics
Online social networking	Online social networks are Web-based services that allow individuals and communities to connect with real-world friends and acquaintances online. Users interact with each other through status updates, comments, media sharing, messages, etc. (e.g., Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn).
Blogging	A blog is a journal-like website for users, aka bloggers, to contribute textual and multimedia content, arranged in reverse chronological order. Blogs are generally maintained by an individual or by a community (e.g., Huffington Post, Business Insider, Engadget).
Microblogging	Microblogs can be considered same a blogs but with limited content (e.g., Twitter, Tumblr, Plurk).
Wikis	A wiki is a collaborative editing environment that allow multiple users to develop Web pages (e.g., Wikipedia, Wikitravel, Wikihow).
Social news	Social news refers to the sharing and selection of news stories and articles by community of users (e.g., Digg, Slashdot, Reddit).
Social bookmarking	Social bookmarking sites allow users to bookmark Web content for storage, organization, and sharing (e.g., Delicious, StumbleUpon).
Media sharing	Media sharing is an umbrella term that refers to the sharing of variety of media on the Web including video, audio, and photo (e.g., YouTube, Flickr, UstreamTV).
Opinion, reviews, and ratings	The primary function of such sites is to collect and publish user-submitted content in the form of subjective commentary on existing products, services, entertainment, businesses, places, etc. Some of these sites also provide products reviews (e.g., Epinions, Yelp, Cnet).
Answers	These sites provide a platform for users seeking advice, guidance, or knowledge to ask questions. Other users from the community can answer these questions based on previous experiences, personal opinions, or relevent research. Answers are generally judged using ratings and comments (e.g., Yahoo! answers, WikiAnswers).

*Figure 2-1: Characteristics of different types of social media*

Source: Gundecha and Liu, "Mining Social Media: A brief Introduction", 3.

Many SM platforms, like Facebook, have become multipurpose and share characteristics of other types of SM. Classification is possible using the original purpose of the platform, but with time, most get inspired by other newer platform and add features throughout the years. For instance, Facebook, although initially friend and individual focused, has rapidly evolved and now combines the characteristics of social networks, blogs, media sharing, social news, opinion, reviews, and answers. Some sites have

maintained their original purpose and will most likely remain single purpose until being replaced by something newer and better. For instance, YouTube will remain a media sharing platform. It will improve its video and sharing features with time but will remain reliant on other SM platform to increase its affluence. The same can be said with Twitter, where its simple and concise interface has made it renowned.

### **SM attractiveness and performance measurement**

Not all types of SM platforms are suitable for public administrations and government agencies. While there are hundreds of SM sites available, establishing a meaningful presence on a SM platform requires a significant amount of resource, both human and financial.<sup>44</sup> Understanding the purpose, characteristics, features, and audience targeted by each platform is essential to utilize the limited resources at the right place.

In this section, metrics used by most SM platforms and analytic tools are defined. These metrics are key for organizations or businesses to measure the performance of their SM strategy. Depending on the objectives, some metrics will be more important than others. Although the CAF is not a business and is not using SM to generate profits, it is still attempting to use SM to maintain a positive public opinion.

#### **Attractiveness**

As the use of SM in governments and public institutions increases, some researchers have begun to investigate what positively contributes to the attractiveness, or popularity, of a publicly administered SM account. Wirtz et al. determined that the three main factors are: “(1) users wish to get connected to other users, . . . (2) the appeal of its

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<sup>44</sup>Influencer Marketing, “101+ Social Media Sites You Need to Know in 2021,” Influencer Marketing Hub, 9 December 2020, <https://influencermarketinghub.com/social-media-sites/>.

content generated by the public institution as well as (3) by other users.”<sup>45</sup> The first factor relates to the social aspect of SM and is straightforward. Users sharing a common interest, in our case the CAF and the military, will be more likely to exchange and share. For our study, this factor will not be assessed as it is assumed that a user following a CAF SM account is demonstrating that wish by voluntarily subscribing to its content.

The second and third factors are elements of what has been commonly defined as user-generated content. The quality of the content produced by the public institution will directly influence the attractiveness of the page. The content can take different forms and some type of content will generate more interest than other. Publications containing video and images will normally generate more reactions and engagement. Previous research has shown that professionally taken pictures and “high-quality images can improve user engagement on social media posts.”<sup>46</sup> This is particularly important when considering that most people view the content on a small phone screen and that the pictures’ displayed size may be even smaller. Mobile phone makers have made the quality of their built-in cameras the central feature of their newer devices, with some newer phones having two or three different lenses, producing professional-level images. The concept of attractiveness will be used during our analysis to observe if the type and quality of the content contributes to the performance of a SM publication.

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<sup>45</sup>Wirtz et al., “Antecedents and Consequences of Public Administration’s Social Media Website Attractiveness,” 39.

<sup>46</sup>Yiyi Li and Ying Xie, “Is a Picture Worth a Thousand Words? An Empirical Study of Image Content and Social Media Engagement,” *Journal of Marketing Research* 57, 57, no. 1 (2020): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022243719881113>.

## Reach

Understanding the potential reach of SM platforms is useful to shape the communication strategy. There are two types of *reach*: the platform reach, and the SM site reach. The first one varies by platform. It is specifically important to select the right platform for the intended communication strategy. For instance, Tik Tok reaches the younger population, where Facebook may reach a broader spectrum of age. There would be little benefit for a retirement home to buy publicity on TikTok, but an energy drink company would most likely reach their core customers on the platform.

Site reach and impressions are common metrics used to assess brand awareness and evaluate SM impact. These metrics are provided in analytic reports from social media sites. Reach is defined by *Sprout Social*, a marketing company specialized in SM analytic for businesses and industries, as “the potential unique viewers a post could have.”<sup>47</sup> This will include the follower count of the publishing user, as well as the sum of the followers of the accounts that shared the publication, or the followers of the followers.<sup>48</sup> Reach does not mean that users have actually seen a publication or post but they would have the possibility, or as defined, potential to see it. Facebook lists multiple factors potentially affecting page reach like “the quality of the content . . . , time of day and whether people are on Facebook on their mobile phone or computer.” These factors will not be specifically analyzed in our case study but should be considered when building a SM communication strategy.

The reach count provided by analysis tools is estimated and based on assumptions that are unknown to the user of the software and may vary depending on which one is used.

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<sup>47</sup>Jenn Chen, “The Most Important Social Media Metrics to Track,” Sprout Social, 4 August 2020, <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-metrics/>.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

To illustrate the potential reach of SM, I derived a count using a combination of available statistical data.

According to the 2018 Statistics Canada survey, 94% of Canadians have internet access at home and 88% of those people also have a smartphone that they can use to conduct online activities. Combined with data from the Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA), 70% of Canadians have a Facebook account, while 38% have an Instagram account. (Figure 2-2).

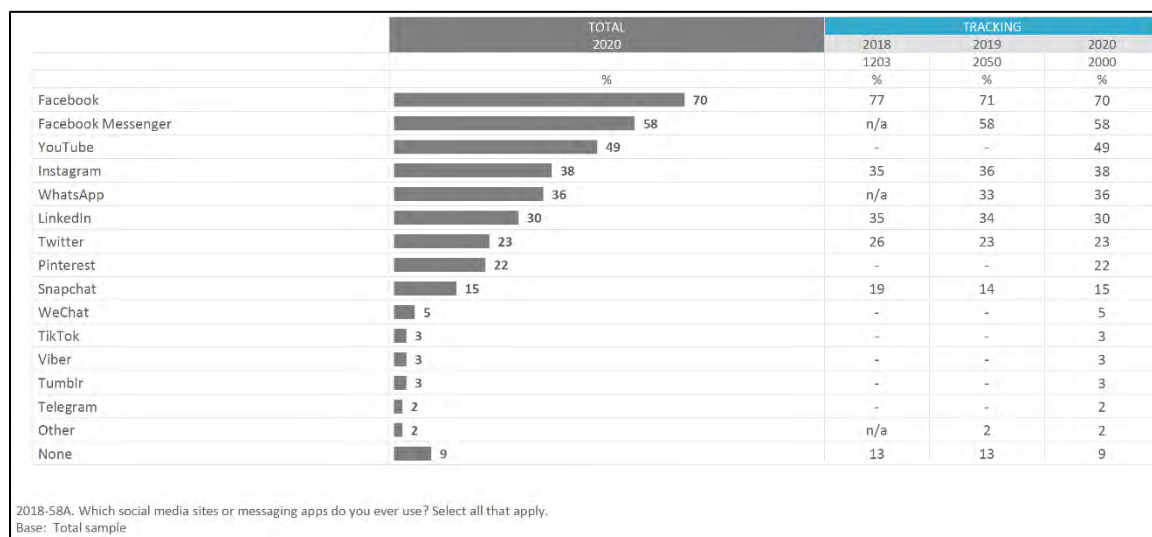


Figure 2-2: Social Media sites used by Canadians (2020)

Source: The strategic counsel, Trends in Internet use and attitudes, 155.

Using the figure for Facebook, it can be concluded that approximately 65% of Canadians use the social network. With an approximate population of 38 million people in Canada<sup>49</sup>, about 24,7 million Canadians are using Facebook, leaving a third of the

<sup>49</sup>Statistics Canada, "Canada's Population Clock (Real-Time Model)," Canada.Ca, 28 January 2021, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2018005-eng.htm>.

population out of reach. The Hootsuite report of January 2021 reports a similar reach percentage of 67,2%.<sup>50</sup>

The report produced annually by CIRA also provides other demographic that can be useful to understand how effective SM can be used to reach a specific audience. For instance, while 99% of the connected population was accessing the Internet with a desktop or laptop computer in 2014, this proportion has been steadily declining to approximately 85% in 2020.<sup>51</sup> In the same period, the percentage of users using smartphones to access the Internet has more than doubled, reaching 72%. When looking specifically at the use of mobile Internet, 90% of the users in the 18-34 age-group, 77% in the 35-54 group, and 53% in the 55+ group use a mobile device to access the Internet.<sup>52</sup> Out of the 1425 Canadians surveyed in 2020 by CIRA, 42% mentioned that social media and e-mail were their most common activity while using their smart phone, followed by instant messaging (31%) and reading the news (23%).<sup>53</sup> Reach will be further looked at in the description of each platform.

## Impressions

To evaluate the result, analysis tools like *Sprout* or the Facebook Page management site provides the number of *Impressions*, defined by Facebook as “the number of times any content from your Page or about your Page entered a person’s screen.”<sup>54</sup> This metric is

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<sup>50</sup>Simon Kemp, “Digital 2021: Global Overview” (Singapore: Kepios, 27 January 2021), 110, <https://datareportal.com>.

<sup>51</sup>The Strategic Counsel, “Trends in Internet Use and Attitudes | Findings from a Survey of Canadian Internet Users,” The Strategic Counsel (Ottawa, Canada: CIRA, 1 April 2020), 6, <https://www.cira.ca/resources/factbook/canadas-internet-factbook-2020>.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>54</sup>Facebook, “What’s the Difference between Page Views, Reach and Impressions on Facebook?”, Facebook.Com, accessed 17 March, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/help/274400362581037>.

particularly useful since it is as close as it can get to know if a person read a post. The fact that it is displayed on the user's screen does not mean that the content has been read and that is where quality images and attention-grabbing headlines are important. Publication containing a lot of text are often only showing the first few lines and additional user input is required to expand the rest of the text.

## Reactions

The most known and visible metric used to measure a post impact is reactions. Facebook introduced the *Like* button, a thumbs up symbol, in 2009, and it has been the only way to react to a post until they added more reactions in 2016.<sup>55</sup> The *Like* reaction expresses supportive and positive feelings and was awkward to use to react adversely to a publication. Research conducted prior to the introduction of additional reactions showed that “negative [text] content has a significant positive effect on sharing but a significant negative impact on liking.”<sup>56</sup> To react to a negative or sad publication, users would need to comment or share. Current reactions from platforms like Facebook and Instagram allows user to express a wider range of emotions in response to a publication. The ability to display one's feeling to a publication with a simple click promotes user's engagement without a significant effort. Reactions will be used in our analysis since they are visible on each publication and do not necessarily require an analytic tool to visualize the effect.

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<sup>55</sup>Facebook, “Company Info,” About Facebook, accessed 25 January 2021, <https://about.fb.com/company-info/>.

<sup>56</sup>Li and Xie, “Is a Picture Worth a Thousand Words? An Empirical Study of Image Content and Social Media Engagement,” 10.



## Engagements

Engagement is a broad term that in the end, combines all the factors that show an interest in an account or publication. For instance, reacting, sharing, clicking an embedded link, or commenting are all contributing to the engagement level of a publication. The engagement data is normally displayed as a rate. The number of engagements is divided by the number of impressions, where a high rate will mean that the audience is responsive to your content.<sup>57</sup> A low engagement rate means that although the impressions may be high, the content is not generating an elevated level of interactions and in turn, low interest.

In summary, reach, impressions, reactions, and engagements need to be analyzed by SM practitioners to measure the performance of their SM account and shape the communication strategy to increase those values, and ultimately obtain a good return on investment (ROI). The metrics provided by the analytic tools are good indicators of the success of a SM campaign, but it must be understood that those metrics and the deductions and interpretation built in marketing firms reports are derived with businesses in mind, where engagement level is normally proportional to the potential revenue. Public administration and businesses do have common objectives, like a good reputation and likeability, but it is not possible to measure a financial profit in public administrations and governments.

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<sup>57</sup>Chen, "The Most Important Social Media Metrics to Track."

## Social Media Platforms

Before getting to the case study, an overview of some of the commonly used social networking platforms will be provided. This overview offers specific knowledge regarding the purpose, characteristics, targeted audience, and user demographic that will contribute to the analysis. For this paper, this will be limited to sites used by the CAF: online social networks (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok), microblogging (Twitter), and media sharing (YouTube). Facebook is covered in depth as it shares attributes with most online social networks, is the most renowned platform and the focus of the case study.

### Facebook

Facebook was launched in 2004 by founders Mark Zuckerberg, Dustin Moskovitz, Chris Hughes and Eduardo Severin.<sup>58</sup> The platform was meant to replace Harvard University's printed school directory and connect university students together in a more interactive way. Each user would create a profile that included their "hometown, their relationship status, contact information and educational backgrounds."<sup>59</sup> Facebook users connect to *friends* and is characterized by the use of the *wall*, where a user could share pictures, and later videos, messages, thoughts, and comments. The platform gained rapid popularity and the network reached 1 million active users by December 1, 2004, less than a year after its creation.<sup>60</sup> From that point on, features were added regularly, Facebook launching its mobile application in April 2006. Initially restricted to students, Facebook opened the network to everyone in September 2006. The network saw its greatest boost

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<sup>58</sup>Facebook, "Company Info."

<sup>59</sup>Brian Jenkins, "Keeping up With Zuck: A Brief History of Facebook Features," *Techniques* 88, 88, no. 8 (2013): 60, <https://search-proquest-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/trade-journals/keeping-up-with-zuck-brief-history-facebook/docview/1466133668/se-2?accountid=9867>.

<sup>60</sup>Facebook, "Company Info."

following the revolutionary creation of the iPhone, by Apple, in 2007.<sup>61</sup> Capitulating on the success of the mobile device, the *Facebook for iPhone* application launched in July 2008. Facebook reached 500 million active users worldwide in 2010.<sup>62</sup> The *Messenger* chat feature was launched in 2011, easing communication between users. It allowed communication between Facebook user on any type of device. The number of active users has continued to grow to reach 2,7 billion users at the end of 2020 (Figure 2-3).

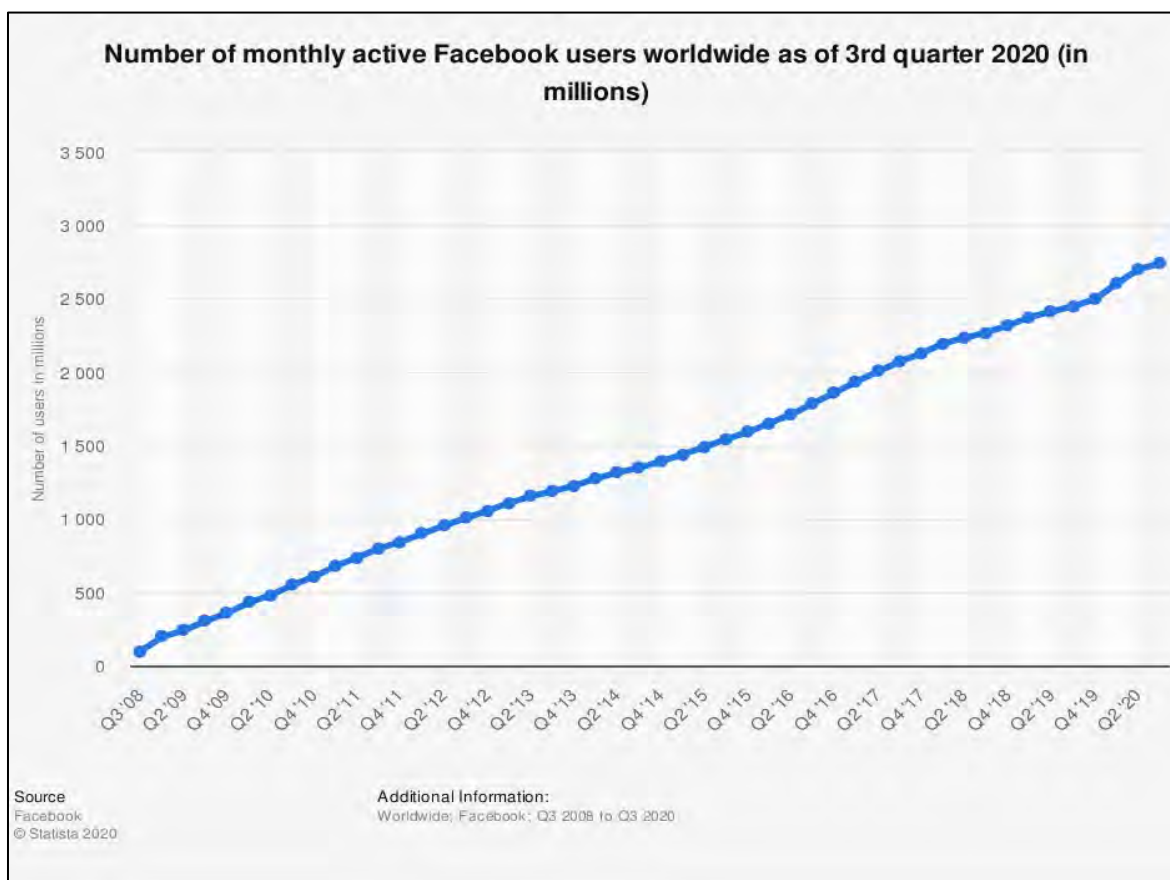


Figure 2-3: Monthly active Facebook users worldwide

Source: Statista, Facebook Monthly Active Users Worldwide 2020.

<sup>61</sup>Apple Inc., “Apple Reinvents the Phone with iPhone,” Apple Newsroom, 9 January 2007, <https://www.apple.com/newsroom/2007/01/09Apple-Reinvents-the-Phone-with-iPhone/>.

<sup>62</sup>Facebook, “Company Info.”

On Facebook, a user can make a publication containing text, photos, and videos. Depending on the privacy level set by the content creator, the publication (user-generated content) will be visible to every Facebook user (public) or only friends (private). Users will see the publication on their personal feed and can then react or comment the publication. The reaction feature is particularly useful to analyze how the users perceived the publication. There are positive quick reactions (Like, Love, Care, Laugh, Wow) and negative reactions (Sad, Angry). Depending on the context of the initial publication, the publisher can seek approval or support depending what reactions it is looking to provoke.

With the expansion of its service to businesses in 2008, Facebook provided brands the ability to create their own profile page and reach in this immense pool of users.<sup>63</sup> It is from that moment that the marketing power of SM was unleashed. Facebook has been the pioneer in developing ways for business to specifically reach the targeted clientele of a brand. When a user creates a profile, Facebook collects various information about the person, like age and gender. The profile management page also offers the user the possibility to input an immense amount of personal information like hometown, education, job history and marital status. This information is not mandatory, but it relies on the user's will to voluntarily share this information and make it available for another user to see. With the evolution of mobile devices, data from built-in phone GPS provides precise geo-localization, and further increased the targeting potential of advertisers. It does raise significant privacy concerns and is an obstacle for many.

Recently, Facebook has added a lot more features, often powered by artificial intelligence (AI) to shape the way the information is displayed. For instance, a post written

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<sup>63</sup>Blueprint, "Infographic: The Evolution of Facebook Advertising," Blueprint, 21 March 2017, <http://blueprintdigital.com/infographic-evolution-facebook-advertising/>.

in the form of a question will be detected as such. Someone simply asking: “what is the best pizza place in Ottawa?”, will see his publication displayed with a map of the area, and replies will be displayed as *Answers*. The publication will also be titled in an attractive manner by the platform, without the author’s intervention. The use of AI and algorithm to detect content type and expected interactions has increased significantly in the last year.

Facebook also serves or has replaced conventional web site for many small businesses and organization. The ease of creating content and the fact that platform is free to use makes it convenient to businesses that could not afford to spend on standard hosting platform and design of web sites.

Facebook targets all age groups with a minimum age to create an account being 13 years old. The main audience is composed of people in the 18-44 years old range but is still well represented in all age groups.<sup>64</sup> Its popularity with older adult keeps growing with time, where teens tend to favor newer platforms like Snapchat and TikTok. Its users’ gender distribution is fairly even (44% female, 56% male).<sup>65</sup>

In sum, Facebook, although originally considered an online networking service, shares characteristics of blogs, social news sites, media sharing platforms, opinion review, and can double as a standard web site.

## Instagram

Instagram was created in 2010 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger as a picture sharing application on iPhone.<sup>66</sup> The aim was to provide a platform which would “improve the ‘mediocre’ appearance of mobile phone photos through filters,”<sup>67</sup> and rapidly share

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<sup>64</sup>Kemp, “Digital 2021: Global Overview,” 107.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 105.

<sup>66</sup>Sloan and Quan-Haase, *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media Research Methods*, 574.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

with friends. The use of filters was embraced by the younger generation of users and the platform capitalized on this feature. User can easily edit, add text, emojis and other effects to their content, increasing its attractiveness. Facebook bought Instagram in 2012 and its popularity grew rapidly, now reaching over 1 billion users<sup>68</sup>. Instagram, with its concept of *Followers* and *Likes*, has been criticized for promoting bullying and abuse, a problem not unique to this platform. “*Likes* have helped to create a generation of young influencers . . . who have made careers out of promoting products on social media. As with regular users, their *Like* totals serve as a sort of pecking order.”<sup>69</sup> The company has since stopped displaying the count publicly in some countries, but the *influencer* concept has kept growing and is now a strong marketing strategy for businesses, which will pay a person with a high *Follower* count to display and promote their brand. For example, a clothing company will associate with an athlete for him to post pictures and videos while wearing the brand and mention it in the captions. Another example are vacation resorts paying *Influencers* to experience their establishment and again, promote the business in their publications. Being owned by Facebook, Instagram now shares a lot of functionalities from its parent, like an algorithm-based feed and both platforms can cross-published automatically. The algorithm “is based on your likelihood to engage” and uses one’s search and messaging history to suggest content.<sup>70</sup> Instagram does not change the format of a

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<sup>68</sup>Facebook, “Company Info.”

<sup>69</sup>Danielle Abril, “Instagram Will Start Killing an Iconic Feature Next Week,” *Fortune*, 8 November 2019, <https://fortune.com/2019/11/08/instagram-hiding-likes-for-u-s-users/>.

<sup>70</sup> Andrew Hutchinson, “Keeping Up with the Algorithms: What You Need to Know About Each Platform’s Sorting System,” *Social Media Today*, March 27, 2018, <https://www.socialmediatoday.com/news/keeping-up-with-the-algorithms-what-you-need-to-know-about-each-platforms/520012/>.

publication according to content type contrary to Facebook. Originality and creativity are key to the attractiveness and popularity of *Instagrammers*.

Instagram user audience is equally split when it comes to gender.<sup>71</sup> Its user base is concentrated in young adults aged 18-34, with a marginal audience above 45.<sup>72</sup> It is an online social service centered on its image and short video clips sharing capability. It also shares the characteristics of blogs.

## YouTube

YouTube is a video sharing platform created in 2005 by co-founders Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim. It was purchased by Google in 2006 for \$1,65 billion.<sup>73</sup> YouTube is currently the 2<sup>nd</sup> most visited website on the internet (after Google.com).<sup>74</sup> YouTube users can upload and share their video for free on the platform and those are accessible by anyone. Unlike most other SM platforms, a user account is not required to view a video, although it is required to post comments. A premium paid account is available to access other features and remove most ads, which are played before or during video playback to generate revenue for content producers. View count provides feedback while the comment section can generate discussion and remains attached to the associated video. The comment section can be disabled by the publisher or YouTube since it has often been the source of hateful remarks.

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<sup>71</sup>Kemp, "Digital 2021: Global Overview," 129.

<sup>72</sup>Kemp, "Digital 2021: Global Overview."

<sup>73</sup>Matt Marshall, "They Did It! YouTube Bought by Google for \$1.65B in Less than Two Years," VentureBeat (Venture Lab, 9 October 2006), <https://venturebeat.com/2006/10/09/they-did-it-youtube-gets-bought-by-google-for-165b-in-less-than-two-years/>.

<sup>74</sup>Alexa Internet, "Youtube.Com Competitive Analysis, Marketing Mix and Traffic," Alexa.Com, accessed 25 January 2021, [https://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/youtube.com#section\\_traffic](https://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/youtube.com#section_traffic).

Again, based on an algorithm, user's viewing habits, and viewing history, a user's homepage will display and offer different content. Popular and trending videos matching the user's interest will show up first and a search engine can be used to find videos on a particular topic.

As of January 2021, more than 2 billion people visits YouTube each month, watching 1 billion hours of video each day. Most users (70%) access the platform via a mobile device.<sup>75</sup> Music and video games are the most popular topics on YouTube. The platform is also a highly used news source with a considerable number of mainstream broadcasters publishing videos, but also many independent news stations, providing an alternate source of information for many viewers. Its capability to stream high-definition content live has become an alternative to traditional TV cable subscription and has given opportunities to channels that are not part of main cable providers to obtain visibility. The Al Jazeera news channel broadcasts live on YouTube and its associated account counts over 7 million subscribers.<sup>76</sup>

YouTube's audience is composed of 54% male and 46% female. It is a prominent platform worldwide and it is the most reaching platform currently available. It has the reported potential to reach almost 90% of the Canadian population.<sup>77</sup>

## Twitter

Twitter was launched in 2007 and was intended as a free short-message service (SMS) where a user's post would be sent via text message or on the web application to his

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<sup>75</sup>Kemp, "Digital 2021: Global Overview," 141.

<sup>76</sup>Al Jazeera, "Al Jazeera English - YouTube," YouTube - Al Jazeera English, accessed 15 April 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/>.

<sup>77</sup>Kemp, "Digital 2021: Global Overview," 143.



followers. A post or publication is called a *Tweet*. It is a short message, capped at 280 characters, and it may include up to 4 images or a video.<sup>78</sup> It gained in popularity in 2009 and “truly established itself as an emerging outlet for the dissemination of information during the . . . Iranian presidential election”<sup>79</sup> of the same year. In the days following the election, it became the voice of the opposition and the only way for the information to reach the world, as Iran banned foreign journalists from covering the riots.<sup>80</sup>

Twitter is also the initiator of the use of hashtags, which consist of the hashtag symbol (#) and a word or sequence of words (without spaces or special characters). They were primarily used to index content on the platform, but quickly became the way to attract attention on a particular topic or make it easy to follow specific events or conversation in a search. A hashtag becoming popular will generate a *trend* and will most likely show on a user’s feed based on the platform’s algorithm and the user’s interests and location.<sup>81</sup>

Twitter is now well-known as United States 45<sup>th</sup> President, Donald Trump, made the platform the center of his communication strategy.<sup>82</sup> It enabled him to speak directly to his citizens, “circumvent[ing] the power of the press, which since at least the days of Richard Nixon, has been increasingly more negative in its coverage of U.S. presidents.”<sup>83</sup> Although President Barack Obama also used the platform, President Trump is the first one

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<sup>78</sup>Twitter, “How to Tweet,” Twitter.Com, accessed 31 January 2021, <https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter/how-to-tweet>.

<sup>79</sup>The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Twitter | History, Description, & Uses,” Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed January 31, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Twitter>.

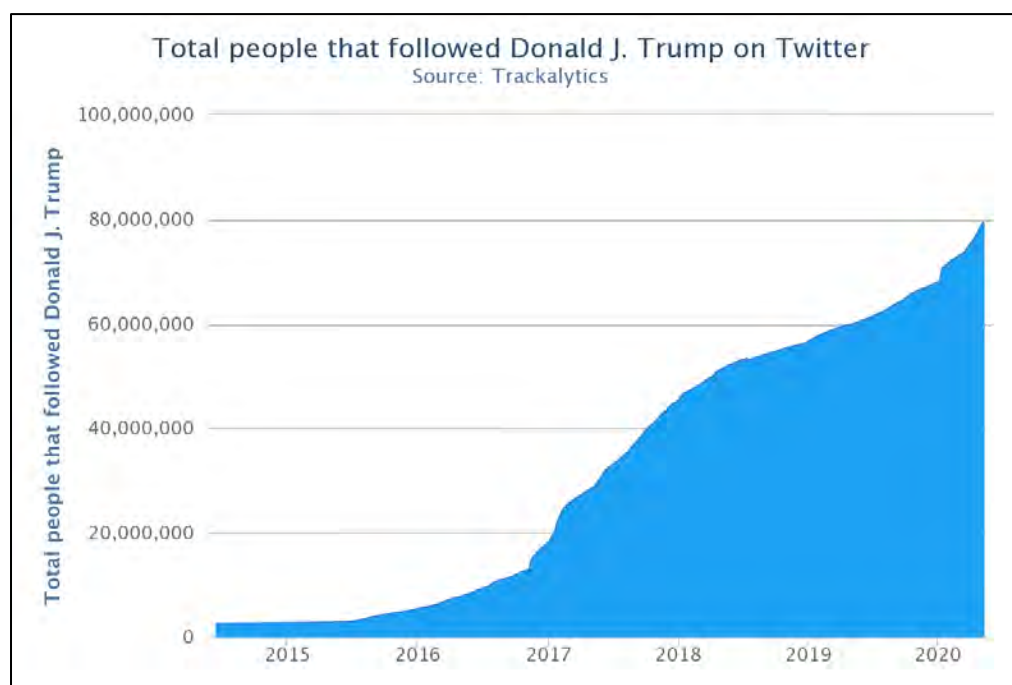
<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Twitter, “Twitter Trends FAQs,” Twitter.Com, accessed 31 January 2021, <https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter/twitter-trending-faqs>.

<sup>82</sup>Yu Ouyang and Richard W. Waterman, *Trump, Twitter, and the American Democracy: Political Communication in the Digital Age* (Cham: Springer International Publishing AG, 2020), 1, <https://link-springer-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/book/10.1007%2F978-3-030-44242-2>.

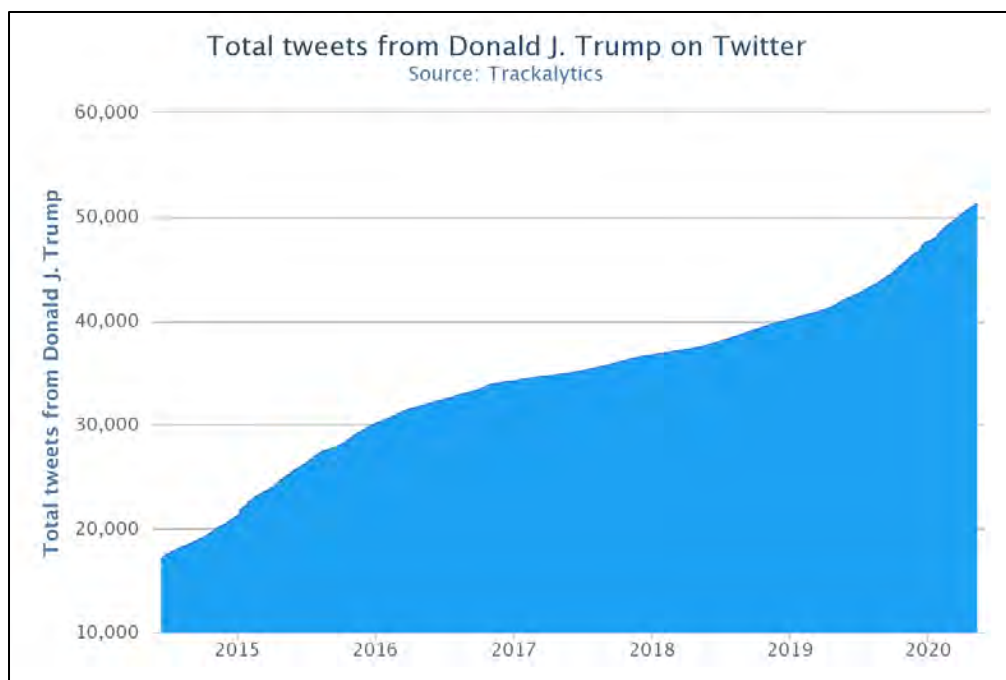
<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 2.

to make Twitter part of his political strategy. Before his announcement as presidential candidate for the 2016 election, he counted slightly less than 3 million followers (Figure 2-4). During the campaign and up to his election in November 2016, the count reached approximately 13 million. He published roughly 8,000 tweets during his campaign, and an additional 17,000 during his 4-year presidency (Figure 2-5). He left the Oval Office with just short of 80 million followers. It provided him tremendous reach when considering the re-publication of his messages in traditional medias, as well as other social media platforms.



*Figure 2-4: Total people that followed Donald J. Trump on Twitter*

Source: Trackalytics, Total people that followed Donald J. Trump on Twitter, accessed 12 December 2020.



*Figure 2-5: Total Tweets from Donald J. Trump on Twitter*

Source: Trackalytics, Total Tweets from Donald J. Trump on Twitter, accessed 12 December 2020.

President Obama is currently the most followed person on Twitter (127,7 million followers) followed by singers Justin Bieber, Katy Perry, and Rihanna. President Trump was ranked 6<sup>th</sup> before having his account permanently suspended by Twitter following the 2020 US elections.<sup>84</sup>

According to Hootsuite social media marketing firm, Twitter currently has a potential reach of 353 million people, with about 6,45 million from Canada.<sup>85</sup> An interesting statistic regarding gender distribution is that Twitter's audience is 68,5% composed of male.<sup>86</sup> This could be a factor to consider when using the platform, especially

<sup>84</sup>Kemp, "Digital 2021: Global Overview," 172.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 169.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 167.

if the intent of a communication is to target women. It is also not popular with the 13-17 age group. More than half of the audience is composed of male between 18-49 years old.<sup>87</sup>

## LinkedIn

LinkedIn was launched in 2003 as a social media network designed to connect businesses and professionals.<sup>88</sup> Although the interface is similar to Facebook, the content of the profile is not; with “a structure similar to a résumé, in that users can summarize their career, advertise their particular skills, and list their education and employment history.”<sup>89</sup> It is particularly useful for recruiting. A business can use the platform to advertise their product, but also publish job listings, or search for potential candidates. Instead of friends, users make *connections* and build a professional network. It is a good option to separate work and personal relationship. It is also a useful source of professional news.

It was bought by Microsoft in 2016 and now counts “nearly 740 million members in more than 200 countries.”<sup>90</sup> It has an approximate Canadian reach of 18 million people.<sup>91</sup> While most social networks require the users to be at least 13 years old, LinkedIn minimum age is 18. Of note, approximately 60% of its users are between the age of 25 and 34.<sup>92</sup> The gender distribution is 43% female, and 57% male.

## TikTok

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 168.

<sup>88</sup>LinkedIn, “About LinkedIn,” LinkedIn.Com, accessed 31 January 2021, <https://about.linkedin.com/>.

<sup>89</sup>Erik Gregersen, “LinkedIn | Overview, History, & Facts,” Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed 31 January 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/LinkedIn>.

<sup>90</sup>LinkedIn, “About LinkedIn.”

<sup>91</sup>Kemp, “Digital 2021: Global Overview,” 156.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 155.

TikTok is one of the newer online social service platforms and is rapidly gaining in popularity. Own by the Chinese company *ByteDance*, users publish short 15-second video normally backed by a popular soundtrack. The platform is mostly used by young adults, with TikTok reporting 60 percent of its user being aged between 16 and 24.<sup>93</sup> TikTok displays a feed that is familiar to other platforms' users, "based on user interests and engagement."<sup>94</sup> The application has limited functionality but will most likely see changes soon as it is gaining popularity and challenging Facebook and Instagram at the top of the standing. Many popular businesses have embraced the concept, and the creative and joyful spirit of the application makes it particularly effective at increasing the popularity of a brand.<sup>95</sup> To gain traction, a video needs to be attractive and unique, and the platform promotes originality.

With a younger audience and an even gender distribution, TikTok has become a major SM platform. It may not be well suited for public administrations and governments for information campaigns since it is really entertainment focused. Its specifically younger audience can be an incentive for targeted recruiting.

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<sup>93</sup>Starrene Rhett Rocque, "How TikTok Quickly Became the Breeding Ground for Tomorrow's Pop Stars," *Teen Vogue*, 29 August 2019, <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/tiktok-what-is-it>.

<sup>94</sup>TikTok, "For You | TikTok Help Center," *TikTok.Com*, accessed 31 January 2021, <https://support.tiktok.com/en/getting-started/for-you>.

<sup>95</sup>Rocque, "How TikTok Quickly Became the Breeding Ground for Tomorrow's Pop Stars."

### CHAPTER 3: SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE CAF

With this understanding of SM platforms, this chapter explores the use of SM by the CAF at both the strategic and tactical level. With over 700 sites accounted for by ADM(PA) and counting, this case study covers what should be considered the *flagship* sites.

First, a review of how DND and the CAF regulate the use of SM in the organization will be presented. Then, a study of the CAF's main SM account, the CAF Facebook site, will be conducted with a focus on the CAF communication priorities and the concepts enumerated in Chapter 2: attractiveness, reach, audience, user-generated content, and feedbacks. The CA Instagram account overview will allow us to study an account from a different SM platform that is also one strategic level lower than the CAF one. This case study concludes with a brief review of the CA Twitter, CAF's Pinterest, and YouTube sites.

#### **CAF SM Directive**

SM have not only taken a significant place in people's personal life, but also in the workplace. This requires organization like the CAF to develop policies and guidelines to set boundaries, as well as "better prevent and leverage the benefits of their employee's participation in the social web."<sup>96</sup>

The use of SM in the CAF and DND is regulated through DAOD 2000-8, titled *Official Use of Social Media*. This directive provides guidance to CAF members on the use of social media in an official capacity. It is primarily directed at "level one advisors (L1s),

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<sup>96</sup>Sonja Dreher, "Social Media and the World of Work," *Corporate Communications* 19, 19, no. 4 (2014): 344, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org.cfc.idm.oclc.org/10.1108/CCIJ-10-2013-0087>.

commanders of commands and formations, commanding officers, managers, SM practitioners and public affair (PA) staffs.”<sup>97</sup>

The DAOD differentiates between official, personal, and professional use of social media. *Official use* is defined as the “use of an official social media account by a social media practitioner on behalf of the DND, the CAF, or both”.<sup>98</sup> For example, the CAF Facebook and Instagram are official accounts and managed by staff at ADM(PA) specifically assigned to monitor and publish content on behalf of the respective commands. Those could be considered institutional accounts as well since they cannot be associated with one person but the organization at large. The Twitter account of the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) (@CDS\_Canada\_CEMD) is another example of official use. The content published represents the office of the CDS.

*Personal use* is defined as “use of a personal social media account for a purpose unrelated to professional development or employment.”<sup>99</sup> This is what most people do daily when they consult their SM for entertainment.

Consulting and interacting with work related social media accounts using one’s personal account is considered *professional use of social media*. Additionally, “communication with a professional association, professional networking (e.g., participating in an online conference)”<sup>100</sup> using your personal account is also considered *professional use of SM*. In other words, most CAF members will be considered to make professional use of SM when they consult, leave comment, and interact with the CAF Facebook site.

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<sup>97</sup>Defence, “DAOD 2008-8, Official Use of Social Media.”

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

Although professional and personal use is defined by the DAOD, their usage is not bound by the directive. It means that it is difficult to regulate what members do and say on their personal social media account. At the practical level, could CAF members be held accountable for improper use of SM on a CAF site? The boundary between professional and personal use is blurry and it becomes difficult to separate the private citizen from the military member.<sup>101</sup> There is also lack of clarity on what is considered an official channel. This is not only a problem for governments or the CAF. Identifying the legitimate owner of an account is difficult, hence lots of platforms add the *verified* symbol to help users authenticate the content they are seeing.

In sum, the DAOD provides definitions and limited boundaries, but does not provide guidelines or best practice, nor does it serve an educational purpose on the use of social media in the workplace.

### **CAF Social Media Case Study**

#### CAF Facebook

The *Canadian Armed Forces* (or *Forces armées canadiennes* in French) is the official Facebook page of the CAF. For the context of this research, it fulfills both the public affairs and organizational strategic communication roles. It is currently managed by the social media department at ADM(PA). The CAF Facebook account has been created as a public relation tool in April 2014, initially intended to distribute news releases, media advisories and public service announcements. Combining both the English and French

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<sup>101</sup>Treasury Board Secretariat, “Guidance on Acceptable Network and Device Use,” 30 May 2016, <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=27907&section=html>.



accounts, it is followed by 390,662 people.<sup>102</sup> The page displays the *verified* badge, confirming its authenticity. The *About* section is fully populated, providing the viewer with links to the CAF information webpage (Canada.ca), the CAF recruiting portal (Forces.ca) and the CAF YouTube channel. It also provides the public a way to communicate with the CAF via the Messenger feature.

The CAF Facebook page is available for anyone to view and can be consulted in a comparable way to a conventional website. To comment or use the communication feature, a user needs to have his own personal Facebook account. For a CAF member, this is considered *professional use* of SM. On its own, this feature excludes anyone that is not willing to have a SM account to interact with the content. Since both CAF members and citizen follow the same site, the content also needs to be tailored to both audiences simultaneously. It also means that content targeted specifically at CAF members will see non-members comment and interact with the publications, rendering difficult the task to extract the valuable feedbacks from the less valuable ones. In turns, it reduces the interests of users to engage with the content with more than a reaction since there is little chance of getting feedback from the organization. It also means that it exposes one's opinion to comments from non-military members. In some cases, this can lead to online harassment and hateful comments. In sum, although the site is required to be public and accessible to reach the general population, using the same account for both internal and public affair communications reduces the type and value of the potential user-generated content and interactions.

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<sup>102</sup>Derek Clouatre to Philippe Turcotte, "RFI - JCSP 47 Student - Thesis," 31 December 2020.

To analyze the performance of the account, ADM(PA) relies on the analytic reports generated using tools from the company *Sprout*, specialized in online marketing and branding. The reports provide most of the metrics presented earlier, as well as other marketing statistics that can be valuable to the SM practitioner to increase the visibility or popularity of the content. The graphical representation of the data highlights trends and are useful to understand what type of content or publication is successful. The following graphic displays the impression over a period of 14 days (Figure 3-1).

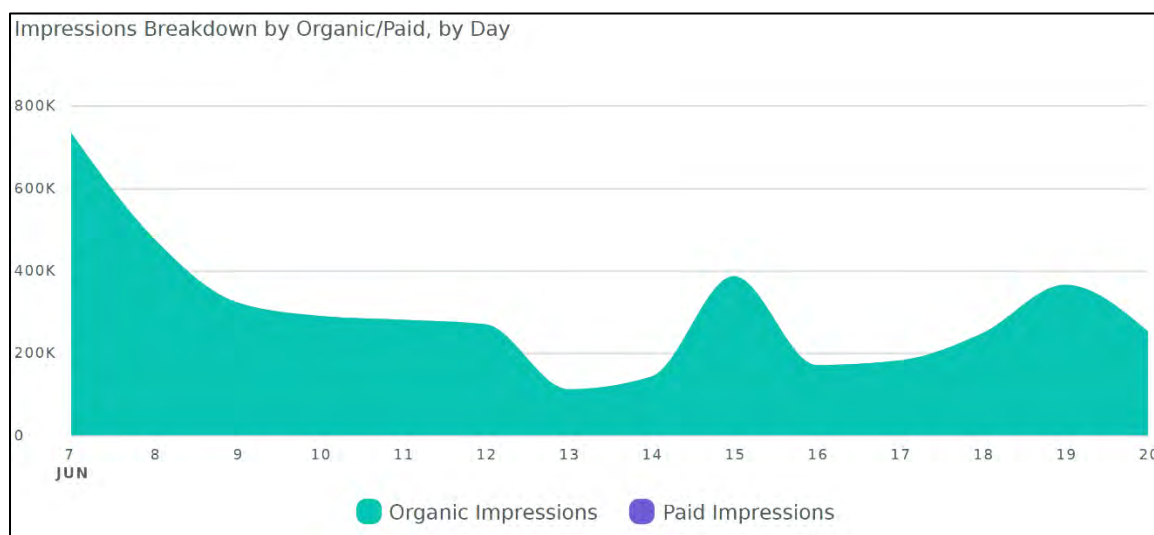


Figure 3-1: CAF Facebook impressions - 7-20 June 2020

Source: Derek Cloutre to Philippe Turcotte, "RFI - JCSP 47 Student - Thesis," 31 December 2020.

The graph depicts a peak of impressions on 7 June 2020, which was associated with Canadian Armed Forces Day. The CAF posted daily between 8-12 June, which are weekdays. There is a dip in impressions on the 13-14 June which is coincident with the weekend and the lack of new posts. The account *cover photo* was changed on 15 June, which generated engagement and increased the daily impressions for that day. The peak of June 19 followed the publication marking Commodore Josée Kurtz taking command of Standing NATO Maritime Group 2.

The report produced by the analysis tool also provides useful demographic information. Using the data reported by ADM(PA) on 20 December 2020, more than a third of the CAF Facebook audience is composed of adults between the age of 25-34 (Figure 3-2).

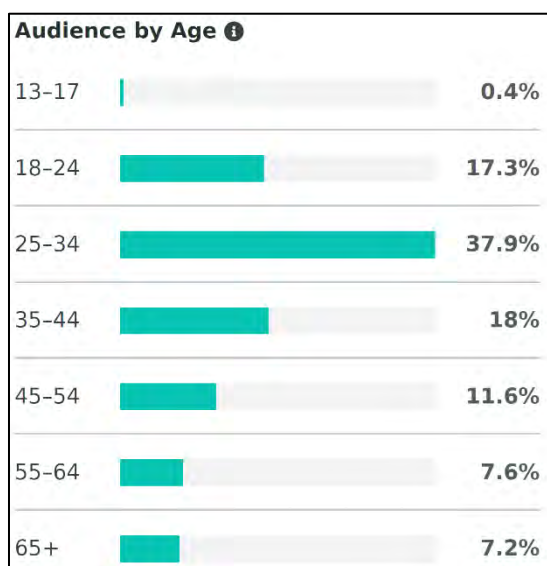


Figure 3-2: CAF Facebook page - Audience by Age

Source: Derek Clouatre to Philippe Turcotte, “RFI - JCSP 47 Student - Thesis,” 31 December 2020.

In all, 73.2% of the audience is composed of adults between 18-44 years old. This is almost identical to the overall Facebook reported audience of 72.3% for that same age group<sup>103</sup>. According to a 2008 Statistics Canada survey, most of the CAF members are between 25-39 years old (51,8%) and an additional 19.3% is 15-24 years old.<sup>104</sup> The proportion corresponds to reported audience by Facebook. The 13-17 years old age group

<sup>103</sup>Kemp, “Digital 2021: Global Overview,” 107.

<sup>104</sup>Jungwee Park, “A Profile of the Canadian Forces,” Perspectives on labour and income 20, 20, no. 3 (2008): 39–52, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/75-001-x/2008107/pdf/10657-eng.pdf?st=YOPBz07j>.

is well under-represented, where Facebook reported only 5,9% of its users belong to that age group.

When looking at the gender distribution of the CAF Facebook audience, two thirds of the followers are men. According to data reported by Facebook, 56% of the platform users are men, meaning that women are generally showing less interest in the CAF site than the men. It does correlate with the lower proportion of women in the CAF. As of February 2020, 16% of the CAF members were women.<sup>105</sup>

It is not possible to know the proportion of followers that are currently serving members of the CAF, meaning that as a strategic communication tool with CAF personnel as the intended audience, its impact on members can only be based on general demographic assumptions. From the data presented previously, Facebook's audience is sufficiently similar to the current CAF age and gender demographic. Combined with the platform's popularity, we can assume that a considerable proportion of CAF members, although they might not be following actively the CAF Facebook account, could have access to its content without having to alter their SM consumption habits.

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<sup>105</sup>Department National Defence, "Recruitment of Women in the Canadian Armed Forces," Canada.Ca, 6 March 2019, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/women-in-the-forces/recruitment-retention.html>.

## CAF Facebook and DND's communication priorities

In this section, a sample of CAF Facebook account's publications that addresses the CAF communication priorities is presented. The analytic data from these publications will indicate if certain topics are more attractive and the level of engagement they generate.

As presented earlier, the first ADM(PA) communication line of effort focuses on personnel related issues. The following post, published in June 2020, informed CAF members about the importance of seeking assistance if suffering from depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Figure 3-3).



*Figure 3-3: CAF Facebook publication about mental health - 15 June 2020*

Source: Jillian Paquette to Philippe Turcotte, "RFI for SM Data - JCSP Thesis," 9 March 2021.

The post appeared on the screen of more than 188,000 people and generated over 15,000 engagements (8.0% engagement rate), which was slightly above the average for that period, but double the rate of the December 2020 period.<sup>106</sup> It generated 82 comments and was shared 762 times. The high number of shares contributed directly to the high number of impressions, demonstrating that the topic does interest the CAF Facebook account followers. The publication combined multiple elements that contributed to the engagement level. It included an eye-catching image, a link that directs the user to the CAF mental health website, and the use of hashtags. Using Facebook for this type of content is particularly relevant. There are limited means for the CAF to engage with retired and released members. It also makes the information visible to family, friends, and relatives of CAF members that may suffer from mental health issues and increases awareness of the public towards this critical issue.

This publication demonstrated other benefits and key concepts of social medias that have been presented earlier, one of which is user-generated content. The comments generated by the community presented a distinct perspective on the issue and generated discussion. Some commented on their own experience with the CAF mental health resources, while some presented alternate ways to get assistance if using the CAF resources was less desirable. There are also comments about *success stories*, possibly influencing a member that suffered a similar experience to ask for help and begin the healing process.<sup>107</sup>

Alternatively, some comments present an opposing and negative perspective. These are important feedback that the institution should capitalize on at various levels. In this

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<sup>106</sup>Jillian Paquette to Philippe Turcotte, “RFI for SM Data - JCSP Thesis,” 9 March, 2021.

<sup>107</sup>Canadian Armed Forces, “Facebook Post,” 15 June 2020, accessed 17 March 2021 <https://www.facebook.com/CanadianForces/posts/2904517826442067>.

case, the SM managers did not reply to any of the comments published, losing the chance to demonstrate that the institution cares and shows empathy towards members and veterans suffering from service-induced mental health issue. Institutional replies to both positive and negative comments demonstrate that the institution pays attention to the SM campaign, cares about users' opinion, and more importantly, can steer the discussion towards the initial communication objective. In this case, the CAF is trying to promote mental health, not highlight errors of the past.

There are also missed opportunities to capitalize and further promote some of the positive comments. Replies from the account administrators or owners will be shown as part of the *Most Relevant* comments, an automated feature that hides potential spam, and automatically expand the comment it is associated with. This brings the attention of the reader towards the comment and the discussion, highlighting the positive or desired strategic effect of the communication.

Another personnel related communication priority relates to the promotion of a diverse and inclusive force. In honor of *Black History Month*, the CAF published a post reminding Canadians of the military contributions of Afro-Canadians and displayed some trailblazers (Figure 3-4).



Figure 3-4: CAF Facebook promoting diversity - 4 February 2021

Source: Jillian Paquette to Philippe Turcotte, "RFI for SM Data - JCSP Thesis," March 9, 2021.

This post was viewed approximately 92,000 times and generated over 4,000 engagements.<sup>108</sup> The vast majority of the comments are positive in nature, highlighting the important contribution of those members and demonstrating support to the CAF. Again, this post was attractive, making effective use of the combination of image, link, and

<sup>108</sup>Jillian Paquette to Philippe Turcotte, "RFI for SM Data - JCSP Thesis," 9 March 2021.



hashtags. The information contained in the post contributes positively to the image of the CAF and meets the strategic communication intent.

Another communication line of effort relates to informing the public on current CAF operations. The following post reached the public by appealing to the Canadian's core values (Figure 3-5).



Figure 3-5: CAF Facebook informing about OP Laser - 20 May 2020

Source: Jillian Paquette to Philippe Turcotte, "RFI for SM Data - JCSP Thesis," 9 March 2021.

The publication was displayed on user's screen more than 116,000 times and generated over 2,300 positive reactions (Like, Love, Care).<sup>109</sup> The use of self-speaking images and hashtag contributed to the high visibility of the post. The post could have included a link to the CAF operation website, which would have provided further opportunities for engagement and access to additional information.

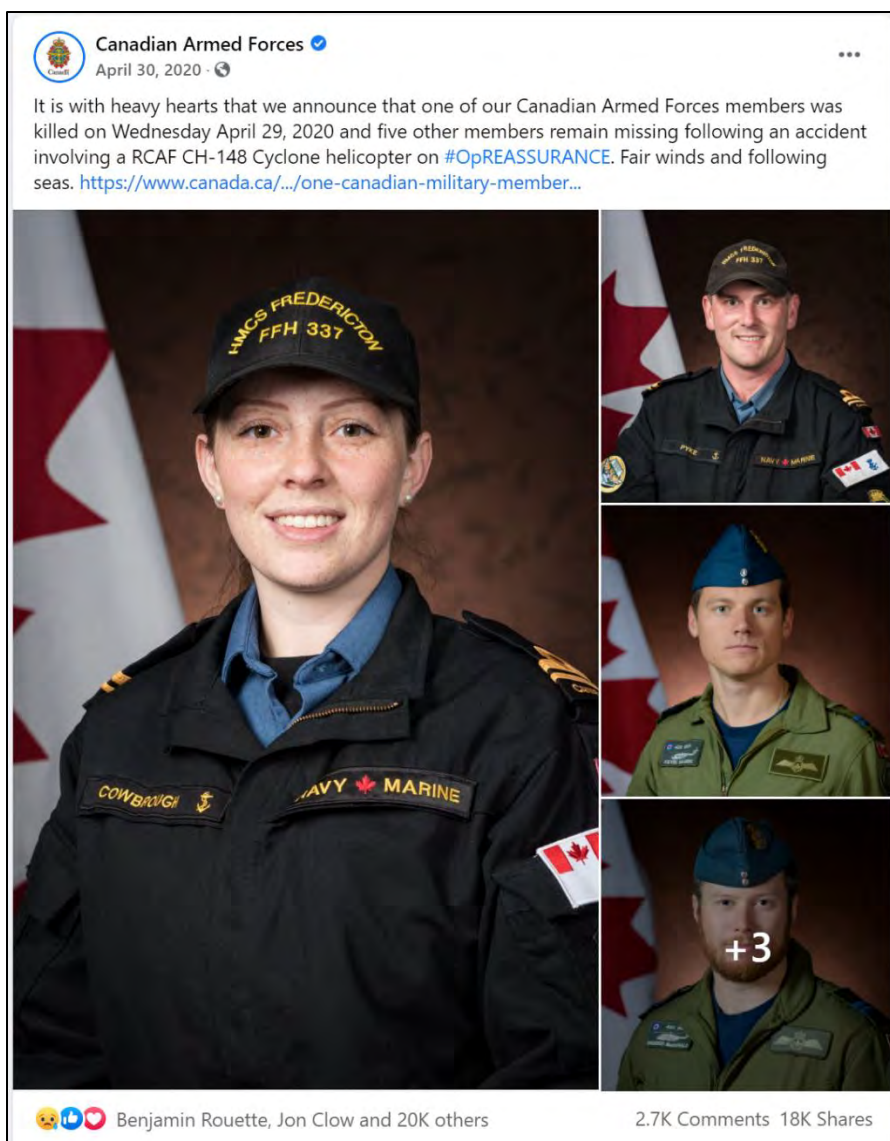
This post, although primarily aimed at informing the public, also has a positive strategic effect on the troops. The post reactions demonstrate the overwhelming public support to the CAF contribution in long-term care facilities and overall assistance to Canadians during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has a secondary effect of increasing the moral of the participating troops by valorizing their work and effort.

There are publications that obviously captivate the attention of the public and generate significant engagement. The loss of six CAF members during a CH-148 Cyclone helicopter crash in April 2020 generated over 3,5 million impressions, almost 1 million engagement and reactions, and was shared over 20,000 times<sup>110</sup> (Figure 3-6).

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<sup>109</sup>Jillian Paquette to Philippe Turcotte, "RFI for SM Data - JCSP Thesis," 9 March 2021.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid.



*Figure 3-6: CAF Facebook personnel losses post - 30 April 2020*

Source: Jillian Paquette to Philippe Turcotte, "RFI for SM Data - JCSP Thesis," 9 March 2021.

Other similar publications always receive popular support and shows the Canadian compassion towards the organization during these tough times. These types of post are informative in nature and in this case, the link displayed takes the user to the official news release which in turn, provides additional information for the public. The discussion generated demonstrate support to the families and to the CAF mission in general. The

statistics issued from this publication contribute to demonstrating the multiplication effect that shares have on impressions, where 91% of the impressions came from other user's account views.

Procurement is another topic where ADM(PA) attempts to increase public awareness. The post that generated the most engagement in the period from 7-20 December 2020, presented the new CAF sniper rifle (Figure 3-7).



*Figure 3-7: CAF Facebook post - 14 December 2020*

Source: Canadian Armed Forces, Facebook Post, accessed 3 March 2020  
<https://www.facebook.com/1522633664630497/posts/3080546698839178/>

Although not as popular as the previous topic, the post generated over 5,200 reactions (Like, Love, Wow), and over 600 shares. Approximately 41,000 users engaged with the post since its publication.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>111</sup> Derek Cloutre to Philippe Turcotte, "RFI - JCSP 47 Student - Thesis," 31 December, 2020

The most popular post ever published on the CAF Facebook page is a Remembrance week CAF video, with Shania Twain’s song *Soldier* as a soundtrack (Figure 3-8).

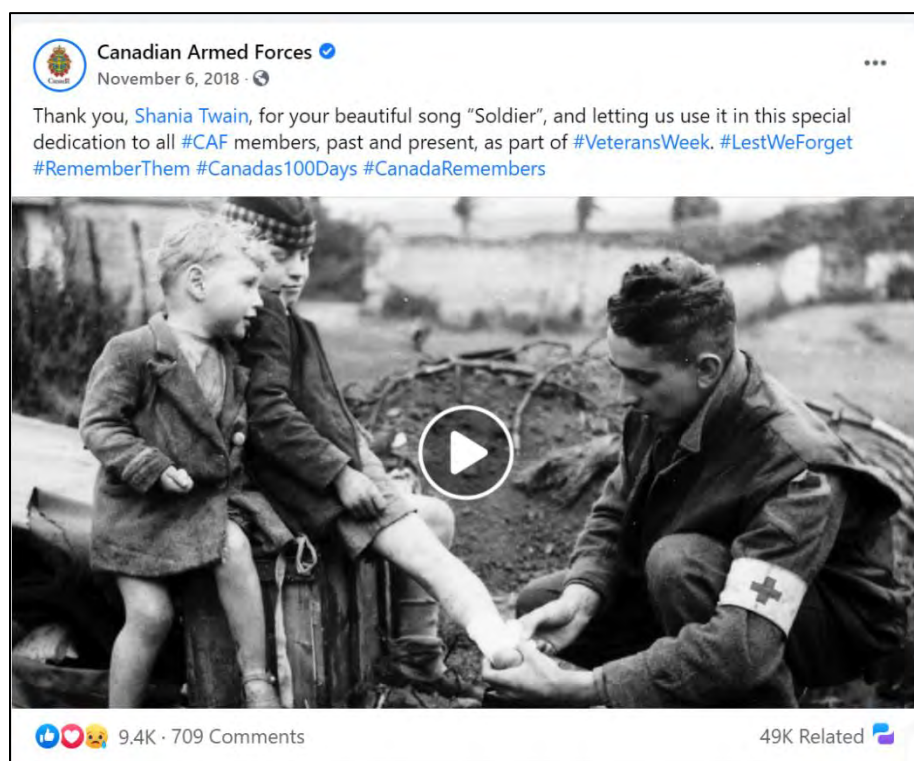


Figure 3-8: CAF Facebook most popular post - 6 November 2020

Source: Jillian Paquette to Philippe Turcotte, “RFI for SM Data - JCSP Thesis,” 9 March 2021.

The publication appeared 5,4 million times on user’s feed, and the video received more than 1,3 million views.<sup>112</sup> The post benefited from the share function, increasing its reach, and making the post visible on many more Facebook pages. It enabled more people to interact with the content, generating discussion about Remembrance Day. This demonstrate that collaborating with a public figure can greatly increase the visibility of publications and reflects positively on the organization.

<sup>112</sup>Jillian Paquette to Philippe Turcotte, “RFI for SM Data - JCSP Thesis,” 9 March 2021

## Canadian Army Instagram

This section will present the analytic data from the CA and Commander of the Canadian Army (CCA) Instagram accounts. These accounts represent one command level lower than the main CAF accounts (L1s) and are considered strategic communication accounts aimed at informing the general population and CAF members about broad CA issues. The CA public affair office manages both account and provided the data presented here. Their report also includes valuable insight that provide a deeper understanding and interpretation of the metrics.

As of December 2020, when combining both the French and English accounts, the CA Instagram counted approximately 91,000 followers. The French account represents 5% of the total followers, and similar engagement levels. The Commander's account is separate and counts slightly more than 3,300 followers. The detailed analytic (Table 3-A), provides further details on the performance of both accounts.

*Table 3-A: Canadian Army Instagram analytics as of December 2020*

	CA English	CA French	CCA (Bilingual)
Followers	86,051	4,888	3,317
Average Post reach	38,650	3,449	1,548
Average Post Likes	4,307	272	227
Average Post Comment	29	2	2
Average Post Shares	115	2	5

Source: Attila Somogyi to Philippe Turcotte, "RFI - RCN, RCAF, CA and MPC Social Media Accounts Analytics," 22

During the year 2020, the CA Instagram account saw a 63% increased in average post reach, which is attributed to a *Photo of the year* contest. To vote for their favorite photo, users had to *Like* the publication, driving the engagement level up. The impressive winning photo was the highest reaching post of the year for the CA account (Figure 3-9). The publication reached over 55,000 people, was liked more than 6,500 times, and commented on 49 times.

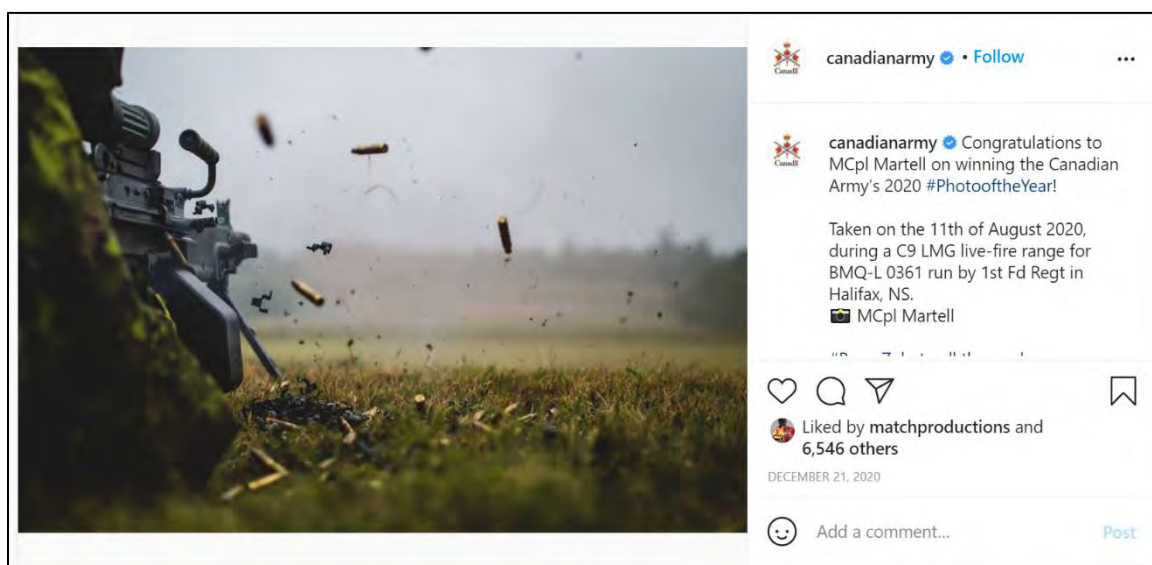


Figure 3-9: @canadianarmy Instagram post - 21 December 2020

Source: Canadian Army, Instagram post 21 December 2020, accessed 24 March 2020

The lowest performing post was a CA year-in-review video that included 9 seconds of static logo and disclaimer. As reported by the CA SM manager in the report, “most followers stopped watching during that time.”<sup>113</sup> Instagram is primarily a mobile phone application and the attention of the user needs to be rapidly captured otherwise the feed is scrolled and the video is no longer in view. The post would most likely not reappear at the

<sup>113</sup>Attila Somogyi to Philippe Turcotte, “RFI - RCN, RCAF, CA and MPC Social Media Accounts Analytics,” 22 January 2021.

next application opening without specifically browsing the CA account due to the algorithm trying to generate an *interesting* feed for the user.

While the CA account saw a rise in affluence, the CCA account saw a significant drop in average reach (-36%) and a similar diminution in engagements during the year 2020.<sup>114</sup> This was explained by the CA SM manager as being due to the way post were written on the account. During that time frame, it was noticed that posts were generic and formal, vice sounding like if they were from the Commander's point of view (Figure 16). In other words, both the CA and CCA account became similar. A recent post on the CCA Instagram account about army recruiting is impersonal and is obviously not written by the commander (Figure 3-10). CAF members following the CCA account expect messaging about key issues and events affecting their employment, while the general population is most likely interested in being informed about army activity, although the CA account should fill this information need.

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<sup>114</sup>Ibid



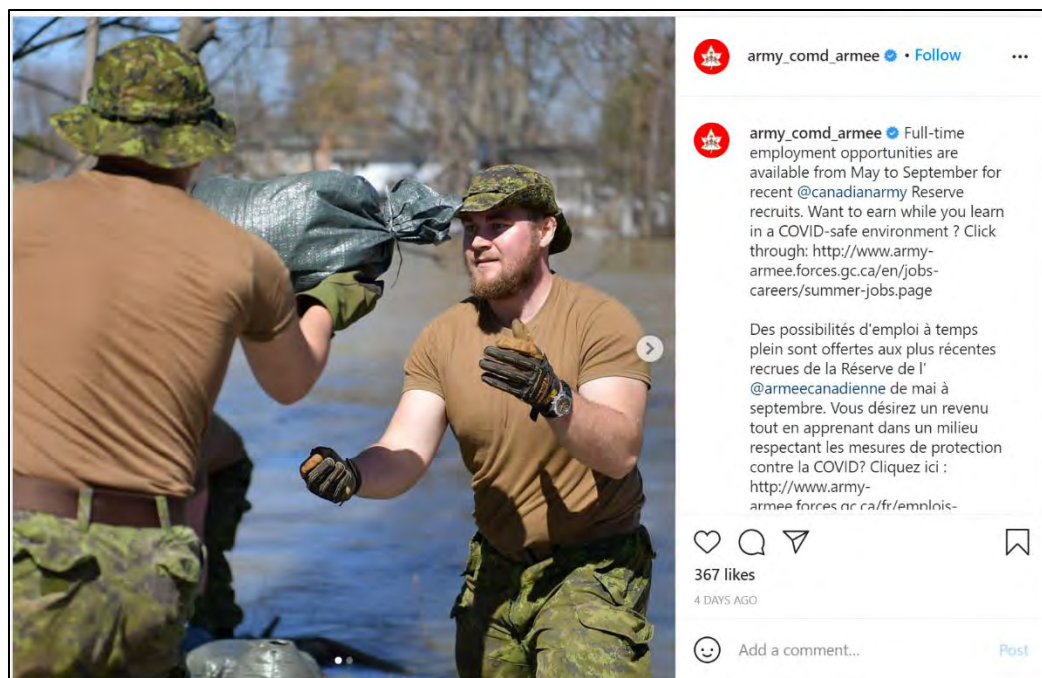


Figure 3-10: @army\_comd\_armee Instagram - 26 March 2020

Source: Canadian Army Commander, Instagram post, accessed 30 March 2021  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CM2sIPTBbPe/>

Another publication from the CCA Instagram account demonstrate the lack of feedback or interaction with followers (Figure 3-11). Although the message pertains to the CA's visit with the troop at the Connaught firing range, a follower asked about the new uniform worn by the CA on the picture. This could have been a good opportunity to inform the troops about the trialed camouflage pattern and get valuable feedback on the subject. Although not all feedback on SM platforms would be useful, engaging in the discussion would show followers that the platform is a way to reach the commander and show that the platform is not unidirectional.

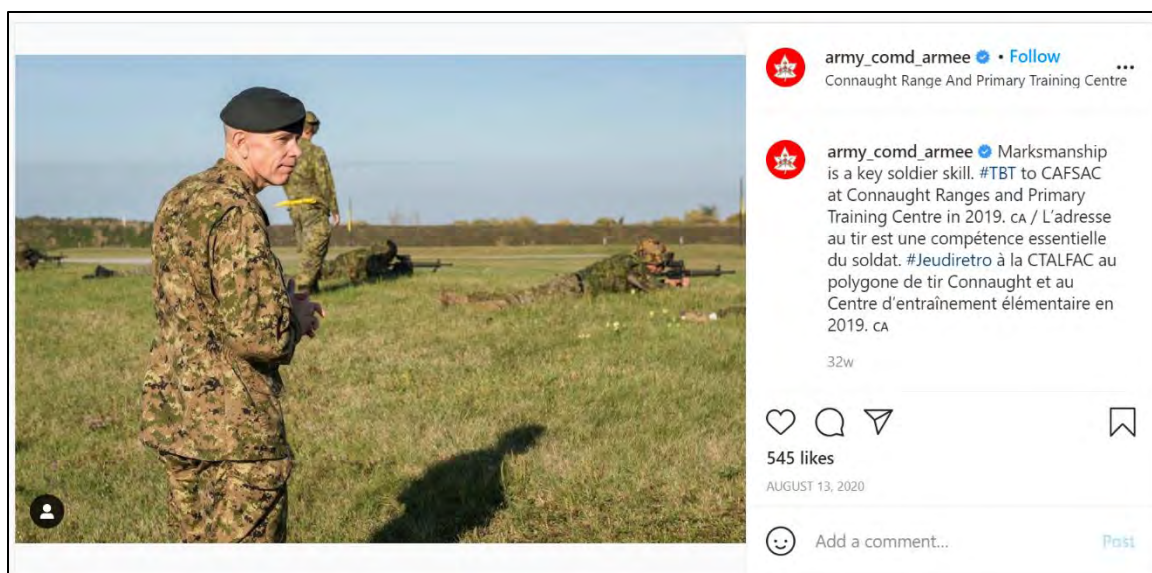


Figure 3-11: @army\_comd\_armee Instagram - 13 August 2020

Source: Canadian Army Commander, Instagram post, accessed 30 March 2021  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CD1Mv3XhGek/>

### CAF Pinterest

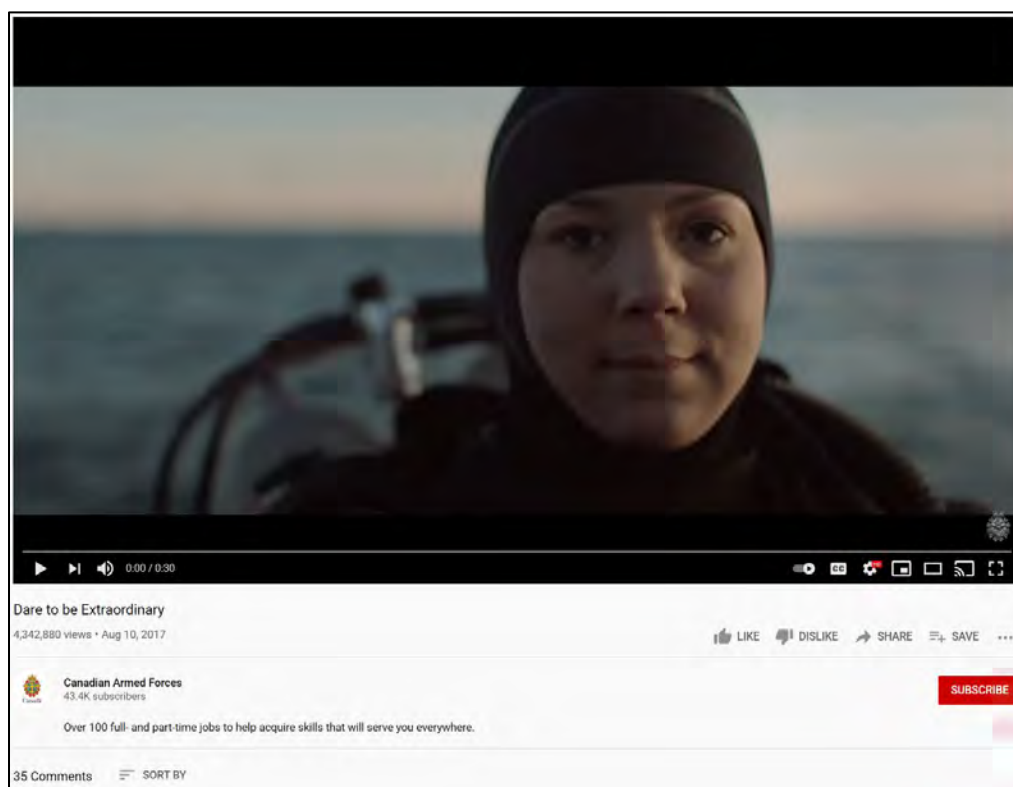
The CAF Pinterest features photos of the Forces, past and present. It counts 1,300 followers. The monthly view count in November 2020 was approximately 25,000, down to 16,000 in April 2021, a reduction of 36% over the 6-month period<sup>115</sup>. The publications observed on the account do not address any specific communication priorities. The platform is not as popular as other platforms, but the fact that three quarter of its audience is female could be considered when trying to reach this demographic. With a desire to increase female presence in the CAF, there could be an incentive to attempt to increase the visibility of the content, but with such a low follower count, its current impact is negligible. Without measures to promote the content, the CAF should consider

<sup>115</sup>Canadian Armed Forces, @CanadaForces Pinterest page, Accessed 21 November 2020, and 23 April 2021.

discontinuing the use of this account and focus on platforms with higher reach and on those that enable more interaction and feedback from users.

### CAF YouTube

The CAF YouTube site was created in December 2009 and counts 43,400 followers.<sup>116</sup> It clearly addresses the main communication priorities of the CAF. The home page is attractive, and videos are sorted by topics which effectively captures the attention of the viewer towards various aspects of the CAF. Some of the recruiting videos were particularly viral, with the most popular counting over 4 million views (Figure 3-12).



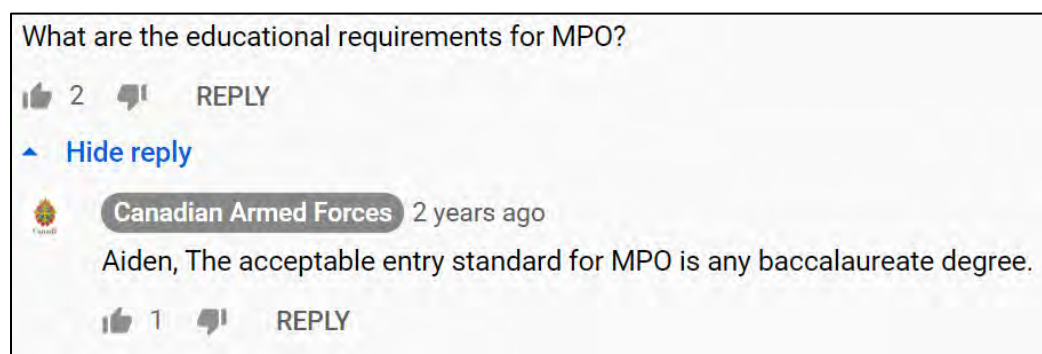
*Figure 3-12: CAF YouTube, Dare to be Extraordinary, accessed 21 April 2021*

Source: Canadian Armed Forces, Canadian Armed Forces YouTube page, accessed 23 April 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=npPdgXTthdg>.

<sup>116</sup>Canadian Armed Forces, Canadian Armed Forces YouTube page, accessed 21 April, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/CanadianArmedForces/about>.

Recruitment videos and those explaining the role of specific trades like cook, military police officer, meteorological technician or weapon technician are particularly useful as they provide users with an inside look into the organization that would not be possible via a paper brochure, or 30 seconds televised advertisement. YouTube is an ideal platform to publish those, with a global audience and high potential reach.

The comment section provides an area for user to ask questions which in some cases, have been answered by a CAF SM practitioner. (Figure 3-13). Unfortunately, after looking at multiple publications, and although some questions have been asked recently, there are no answers dating less than 2 years ago, meaning that the CAF is currently not following up on user's comments on the platform.



*Figure 3-13: YouTube comment answered by CAF*

Source: Canadian Armed Forces, Canadian Forces YouTube, Accessed 27 April 2021

YouTube is also used by the CAF to publish a weekly update on current CAF activities called *Defence Team News*, a prime example of the use of SM for strategic horizontal communication. With 330 clips published since January 2016 and a view count averaging approximately 1,000, these videos are high quality, well edited, and are complementary to the e-mail version available only on the Defence Intranet. These videos

are unidirectional broadcasts as well and it does not seem that the CAF monitors and responds to comments on those publications.

#### JCSP 47 Facebook page

At the tactical level, many units have a Facebook or Instagram account. This level constitutes most of the 700 registered account in the CAF.<sup>117</sup> The *JCSP 47* course members created a Facebook group as a mean to communicate and exchange course relevant information. The group is private, meaning that to view the page, a member needs a personal Facebook account and be invited by the administrator of the site. The group counts 92 members, which is 79% of all the students, which are CAF officers of the rank of Major and Lieutenant-Colonel. This participation level could be considered high, but it highlights critical limitation on using a platform like Facebook for official communications. For this reason, although the initial intent was to have essential information broadcasted, its purpose shifter towards entertainment. With one fifth of the class not receiving the information, alternate means, in this case, a combination of e-mail, Zoom and Microsoft Teams were used.

An interesting feature of the page is an indication below each publication revealing how many participants have viewed a post. By reviewing a sample of publications, most post are seen by an average of 75 members, with only a few ever reaching above 80.<sup>118</sup> This yields an average reach of 65% of all course members. It can be deducted that although

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<sup>117</sup> Formatting...

<sup>118</sup> Canadian Forces College JCSP 47 Class, JCSP 47 Facebook page, accessed 27 March 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2228882887420166>.

a member has joined a SM group, it does not mean he or she is monitoring it and consulting it regularly.

Additionally, after observing the difference in view count between older and more recent publication, it normally takes more than 1 day for the count to reach its maximum value. This demonstrate that although SM media publication are immediately available to be viewed when published, there is a delay that for some time-critical information, could be too long.

This simple overview of a unit level account exposes the limitations of Facebook with regards to audience reach, and ultimately demonstrates that the efficiency of the media for official communications is limited.

## CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION & OBSERVATIONS

The use of SM by the CAF as a public relation tool is undeniable and essential in today's communication landscape.<sup>119</sup> The data presented previously demonstrated that when understood, this type of media has the potential to reach many Canadians. It does present some limits that public administration's SM practitioners need to be aware of. In their study, Feeny and Porumbescu argues that SM platform are exclusive: "they are designed to enable predetermined communities with resources to connect and exchange specific types of information."<sup>120</sup> Although SM are free, a user requires access to a computer or a smart device, as well as internet access. The user also needs to agree to share a certain amount of personal information and accept that his privacy while using the platform is limited. There are a few implications to this concept for the CAF and its members. On one end of the spectrum, the CAF provides ways for its members to access online resources in diverse ways. CAF personnel can access social media platforms using workplace computers, or in various military installations, like messes and Military Family Resource Centres (MFRC). Providing a way to access them does not mean that the personnel will be consulting them. There is anecdotal evidence that many members do not have social media accounts for various reason, like security and privacy. The number of users from the JCSP 47 Facebook group also supports this argument.

SM media are also exclusive in the fact that they introduce gender and age bias depending on what platform is used. Public administrations need to be cautious when

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<sup>119</sup>Michael A. Crumpton, "Accounting for the Cost of Social Media," *The Bottom Line* 27, 27, no. 3 (2014): 96–100, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org.cfc.idm.oclc.org/10.1108/BL-06-2014-0017>.

<sup>120</sup>Mary K Feeny and Gregory Porumbescu, "The Limits of Social Media for Public Administration Research & Practice," *Public administration review*, July 16, 2020, 2, <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13276>.

selecting a SM platform as it “render[s] government accountable only to the population segments social media designers target or the platform’s community.”<sup>121</sup> For instance, Twitter reports that 68,5% of its audience is male<sup>122</sup>, where Pinterest reports that 77,1% of its audience identifies as female.<sup>123</sup> Facebook audience is composed of 44% female and 56% male.<sup>124</sup> On the other hand, Instagram reports almost an even gender distribution.<sup>125</sup> Snapchat favors the younger generation, with almost 60% of its community members between 13 and 24 years old.<sup>126</sup> With 62% of its user aged between 10 and 29 years old<sup>127</sup>, Tik Tok is another platform particularly popular with that generation. Focusing on a specific platform limits the overall reach but can also help to target the message. For example, Pinterest, Facebook, and Instagram should be favored to meet the recruiting effort of women in the CAF.<sup>128</sup>

In this context, SM brings people with similar interests together and create links between people based on their relational status with each other.<sup>129</sup> For example, Facebook will suggest connecting with co-workers, family relatives, classmates, or members of the same gym, often originating from a similar socioeconomic environment. This further limit the diversity of content and opinion presented on one’s SM feed.

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<sup>121</sup>Ibid.

<sup>122</sup>Kemp, “Digital 2021: Global Overview,” 167.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., 175.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., 105.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., 129.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid., 161.

<sup>127</sup>Brandon Doyle, “TikTok Statistics - Everything You Need to Know [Feb 2021 Update],” Wallaroo Media, February 6, 2021, <https://wallaroomedia.com/blog/social-media/tiktok-statistics/>.

<sup>128</sup>Defence, “Recruitment of Women in the Canadian Armed Forces.”

<sup>129</sup>Eun-Mee Kim and Jennifer Ihm, “Online News Sharing in the Face of Mixed Audiences: Context Collapse, Homophily, and Types of Social Media,” null 64, 64, no. 5 (2020): 756–76, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2020.1835429>.



Another challenge of using SM relates to accountability. As Feeney and Porumbescu noticed in their study, “governments struggle to verify user identity, stop harassment, and combat misinformation”<sup>130</sup>. There is ample evidence that support this statement. The Strategic Counsel surveyed 2000 Canadian internet and social media users and 32% of the participant answer that they were “reluctant to use social media or participate in an online discussion because of concerns about online harassment.”<sup>131</sup> Furthermore, 41% of the 18- to 34-year-old surveyed experienced or witnessed harassment online.<sup>132</sup> The proliferation of bots, trolls and fake accounts challenges SM practitioners and renders the task of moderating accounts almost impossible.<sup>133</sup> To counter this phenomenon, Facebook has taken steps to help prevent and mitigate the effect of misinformation on the platform, like adding banners on possible false information, or simplify removing content that has been reported by other users as harmful.<sup>134</sup> But still, harassment and harmful comments are difficult to eliminate and it requires constant monitoring. It is easy to hide behind a SM profile, the internet providing anonymity.<sup>135</sup> Some people unfortunately feel like they can say anything and that others will not be affected.

The nature of SM and the Internet renders the information both instantaneous and persistent, creating another challenge for SM practitioners and account moderators. On the

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<sup>130</sup>Feeney and Porumbescu, “The Limits of Social Media for Public Administration Research & Practice,” 3.

<sup>131</sup>Counsel, “Trends in Internet Use and Attitudes | Findings from a Survey of Canadian Internet Users,” 152.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid., 153.

<sup>133</sup>Feeney and Porumbescu, “The Limits of Social Media for Public Administration Research & Practice,” 3.

<sup>134</sup>Facebook, “Combating Misinformation,” About Facebook, March 25, 2020, <https://about.fb.com/news/tag/misinformation/>.

<sup>135</sup>Jonah Berger, “Beyond Viral: Interpersonal Communication in the Internet Age,” *Psychological Inquiry* 24, 24, no. 4 (2013): 294, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840X.2013.842203>.

publisher side, it is impossible to know when the information will appear and even if it will ever appear on a user's SM feed. If a publication was made in the morning, and the user consults the SM platform late at night, the newer publications may overtake the earlier ones and the user may never see them. This delay was shown in the case study of the JCSP Facebook group. It may result in the user seeing the publication later when there is insufficient recent content to display, and the feed algorithm makes the publication appear on the user's feed. It requires infinite resources to constantly monitor comments, especially when publications are popular and generate a lot of engagement. Therefore, the attention of SM moderators is on the more recent publication, even if older publication may still show and generate engagement.

The information is also persistent as SM publications on most platform does not expire, are archived, appear in search engines, and can be consulted at any time. For example, the CAF Periscope account, although the platform has shut down, is still archived and easily accessible via a search engine query. The information does not mutate and remains unchanged through time and as it gets further distributed.<sup>136</sup> This is favored by the concept of sharing, which takes the original publication and leaves it identical as it proliferates.

Sometimes, SM publication may have unintended consequences. A Twitter publication by then CDS Admiral Art McDonald, aimed at promoting the efforts made by the CAF to improve diversity and inclusion, backfired when the photo chosen showed only white males around the discussion table (Figure 4-1).

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<sup>136</sup>Ibid, 293.



Figure 4-1: @CDS\_Canada\_CEMD Twitter post - 11 February 2021

Source: CAF CDS, Twitter post, accessed 5 March 2021  
[https://publish.twitter.com/?query=https%3A%2F%2Ftwitter.com%2FCDS\\_Canada\\_CEMD%2Fstatus%2F1359743611349438464&widget=Tweet](https://publish.twitter.com/?query=https%3A%2F%2Ftwitter.com%2FCDS_Canada_CEMD%2Fstatus%2F1359743611349438464&widget=Tweet)

The publication immediately generated a lot of reactions and comments highlighting the lack of diversity around the table. Numerous news article then covered the incident, publishing a screenshot of the tweet that will forever remain in news archive.<sup>137</sup> This publication generated an elevated level of engagement and reach. By being retweeted more than 4,000 times, the publication then appeared on the Twitter feed of all the followers of those users, increasing exponentially the reach of the publication. When adding the reach of the news website that published the article, this demonstrates the

<sup>137</sup>David Pugliese, “Military Tweet on Diversity Faces Backlash after It Features Eight White Male Officers,” *The Ottawa Citizen* (Online), 2021, <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/defence-watch/military-tweet-on-diversity-faces-backlash-after-it-features-eight-white-male-officers>.

potential impact of SM. They are now a prominent source of information, highlighting the importance of considering them as an integral part of the communication strategy.

Another challenge is the lack of control and authority on the platform. The content and data are controlled and managed by privately owned companies, with an aim to generate advertisement revenue.<sup>138</sup> To maximize this potential, SM companies like Facebook uses algorithm and AI that will select the content that a user will see based on parameters that the SM practitioner has no control on. For instance, Facebook has made changes to its feed algorithm in 2018 to increase the relevance of the information displayed, favoring friends and family members over paid advertising and businesses.<sup>139</sup> But in the end, there is little transparency from SM companies and “no direct access to social processes”<sup>140</sup> that drives the way SM functions. This secrecy is what provides control and power to the SM platforms.

The technology inherently introduces social bias and may not be impartial to gender issue. Criado-Perez argues that “cultural stereotypes can be found in AI technologies already in widespread use.”<sup>141</sup> Her research has found that the dataset used to train various AI system favored male and that training with such data gaps often led to amplifying the gender bias. With the CAF working hard towards gender equality and diversity, the use of

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<sup>138</sup>Feeney and Porumbescu, “The Limits of Social Media for Public Administration Research & Practice,” 4.

<sup>139</sup>Brent Barnhart, “How the Facebook Algorithm Works and Ways to Outsmart It,” Sprout Social, 3 August 2020, <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/facebook-algorithm/>.

<sup>140</sup>Susanne Krasmann, “The Logic of the Surface: On the Epistemology of Algorithms in Times of Big Data,” null 23, 23, no. 14 (2020): 2099, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2020.1726986>.

<sup>141</sup>Criado Perez Caroline, *Invisible Women : Data Bias in a World Designed for Men* (New York: Abrams Press, 2019), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=2030243&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

social media to enhance the inclusion and engagement of that segment of the population may well be reinforcing the opposite.<sup>142</sup>

In the case of a government organization like the CAF, the intent of using SM is not to extract revenue or increase sale, but to inform and connect with constituents and CAF personnel. Facebook has recently added information and guidance to help government use Facebook more effectively, especially to better target their audience.<sup>143</sup> In the end thought, “government social media accounts are treated the same as any other account and come with no special rights or privileges.”<sup>144</sup>

### **Lack of overarching SM strategy**

The first critic of the CAF SM utilization is the apparent lack of overarching SM communication strategy. The DAOD published by DND is a directive but does not give direction or does it orchestrate the way SM will be used by L1s and SM practitioners. The CAF requires a SM strategy that does not only lay the communication priorities of the department, but also specifies how it will use the different medias, both the social and traditional ones to improve communications with the Canadian public and the serving members of the Defence Team. The case study demonstrated the strong interconnections between traditional and social medias with many articles sourcing their information from SM publications.

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<sup>142</sup>Feeney and Porumbescu, “The Limits of Social Media for Public Administration Research & Practice,” 4.

<sup>143</sup>Facebook, “How to Use Facebook Groups to Connect with Constituents, Voters and Supporters,” 1 July 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/gpa/blog/how-to-use-facebook-groups-to-connect-with-constituents-voters-and-supporters>.

<sup>144</sup>Feeney and Porumbescu, “The Limits of Social Media for Public Administration Research & Practice.”

The CAF does not seem to synchronize the SM strategy between departments and other agencies. The integration of the communication strategy will ensure the consistency of messaging.<sup>145</sup> There is also no recommended or directed way of measuring performance amongst the department, with each L1 producing different reports with different outputs. The Secretariat of the Treasury board does provide all GC agencies with a detailed guide on how to build a departmental SM strategy<sup>146</sup>, but there is no indication from DND and the CAF that they are implementing these guidelines.<sup>147</sup>

The strategy needs to overtly identify the drawbacks of SM like gender and race bias, to then research and implement mitigation measures. Public Service and Procurement Canada (PSPC) is responsible for “developing best practices and tools, including media planning tools, to reach audiences, including Indigenous, ethnocultural and official language minority communities.”<sup>148</sup> A Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) advisor should be dedicated to the SM department to not only monitor daily usage but shape the strategy to promote inclusivity and diversity.

Additionally, the strategy needs to put SM practitioner training at the forefront.<sup>149</sup> From the case study and communications with ADM(PA) during the conduct of the research, it is clear that L1’s SM practitioners possess a good understanding of the basic functionality of various SM platforms and analytic tools, but this knowledge seems to be based more on the practitioner’s personal use of SMs and work experience in the domain of communication. The CA produces a detailed report that includes analysis of

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<sup>145</sup>Sonja Dreher, “Social Media and the World of Work,” *Corporate Communications* 19, 19, no. 4 (2014): 351, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org.cfc.idm.oclc.org/10.1108/CCIJ-10-2013-0087>.

<sup>146</sup>Treasury Board Secretariat, “Directive on the Management of Communication,” *Canada.Ca*, 25 October 2018, <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=30682&section=html>.

<sup>147</sup>Derek Cloutre to Philippe Turcotte, “RFI - JCSP 47 Student - Thesis,” 31 December 2020.

<sup>148</sup>Treasury Board Secretariat, “Directive on the Management of Communication,” 25 October 2018.

<sup>149</sup>Sonja Dreher, “Social Media and the World of Work”, 350.

performance and trends of all the account under their authority. Their interpretation of the data leads to a modification of the publishing methodology to capitalize on what worked and avoid posts that are not generating the level of engagement. The other L1s did not provide interpretation of the data and the use throughout time did not show any change.

### **Lack of feedbacks and interactions to user-generated content**

The CAF does not seem to leverage yet the full potential of various SM platforms. The lack of replies to inquiries from users by CAF SM practitioners negatively affects the attractiveness of the account, which in turn, reduces the strategic communication benefit that it could yield. Users expect a response or a dialogue to take place when commenting on a publication. When users see that there is no response, they lose that will to engage and in the long term, will lose interest and stop paying attention to the content. For example, a Facebook publication by the Military Personnel Command (MPC) posted on 3 March 2021 would have warranted an official response from MPC, but it was provided by another user, in this case, a CAF member. Although the answer seems correct in this case, it is impossible for the person that asked the question to verify its accuracy (Figure 4-2).



*Figure 4-2: MPC Facebook publication comment section - 3 March 2021*

Source: Military Personnel Command, Facebook Post 3 March 2021, – accessed 4 March 2021  
<https://www.facebook.com/milperscom/posts/2904602363153142>

In some way, the fact that another CAF member provided the answer demonstrates the social and interactive power of social media. This concept where one user helps another show that user-generated content and social motivation both contribute to the attractiveness of the SM page.

Conversely, the lack of an official answer could contribute to misinformation and hinder the strategic communication goals. In this case, if the MPC commander's direction is to increase awareness of CAF members responsibility when relocating, ensuring timely and accurate answers to questions would directly contribute. The CAF makes unidirectional use of SM and as such, limits the benefits of using the platform. The fact that a "fire and forget" model is used renders the tool informational at best.

At all levels, there are obstacles to feedback. The lack of communication strategy is one. Without explicit directions from managers, SM practitioners are not in a position to



answer user's question as they are responding on the behalf of the organization. They need to be empowered by the manager to do so, and this requires guidelines and pre-establish directions. This also mean that subject-matter experts need to be dedicating time and resources to monitor and respond to SM inquiries.

Another obstacle is the requirement to employ both official languages when publishing content.<sup>150</sup> The availability of bilingual SM practitioner is limited, and this restricts the number of persons that can be dedicated to the task, or additional translation effort is required, which takes time. As explained earlier, older SM publications are overtaken by newer ones and a delayed response likely renders the interaction pointless.

The fact that most comments are in English also contributes to restricting the will to interact of French or non-English speakers. It is difficult to participate actively to a dialogue in a second language and context can often be lost in translation.

The fear of reprisals, online hate and harassment are also barriers to feedback. Making one's opinion public can impact someone's personal but also professional life. This is particularly applicable in today's military context. There could be significant career implications following the publishing of controversial information on SM. The comment section attached to a Facebook publication by the National Post concerning the allegations of sexual misconduct by Gen Vance is filled with hateful comments towards the plaintiff.<sup>151</sup> Then comes the requirement or responsibility to monitor and moderate social media accounts. Where does the freedom of speech stops and who is ultimately responsible for the content published on the platforms? It becomes challenging for public administrations

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<sup>150</sup>Treasury Board Secretariat, "Directive on the Management of Communication," Canada.Ca, 25 October 2018, <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=30682&section=html>.

<sup>151</sup>National Post, National Post Facebook Post, 23 April 2021, accessed 28 April 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/NationalPost/posts/10159748655809595>

to figure out what can and cannot be said on SM. This also highlights the need for a strategy that stipulates how to respond to hateful content, without falling in the pitfall of also removing negative opinion towards the organization, hence allowing people to disagree or express their opposition to a comment or event.

Finally, there is permanence. Although most platforms allow the user to edit and delete comments, once they have been published, anyone can take a screen capture and re-distribute the information. There are multiple stories of artist or politician who retracts themselves on SM, but once it is out there, it is often too late to take back. The information is also permanent in the cloud. SM content is archived forever and is often retrievable using search engines like Google or the ones embedded on SM platforms.

Although the statistics demonstrate that most likely the majority of CAF member is present on SM, platforms like Facebook and Twitter will never be able to be used as official communication channels. While a town-hall type meeting is mandatory for all personnel of an installation, consulting and following a SM page with a personal account cannot be forced on the member. There will always be a proportion of the members that will refuse to use SM. The lack of control on the platform discussed earlier means that SM are not a substitute to official internal communication like team meetings, direct e-mails, and face-to-face interactions. There is no way for the CAF to guarantee that the message will be displayed on the user's feed, and there is no way to verify if the message is read.

CAF official communications need to be conducted using tools that can confirm distribution, receipt, and if required, a mean to verify the user has read the message. The adoption of the Office 365 collaborative platform by the CAF does meet that requirement, but it is still restricted on personal devices, limiting its use on member's own cell phone.

The publishing of the Defence Team Newsletter via official email, but also as a video on YouTube shows that when combined, the use of traditional and SM medias contributes to reaching the maximum number of members.

At the tactical level, it is easier to promote a unit or squadron account and increase unit followers. Units must research what their members are using and then select one or two platforms that will reach the majority of the members. While not optimal for official communications, SM can be a good moral booster by promoting unit activities and accomplishments. They are also useful to increase the unit visibility and exposure within their local community and contribute to the understanding of the mission by the population.

In the end, the importance of a unit SM strategy is key to leveraging the attributes of interactions and feedback provided by platforms like Facebook. With the option to create private groups, commanders can use the tool to generate discussions on key topics and raise his awareness on issues that are important to his or her people. The coordination of communication is also key to avoid information overflow, where people will lose interest in monitoring multiple means if the same information is repeated on too many platforms. It can also lead to contradicting information if different people manage different platforms. Considering all these variables, updating the SM strategy, and assessing performance at regular intervals will be required to tailor SM utilization, which in turn will maximize the benefits and effects at both the strategic and tactical level.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research paper was to analyze the effectiveness of SM as a strategic and tactical communication tool in the CAF. Communication is an essential component of the CAF leadership framework, contributing to mission success, members well-being and commitment to the organization. SSE highlighted the CAF's communication challenges, especially those related to personnel issues.

This paper found that user-generated content and the will of users to interact with each other were two attributes contributing to the attractiveness of SM. The research showed that some SM platforms reach a wide and global audience, providing an open and alternate platform to traditional medias. It exposed key limitations and drawbacks of SM like gender, age, and social bias, in addition to being a source of online hate and harassment. This paper argued that the CAF unidirectional use of SM does not leverage the benefits of user-generated feedbacks and interactions. It also argued that the lack of an integrated SM strategy in the CAF limits the potential contribution of SM to the overall communication strategy and does not provides leaders the guidance required to employ the medium effectively.

The CAF use of SM could become more effective with the establishment of a coordinated SM strategy that will synchronize efforts but also better define their communication objectives. The development of the strategy should consider developing mitigation measures to address the gender, social, and age biases by including a GBA+ advisor in their communication team. The strategy should address how the organization can benefit from the feedbacks generated by users by establishing procedures to collect,

analyze and generate useful reports to commanders not only on the statistical performance, but on the actual effect of the publications on the targeted audience.

The paper also highlighted the power of SM as a bi-directional communication tool that could enable the institution to open the dialogue on key personal issues like benefits, retention, mental health, sexual harassment, and hateful conducts. The CAF needs to show their receptivity to criticism and SM could be a way to demonstrate the organization's will to listen and take active steps towards improving the institution.

A strategy that will identify the most suited platforms will enable the CAF to focus where maximum effects is achieved. Phasing out unused or under-utilized account and better controlling the number of accounts at all levels would be good steps towards improving the efficiency and quality of SM communications. All these measures require that human and financial resources dedicated to SM communications be maximized.

Future avenues of research should consider surveying the specific use of SM by CAF members, looking at how under-represented groups in the CAF perceive SMs and attempt to identify if attributes specific to military service like rank, unit, element, and experience affects the use of SM by CAF members.

In the end, it is important for today's CAF to maintain and improve their online presence. SMs have taken too much importance in the information landscape to be treated like a second order media and although this research highlighted some drawbacks, military leaders at both the strategic and tactical level can benefit from efficiently using SM, and ultimately, achieve mission success.

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