Digital Photos, Social Media Sharing, and the Office of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

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Abstract

Social media has given Canadians the opportunity to directly connect and share content with each other. Market trends show that users of new digital media prefer to consume and share visual content with celebrity or human interest themes. Finding such visual content is easier when it has been produced and distributed by others. In particular, both traditional news and social media sometimes reproduce digital photo handouts produced by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). These handouts give the PMO an opportunity to feed a stream of positive visuals of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau into online Canadian media platforms. These campaign-style photos promote the prime minister but do little to educate Canadians on civic issues or government business. This creates a situation where the PMO might be diminishing the independence of social media spaces in the pursuit of political goals by reorienting these handouts towards social media-driven consumption. Where are PMO-produced digital photographs of Prime Minister Trudeau reproduced on social media and other non-social media web sites? By addressing this question, I attempt to demonstrate that by providing social media geared towards content sharing with affordable, in-demand digital photo handouts, political actors such as the Trudeau PMO use these platforms as distribution vehicles for their own positive leader-centric visuals. I hypothesize that almost all PMO digital photo handouts are reproduced by individual citizens on social media. However, significant numbers of reproductions on non-social media web sites were discovered under a specific set of circumstances. I highlight these trends that popular handouts follow and use them to construct a "shareability formula" that I suggest maximizes the spread of handouts online if followed. I then discuss the implications of these trends for public discourse on Canadian digital media and the changing dynamics between the PMO, mainstream news media, and a more responsive public.

Table of Contents

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List of Tables and Figures

1. Introduction

Beset by the pressures of a consumer base going digital, many traditional pre-Internet mass media are struggling to keep up with the double-digit growth of their web-based competitors (Mitchell et al., 2015; Mitchell and Holcomb 2016). Meanwhile, new digitally-based media are growing in size and number, particularly on social media platforms. Many of them thrive on aggregating or repackaging content produced by others instead of producing original content in-house (Alterman 2008; Baker 2007; Mitchell and Holcomb 2016). Demand for content online is rising, particularly visual content such as video, pictures, and other graphics such as emoji and image macros (Mitchell et al., 2015). The operators of these new digitally-based media platforms have growing incentives to find digital content they can cheaply access and reproduce as a result of changing demands and the shift towards digital distribution. This demand can be a public relations opportunity for those who can create such digital visuals, such as the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in Canada.

The central question I seek to answer in this thesis is: where are PMO-produced digital photographs of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau reproduced on social media and other non-social media web sites? By addressing this question, I attempt to discover the Internet platforms where these visuals are useful as information subsidies. Political actors, such as the PMO, exploit the need for digital visuals in order to shape their own public images. By providing resource-poor publishers on social media and other online platforms with affordable and in-demand content in the form of photo handouts, actors use these digital platforms as distribution vehicles for their own leader-centric visuals that positively portray the actor. Whether or not these government visuals are used by the people that operate these platforms, if they use them at all, is a topic that deserves study.

Within Canada, these government-produced digital photo handouts can be understood as part of a decades-old trend toward the growing control and politicization of government information and communications. A larger and more powerful PMO has exerted increasing control over what information the government produces and how it is communicated and presented to the public and mainstream media organizations (Ditchburn, 2014: 87-92; Glenn, 2014: 11; Savoie, 1999: 3, 8). The rise of the Internet, among other developments, has strengthened the push to extend control and further politicization at the federal level of government communications (Glenn, 2014: 9; Marland, 2016). This control is exercised to manage relations with the media and defend the government's public image in a permanent campaign waged between elections to maintain the support of constituents (Blumenthal, 1980: 7; Lees-Marshment, 2009: 218; Taras, 1988: 38). Photo handouts, in these circumstances, help governments carry out image-building efforts within this campaign. This is done by attempting to bypass, through the handout, any distortion of the government's intended message or visual impression. The assumption here is that a positive visual of a government official will remain positive, regardless of where it is reproduced or how the media operator republishing the photo attempts to filter or alter its message (Lalancette and Tourigny-Koné, 2017: 269-70, 15; Marland, 2012: 222-23, 2014: 56-57; Taras, 2015: 277-78).

Research has suggested that the PMO of Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper extensively used digital visual handouts as part of such image-building efforts. Campaign-style digital photos and videos were produced by the Harper PMO and distributed through social media and other platforms it operated. Several authors have suggested that these digital visuals were part of a larger attempt to construct a positive image of Harper. The digital visuals were constructed in a way that was more likely to punch through any attempted reinterpretation and

leave an impression on the viewer. Although some researchers have predicted that Justin Trudeau's PMO will adopt many of these image management practices, little research to date has been published on the subject (Lalancette and Tourigny-Koné, 2017: 271; Marland 2014).

Furthermore, photo handouts are thought to be a welcome information subsidy to any media that covers politics as entertainment. The "traditional" news staples of public affairs and court cases are avoided in favour of simpler human interest stories and celebrity gossip that are thought to be more appealing and easier to understand by audiences. Photos that portray politicians the same way celebrities are portrayed can help a government define its own image within a media market that is increasingly oriented towards celebrity stories (Lalancette and Tourigny-Koné, 2017: 260; Street, 2003: 85-86; Underwood, 2001: 101). This is compounded by the possible effect that handouts have on influencing media consumption in the social media age. Photo handouts can take advantage of common browsing habits that draw people towards articles or videos if the link features a person's face (Google, 2014: 49-50). This drives increased traffic that many market-oriented outlets rely on for revenue.

Does it matter if political actors are able to influence what we see, hear or read in the media? It certainly poses issues within the context of the fundamental assumptions of the roles the press plays in a healthy democracy. A free and informative news media is seen by many as crucial to the continued functioning of democracies, helping to enable debate, distribute information to citizens, and be on the lookout for corruption and other social maladies (Fletcher, 2014: 27-29). What are the consequences, then, if media operators try to fulfill these roles when they arguably lose effective control over increasing amounts of the content they publish by reproducing government photos? Individual media organizations have, from time to time, asserted their editorial independence by attempting to subvert the government's intended

message of these photo handouts. These actions have the potential to negate the effects of politicized communications. They could also be figurative rear-guard actions by an institution struggling to salvage or reclaim the traditions and privileges it was previously accustomed to living with (Machiavelli, 2006: 21-22).

In addition to the above challenges posed to traditional news organizations, photo handouts have a likely impact on citizen-operated digital media, particularly social media. Innovations in digital communications give ordinary citizens the ability to reach a wide audience with just a smartphone and an Internet connection. Photo handouts are a convenient content subsidy for these citizen broadcasters, just as they are attractive subsidies for mainstream Canadian media organizations. Social media and the culture surrounding them are geared primarily towards sharing content, rather than creating it. A citizen is incentivized on these platforms to share anything that display's the user's desired self-image or connects her or him with a community or audience. Furthermore, it's expected that popular social media content will inevitably be copied or modified by others on different accounts or web sites (Reeve, 2016: 46-49). Political actors such as the PMO are incentivized to produce content that social media users will want to share with their audiences. The issue at the base of this new sharing-focused relationship is similar to the older relationship between the PMO and mainstream Canadian media institutions. Networks created by the innumerable connections between social media accounts function as public spaces, which are likewise conducive to thriving democracies. Pieces of content circulate through these spaces as they are shared, providing opportunities for discussion and civic participation. Furthermore, the feedback functions of many social media give citizens the ability to render near-instantaneous judgement on anything up for discussion.

The viability of these digital venues for hosting such discourse may be compromised by government efforts to fill them with content favourable to its policy agenda.

To investigate my research question and address these concerns, I conduct a study that identifies digital photo handouts disseminated by PMO-operated social media accounts and other web sites. I identified a small sample of PMO handouts and waited approximately 24 hours so that they could be picked up and reproduced elsewhere on the Internet. I then used a combination of text- and image-based searches alongside associated social media reproduction frequencies to determine how many times each photo was reproduced and where these reproductions occurred. To juxtapose the results of PMO photos with comparable officials, I carried out this procedure with handouts featuring four other Canadian public officials. I hypothesize that most of the reproductions of PMO photo handouts will be found on social media, including social media accounts operated by mainstream media organizations or the content creators they employ. However, I expect the number of reproductions found on non-social media web sites, regardless of the site's purpose or operator, to be negligible. Although photo handouts are reproduced in print as well, I do not hypothesize on print reproduction frequencies, in order to preserve the digital focus of this thesis.

My study yields a number of interesting findings, some of which are in line with my expectations and some which run counter to them. More than 99 per cent of the reproductions of all photo handouts were found on social media. This was true for PMO photo handouts as well as for all other public officials studied for comparison. However, the reproduction of PMO handouts on non-social media web sites was not negligible. They only occurred in a small number of cases where several criteria were met. First, I only saw a significant number of reproductions on non-social media web sites when social media reproductions hit a certain

critical mass, which was somewhere in the high thousands. Such photos were often similar to older handouts that also "went viral." Secondly, the photo must have been released through specific social media geared towards sharing. Handouts disseminated across Facebook and Twitter always got more reproductions than those that sat in a Flickr or Instagram photo gallery. Finally, the photo must have been released to the public through a medium primarily branded with the public image of Trudeau. These trends will be interpreted through existing literature on information management and the political use of photography, which I will now discuss.

2. Literature review

Governments and politicians seeking public approval will usually try to associate themselves with positive images, such as displays of competence, compassion, or patriotism. An August 2016 photo op demonstrates how Canadian politicians can exploit the country's media to get such positive images in front of the eyes of citizens. Right before heading on stage to perform the final show of their most recent tour in Kingston, The Tragically Hip frontman Gord Downie shared a hug in a private moment with Justin Trudeau backstage. A photograph of the embrace almost instantly spread across Canadian social media and the wider Internet to thousands of Canadians (Figure 1). Mainstream Canadian media, recognizing the photo's appeal, republished it in stories reporting on the farewell concert. As the initial emotion subsided, a different discussion around this photo emerged, specifically regarding who produced it. For while media workers were barred from taking photos of the concert, the prime minister's official photographer Adam Scotti had exclusive access to the venue and was able to take the soon-to-be viral photo. Without their own photos of Trudeau's backstage moment, Canadian media had the choice of running the government's own photo handout – essentially a visual press release – or not running anything at all (Andrew-Gee, 2016; Gollom, 2016). That thousands of Canadians on

social media and many mainstream media institutions chose to reproduce the photo regardless demonstrates that many will let the government influence the content of the news they consume.

Figure 1: PMO photo handout of Justin Trudeau and Gord Downie (2016)

Source: Gollom (2016).

At the heart of this decision are the incentives pushing Canadian media to reproduce government photos, and how governments exploit these incentives. Underlying this dynamic is a broader discussion on political power, image management and the use of government resources to maintain the public image of the prime minister. Additionally, social media and the Internet play a transformative role affecting both Canadian media and politics. It is in that political context that relevant scholarship surrounding the PMO's creation and distribution of photo handouts is summarized in the following section.

2.1 Image management in Canadian media and politics

Prominent scholars have suggested that the ability of states – democratic or otherwise – to govern hinges on public opinion (Key, 1961: 3-4; Rousseau, 1999 (1762): 48-49). This recognition of the power of public opinion over state authority was heavily qualified, however. Many of these scholars were skeptical of the ability of the average citizen to find and process the information required for participation in public affairs (Key, 1961: 5). Emblematic of this viewpoint are the post-WWI writings of American commentator Walter Lippmann, who held

that people either have "little time for the affairs of state" (Key, 1961: 5) or have difficulty educating themselves on political issues (Bernays, 2005: 63-64). Instead, he suggested that most people use established stereotypes to quickly and economically make sense of events and information (Lippmann, 1922: 88-90). This approach to public opinion asserts that most people, through their need for visual cues and images as mental aids in processing information, can be vulnerable to suggestion through the media (Goffman, 1959: 1; Key, 1961: 6; Zaller, 1992: 6-7). Meanwhile, newer research on voter behaviour was moving away from older conceptions that tied vote choice to pre-determined factors such as group dynamics, partisanship or demographics. These studies conceded to political campaigns the ability to sway votes through campaign dynamics. They variously suggested that people could be persuaded by issue-based appeals, reassuring symbolic actions or the image of a strong leader (Bartels, 2008: 10; Campbell et al., 1960: 546-47; Clarke et al., 1996: 451; Downs, 1957: 4, 39-43; Edelman, 1976: 73-76, 90-91; Lazarsfeld et al., 1965: xx; Stokes, 1992: 146). Through persuasive propaganda that invokes familiar concepts and images, governments can rule through media campaigns that harness public opinion in support of elite ideas and goals, and more generally by steering debate in an advantageous direction (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962: 948; Bernays, 2005: 63-64). Such image and narrative manipulation within public discourse is central to the strategies of those seeking to manufacture consent in the service of political leaders or policy goals.

In Canada, placating regional interests gradually waned as the dominant approach to politics. In response, image management through media rose as a viable tool for political campaigning and governance. Up until approximately the 1920s, the lack of a pervasive national media and the difficulties of cross-country travel meant that federal campaigns were primarily local affairs (Carty et al., 2000:181-182). They were conducted through a brokerage system

where politicians built winning coalitions through tailored appeals that balanced regional demands (Carty et al., 2000: 14-16, 180-82; Marland and Giasson, 2016: 344). An effective leader, acting as the party's chief broker, held together a network of locally-based party activists with a strong, personalized organization. This network connected the leader directly with these cadres, who would campaign in return for patronage (Carty, 2015: 46; Carty et al., 2000: 15; McCall-Newman, 1983: 17, 38). Demographic shifts and anti-patronage civil service reforms reduced the effectiveness of this brokerage approach. Instead, Canadian politicians began supplementing brokerage strategies with direct appeals, such as advertisements or candidate-created shows broadcast over then-new communications technologies (Carty, 2015: 47, 126; Carty et al., 2000: 182-83). The rise of radio and television increased the political prominence of the party leader within the eyes of the voting public. John Diefenbaker's campaigns in the late 1950s, for instance, made ample use of television appearances in successive campaigns that focused on the Progressive Conservative (PC) party leader (Carty et al., 2000: 183-84). This newfound prominence meant that the leader and the party had to strategically consider and alter the image the leader presented through mass media communications. Image management, for Canadian parties, was consequently part of a greater need to be filled when campaigning. It wasn't enough to just build or alter images of their leaders for the campaign. Parties had to skilfully use these to build easily digestible, pan-Canadian narratives with the party leader at the centre.

Canadian political parties responded to this rising need for skill in mass media communications by hiring from the private sector. They retained advertising professionals who could help them run sophisticated mass media campaigns. Such professionals ran campaigns on the air waves and on camera similarly to how they marketed products and services for their

commercial clients (Bernays, 2005: 65; Boyer, 2015: 16; Blumenthal, 1980: 1-2; Carty, 2015: 47). By combining their expertise with the political needs of their new clients, these practitioners helped Canadian parties leverage public opinion and mass media to better define or redefine their public images and campaign narratives (Boyer, 2015: 16, 53-56, 123; Carty et al., 2000: 183, 198-99; Clarkson, 2005: 15-16, 279). Such image management works by taking advantage of the tendency of citizens to make assumptions about politicians based on visual cues. People wanting to make a good impression on others will want to alter their image, displaying cues that express or evoke desired attributes (Goffman, 1959: 1-4; Lippmann, 1922: 88-90).

The one-to-many advertisements and other messages produced by these professionals also reduced the influence of traditional media gatekeepers such as news editors and announcers. Through simple and direct communications, leaders could more reliably communicate an unfiltered message across entire provinces, regions, or most of Canada. For instance, image consultants would work to market Diefenbaker's populist approach to campaigning, while the Liberals hired an ad agency to cultivate an "Uncle Louis" image for then-incoming PM Louis St-Laurent (Carty et al., 2000: 183; Clarkson, 2005: 15-16; Delacourt, 2016: 31-35). The teams of professionals that helped Diefenbaker and St. Laurent curate these public images thus helped meet the parties' need for pan-Canadian, leader-centric campaign narratives. These professionals did so by constructing images through television appearances and magazine advertisements. Such visuals projected an easy-to-understand message to the viewer while minimizing the opportunities others had to distort or subvert this message. This maximized the chance of leaving a lasting impression on the viewer.

Technological changes also made their mark on how governments, political leaders and citizens interacted with the news around them. The centuries-old monopoly of print ended with

the entry of radio and television. These new technologies raised concerns over how they might be used. Among these concerns arose theories that suggested ways technology is able to determine how societies develop. Marshall McLuhan famously asserted, when he said "the medium is the message," that the impact of a medium is more influential on the people using it than the content the medium is used to transmit (Levinson, 1999: 35). A similar theory, termed technological determinism, ascribes new and changing technologies a near-omnipotent role in shaping society. Other scholars in this field give technology an influential role that depends on sociological and cultural factors. History and ideology are accorded comparatively smaller roles (Paragas and Lin, 2014: 2; Skinner, 1976: 3). Some academics applied technological determinism to media theory, drawing a line between changing media technologies and a concurrent shift from dispassionate coverage of public interest topics to sensationalism and scandal (Ursell, 2001: 175-78). While the degree of this effect is debated among academics in the field, such a shift towards tabloid-style human interest news and gossip would create incentives for journalists to avoid policy-oriented stories in favour of personality-centric stories. Such news coverage would encompass, as will be discussed later, a focus on political leaders as individuals rather than as officials responsible for the country's government.

Early into the era of mass media-driven Canadian politics, we can see how political, social and technological changes sparked a drive towards a new era of mass media campaigning. Throughout these changes, there is one constant: the position of the party leader in Canadian federal politics. The leader's office did not diminish in importance in campaigning. Instead, the main change is that the formula for electoral success began to shift. The necessity of connecting the leader directly to voters rose as the power of brokerage politics waned. This shift was concurrent with the advent of leader-centric mass media campaigning. Making lasting

impressions with voters is important, given that the image of any political candidate sways vote choice regardless of the issues on the table (Bittner, 2011: 1; Johnston et al., 1992: 14; Rosenberg et al., 1986: 119). As we will see, Canadian image management professionals accomplish this by using whatever resources are available, including government resources. This ultimately helps to ensure that the leader as favourable as possible to Canadians through all media he or she appears in.

2.2 Political marketing and the manufacturing of public images

The rise of political marketing research and an emerging conceptualization of the citizen as a consumer was concurrent with the shift towards mass media, image-based campaigning. Through the language and concepts of commercial marketing, academics and practitioners increasingly viewed politics in marketing terms. Citizens became consumers shopping for political products, while parties became businesses competing for the electoral support of these citizen-consumers (Savigny, 2008: 117). Alongside this shift was the importation of marketing, as a concept, from the commercial world to the political world (Lees-Marshment, 2009: 24-28). Just as the act of voting became a transaction, this new literature on political marketing came to talk of candidates selling themselves to the public (Lees-Marshment, 2009: 24-28; Newman, 1999: 36-39). Concepts were coined or retrofitted to facilitate this reconceptualization of politics: politicians were understood to have brands based on their public image, they had to visibly deliver on promises made to consumers, and the policies they proposed were tailored and packaged before presenting them to the media (Blumenthal, 1980, 6-7; Esselment, 2012: 135; Franklin, 2004: 5; Lees-Marshment, 2009: 203-08; Paré and Berger, 2008: 43; Scammell, 2014: 66-73). A Harper PMO photo op that placed large "5%" stickers prominently on TVs at an electronics store is an example of this. The simple and direct imagery of the photo op used "a

strong marketing visual" to clearly demonstrate that the government had delivered on its promised tax cut (Esselment, 2012: 135). By carrying out such strategies through constant one-to-many communications, politicians could leverage all available resources to defend their images, project a position of strong leadership and shore up public support in between election campaigns while governing (Blumenthal, 1980: 6-7; Heffernan, 2006: 583; Lees-Marshment, 2009: 203-08; Scammell, 2014: 66-73; Taras, 1988: 38). Maintaining a positive public image is a common goal found in all of these political marketing concepts.

A subset of this political marketing research concerns itself with the importance of using symbols and images to make emotional connections with citizens and to help establish a positive brand for a candidate (Newman, 1999: 88-93; Scammell, 2014: 69). As stated previously, research in this field posits that voters use images, stereotypes and allegories to easily process new information (Lippmann, 1922: 88-90; O'Shaughnessy, 2004: 49-51; Verser and Wicks, 2006: 179). Political actors, working with this knowledge, have to "search for concrete symbols that serve as information shortcuts...to their position on larger abstract problems" (Popkin, 1991: 49, 102). Doing so gives them a leg up against the lack of incentives many voters have towards investing time in politics: the actor takes images that voters are already familiar with and connects those images to issues (Nimijean, 2014: 179; Popkin, 1991: 102). The Conservatives, for instance, criticized Justin Trudeau with the phrase "nice hair, though" during the 2015 federal election. The phrase was an image-based shortcut the Conservatives used to suggest that Trudeau was photogenic but lacked Harper's policy acumen or governing experience (Clarke et al., 2016: 342; Marland, 2016: 198-99; Thompson, 2016: 216). Some authors suggest that this kind of image and narrative manipulation serves elite interests in maintaining power, defending societal institutions and maintaining support through emotional appeals (Bernays, 2005: 71-74; Ellul,

1973: 74-75; Entman and Rojecki, 1993: 155; Nimijean, 2014: 187-90; O'Shaughnessy, 2004: 38-39, 49-51). Others assert that public images are contested terrain that offers political actors an opportunity to modify, subvert or degrade the images of opponents, and more generally shape public debate (Adatto, 2008: 9; Grabe and Bucy, 2009: 98-100; Zaller, 1998: 112). Whether reality reflects either of these situations, or a combination of both, we can see more clearly how academics and professionals grasped how images can be manipulated into a larger narrative that serves the image management efforts of political actors.

Just as this political marketing research concerned itself with the alteration of images and narratives, so too did those in the field explore how political actors fabricated images outright for the same reasons. Authors, observing public and private image management practices from a commercial advertising viewpoint, began criticizing the flourishing of contrived events designed solely to put a subject or issue into the media. American historian Daniel Boorstin pioneered this direction of research and described contrivances such as photo-ops as "pseudo-events." He saw that advances in image creation and distribution technologies meant that, as audiences demanded more stimulating and exciting content, media were accordingly pushed to cover more and more pseudo-events (Boorstin, 1992: 9-12). This struggle to meet rising consumer demand for media content, particularly visual content such as photos, is an important trend. Through pseudo-events, politicians and governments can use modern image management techniques to campaign for a number of political goals.

One of these goals is to simply retain the attention of citizens. Politicians must compete for attention in a crowded media market. With citizens putting more value into personality, style, and other individual traits when judging politicians, strategists respond by deliberately projecting images of these politicians that respond to these changing demands. This trend leads to the

coverage of politics and politicians in fashions similar to celebrity gossip news. Leaders are promoted as celebrities and political communication is re-imagined as an offshoot of the entertainment industry. A politician's private life is on display and the whole family is brought inside the picture frame. The resulting humanized public image is promoted in celebrity-oriented media (Lalancette and Tourigny-Koné, 2017: 260; Marland, 2016: 91, 412; Seawright, 2013: 170; Street, 2003: 85-86). Media organizations are primed to search for this style of celebritized reporting, and politicians that come across as aloof or out of touch can damage their own public images. A 2006 photo of Harper shaking hands with his son as he dropped him off at school, for instance, was cited by his critics as evidence of his perceived cold and uncaring personality (Marland, 2016: 80). Such an image contrasts sharply with the photo of Trudeau hugging Downie (see Figure 1) and other celebrity-esque photos like it. These images, designed to appeal to this specific consumer demand, are thus necessary in connecting the leader to many media consumers. Image management in this vein involves a celebrity-like political marketing that avoids the unpopular complexities of policy details. In its place is a packaging of the leader that abides by market trends in media towards human interest stories, flashy graphics and sensationalism (Marland, 2016: 91; Small et al., 2014; Underwood, 2001: 101-02, 106-07).

A significant image management technique that political actors have adopted to shape public images is framing, where certain aspects of a subject are highlighted above other aspects. This is usually done to promote an interpretation or narrative regarding the framed subject (Entman, 1993: 52; Grabe and Bucy, 2009: 98). These frames act as cognitive organizers by providing a focal point to organize facts on a topic into a narrative. Through frames, people can conceive of and react to subjects differently, recalling ideas and information emphasized by the frame while overlooking information outside it (Grabe and Bucy, 2009: 98; Popkin, 1991: 81-82,

102). Given the previously-stated importance of how images and narratives can leave lasting impressions on citizens (Grabe and Bucy, 2009: 97-98, 100), political actors are incentivized to fight for control of these frames. Highly visible politicians, such as party leaders, typically act to manage and enhance their images by framing them with desirable themes and ideas through pseudo-events and other campaign communications. Journalists who report on such events, meanwhile, will sometimes try to deconstruct framing efforts, subverting or reinterpreting the images produced in order to try to assert their editorial independence (Comber and Mayne, 1986: 75; Esser, 2008: 423; Grabe and Bucy, 2009: 97-100; Zaller, 1998: 112-13). While the ability to frame an issue in the media can be seen as a measure of success in political communication (Fletcher, 2014: 29), pseudo-events can also backfire by instead highlighting any problems a political actor may have in trying to project them. The famous photo of PC party leader Robert Stanfield fumbling a football, for instance, illustrates how attempts to project a specific image can go wrong by framing the leader with an unwanted attribute. This in turn reinforces the need for politicians to manage the media and protect their own images (Grabe and Bucy, 2009: 85; Heffernan, 2006: 586-87).

2.3 Agenda setting and information subsidies

This struggle for control over how issues and images are framed is, in turn, a way for all actors involved in public discourse to influence its content, direction, and outcomes (Grabe and Bucy, 2009: 132n1; Popkin, 1991: 82). Those acting to influence public debate, in turn, are often doing so to influence the public agenda. This agenda refers to a group of subjects that political actors both inside and outside of government pay close attention to. It is important in how it impacts public policy (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993: 4; Kingdon, 1984: 3). To influence or control it, by directing the attention of media audiences to certain issues and away from others, is to have an

edge in influencing public discourse and opinion and, through this, public policy outcomes (Grabe and Bucy, 2009: 132n1; Kingdon, 1984: 4, 206-08; McCombs and Shaw, 1972: 177; Weaver et al., 1981: 4). Justin Trudeau, for instance, announced a cabinet shuffle ten days before the inauguration of Donald Trump. The Liberal government was able to frame the shuffle as a preparation for the new president by moving high-profile ministers into departments responsible for Canada-U.S. relations. In the process, they were able to alter the public agenda by sidelining media discussions of the government's shortcomings with news of the shuffle (CBC News, 2017; Wingrove, 2017). Other qualities, such as issue resonance or image perception, affect whether an issue makes it onto the public agenda or not (Gandy Jr., 1982: 7; McCombs and Shaw, 1993: 63). However, this theory and the cabinet shuffle example demonstrate how images, such as Trudeau's public image as an effective leader, are built to strategically create narratives, disrupt unwanted narratives, and help meet the need to maintain constant communication with citizens.

These agenda setting efforts go hand-in-hand with image management techniques towards crafting desired images. Early authors in this field noted mass media's ability to play an interpretive role, often aided by those in government and other positions of influence. These influencers are then able to get topics discussed in the media (Cohen, 1967: 25-28, 169-72). Later studies emphasized the ability of media to shape the public agenda by determining what was up for discussion, and elite use of the media to put their favoured issues (McCombs and Shaw, 1972: 177). As with the framing literature, other academics have met this elite-centered model with a pluralist alternative that emphasizes exogenous forces or the abilities of political actors in agenda construction (Kingdon, 1984: 187; Soroka, 2002: 74, 117-18; Walgrave and van Aelst, 2006: 92). Most seminal works of agenda setting research, however, give political actors and media organizations some degree of influence in determining "what we talk about" (Soroka,

2002). For the Canadian professionals discussed earlier, setting the agenda is a must for their efforts in constructing images and narratives that steer conversations away from inconvenient topics and towards preferred ones, such as positive frames of the party leader.

To help their agenda setting efforts, these political actors produce "information subsidies" as a way to ensure that the content being produced is as influential as possible (Gandy Jr., 1982: 61). From photo handouts of pseudo-events to research from think tanks, information subsidies refer to political actors subsidizing the production and use of favourable content by making it accessible for those that might need it. Examples of subsidies and their users are numerous, although their typical consumers are media outlets (Boorstin, 1992: 10-11; Cohen, 1967: 170; Gandy Jr., 1982: 61-63, 79-81). Smaller community-based newspapers in Canada, for instance, appreciate the availability of digital photographs provided free of charge by governments and other political actors. The pressures of satisfying demand for web content push them towards reproducing photos they would not be able to acquire through a dedicated staff photographer or a costly wire service. By taking advantage of such constraints on time and resources, as well as the climbing demand for inexpensive visual content, governments can get their own visuals reproduced by other online media platforms (Gandy Jr., 1982: 62; Marland, 2012: 226, 2016: 87-88). Through digital photo handouts, governments can try to seize some influence over important public images. They can produce visuals that reshape images, reinforce narratives, and construct brands (Marland, 2012: 222-23, 2014: 62-65). Information subsidies can ultimately help Canadian federal parties in connecting citizens with the best possible public image of their respective leaders. Such subsidies, through these photo-facilitated image management processes, are important tools for governments that have to wage permanent campaigns.

2.4 The permanent campaign and politicization of government communications

For governments, information subsidies are one manifestation of how politicians directing their permanent campaigns harness government resources for political ends. The permanent campaign is a phenomenon whereby politicians maintain their support between elections through constant campaigning (Blumenthal, 1980, 7). This often involves a politicization of government machinery. Resources and institutions outwardly intended for non-partisan purposes, such as government photo handouts, are re-employed towards political goals or created if they didn't previously exist (Kozolanka, 2014: 4-6; Lees-Marshment, 2009: 220; Rose, 2000: 4). Governments extend greater control over information so that they can re-employ it strategically (Bennett and Manheim, 2001: 280). While government advertising campaigns are sometimes justified as public education services, for instance, they often wind up — either deliberately or inadvertently — promoting political viewpoints or the leader of the government of the day (Firestone, 1970: 23; Howlett 2009, 28; Kozolanka, 2006). The Harper PMO, for example, produced a web video series called *24/Seven* that gave viewers a weekly update of the activities of his administration. The video magazine used positive visuals emphasizing a strong and active prime minister, which were similar to Conservative campaign frames (Lalancette and Tourigny-Koné, 2017: 267-73). Such controls on information, as part of a broader permanent campaign, have become permanent features of Canadian federal governments (Ditchburn, 2014: 119; Kozolanka, 2006; Sampert et al., 2014: 282). Major elements of this information and message control were established throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, alongside the growth of the communications functions and overall political power of the PMO and the prime minister (d'Aquino, 1973: 56-57; Ditchburn, 2014: 91-92; Goldenberg, 2006: 75-78; Savoie, 1999). As

observed in the *24/Seven* visuals portraying Harper, the availability of public resources is an opportunity for Canadian governments to connect citizens to their leaders. Resources are politicized to create effective visuals that media organizations and others can cheaply reproduce to satisfy demand for visual content.

Photographic government communications, in this context, can serve as an inexpensive and effective information subsidy to aid a government's messaging efforts. These photos take advantage of the rising demand for digital visuals, the versatility and speed that photos provide in communicating messages, and the fiscal constraints that media face (Adatto, 2008: 10; Marland, 2012: 220-23, 2016: 86-88; Sampert et al., 2014: 290; Taras, 2015: 277-78). The insatiable demand for visual content on the web compounds these issues and serves as another incentive for reproducing government photos, since photos attract more web traffic (Marland, 2016: 87-88). These pressures provide greater opportunities for government to communicate directly to the public through visual information subsidies. Many media outlets must weigh the potential costs of republishing these government-produced photos against the expense of publishing them through other methods, such as funding them with advertising or subscriber fees (Gandy Jr., 1982: 62-63; Marland, 2012: 227-28). The Harper PMO, for instance, was alleged to favour local media over the national Parliamentary Press Gallery. This was because local outlets were reportedly seen by the PMO as being more receptive to government information handouts and less likely to subvert their intended messages (Kozolanka 2012: 111; Martin, 2011: 64-65). Some Canadian political consultants additionally value photos because of their resistance to such subversion. Visuals, if planned right, are valued by these professionals for being able to communicate a message in spite of efforts to reframe or negatively interpret the image (Marland, 2016: 312).

For governments seeking to create effective visuals, it is not enough to take pictures at random and arbitrarily distribute them, in the hopes that they will be picked up by other media for republication. Additional management strategies are necessary to defend the government's image. Just as precise attention to the details of image presentation is emphasized in visual communications, inattention to these details can be damaging (Adatto, 2008: 53; Kozolanka, 2012: 108). The presence of Bloc Québécois leader Gilles Duceppe in a December 2008 press conference is one such example. The imagery of siding with separatists to unseat the government was damaging to the Liberal-NDP coalition, which had held the news conference (Ibbitson, 2015: 285; Topp, 2010: 144-48). Furthermore, image management efforts can become a damaging story themselves, as journalists and others push back against government manipulation of news media. Through an increased focus on deciphering or documenting the techniques of the manipulators for the public, journalists try to subvert management strategies. The public likewise becomes more cognizant of overbearing strategies by a government the longer it stays in power (Esser and Spanier, 2005: 31-32; Heffernan, 2006: 588-89). The rise of social media, meanwhile, makes it easier for governments to lose control over their images. The online shift from one-to-many communications to participatory social dialogues means that citizens can more easily build or damage a public image (Mills, 2012: 162-64). As discussed earlier, any carefully-planned pseudo-event or other information subsidy can be negated or rendered politically toxic through poor frame control, which allows others to reframe or undermine images and turn them against their producer.

Aware of the danger of gaffes, governments will often employ strategies of evasion as part of their image-making efforts. This involves public appearances by officials or candidates in tightly scripted events. Less controllable situations, such as media scrums, are avoided (Taras,

2015: 275-77). Another way to herd the media into using the government's photo handouts is to bar journalists from events while allowing government photographers to take pictures (Taras, 2015: 278). The Harper administration employed this kind of strategy during a 2009 pseudo-event in Nunavut. The only photo of the event available for republication was a Conservative PMO photo handout. This photo showed the prime minister and members of his cabinet smiling while taking seal meat hors d'oeuvres from a plate (Curry 2009). Meanwhile, tight controls over external and internal information flows are put in place by the government to keep potentially damaging information out of the public eye (Jiwani and Krawchenko, 2014: 60-62; Kozolanka, 2012: 111). Through a combination of incentives and restrictions pressuring a cash-strapped media, Canadian news editors and columnists are thus pushed towards reproducing PMO photos that help government messaging and image-building efforts (Marland, 2012: 220-23; Taras, 2015: 277-78).

All elements of the permanent campaign can be seen coming together through these image management techniques. Canadian government professionals have access, through the politicization of government resources, to the digital photo handout. This affordable image management tool helps political professionals create favourable visuals for a larger narrative. These visuals are additionally resistant to distortion or reframing by other actors. By subsidizing digital photos that are in demand, these professionals maximize the chances that these visuals will be reproduced by other Canadian media. Such in-demand visuals follow market trends towards human interest issues by emphasizing the personalities, style and individual lives of politicians. The demand for visual content on social media web sites likewise helps to maximize the distribution of digital photos. This extends the impact the photos can have on Canadian citizens. Finally, through a constant drip-feed of positive visuals produced for the public and

Canadian media organizations, governments can build frames, set agendas, prime citizens and news organizations for specific photos and contribute to favourable narratives.

As image management efforts in Canada are usually focused on party leaders, this thesis is concentrated on digital photo handouts of the prime minister produced by the PMO. The following study examines how the PMO is able to use the demand for affordable digital visuals on social media and elsewhere on the Internet to propagate its own visuals of the prime minister. I intend on carrying out this examination by identifying select PMO photo handouts featuring Trudeau and monitoring how they are reproduced by online media platforms. In line with my focus on social media, this study will distinguish how these handouts are reproduced via social media from how they are reproduced on non-social media web sites.

3. Methodology

This thesis addresses the frequency and circumstances which digitally-based Canadian media, when reporting or commenting on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, reproduce photographs of him that have been created by the PMO. It specifically examines the circumstances under which these photos were reproduced. This examination will focus on social media. For clarity, it is best to define an important term used in this thesis. A "digital media platform" is used here as any web site where textual, audio, visual or audiovisual content can be disseminated to the public. Specifically, my focus is on a number of digitally-based, English-language Canadian media platforms that reproduce PMO photographs of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. These platforms encompass the social media Facebook, Flickr, Instagram and Twitter.[1] Stand-alone web sites that

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[1] A photo is published on Facebook, Flickr, Instagram and Twitter as part of a post that shows when it was published, the account that published it, and options for people to interact with the post. These interactions include leaving comments, "liking" the post, or sharing it. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter display posts in a timeline belonging to an account, with posts arranged according to age and the newest posts appearing first. Flickr

are not part of a social media network but can still be discovered by Google are also included. Media platforms that are used by the PMO or other public officials to disseminate photos to the public are included as well, and are specifically named for inclusion in the methodology. Appendix A contains further details relevant to this definition, and to the rest of this methodology.

My main hypothesis is that photos of the prime minister issued by the Trudeau PMO will mostly be reproduced on social media by people and organizations other than mainstream media. To test this hypothesis, I conduct a study that monitors and selects, within specified criteria, photos produced and disseminated by the PMO. Additional photo handouts that feature a small number of comparable Canadian public officials are collected to give context to the PMO photo data. My approach is conceptually similar to the methods of the Atlantic cod tagging program run by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) in Newfoundland and Labrador since 1997. Cod are captured by DFO scientists, tagged and then released back into the wild. The data submitted alongside the tags by fish harvesters, which is returned to the government for a cash reward, informs DFO research (McLean 2009). Likewise, this thesis identifies all relevant PMO photo handouts issued on two selected days in 2016 before giving the selected photos approximately 24 hours to circulate online. This time period was chosen in order to give all photos enough time for distribution in the media cycle. Longer time spans were avoided as the shortness of the media cycle was assumed to limit the spread of photos after 24 hours. This is done with the intention of finding out where they were republished in order to affirm or disprove my hypothesis.

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organizes posts through a similar "photostream" with new photos appearing first; optional groupings of photos created by the Flickr account operator are termed "albums."

The first step in this study is to locate the media platforms the PMO uses to disseminate its photo handouts online. Table 1 contains all the platforms that disseminate PMO photo handouts of Trudeau and operate under an explicit Trudeau brand. Additional information relating to this table is in Appendices A, B and C. I locate these specific platforms only on the four social media services mentioned to keep the amount of data collected at a size manageable without extra human resources or sophisticated computer programs. Stand-alone web sites, by which I mean any web site constructed and updated by its operator, are also included. Previous studies and news coverage on PMO photo handouts were consulted to find these platforms. This research led me to include platforms with a documented history of primarily serving as leader-centric promotional vehicles for Government of Canada (GoC) or PMO messaging efforts. Media platforms unrelated to this function that occasionally distribute PMO photos—of which hundreds exist—are not included. For example, my study looks at both Trudeau's parliamentary Twitter account and the stand-alone homepage of the GoC, while ignoring the Twitter accounts of Liberal backbenchers or Canadian embassies. Overall, I selected as many platforms that disseminated PMO photo handouts as possible while retaining comparability across data collected for different public officials.

Table 1: Digital media platforms publishing PMO photo handouts of Justin Trudeau

Advertised operator of platform	Platform used to disseminate PMO photo handouts
Government of Canada	Stand-alone home page
Liberal Party of Canada	Stand-alone home page Facebook Instagram Twitter
PMO	Stand-alone home page Twitter
Adam Scotti	Instagram Twitter
Justin Trudeau*	Facebook Flickr Instagram Twitter

PMO: Prime Minister's Office
Note: These platforms are separated from the PMO due to their branding, which explicitly associates the platform with Trudeau as an individual. They are still run by the PMO.

I visited the digital media platforms in Table 1 on the nights of October 31 and November 7, 2016. October 31 was chosen as it is Halloween, and previous Halloween PMO photo handouts made it a likely candidate for finding celebrity-esque photos of Trudeau. November 7 was chosen for comparison, as it was a day where no such photos were expected. On all of the platforms located in Table 1, I started my search by browsing all posts that were published to a platform the same day I visited it. I noted the date the photo was taken and who was credited with creating it, if this information was found. I saved a digital copy of each photo. Any associated text, such as a caption or associated social media post, was also recorded if available. For example, on the night of November 7, I browsed through all of the posts published that day by the PMO's Twitter account. Among these posts was one accompanied by a photo handout of Trudeau touring a Canadian Coast Guard vessel. I saved the picture file displayed in Figure 2 and copied its caption into a text file. Associated text for this photo was found in a linked press release, which gave me the date the photo was taken. Finally, a direct link to the post was recorded to facilitate identifying social media reproductions of the photo.

Figure 2: One of the PMO photo handouts identified for inclusion in the study

Source: Prime Minister's Office (2016b).

The identified photos were, first and foremost, PMO-produced handouts that have Justin Trudeau as their subject. This focus on Trudeau as an individual is guided by my attempt to demonstrate that inexpensive digital visuals are being used by the PMO and other political actors as tools for public image construction and defence. Recent market practices on attracting web traffic suggest that I had to identify photo handouts of Trudeau where his face was visible and distinguishable, in that his face was in focus, easily recognizable, and not obscured (Google 2014). These criteria ensure that Trudeau was a subject of the photo handout regardless of where it was reproduced, and was therefore ideal according to modern image management techniques. The PMO photo handout in Figure 2 passed these criteria, as Trudeau's face is facing the camera and he is close enough to distinguish as a subject of the photo at a glance. These rules were also applied to photo handouts of the other four public officials to retain comparability.

After I saved all identified photos, I ran two sets of searches using the data I gathered. Each set was performed approximately 24 hours after I finished collecting data on the nights of October 31 and November 7. Social media reproductions were gathered before any searches were performed if the photo handout was disseminated through social media. My objective was

to locate as many reproductions of the photos I identified. With each photo, I performed three searches on Google.ca, assuming the following content could be recorded:

1) A search using all text associated to the photo, such as a caption or social media post;

2) A search using the name of the photo's creator, such as an individual photographer; and,

3) An image-based search, where you upload a copy of an image file from your device to Google. The search uses this copy to find web sites that display the same image.

Examples of these searches can be seen in the searches run for the photo handout in Figure 2 on the night of November 8. Its caption was used as the text for search #1, and the name of the photographer who took the photo was the text used for search #2. Search #3 was conducted by uploading the copy of the photo handout I had previously saved to Google's image search application.

Using the results of these searches, I recorded the number of instances where the photo was reproduced. In addition to the data generated through these searches, I included the number of times each photo was shared through social media.

Identical searches were conducted on photo handouts featuring four public officials other than Trudeau. The searches for these additional officials situate what is collected on PMO-run platforms among data from photo handouts of other Canadian officials. The comparisons that can be made between the resulting data sets can help identify to what extent Trudeau's public image affects the distribution of PMO photo handouts. And like with the PMO-operated platforms at this study's core, these additional platforms must primarily be leader-centric communications vehicles for one of these officials. Specifically, I incorporate platforms operated by the offices of Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) Leader Rona Ambrose, Finance Minister Bill Morneau,

Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister Katie Telford, and Liberal Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne. These officials were selected as they are roughly comparable with the office of the prime minister, albeit on a smaller scale. Photo handouts of these officials were identified by monitoring platforms operated by these officials or their offices. A table of all these platforms is in Appendix C.

4. Trends identified by study

Several major trends that have been outlined can be seen within my study's findings. These trends relate to my hypothesis and to additional discoveries that were unexpected. All of these findings address the PMO's exploitation of online demand for digital visuals in managing the prime minister's public image. The circumstances where the identified PMO photo handouts were reproduced on social media can be viewed through several theoretical lenses that will be applied in the discussion.

As explained, on October 31 I identified eight PMO photo handouts of Trudeau for study. Searches conducted about 24 hours later show that the photos were reproduced a total of 36,373 times. More than 99% of these reproductions occurred on social media platforms. Figure 3 displays most of the human interest photos that were found.

Figure 3: Some of the human interest PMO photo handouts published on October 31, 2016

Source: Prime Minister's Office (2016a); Scotti 2016.

Three of the photos accounted for the vast majority of that day's reproductions. These human interest photos featured Trudeau and his family trick-or-treating. Captions and the text of related social media posts contributed to this theme by including details on the costumes that Trudeau and his son Hadrien were wearing. The photos were distributed on a variety of social media platforms, but none were distributed on the web site of the PMO. These social media included the Trudeau-branded Facebook and Twitter accounts, which facilitated most of the reproductions of these photos. Similar photos posted to Adam Scotti's Instagram and the Trudeau-branded Instagram account were not reproduced at all.

Figure 4: Some of the policy-oriented PMO photo handouts published on October 31, 2016
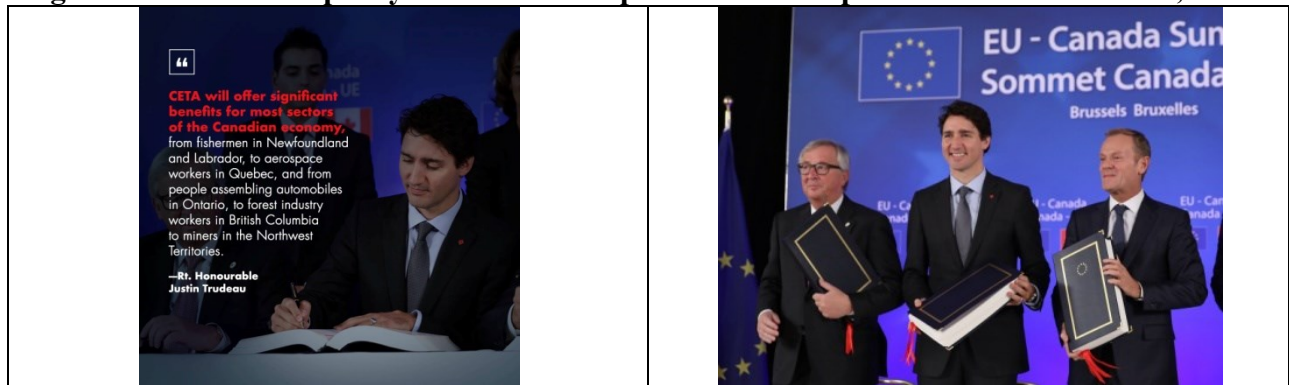
Source: Prime Minister's Office (2016c, 2016d).

By contrast, reproductions of three handouts of Trudeau signing the Canada-European Union (EU) Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) with EU leaders (Figure 4) accounted for a tiny fraction of the results. These were the only photos released on October 31 that communicated information about government policy. This was done through the subject matter of the photos, which informed Canadians that Trudeau had signed an agreement on trade with the EU. It was also done through text superimposed on one of the handouts, which touts the benefits of the deal for workers in specific Canadian industries such as the Newfoundland and Labrador fishery.

These photos were released through on the Twitter account of the PMO and the Liberal Party's Twitter and Facebook accounts. Handouts distributed through Twitter were paired with hashtags, which connected the photos to relevant policy discussions on Twitter. The PMO Twitter post, for instance, used hashtags to include the photos in searches for the keywords "EUCanada" or "CETA." The Twitter accounts of the EU officials in this photo were likewise linked to this post. This differed from the human interest photos, which only used the holiday-oriented "#trickortreat" hashtag. No policy-oriented photos were reproduced on Trudeau-branded social media or on the website of the PMO. Table 2 gives the reproduction frequencies for all photos identified on October 31.

Table 2: Reproduction frequencies of all October 31, 2016 PMO photos, by platform

Photo description	User account: Platform(s) photo published on	Total reproductions on social media
CETA: Trudeau, flanked by others in the background, is signing a book. Overlaid on the photo is a quote from Trudeau touting the benefits of CETA.	Liberal Party of Canada: Facebook	108
CETA: Same photo as above, with minor differences in formatting.	Liberal Party of Canada: Twitter	22
CETA: Trudeau standing with EU leaders at a signing event.	PMO: Twitter	19
Halloween: Trudeau is helping his son ride a scooter.	Adam Scotti: Instagram	0
Halloween: Trudeau and his family poses in costume for a photo.	Justin Trudeau: Facebook, Twitter	11,511
Halloween: A close-up of Trudeau crouching to play with his son. Both are in costume.	Justin Trudeau: Facebook, Twitter	13,940
Halloween: Trudeau is taking his son trick-or-treating.	Justin Trudeau: Facebook, Twitter	10,737
Halloween: A collage of the above three photos.	Justin Trudeau: Instagram	0

On the night of November 7, I identified 17 PMO photos featuring Trudeau for inclusion and conducted searches for them approximately 24 hours later. These photo handouts were entirely policy-focused, and featured a photo op Trudeau held in British Columbia where he announced a new program for protecting Canadian marine environments. Most of these photos were of the event, although one also had policy information promoting the new program imposed on it. Examples of these photos are presented below in Figure 5. As with the data collected on October 31, more than 99% of all reproductions occurred on social media.

Figure 5: Several policy-oriented PMO photo handouts published on November 7, 2016

Source: Prime Minister's Office (2016e).

These photos were reproduced on a total of four different PMO platforms, although individual photos were only disseminated through some of them. There does not appear to be any explanation why the PMO released certain photos using the specific platforms they chose. The text associated with these photos was entirely policy-focused. Unlike the October 31 policy photos, however, the PMO didn't use social media sharing functions in any significant capacity when releasing some of these handouts. Instead, the most popular photos were released with an accompanying link to a press release containing a backgrounder of the announced program.

The bulk of the reproductions, as listed in Table 3, were of three related photos disseminated through a single Twitter post published by Trudeau's MP Twitter account. This was similar to the reproductions generated through photos published through a single October 31 post. With the exception of Flickr, all other photos were released through PMO-branded

platforms and were reproduced at a fraction of the rate these three photos received. Any photo

that wound up only on Flickr and the PMO's website received no reproductions at all.

Table 3: Reproduction frequencies of November 7, 2016 PMO photos, by platform

Photo description	User account: Platform(s) photo published on	Total reproductions on social media
Trudeau touring the bridge of a Canadian Coast Guard vessel.	PMO: Web page Justin Trudeau: Flickr, Twitter	801
Trudeau and a cabinet minister touring the bridge.	PMO: Web page, Twitter Justin Trudeau: Flickr	48
Trudeau and a cabinet minister touring the bridge, with technological equipment in the foreground.	PMO: Web page Justin Trudeau: Flickr, Twitter	801
Trudeau giving a speech. He is standing at a podium that says "Oceans Protection Plan."	PMO: Web page, Twitter Justin Trudeau: Flickr	86
A close-up of Trudeau giving a speech, flanked by a cabinet minister.	Justin Trudeau: Twitter	801
Trudeau touring a Coast Guard vessel. He is surrounded by Coast Guard personnel.	PMO: Twitter	48
Trudeau giving a speech. A quote from Trudeau is imposed on part of the photo.	PMO: Twitter	52

Note: Several photos that were disseminated solely through the PMO's web page and Trudeau's Flickr account were not reproduced at all. These are four of the Coast Guard Vessel photos and six of the Coast Guard Speech photos.

The October 31 trick-or-treating photos account for the only significant number of

handout reproductions (35) that I found on mainstream news web sites, apart from the social

media accounts they operate. Some of these organizations were uncritical in their approach and

covered the PM and his family as if they were celebrities. These outlets pared the handouts with

descriptions of the Trudeau family, the Ottawa neighbourhood they live in, and the details of

some of their costumes. Others covered the photo op in a critical fashion, attempting to reframe

the photos by drawing attention to the cultural politics surrounding Trudeau's choice of costume.

News organizations that did this were able to add a clearly-defined political angle to photos that

were originally distributed in the vein of human interest stories (Elliott, 2016; Joseph, 2016).

Furthermore, some organizations only published the PMO handouts with their stories, while

others paired the handouts with other photos of the event, such as photos from the Canadian Press wire service. None of the policy-oriented photos were reproduced on the websites of news organizations.

For comparison, this study found 67 photo handouts of Ambrose and Wynne over the study's two dates. These received a collective total of 53 reproductions, all on Facebook and Twitter. These photos were distributed through accounts belonging to the individual officials, rather than through institutionally-operated accounts. No one photo received the bulk of these reproductions. No photos featuring Morneau or Telford were identified.

5. Discussion

Speaking to a CBS sports podcast in April 2017, Trudeau said that his government was concerned about the state of Canada's news media. He asked his host if people were willing to accept a news media that satisfies consumer demand with blooper videos and kittens, as opposed to reporting on more newsworthy topics (Delacourt, 2017b). This concern follows from his government's early actions on accountability, such as the publication of new rules covering the "personal and partisan use of social media" by members of his cabinet (Prime Minister's Office, 2015). Yet this thesis has shown that the Trudeau government is adapting to this new social media landscape by supplying this type of content. This is done by adapting pseudo-events, or events contrived to generate media coverage (Boorstin, 1992), to better satisfy this demand. The PMO has, for example, produced photos in 2017 of Trudeau photobombing a high school prom (Azpiri, 2017), wearing multicoloured socks celebrating the end of Ramadan, and high-fiving a young girl dressed as Wonder Woman (Prime Minister's Office, 2017a). These photos and the surrounding news coverage of them spread rapidly through social media, occasionally making their way to the web sites of mainstream news organizations. Some of these social media-ready

pseudo-events also help Trudeau display an outward appearance of approachability (Marland 2016, 133 ; Proudfoot, 2016), while the resulting images help the PMO in minimizing the presence of independent media workers. The result is that the PMO can corral independent media into reproducing handouts without appearing overtly manipulative of media workers. By producing photos similar to what's popular on social media, the Trudeau PMO is creating an information subsidy better suited to take advantage of the demands of Canadians in an evolving media landscape.

This thesis explores where the PMO's photo handouts of Trudeau are reproduced on social media, as well as non-social media web sites such as the photo gallery of the PMO's web site. I initially hypothesized that most of the reproductions of these handouts would be found on social media, including accounts run by news organizations or their employees. I also hypothesized that reproductions found on non-social media web sites, regardless of the web site's purpose or operator, would be negligible. My study does not fully support these hypotheses: while almost all reproductions were concentrated on social media, reproductions on non-social media sites embodied several trends and were clustered in significant numbers. A related finding is that the photos with the most social media reproductions also followed these trends.

In the following pages, these trends will first be described and investigated to see how they individually influence the reproduction of digital photo handouts. I will then examine their combined influence. This combination of trends will be constructed into a distinct formula that, when followed, maximizes the spread of photo handouts through the Internet. This formula will be part of a larger model I will then construct, and will describe relations between the PMO, established media organizations, and the public. I argue that the changes described in this new

media model tell us how the Trudeau PMO is adapting to a newly responsive media-consuming public and the resulting pressures exerted on content producers. These pressures have pushed the PMO to shape its photo handouts along market trends. Photo handouts are tailored to favour human interest stories and past handouts that were popular. These pressures are likely influences on the PMO's selective use of social media and Trudeau-centric branding to maximize the reach of its handouts. I conclude that meeting these pressures strengthens the PMO's ability to shape and defend the public image of Trudeau through the use of digital photo handouts as information subsidies.

The first and most prominent of these trends is the difference in reproductions between policy- and human interest-oriented handouts. The latter were reproduced more and on both social media and non-social media web sites in significant numbers. Policy handouts were reproduced less and only on social media. These differences can be explained as a product of the emphasis on entertainment and celebrity in politics and political news coverage. Modern political marketing scholarship has conceptualized politics as a marketplace. Politicians become businesses that sell a political product to prospective buyers (Savigny 2008, 117). This product must be adapted and branded to meet market demand through mass media campaigns (Newman, 1999: 88-93; Paré and Berger, 2008: 41-43; Scammell, 2007: 189-90; Taras, 2015: 273). As part of this change, policy specifics are avoided in favour of the human interest issues and sensationalized stories that media markets favour. Politicians are treated and marketed as celebrities, with news media and the public focusing on personal lives instead of policies (Lalancette and Tourigny-Koné, 2017: 260; Marland, 2016: 91; Seawright, 2013: 170; Street, 2003: 85-86). Content producers, such as the PMO, are thus pressured to produce information subsidies with human interest themes. Handouts of Trudeau attending a kid's camp in Shelburne

or reading to his young son (Prime Minister's Office, 2017b; Raj, 2015), for instance, help feed the demand for these photos, which function more as entertainment than as news content. Such subsidies help leaders connect with voters on an individual level, as it is assumed that most citizens shy away from policy complexities in their media consumption choices. In place of these policy specifics is the use of recognizable symbols that citizens can use as cognitive shortcuts for values the prime minister and his government stands for (Marland, 2016: 91, 412; Scammell, 2007: 177; Underwood, 2001: 101-02, 106-07).

The concentration of reproductions around a set of three Halloween PMO photo handouts shows that online demand for digital visuals gravitates toward human interest photos. This photo set, as shown in Figure 3, features the Trudeau family trick-or-treating. They account for almost all of the reproductions recorded, both on that day and as part of the entire study. Of these reproductions, over 99 per cent of them were on social media. However, these handouts were the only ones reproduced on non-social media web sites. Most of these reproductions were on the web sites of mainstream news organizations. Content-wise, they educate the viewer on what Hadrien Trudeau and his father dressed up as but are void of information on government policy.

Such celebrity-esque details are in line with news media and consumer demand for human interest content. They also steer clear of the complex policy coverage that many media markets have soured on (Underwood 2001, 101-02, 106). This difference in demand can be observed by how reproductions of the Halloween photos dwarf reproductions of handouts with a specific policy theme, such as those in Figures 5 and 6. Those visuals were distributed on the same day and contain policy information about the Canada European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), which the prime minister had recently signed. This trend is pushed by the need of the PMO and news organizations to compete with other human

interest and celebrity stories for consumer attention. For example, handouts released on October 31 coincided with popular stories reporting on Hillary Duff's costume controversy, a parent and child trick-or-treating on an airplane, and a CBC reporter showing up to work in an Elmo costume (Associated Press, 2016; Hughes, 2016). Emphasizing the celebrity and personal life of the prime minister and his family helps the PMO compete against this media content. They make these connections with citizens by exploiting demand on social media and non-social media web sites for uncomplicated, personalized digital human interest visuals (Lalancette and Tourigny-Koné, 2017: 260; Seawright, 2013: 170; Street, 2003: 85-86; Underwood 2001, 101-02, 106). These handouts subsidize the content consumption of people partial to celebrity news or the viral videos Trudeau cautioned against.

The use of tabloid-style, policy-free photo handouts strengthens the ability of the PMO to manage Trudeau's public image. For while human interest handouts do little to inform people on specific policies or issues, their simplicity and symbolic messages makes them effective tools to project a desired image. The earliest image management scholars suggested that most people would not seek out policy details, and would instead try to find shortcuts through visual cues when figuring out what kind of policies a politician might implement (Bernays, 2005: 63-64; Key, 1961: 5; Lippmann, 1922: 88-90). Research on photo handouts has shown that cues such as business suits or work environments, for example, convey values of hard work (Taras, 2015: 277-78). We do not know, based on the Trudeau family's choice of costumes, what the Liberal government's plans are for tax rates or foreign policy in the Middle East. However, we can infer values from many of the handouts surveyed for this thesis. The image of Trudeau posing with the rest of his family can be seen as embodying the middle class family values that were a consistent theme in Liberal 2015 campaign communications.

Using photos in this manner also helps the PMO minimize the ability of any media operator reproducing the image to reinterpret the handout or subvert its intended message. Many image management professionals believe that the symbolic impact of a photo handout remains unchanged regardless of where or how it is reproduced, making the photo resistant to distortion (Marland, 2016: 74, 80-81, 311-12; Martin, 2011: 64-65; Taras 2015, 243-44). The photo handouts of Trudeau at a Coast Guard photo op, for instance, display positive images and text quotes of Trudeau. By showing him touring a Coast Guard ship outfitted with sophisticated scientific instruments, the photo is aligned with Liberal policy priorities of respect for government science. By depicting Trudeau sharing a podium with Transport Minister Marc Garneau, other handouts emphasize the prime minister's stated preference for involving Cabinet in governance without obscuring his own persona. This and other handouts from the photo op would still communicate a Liberal-friendly image of Trudeau, regardless of where the photo was reproduced or whether any attempt was made to reinterpret its meaning. The PMO produces a constant stream of these on-message, campaign-style handouts to carry out the permanent campaign of the government.

These symbols function well as image builders by connecting Trudeau's public persona to the values they invoke. Rather than insisting that a viewer sit down to digest what the Liberal policy platform has to say about LBGT rights or gender parity, the PMO can get the message across by tweeting photos of the prime minister marching in the Toronto Pride Parade or standing shoulder-to-shoulder with his wife, Sophie. These images connect Trudeau to the values represented by the symbols in the photo, contributing to a larger frame that highlights the positive values of his public image above other, more negative aspects of it (Entman, 1993: 52; Grabe and Bucy, 2009: 87, 98; Verser and Wicks, 2006: 179). Through repeated use of symbolic

communications transmitted through photo handouts, this frame helps the PMO create and spread narratives that boost Trudeau and the objectives of his government. Their repeated use also helps the government in altering the public agenda, or the group of topics currently up for consideration and debate in the public sphere (Kingdon, 1984: 3). Inserting positive visuals into the public sphere helps change which topics are being discussed (Grabe and Bucy, 2009: 132n1; McCombs and Shaw, 1972: 177, 181). Trudeau is made more salient while other issues and members of his government are obscured, lose attention and drop off the agenda. The PMO's successful October 31 handouts, for instance, were a welcome distraction to draw attention away from a scandal then surrounding the immigration status of Democratic Institutions Minister Maryam Monsef (Malcolm, 2016).

A second trend is the differences between the social media web sites used to distribute the handouts. Technology-oriented explanations emphasize on the transformative influence of the medium being used, as opposed to looking at the influence of the content being transmitted by the medium (Levinson, 1999: 35; Paragas and Lin, 2014: 2; Skinner, 1976: 3; Ursell, 2001: 175-78). Such an approach can explain why some differences in reproduction frequencies can be traced back to the media used to distribute them to the public. Photo handouts disbursed over social media outperformed those released through non-social media web sites. Furthermore, sharing-centric social media outperformed other social media web sites surveyed. Facebook and Twitter distributed the most popular photos. Photo handouts disseminated over Instagram received no reproductions whatsoever, regardless of whether they were human interest or policy-oriented. Flickr was likewise a figurative graveyard for photos. In fact, a large portion of PMO handouts were not reproduced at all, according to the study's sample. All of these overlooked photos were distributed solely through Flickr, Instagram or the PMO's web site.

A technology-centered explanation suggests that photo handouts can really only have their potential for reproduction unlocked when they are disseminated using platforms specifically geared towards sharing. Both McLuhan and the viewpoints ascribed by technological determinists suggest that the way a technology is constructed and used has substantial impact on the society using it (Levinson, 1999: 35). The Internet's function is the exchange of information, and the social media responsible for facilitating the most reproductions, Facebook and Twitter, are the media geared the most towards facilitating effortless sharing of content. They make photo reproduction a near-instantaneous operation, requiring at most one or two clicks. This is in line with previous literature on social media sharing, which theorized that content is more sharable if distributed through platforms with accessible, easy-to-use sharing functions (Mills, 2012: 167). Instagram and Flickr, by contrast, are primarily constructed as photo albums for browsing and commenting. Sharing photos is possible on these social media web sites, but not as seamless as what Facebook and Twitter provide. Furthermore, Instagram prevents users from saving photos on the platform through a browser, making sharing those photos additionally cumbersome. If the medium is the message, then Facebook and Twitter's message is to take the information you choose to consume and share it to whoever else is willing to subscribe to you. This message incentivizes social media users to reproduce soft news and other human interest content as well.

Keep in mind that information subsidies are, by their very nature, supposed to be accessible to those who want them. They are made to provide media operators short on resources with the ability to reproduce content at little or no cost to their operation (Gandy Jr., 1982: 61-62). For most citizens on social media, the only resources they will apparently expend is their patience: an information subsidy is no longer worthwhile if the user cannot easily access and reproduce it. The few minutes required to save a photo handout from the Instagram and Flickr

accounts of the PMO is evidently too steep a price for most people. Even differences as small as relatively cumbersome sharing functions or poor web site layout will make any digital file a lot less useful as an information subsidy. Twitter's instantaneousness, along with Facebook's orientation towards like-minded communities and large user population, makes them preferred services for people looking to share content to peers or like-minded strangers.

Another theme in the study is the role of the office of the prime minister. Party leaders have always been prioritized in Canadian politics, and the rise of mass media campaigning has accorded the public image of the leader a high status and profile (Carty, 2015: 46; Carty et al., 2000: 14-16, 180-82; Marland and Giasson, 2016: 344-45; McCall-Newman, 1983: 37-38.) The centralization of policy-making authority within the PMO has elevated the PM above all others in Canadian politics (Savoie, 1999). The political importance of a head of government means that there are more people paying attention to her or his public image (Carty et al., 2000: 183-84; Heffernan, 2006: 590). Trudeau's public image is synonymous with the Liberal administration and its actions, and the PMO must consider the strategic use of the leader's public persona in campaigns.

PMO photo handouts benefit from Trudeau's high profile domestically and internationally. The bulk of reproductions were of photos distributed through these Trudeau-branded media, where the platform's branding is dominated by his persona. Profile pictures, account names, and medium content all bear his name or face. This is opposed to digital media platforms with institutional brands, such as the Government of Canada's web site or the Liberal Party's Twitter account. The three popular Halloween photos were distributed through the PMO's Trudeau-branded Facebook and Twitter accounts. By contrast, photos distributed through PMO- and Liberal-branded accounts on the same day were reproduced less often. The Coast

Guard photos (see Figure 5) released on November 7 repeat this difference, in that similar photos were reproduced more if distributed through the Trudeau-branded Twitter account. Even with all handouts distributed on that day oriented toward a specific policy, this account still outperformed other platforms used that day in terms of reproductions generated. Through this single difference, we see that the prime minister's image has inherent value (Heffernan, 2006: 590) that can be transferred to an information subsidy or the medium transmitting it. Furthermore, these personalized accounts benefit from the broader trend in increasing consumer and media demand for personalized political communications, which favours the social media of individuals over institutional accounts (Stanyer 2013, 1-5). The power and visibility the PMO has amassed since Confederation can be used in a political marketing sense to entice political customers to choose the photo handout it puts out on the market (Lees-Marshment, 2009; Savoie, 1999). In this vein, the PMO has reacted to these incentives by exerting greater influence over what information the government produces and how it is presented to the media (Ditchburn, 2014: 87-88, 90-92; Glenn, 2014: 11).

The prime minister therefore isn't just a powerful public official, but is also as a highly visible and recognizable symbol that is shorthand for the government. People who want to know what this government is doing are likely to visit media carrying a Trudeau-dominant brand to find out. It is not enough that the medium displays a banner graphic of the prime minister, as many institutionally-branded social media included in the study did. Photo handouts get the full benefit of his brand when the medium is covered with it. All November 7 handouts, for instance, were of a single subject—the prime minister touring a Coast Guard vessel and announcing a related environmental program—but photos distributed through Trudeau-branded social media received ten times as many reproductions as those distributed through institutionally-branded

media. Image management using visual information subsidies is therefore more successful when it uses the high-profile brand of the prime minister as much as possible.

The study also monitored the accounts of some other public officials of comparable importance in Canadian politics, although they are not of equal public stature. The results indicate that officials apart from the prime minister struggle to get their photo handouts reproduced, regardless of the role or influence they possess. All handouts of Rona Ambrose and Kathleen Wynne received a collective total of 53 reproductions, all on Facebook and Twitter. Meanwhile, no photo handouts featuring Bill Morneau or Katie Telford could be identified at all. The smaller public profiles puts these officials at a disadvantage when competing for attention in a crowded online marketplace that is more interested in Trudeau's persona. For where Trudeau's image is a default symbol representing the governing Liberals and their actions, the roles of these officials severely reduces the value of their handouts. For Ambrose, Morneau and Telford, handouts of them become valuable when they are at the centre of any issue or event. Photos of Morneau, for instance, typically become valuable enough to run when the government releases a budget or a fiscal update. Economic stories like that directly involve the Department of Finance, of which Morneau can serve as a suitable visual symbol for. The comparative rarity of these stories and their content, which is usually focussed on domestic public policy, severely limits the popularity of handouts of these officials. Wynne's role as the head of a subnational government further limits the value of her handouts to news organizations and social media users living in Ontario, as opposed to the Canada-wide market that PMO photos are open to. Trudeau additionally has a large collection of international followers, who boost the visibility of his handouts in lists of popular social media posts. The individual personas of officials and how citizens respond to them also affect the attention generated through any kind of mass media.

Ultimately, photo handouts appear to be ineffective tools in image-building efforts for these officials, as their handouts aren't consistently valuable to many media operators as information subsidies.

Finally, the PMO supplies images to fulfill anticipated increases in demand for certain visuals. The 2016 Halloween handouts, for instance, mimicked commercial news media photos of then prime minister-designate Trudeau trick-or-treating with his family. Those photos were received positively on social media in 2015. This was a strong signal to the PMO that demand for visuals of such a pseudo-event would expand the same time the next year. Repeats in October 2017 and 2018 should be likewise be anticipated.

The timing of a photo is therefore another trend that affects handout reproduction. This trend is followed by taking advantage of predictable spikes in demand for a photo. Upcoming holidays, public events such as the Tragically Hip concert (see Figure 1) or the successes of earlier photos can be used to inform these predictions. A photo of Trudeau photobombing a wedding in British Columbia, for example, appears to have influenced a photo of him photobombing a high school prom in the same province (Azpiri, 2017). Both achieved social media popularity. The difference between them is that the latter photo was taken by Trudeau's official photographer, who was accused of setting up the shot ahead of time and using the prom goers "as a PR prop" (Hutchins, 2017). This focus on the timing of a photo works in reverse as well, as the PMO must avoid releasing photos at inappropriate or embarrassing times to avoid gaffes (Marland, 2012: 224-26; Taras, 2015: 277-78).

Taking advantage of citizens' near-insatiable demand for interesting and engaging events, political actors such as the PMO can manufacture well-planned pseudo-events ahead of time or on the fly. The control it has over these pseudo-events gives PMO personnel an opportunity to

employ strategies of evasion that previous administrations have used to minimize negative media coverage. Routes are scripted and careful thought is given to everything from camera angles to wardrobe choice (Marland, 2016: 311-14; Taras, 2015: 277-78). A PMO that wants to take full advantage of a timed event can incentivize news media to use its own photos by barring independent photographers from the event (Boorstin 1992, 9-12; Taras, 2015: 275-78). The Trudeau PMO has flipped this tight scripting on its head with social media-friendly events like the Vancouver prom photobombing, however. Through these unannounced performances, I believe that the Trudeau PMO is employing a different strategy of evasion. These performances, through their relative spontaneity, protect Trudeau's image by excluding independent media workers and corralling media into republishing the resulting PMO handout.

When these trends are viewed together, they share a common thread in the 2016 Halloween photos. This set of handouts follows everything previously observed. Other photos that only follow some of these tendencies see increases that are nowhere near the rates for these popular handouts. From these combined trends and the results they produce, I argue that they constitute a "formula." First of all, the photo handout must be distributed on social media specifically geared towards the easy sharing of content. Secondly, the photo must have a human interest theme, in that it displays the personal life or human qualities of its subject. Additionally, the photo must have the Prime Minister of Canada as its subject and the medium used to distribute it must be primarily branded with the prime minister's public image. Finally, the photo must be timed to enter the public sphere when demand for it is high. When followed completely, I argue that this "shareability formula" maximizes the chance of a photo handout being widely reproduced online. This formula follows in the footsteps of previous models that modeled the

spread of content through social media in terms of the individual qualities of the content and the social media (Mills, 2012).

Audience feedback, in the form of likes, retweets, and other forms of comment, are the social media signals that pressure the PMO to follow the shareability formula, either in whole or in part. The pre-web relationship between the PMO, news media and the public outlined in the traditional method of handout distribution is altered by this feedback. For much of Canada's modern history, the power dynamics between the government and the mainstream news media travelled a straight and direct road. The centre interacted with the news media *en masse* through press releases, photo handouts and answered questions, while the news media interacted with the centre by asking questions and running its answers and information subsidies, notably news release, either with or without comment. While access varied on how favourable a journalist or organization was to the centre, the overall relationship was symbiotic. The news media relied on the government to produce news and information subsidies with which it could fill its pages, screens and airwaves. The government in turn relied on the media to communicate image management efforts, try to set agendas and carry out the duties of the permanent campaign. A third party in this relationship was the public, which was mostly relegated to receiving photos through mass media.

Avenues within these traditional relationships for feedback on PMO handouts were, relative to the present day, limited and slow-acting. The news media could provide feedback on information subsidies, either directly through questions or indirectly by reinterpreting them or filtering them out. Meanwhile, low demand for a constant stream of visuals meant that news media did not face the pressures associated with having to feed consumers a near-constant stream of visuals. Within this old relationship, as illustrated in Figure 6, the primary power dynamic was

between the media and the centre. The public—which is the body that democratic governments derive their legitimacy from—played a passive role and could do little other than receive what the centre produced and the news media didn't filter out.

Figure 6: The traditional method of PMO photo handout distribution

From this perspective, the rise of the Internet and social media gives citizens a degree of influence over what circulates in the Canadian media sphere. The volume and precision of social media-generated audience feedback are valuable data that political professionals can use to shape the creation of future photo handouts. However, the centre is straitjacketed by these very metrics, which primarily incentivize whatever drives clicks. This constant stream of feedback, combined with the new pathways and demands created by digital media, result in a new model of handout distribution that is illustrated in Figure 7. Within it, photo handouts can still take the path outlined in the traditional method, where they go from the centre to citizens via the news media. The PMO can also leapfrog over the media and send handouts directly to citizens when it wants to meet expected citizen demand or avoid having its message reinterpreted or filtered out by the news media. The PMO can likewise take advantage of greater overall demand for digital visuals exerted on the news media to get its handouts reproduced. This model also helps to meet the social media-specific need for the sequential release of digital photos. Previous successes can inform the creation of additional related photos that reinforce a main message or public image (Mills, 2012: 168-69).

Figure 7: A proposed "digital-traditional model" of PMO photo handout distribution
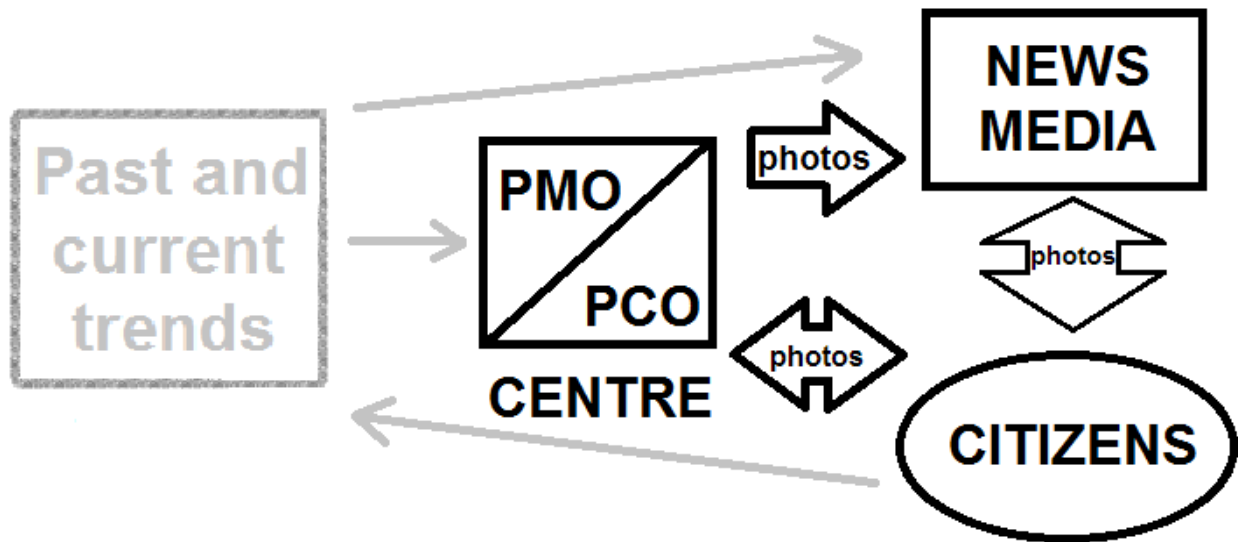
However, underlying these tools for the PMO are new market signals that dictate the terms for success in the social media age. Embodied by the criteria that make up my shareability formula, these signals push the PMO to exploit all the secrets of viral success on social media. Among other changes in its information subsidies, these signals are answered through the production of more celebritized content that has little or no educational value. The PMO has been doing so by finding earlier photos that were previously successful and producing sequels of them. It is entirely within reason that the Trudeau government and its successors, under pressure and growing long in the tooth, will produce more and more policy-free, human interest handouts that follow the formula to shore up support and maintain the image of the prime minister.

Internet communications technologies give governments the flexibility to communicate and meet the diverse needs of Canadians (Delacourt, 2017a). The demand exists for graphics of Canada's political leadership and there is a public service in informing Canadians of their government's activity. Photographs are a simple and effective vector with which to connect citizens to leaders, and people will want to view, like and repost the ones that appeal to them.

Such photos are also within the same genre of personalized "family" photos of the prime minister, such as the 1973 photo of Pierre Trudeau carrying a one-year old Justin under his arm (MacIvor, 2015). Demand is always high for celebrity-esque photos in a media environment that does not discriminate between the personal and public spheres of a politician's life. Digital photos that emphasize the details and underlying values of the personal lives of politicians can help them in defending their policies and public images (Corner and Pels, 2003: 11; Stanyer, 2013: 2; Street, 2003: 85-86, 92). They can also be used effectively across a wide variety of media, from newspapers to a variety of integrated social media platforms (Mills, 2012: 168). This makes celebrity-esque photos a useful vector for connecting unstable constituencies and detached citizens with policy content and political discourse through personalized, entertaining content (van Zoonen, 2005: 58-59, 147).

However, just as some people want to connect with their government through such visuals, some prefer celebrity-style human interest photos of the prime minister over those that are policy-focused (Underwood, 2001). Traffic-centered metrics incentivize the PMO to release more photos with popular human interest angles. Little information on policy is typically communicated to Canadians through the most popular handouts. I believe that there is an opportunity for the PMO to react to market pressures for celebrity-like visuals while still educating Canadians through handouts, however. While my study indicates that Canadians using social media sour on complex policy topics, the government can still communicate basic policy facts by piggybacking symbolic policy content on human interest handouts. Otherwise, as successive governments exploit the formula for policy-free viral content, I argue that citizens will likely react the same way they have reacted to the overuse of other permanent campaign

techniques: tuning out while growing cynical towards the intentions of their government (Esser and Spanier, 2005: 31-32; Heffernan, 2006: 588-89).

An additional outcome of the constant demand for celebrity-like visuals and increasing pressure from an active public sphere, I suggest, is that the government will adapt existing strategies of evasion for social media. Normally, such strategies involve tightly scripted pseudo-events and the avoidance of potentially uncontrollable situations (Taras, 2015: 275-77). As outlined previously, the Trudeau PMO is taking a different tack with these defensive actions. Informed through audience feedback metrics what stories and visuals play well on social media, the PMO can conjure up pseudo-events with little advance planning or strict stage-managing. The apparent spontaneity of these pseudo-events helps excuse the exclusive access that PMO photographers have to record them. This exclusivity means that media are forced to reproduce the resulting handouts if they want to satisfy online demand for digital photos of the event. The flexibility of conducting these events, meanwhile, helps Trudeau project an image of approachability while obscuring the contrived nature of what the photo depicts at the same time. Likewise, this flexibility helps the PMO better prepare pseudo-events timed to take advantage of expected spikes in demand for specific visuals. Taken together, these factors combine to minimize the chance of an image-damaging gaffe but might be recognized by the public as manipulative over time.

6. Conclusion

Photo handouts are another tool the PMO uses in its permanent campaign to build and maintain the image of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. They meet the needs of resource-poor news organizations and social media users for inexpensive digital visuals, through which they can harness social media to distribute positive images of the PM. A variety of factors are

converging to change the PMO's job of image management. Although some of these factors are more influential than others, it is valuable to look at how they, when together, maximize the online shareability of a PMO handout. This "shareability formula" embodies the changing relationship between government, mainstream media and a public that is more selective in its media consumption habits. However, social media feedback mechanisms straitjacket the PMO in its information subsidy use. These pressures are forcing the PMO to adapt its image management toolkit, including its photo handouts, to meet these demands. Strategies of evasion are also being updated for the social media age, where pseudo-events look spontaneous and relatable. Past image management techniques have, when overused, become stories in themselves that highlight government efforts to manufacture a consensus in favour of elite goals.

After evaluation, I conclude that my hypothesis only holds up when photos have a policy angle. When photos have a human interest angle, the handouts are useful as information subsidies for mainstream news organizations as well, even though we must question the photos' information value. Furthermore, appearing on any social media platform doesn't give a photo handout an automatic boost to how shareable it is. Social media must possess additional qualities if they are to be effective vectors in disseminating handouts.

Is there anything that can be done about this? Photo handouts are politicized to promote the government's leadership. I believe that any kind of remedy to this situation needs to take a degree of control over this tool out of the hands of elected officials and their partisan staff. An independent body could be used as a check on politicization. Specifically, an officer of Parliament could be appointed and empowered with a specific mandate to approve photo ops and other proposed communications. All arms of government would be required to submit planned communications to this officer in advance of their creation and dissemination to the public. The

office would review proposed communications and be empowered to reject proposals or demand changes to ensure that messages inform Canadians about policy, government programs and activity, or other salient issues. This office would be granted a budget sufficient to retain marketing talent to help policy facts piggyback on human interest visuals. Exceptions would exist for emergency communications, but the goal is to curb the free reign public officials have over government information handouts without destroying the subsidies' usefulness. Through this recommendation, I believe that by requiring clearer public interest justifications for their production, PMO photo handouts could communicate basic facts while still meeting demand for visuals of the leader.

Finally, I think that there are several worthwhile research leads uncovered by my thesis. Media usage has shifted to a social media-dominant pattern where what is consumed is shaped by social factors. Those we follow on Twitter or have as friends on Facebook provide the content we consume through these platforms. Political partisans, in this social media environment, double as repeater stations for PMO content, taking photo handouts and other information subsidies and relaying them to other people within the partisan's social network. People who dislike the content have the choice of tolerating it as a condition of staying connected to that person's social media accounts. Ending the deluge can only be done by removing themselves from the partisan's online social network. In this sense, digital photo handouts may be contributing to the social "sorting" observed by the authors of *The People's Choice* more than 70 years ago. Through this process, public opinion is formed and reinforced by like-minded individuals congregating among themselves to confirm each other's opinions, creating constellations of "echo chambers" (Lazarsfeld et al., 1965: xx-xxi). As has been highlighted by other authors, little is understood of how citizens use photo handouts (Marland, 2014: 71) and

research into this topic might reveal an unexpected social externality of their production in the social media age.

The digital focus of this story means that photo handouts reproduced through other platforms are ignored. Digital photos disseminated by the PMO can be reproduced in print publications. Moreover, the PMO is increasingly shifting to a multimedia-based model: photo handouts and text press releases are now released alongside video, audio, and hybridized content such as looping .gif files to meet the diverse needs of the marketplace. This means that photo handouts may wind up reproduced in community newspapers or Twitter slideshows. Likewise, the Trudeau and Harper PMOs have broadened the array of information subsidies the centre uses to include video magazines and other multimedia information subsidies. These handouts have been distributed through government-run web sites and social media in the same manner as the photo handouts studied in this thesis (Lalancette and Tourigny-Koné, 2017: 260-61, 263). Further research on the effects of government information subsidies should look at video and other multimedia information subsidies. Recent trends in Canadian federal politics show that this shift within PMO image management efforts is being followed by other parties and political actors (Ryckewaert, 2017).

Social media presents an avenue for rejuvenated revenues for journalists and near-frictionless discourse for citizens. As traditional media search for ways of keeping themselves sustainable, social media allows digital media start-ups to raise funds directly from dedicated consumers and offer them products that traditional media cannot sustainably provide. Some of these new ventures combine digital platforms in order to weave educational and political information with personalized, human interest entertainment (Greenslade, 2012). Canadian examples include media criticism news site Canadaland, public interest journalism organization

Ricochet, and right-wing news site Rebel Media. All of these new ventures are primarily funded through audience donations. However, they operate in the same market-driven environment as established journalistic organizations. This subjects them to the same economic pressures that make information subsidies valuable to independent media.

Meanwhile, the PMO is working to gain a stronger footing in Canada's social-media dominant public sphere by availing of the concentrated power and high visibility of the prime minister. The ease with which the "selfie prime minister" uses social media to his benefit helps him parlay this power into online image management efforts. With these new media ventures commanding ever more powerful segments of public opinion, the PMO will itself be incentivized to stay on their good side to avoid image-ruining public disasters. Many of these new media ventures have already shown themselves to be more willing to abandon traditional positions of fairness in reporting, openly rooting for a party or cause (Hartman, 2017). With large portions of these new audiences thus consisting of self-selected partisans, the PMO has a possible new venue to carry out the permanent campaign goal of maintaining coalitions between elections by staying in constant contact with supporters (Blumenthal, 1980: 8-10). What will happen when nonpartisan Canadians, especially younger citizens who grew up with social media, come to recognize and tire of how their political leaders use image management tools to manipulate the social media they grew up with?

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Appendix A: Methodological details

Many considerations were taken into account when constructing this thesis' methodology and resulting study. Including every special rule, detail, justification or exception incorporated into it would make it cumbersome and less useful for the reader. To achieve the need for clarity in the section with an equally important need for transparency, many of its extraneous details have been collected in this appendix. They have been sorted by order of what part of the methodology they correspond with.

In addition to a focus on digitally-based, English-language Canadian media platforms that reproduce PMO photo handouts of Trudeau, my technical capabilities meant that the focus of the thesis was set to media platforms discoverable through text- or picture-based Google searches.

Facebook, Flickr, Instagram and Twitter have been chosen as they meet all other criteria for selecting platforms and each of them are used by at least more than half of the public officials included in this survey, one of whom is the prime minister. Furthermore, social sciences literature involving data collection through social media suggests choosing popular platforms, as the large volume of content produced provides more opportunities to collect relevant data (Barberá, 2014: 13; Small, 2012, 2014). Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are popular among regular web users, while Flickr is popular among media professionals and amateur photographers to share photographs. While LinkedIn also meets these criteria, it has been excluded for additional reasons that will be further explained.

The centralization of power and visibility within the Canadian federal government suggests that this thesis should concentrate on the PMO in order to track the dissemination of leader-focused government photography from its source (Savoie 1999). Furthermore, the ample resources available to the prime minister make him the ideal candidate for this thesis' study.

The prime minister's family is not a part of this study, even though PMO photographs are produced of Trudeau's wife and children. This is to ensure that the methodology concentrates on the prime minister as an individual and avoids having to distinguish between the personal brands of each member of the Trudeau family. My capabilities limit the focus to English-based media outlets, as the study involves web searches that make use of text associated with the selected photographs, such as by-lines or captions. Excluded media are outlets that solely publish audio or visual content, including those in French. Television and radio programs broadcast on the Internet, for instance, are therefore excluded. The resources available to me also do not permit resource-intensive monitoring of print media.

As web pages constantly change and are updated, a description of the website of the PMO as it existed on November 7, 2016 is given to describe a typical example of the non-social media web sites monitored by the study. Its homepage prominently displays a slideshow of recent photos, most of which feature the prime minister. Each of these photos is a link to some corresponding piece of information, such as a press release or photo gallery. Other photos and graphics can be found on this homepage, including links to the latest handouts posted in the site's "photo gallery" section. Interested individuals can also submit an e-mail address to subscribe to a listserve that sends updates about the prime minister to subscribers.

Public officials from other countries are not included to avoid the difficulties of comparing data collected in different social climates or legal jurisdictions. The criteria for media platform selection for the four Canadian officials are the same as that used for Trudeau. However, the media selected are associated with the named official, rather than the PMO. The chosen photo handouts must likewise feature the associated official. For example, social media for the federal Department of Finance are included in the methodology alongside platforms that

are titled with Bill Morneau's name, as they are associated with Morneau through his position as Minister of Finance.

Morneau has been chosen as he is the minister of a high-profile government department. Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) Leader Rona Ambrose was also included as she was the Leader of the Official Opposition in Parliament at the time of the study. The Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister, Katie Telford is included as she is a senior advisor within the PMO: her position in the centre of the federal government gives her considerable policy-making power. Liberal Kathleen Wynne is part of the study because she is the Premier of Ontario, the largest English-majority Canadian province. Telford does not have a personal website and only posts using her Twitter account.

Flickr offers the same data and interaction options that the other three social media platforms provide, except the option to share a Flickr photo by posting it to your own account. These interaction options on Flickr must instead be accessed by clicking a photo within the photostream, which takes the viewer to that photo's individual post. The mobile web versions of all four social networks were not noticeably different from their desktop browser counterparts in how they display photos at the time of the study, except that all automatically degrade photo resolution to reduce the size of downloaded photos. Posts can be published using desktop or mobile application (apps) versions of the social media platform's user interface.

Several media platforms that would normally be included in the above list are excluded for reasons other than the methodology's central criteria. PMO photographer Adam Scotti's Facebook has not been included as he does not have a public account and does not accept friend requests for what appears to be his private account. His Flickr account is excluded as it has been abandoned. Scotti has not posted pictures to it since February 2016 and has instead directed

people to the Flickr account of the prime minister. Many other social media platforms have also been excluded as they have not been used since the start of the Trudeau administration: these are the LinkedIn accounts of all five public officials, as well as the Flickr account of the Conservative Party of Canada. The LPC-branded web pages of Trudeau and Morneau are biographies that are not updated with new photographic content.

To ensure comparability between photo handouts of Trudeau and of the other public officials, he must appear in all saved photos. A photo of Trudeau's wife and children that he doesn't appear in, for example, would be excluded. A more comprehensive study of the Trudeau PMO's public brand building, in line with previous research, might include his family as extensions of the progressive public image that the PMO seeks to project. Such a comprehensive treatment of the brand images of Trudeau and the other public officials this thesis will study is a task beyond its planned scope.

The consistency of the results of the face recognition rule was tested through an intercoder reliability process. A pilot dataset for all five public officials was assembled on August 19, 2016. The most recently disseminated photo handout was saved from each media platform. Following this, the resulting dataset was given to an individual experienced in transcribing and coding documents. This coder was instructed on how to perform an intercoder reliability test, and was given a package consisting of the official government portrait of all five public officials for reference, instructions on how to code the photos, and the study criteria governing face recognition as described above. As an official government portrait could not be found for Telford, the profile picture she used for her Twitter account at the time of the intercoder test was used instead. The coder was instructed to record both the filename of each photo and the coder's judgement on whether the public official's face was recognizable or not in

a provided Excel spreadsheet. Once the coder was trained, both the coder and this thesis' author then simultaneously applied this process to the pilot data set. The two resulting spreadsheets were then compared. Before the intercoder test was conducted, I judged that if results in the spreadsheets are identical at least 95 per cent of the time, then the methodology will be deemed to possess an acceptable degree of reproducibility. The intercoder test returned two spreadsheets with data sets that were identical 98 per cent of the time, with 46 out of 47 identical pairings of coded photos. This result suggests that only including photos where the subject's face is clearly recognizable is suitable.

A pilot of the study's search procedures, performed from the 16th to the 17th of February, 2016, also utilized the text and image search functions of the Bing and Yahoo! search engines. They have been excluded from the methodology as Bing and Google returned virtually similar results for both the text and image search functions, while Yahoo! generally returned less relevant search results than Bing and Google, and fewer overall results as well.

Utilizing the entire associated text as a single string in the text search guards against modifications to this text by focusing searches on individual keywords. The use of many keywords in a single search should mean that a rewritten by-line or truncated social media post, for example, will still be found by Google's text search engine, as both pieces of text share enough important keywords. This precaution against false positives is reinforced by the time restrictions that were imposed on searches. In all searches I altered the search parameters to only return results published before 24 hours of the time of the search. A text search for the name of the photographer or source of the photo was used to find reproductions that indicated the source but otherwise did not carry a byline or any other kind of associated text. The Google searches

were performed after all available social media data were recorded as an extra precaution against double counts.

Data were recorded in two Excel spreadsheets. The first records reproductions of photos of the five public officials in this study, with these data being sorted into columns for each public official. The second records reproductions of media institution photos, with data being sorted into columns for each media institution. All columns for both spreadsheets are further split into two sub-columns, one for non-social media web sites and the other for social media. These subdivisions facilitate the use of collected data in affirming or disproving this thesis' hypothesis by determining whether or not most reproductions occur in the realm of social media. In both tables, each photo had its own row to streamline recording data for individual photos.

A strength of the method chosen is its affordability. The PMO produces a variety of multimedia content across platforms that differ in what data are displayed, how it is displayed and in what ways an end viewer can manipulate it. The flexibility of Internet-based platforms means that the data being produced often change in volume, type, or presentation as web site functions are constantly changed. Focusing squarely on digital photos avoids the complexities and higher costs of collecting and processing these varying kinds of media, especially video and audio clips. Instead, my study surveyed static pieces of content that can be quickly processed and retained for further study.

Appendix B: URLs of all digital media platforms included in study
Prime Minister's Office
Government of Canada home page: http://www.canada.ca/en.html
PMO home page: http://pm.gc.ca/eng
PMO Twitter account: http://twitter.com/CanadianPM
The Instagram and Twitter accounts of Adam Scotti, Photographer to the Prime Minister:
http://www.instagram.com/adamscotti/ ; http://twitter.com/AdamScotti
PM Trudeau's Facebook account: http://www.facebook.com/JustinPJTrudeau
PM Trudeau's Flickr account: http://www.flickr.com/photos/pmtrudeau
PM Trudeau's Instagram account: http://www.instagram.com/justinpjtrudeau
Trudeau's MP Twitter account: https://twitter.com/JustinTrudeau
LPC home page: http://www.liberal.ca
LPC Facebook account: http://www.facebook.com/LiberalCA
LPC Instagram account: http://www.instagram.com/liberalca
LPC Twitter account: http://twitter.com/liberal_party

Other public officials
Ambrose's MP home page: http://ronaambrose.com
Opposition Leader Ambrose's Facebook account: http://www.facebook.com/ronaambrose
Opposition Leader Ambrose's Instagram account: http://www.instagram.com/ronaambrose
Opposition Leader Ambrose's Twitter account: http://twitter.com/RonaAmbrose
CPC home page: http://www.conservative.ca
CPC Facebook page: http://www.facebook.com/cpcpcc
CPC Twitter account: http://twitter.com/CPC_HQ
Minister Morneau's Facebook account: http://www.facebook.com/morneau.bill
Minister Morneau's Instagram account: http://www.instagram.com/billmorneau
Department of Finance home page: http://www.fin.gc.ca/fin-eng.asp
Department of Finance Flickr account: http://www.flickr.com/photos/fincanada
Department of Finance Twitter account: http://twitter.com/FinanceCanada
Morneau's MP Twitter account: http://twitter.com/Bill_Morneau
Chief of Staff Telford's Twitter account: http://twitter.com/telfordk
Premier Wynne's Facebook account: http://www.facebook.com/WynneFans
Premier's Office Flickr account: http://www.flickr.com/photos/premierphotos
Premier Wynne's Instagram account: http://www.instagram.com/kathleen_wynne/
Premier Wynne's Twitter account: http://twitter.com/Kathleen_Wynne
Wynne's MPP homepage: http://kathleenwynne.onmpp.ca
Liberal Party of Ontario (LPO) homepage: http://www.ontarioliberal.ca
LPO Facebook page: http://www.facebook.com/OntarioLiberalParty
LPO Flickr account: http://www.flickr.com/photos/ontarioliberal
LPO Twitter account: http://twitter.com/ontliberal

Appendix C: Digital media platforms publishing photos of other public officials studied

	Rona Ambrose	Bill Morneau	Katie Telford	Kathleen Wynne
Stand-alone web page	- Ambrose's MP homepage - CPC homepage	- Department of Finance homepage	None	- Wynne's Member of Provincial Parliament homepage - LPO homepage
Facebook	- CPC Facebook page - Opposition Leader Ambrose's Facebook account	- Minister Morneau's Facebook account	None	- Premier Wynne's Facebook account - LPO Facebook page
Flickr	None	- Department of Finance Flickr account	None	- Premier's Office Flickr account - LPO Flickr account
Instagram	- Opposition Leader Ambrose's Instagram account	- Minister Morneau's Instagram account	None	- Premier Wynne's Instagram account
Twitter	- Opposition Leader Ambrose's Twitter account - CPC Twitter account	- Department of Finance Twitter account - Morneau's MP Twitter account	- Chief of Staff Telford's Twitter account	- Premier Wynne's Twitter account - LPO Twitter account

CPC: Conservative Party of Canada
LPO: Liberal Party of Ontario