



**Editors**

**Prof. Dr. Tuğba Uçma UYSAL**  
**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ceray ALDEMİR**  
**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mehmet AVCI**

# **Manual for HEIs Sustainable Communication in Social Media**



**“How to Become a Changemaker?”**

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Manual for HEIs Sustainable  
Communication in Social Media**

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**Prof. Dr. Tuğba Uçma UYSAL<sup>1</sup>**

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ceray ALDEMİR<sup>2</sup>**

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mehmet AVCI<sup>3</sup>**



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<sup>1</sup> Prof. Dr. Tuğba Uçma Uysal , Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, utugba@mu.edu.tr ,  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3652-7221>

<sup>2</sup> Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ceray Aldemir, Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, cerayaldemir@mu.edu.tr,  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7996-4886>

<sup>3</sup> Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Avci, Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, mehmeta@mu.edu.tr,  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1201-6718>



"En İyi Akademi,  
Bir Kitaplıktır."

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- 0.544 225 37 38
- 0.312 215 14 50
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## **PREFACE**

In a more interconnected world, the significance of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) has intensified in tackling global concerns. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), established by the United Nations in 2015, constitute a global need to eradicate poverty, safeguard the environment, and guarantee prosperity by 2030. Higher Education Institutions are distinctly situated to lead this initiative, not just by educating future generations but also by acting as catalysts for sustainable transformation through research, innovation, and community involvement. To adequately fulfil their role in this global initiative, universities must reevaluate their communication strategies, particularly in their engagement with society and the promotion of sustainable development across all platforms, notably social media.

Social media serves as a potent instrument for higher education institutions to enhance their initiatives, interact with many stakeholders, and generate enduring influence through discourse on sustainability. This book, *How to Become a Changemaker? The manual for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) on Sustainable Communication in Social Media* tackles the urgent necessity for HEIs to leverage digital platforms for efficient and sustainable communication. It offers an extensive guidance to assist institutions in formulating strategies that connect with the SDGs while promoting collaboration, awareness, and action among students, staff, and external populations.

This e-book is the outcome of the "Development of Sustainable Communications of Higher Education Institutions in Social Media" project, supported by Erasmus+ under Project No: 2022-1-PL01-KA220-HED-000090164.



The book comprises five fundamental chapters, each concentrating on critical elements of sustainable communication for higher education institutions.

Chapter 1: Foundations of Sustainable Communication lays the groundwork by exploring the principles of sustainability in communication. It highlights the importance of aligning an institution's messaging with broader environmental and social goals, ensuring that sustainability is integrated into the core values of the institution's outreach and engagement efforts.

Chapter 2: Social Media Strategies for HEIs delves into how institutions can effectively utilize social media platforms to promote sustainability. This chapter outlines the specific strategies HEIs can adopt to maximize engagement, build community, and foster a culture of sustainability both on and off-campus.

Chapter 3: Content Development for Social Promotion focuses on the art of content creation, emphasizing the role of storytelling, visuals, and messaging that resonate with diverse audiences. It provides practical insights into creating content that not only educates but inspires action and advocates for long-term behavioral change.

Chapter 4: Enhancing Teamwork and Collaboration underscores the importance of cross-disciplinary collaboration and teamwork within HEIs to promote sustainable communication. It examines how universities can foster collaborative environments where academic departments, administrative bodies, and students work together to drive sustainability initiatives through cohesive communication efforts.

Chapter 5: Measuring Success in Sustainable Communication provides tools and frameworks for assessing the effectiveness of communication strategies. It offers metrics and key performance indicators that institutions can use to measure their success in engaging stakeholders and advancing sustainability goals through their digital communication efforts.

Each chapter is designed to equip HEIs with the knowledge and tools they need to become proactive changemakers, using communication as a lever for sustainability. The ultimate goal of this manual is to inspire institutions to take concrete actions toward creating a more sustainable future by engaging their communities through informed, strategic, and impactful communication.

Prof. Dr. Tuğba Uçma Uysal

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ceray Aldemir

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Avcı



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## **INTRODUCTION**

The traditional separation between academia and the professional world is becoming more porous and dynamic. How, in that regard, will the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) affect universities and vice versa? Higher education was never explicitly involved in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as either a development goal in its own right or as a potential agent to address other development goals. The focus was on primary education and particularly access (not educational outcomes). Progressively, the MDGs and international development became a discipline of study by interested students and researchers. Universities produced research, data and analysis of the MDGs experience. It could be said that universities followed the MDGs from the outside, from an observer vantage point, in most cases.

Sustainable development is crucial to the future of Europe and the entire planet. The framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ensures social cohesion, economic prosperity and protection of the environment. Education, research and innovation are essential in sustainable development, making universities key contributors to achieving the goals. The Sustainable Development Goals provide a common international framework for concrete action. Adopted in 2015 by 193 countries, the 17 goals have 169 targets and are part of the United Nations sustainable development agenda aimed at ending poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring prosperity by 2030. The European Union has committed to work towards these goals both within Europe and with its partners abroad.



It is widely agreed that integrating the SDGs into universities and colleges is both necessary and mutually beneficial. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are on a unique position to be at the forefront of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) promotion and serve as a benchmark for other sectors of the economy. HEIs can also contribute to the discussions on the SDGs in society at large.

The SDGs offer institutions an easily communicable sustainability blueprint that shows the education, awareness and behaviour change required to succeed in a world affected by continued global issues such as modern slavery, inequality, over consumption of finite resources and widespread pollution. They also help combat new challenges like the rapidly approaching climate crisis and its consequential extreme weather patterns. These Goals are relevant to every single person on this planet, but particularly students, as they will bear the brunt of inaction on these issues.

The SDG targets are very quantitative, they are designed to produce data from nation states to make sure progress can be benchmarked. Some of the SDG targets ask for data on education, but for the most part they do not. So how can education institutions contribute? Education must be integrated into every single SDG. Without education, progress will not be sustainable. Therefore, it essential that the Higher and Further Education sector realises they have a key role to play in the SDGs and starts to integrate them holistically across their curriculum and campus, and into their research, leadership, operations, administration and engagement activities.

It is important to remember that the SDGs were designed to be symbiotic and not viewed in a standalone sense, and therefore most of the examples could fit under several of the SDGs. The SDGs work together to create holistic Sustainable Development, just as an institution must. There is no right or wrong way to start contributing towards the SDGs. But the education sector must accept responsibility to play a central and transformational role in attaining the

Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and they must have a plan on how to do this with a reporting mechanism.

The SDGs can be grouped into three broad areas: well-being, the environment and the economy. Universities play a central role in all three. Access to quality education is crucial for sustainable development and a pre-requisite for the achievement of the other goals. Higher education facilitates social mobility, empowers people through critical thinking and provides them with the skills needed in a rapidly changing labour market. Higher education contributes in various ways to making people more resilient and able to face various challenges. Recent OECD statistics confirm that people with a higher education degree are less likely to be unemployed and earn on average 54% more than those who only completed upper secondary education. A university education, thus, better protects against poverty.

Furthermore, the data reveals that higher education graduates are less likely to suffer from depression, which is an important factor for health and well-being. University hospitals play a key role in the public healthcare system. They train new generations of medical professionals, provide care to millions of patients and conduct research that helps find innovative solutions to cure or even prevent disease. Universities are closely connected to their regions, playing a crucial role in the education, innovation, culture and civic life of their local communities.

They are also major employers, making considerable economic contributions to their regions. Universities conduct fundamental research that is crucial to understanding how nature and the earth's ecosystems function. They gather people from various disciplines, with different approaches and talents to find innovative solutions to the world's challenges. Research produces evidence that is indispensable in identifying developments in climate change and global warming, as well as their impact. Research is also crucial in understanding the interactions of various SDGs, identifying trade-offs and mutual reinforcements

and developing a balanced approach in pursuing them. Interdisciplinarity is a key factor in this process. Digitalisation, automation and globalisation are changing labour markets in a rapid and radical way.

The demand for highly skilled people is increasing, making re-training and up-skilling ever more important. Today in Europe, about 40% of young people have a higher education degree and this is likely to increase, as will the role of universities in providing lifelong learning. Sustainable development is only possible if we radically change the way we produce and consume. Innovative solutions must be developed in a collaborative effort. Universities work with companies, other education providers and local stakeholders in this regard, often supporting business creation through start-ups. This makes higher education a key facilitator in open innovation. Universities also provide the international links and pipelines needed to nourish local innovation ecosystems and achieve sustainable growth. Strong institutions accountable to society are a key component of sustainable development.

Strong autonomous universities are important partners of governments, companies and civil society in working towards common goals. These partnerships and collaborations are crucial in the promotion and implementation of the SDGs, both in Europe and internationally. Universities facilitate people-to-people contact and are important actors in soft diplomacy. Thousands of mobile students cross borders to gain knowledge about new cultures and bring understanding about their own countries to their hosts. Researchers cooperate around the globe, building networks and developing the knowhow needed to sustain innovation worldwide. HEIs can be a key contributor to society's progress towards gender equality (SDG5).

For example, HEIs' teaching and learning helps female social mobility, their research helps identifying gender equality gaps in society, their reasons and consequences. HEIs also fight against sexual violence, abuse and harassment

within their campuses with proactive policies and resources. HEIs can have a direct impact on sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11) in many different ways. From the integration of the campus into the urban environment and its open spaces, their housing, transportation, cultural, security, sustainability and infrastructure policies, to the integration of local and regional contexts into their research (e.g. to solve local urban problems) and their curricula (e.g. experiential learning). Universities provide cutting-edge research, high quality education, and ground-breaking innovation (Goal 4 and 9). Strong universities are an important part of civil society (Goal 16) and they are excellent promoters of global and local partnerships (Goal 17).

Through their contributions to these four goals, universities facilitate the achievement of all the other goals. Notably, universities support students in developing the rigorous scientific mind set and spirit of curiosity and entrepreneurship needed to produce the solutions required for sustainable development. University researchers, teachers and students work in partnership with citizens and the private and the public sector, co-creating knowledge that can produce solutions. It is the combination of these core missions that gives universities a unique place in the common effort to achieve the SDGs. Colleges and universities are a breeding ground for innovation and creativity. There, students are being exposed to new ideas while formulating the basis of their values going into their professional careers and beyond.

While much learning takes place inside a classroom, students can learn just as much from the atmosphere created around them. The implementation of sustainability reporting within these higher education institutions demonstrates to students and other stakeholders the importance of accountability and environmental stewardship within all organizations and facets of life. Sustainability reporting is an important tool for HEIs to communicate their environmental, social, and economic impacts and their efforts to improve performance in all three areas of sustainability. At the same time, reporting

demonstrates their commitment to sustainability and can inspire others to take similar responsibility for their own actions for a more sustainable future. Educational institutions can also use sustainability reports to highlight collaborations and partnerships with other organizations or stakeholders to achieve sustainability objectives.

Higher education institutions have a unique platform to promote sustainability and environmental stewardship in future leaders and decision-makers. Sustainability reports can pique the interest of the student audience by describing sustainable practices on campus as well as efforts to reduce their environmental footprint in the community. Sustainability reports typically cover a range of topics such as energy and water usage, waste management, transportation, procurement, greenhouse gas emissions, and sustainability-related education and research initiatives. One crucial step involved in reporting on these topics is identifying stakeholders to gather critical insights and feedback. While stakeholders will vary depending on the institution, all HEIs have a major stakeholder group in common: the student body.

A recent UNESCO report titled “Knowledge-driven actions: transforming higher education for global sustainability” emphasizes the importance of partnerships and collaborations with stakeholders. Most sustainability reports follow a framework such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) or the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB). However, data on international trends in sustainability reporting shows that the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) is the most popular reporting framework used by HEIs in the United States, followed by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) framework. The STARS framework – a program of The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) – is designed specifically for colleges and universities. Its aim is to “measure, report and strengthen [the institutions’] contributions to global sustainability.”

# CHAPTER 1

## FOUNDATIONS OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNICATION

Prof. Andreas Ahrens<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Jelena Zascerinska<sup>2</sup>

Sustainable communication is highly topical and relevant in all the aspects of modern life. The significance of sustainable communication is emphasised by the complexity of its role in dealing with problem situations. Sustainable communication helps solve many issues. For example, empowering digital transformation as part of the European Green Deal (Fetting, 2020), or building a safe working environment free of, e.g., sexual harassment or similar, or making local communities more entrepreneurial to react to economic crises. Therefore, sustainable communication is a means and a tool in problem solving.

The use of social media increases the impact on sustainable communication of higher education institutions (HEIs). Social media helps reach a wide spectrum of public engaging university staff, students, business and enterprise stakeholders, policy makers, governmental representatives, and all the interested. Therefore, the understanding of sustainable communication is the cornerstone when achieving

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<sup>1</sup> Hochschule Wismar, University of Applied Sciences: Technology, Business and Design, andreas.ahrens@hs-wismar.de, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7664-9450>

<sup>2</sup> Centre for Education and Innovation Research, [iizi.info@inbox.lv](mailto:iizi.info@inbox.lv), <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4664-8593>

the success of leveraging social media by HEIs. By the end of using Chapter 1 Foundations of Sustainable Communication, the chapter users should be able:

- To analyse the background information on sustainable communication;
- To evaluate the inter-connections between diverse opinions, develop ability to present their own perspective on the problem solution, and solve problems;
- To build the steps when implementing sustainable communication;
- To reflect on achieved results when evaluating the implementation of sustainable communication.

### **I. Methodological background of sustainable communication**

Methodological background can be described as beliefs and assumptions on which the understanding of work or research is based on. The present methodological background is presented in the format of principles. Principles are defined as one's collection of concepts about the world as an orientation for his/her behaviour (Ahrens & Zaščerinska, 2015). The methodological background of sustainable communication implies the consideration of the principles (OECD, 2019) the contemporary world is based on as shown in Table 1.

*Table 1 Key principles applied to the modern world* (adapted from OECD, 2019)

<b>Principle</b>	<b>Short description</b>
Interconnectedness	Everything in the universe is interrelated.
Interdependency	One phenomenon impacts the other existing or emerging phenomena.
Flux	Everything is in motion

These three key principles, namely interconnectedness, interdependency, and flux, shape our understanding of the existence of the modern world. It means that a change in interconnectedness, interdependency, and motion might impact the modern world. Some of the changes might have a great impact or a certain influence on the world, in general, and its entities, specifically. The same is also relevant for sustainable communication: a change in information will ensure the emergence of new knowledge, and similar situations.

## **II. Methodological framework for sustainable communication**

The interdependency in the modern world urges individuals' ability to equalise the existence of contradictions and incompatibilities as well as to turn complexity and ambiguity into comfort (OECD, 2019). A specific point of view on an entity shapes a framework (Ahrens & Zaščerinska, 2014). Consequently, methodological framework represents the inter-related procedural aspects to be applied to a specific situation (Ahrens & Zaščerinska, 2014).

The methodological framework for sustainable communication intends reconciliation of problem and tension situations in the existing world as well as building a better world in terms of sustainability. These imply considering the inter-connectedness and interdependency of entities in the world as well as their impact on the existing and future world in short and long terms (OECD, 2019). By doing that, individuals improve their ability to equalise contrary requirements, enrich their ability to present their point of view, and solve a range of various problems and tensions (OECD, 2019). Both problem solving and building the sustainable world cannot be done without empathy and respect (OECD, 2019). For empathy and respect, individuals' strong morality code includes sustainable co-existence with others and the planet based on an objective reality reflection (OECD, 2019).



### III. Methodological approach to sustainable communication

The principles of interconnectedness, interdependency, and motion are reflected in the research methodology built as the unity of external and internal perspectives (Zaščerinska, 2011). This approach accentuates the existence of two perspectives as depicted in Figure 1 (Zaščerinska, 2011). The two perspectives include the external perspective, on the one hand, and the internal perspective (Zaščerinska, 2011), on the other hand.

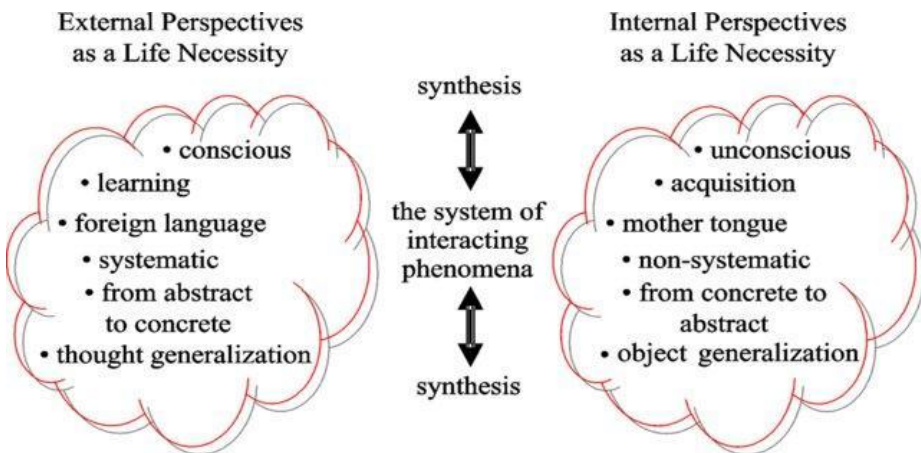


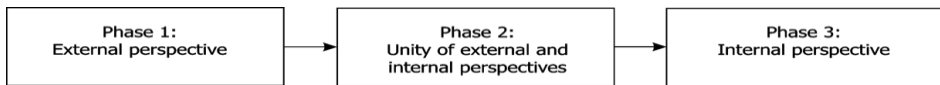
Figure 1. *The unity of perspectives* (Zaščerinska, 2011)

The external aspect relates to the process, while the internal one refers to the process results (Ahrens, Zascerinska, & Aleksejeva, 2021) as illustrated in Table 2 (Ahrens, Dzerviniks, Skromule, Usca, Blazulioniene, Zascerinska, Kavolius, & Hognadottir, 2024).

Table 2 *Sustainability as the system of the perspectives* (adapted from Ahrens, Dzerviniks, Skromule, Usca, Blazulioniene, Zascerinska, Kavolius, & Hognadottir, 2024)

<b>Sustainability</b>	
<i>External sustainability</i>	<i>Internal sustainability</i>
Sustainable processes	Sustainability results

The methodology proceeds in three phases. It starts from the external perspective, then it moves to the system of perspectives, and, finally, goes to the internal perspective (Zaščerinska, 2011) as shown in Figure 2 (Ahrens & Zaščerinska, 2012).



*Figure 2. Phases of the development of the perspectives* (adapted from Ahrens & Zaščerinska, 2012)

Further on, both perspectives are interrelated and interdependent (Ahrens, Dzerviniks, Skromule, Usca, Blazulioniene, Zascerinska, Kavolius, & Hognadottir, 2024). This interconnectedness and interdependency can be described as the dependency of results on the implemented process (Ahrens, Dzerviniks, Skromule, Usca, Blazulioniene, Zascerinska, Kavolius, & Hognadottir, 2024). If the process is carried out in accordance with the plan and schedule, the intended results are obtained (Ahrens, Dzerviniks, Skromule, Usca, Blazulioniene, Zascerinska, Kavolius, & Hognadottir, 2024). If the process has some deviations from the plan and schedule, results might be different when compared to the intended results (Ahrens, Dzerviniks, Skromule, Usca, Blazulioniene, Zascerinska, Kavolius, & Hognadottir, 2024). The process is in fluid and in motion, therefore the result might change along with the shifts in the process implementation (Ahrens, Dzerviniks, Skromule, Usca, Blazulioniene, Zascerinska, Kavolius, & Hognadottir, 2024).

#### **IV. Theoretical Concepts: notions, elements, and procedures in the context of HEI**

By sustainability, stability is understood (Emas, 2015). Stability means the process that proceeds without dramatic fluctuation, or without significant

changes. Therefore, sustainability can be characterised as two-sided sustainability. Two-sided sustainability includes (Ahrens, Zascerinska, & Aleksejeva, 2021)

- sustainable communication, on the one side, and
- sustainability communication, on the other side.

Sustainable communication and sustainability communication are different in their meaning (Ahrens, Zascerinska, & Aleksejeva, 2021). Sustainable communication means the sustainable process of information exchange, also known as sustainable process of communication, (Elving, 2020). And sustainability communication is defined as an individual's competence (knowledge, skills and attitude) to sustainable development, also known as communication for sustainable development.

Sustainability is differentiated into external and internal sustainability (Ahrens, Zascerinska, & Aleksejeva, 2021). Table 3 shows the relationships between the perspectives as well as sustainability.

**Table 3 The inter-relations between the perspectives and sustainability**

(adapted from Ahrens, Zascerinska, Bikova, Aleksejeva, Zascerinskis, & Gukovica, 2023)

<b>The system of the perspectives</b>	
<i>External perspective</i>	<i>Internal perspective</i>
Sustainable communication	Sustainability communication

The established relationships between the perspectives and sustainability reveal that persons transform information into knowledge. Persons' knowledge, skills and attitude are the results of information processing. This shows that information and knowledge are inter-connected. Connections between information and knowledge also include data. Table 4 demonstrates the inter-connections between

data, information and knowledge.

*Table 4 Data, information and knowledge and their inter-connections* (adapted from Ahrens, Zascerinska, Bikova, Aleksejeva, Zascerinskis, & Gukovica, 2023)

<b>Phenomenon</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Information</b>	<b>Knowledge</b>
Meaning	Symbol	Facts	Definition
Explanation	Can be expressed by different means, e.g. sign, text, letter, digit, code, audio record, or images, etc (Kemp, Butler-Henderson, Allen, & Ayton, 2021).	Statement of an event (Zelinkis, 2020; Kalpana & Kumar, 2020)	Statement of entity’s meaning, constructing parts, and procedural measures (Ahrens, Zaščerinska, & Andreeva, 2013)
Inter-connection between the phenomena	New facts are presented by data (Lasmanis, Sporāne, Pakalne, Kalniņa, Mukāne, Hofmane, & Mauliņa, 2008)	Data that was processed, analysed and interpreted is defined as information (Sedkaoui, 2019)	Processed information means knowledge (Ferreira, 2008)

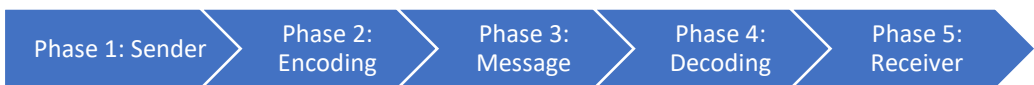
The following inter-relations between data, information and knowledge are determined:

- Information is based on data,
- Information builds the basis for knowledge, and
- Knowledge is constructed on the analysed information that stems from data.

The interconnectedness between data, information and knowledge prescribes their motions in the following direction:

- First, data appears.
- Second data are converted into information,
- Finally, knowledge is created.

There is a general problem of efficiency of sustainable communication in many fields of our life. The key problem is the organisation of such a process of sustainable communication that allows for the increase of process results. A difficulty is related to the understanding of the communication process as a one-way linear process as depicted in Figure 3.



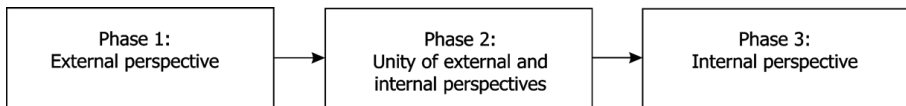
*Figure 3 One-way linear communication process* (adapted from Ahrens, Zascerinska, Bikova, Aleksejeva, Zascerinskis, & Gukovica, 2023)

Communication process is a social activity (Tilla, 2003). Communication process is designed on the basis of Activity Theory formulated by Leontyev (Leont'ev, 1978). Despite Vygostky describing the activity concept in his psychological investigations, Leontyev clearly separated an individual action from social activity (Blunden, 2009). Leontyev indicated that individual action is a part of social activity (Blunden, 2009). Social activity gives a meaning to individual action (Blunden, 2009).

Vygotsky presented the Law of Development, also known as interiorization (Sitarov, 2004). Vygotsky's Law of Development means that society's (external) culture is transformed into a person's (internal) culture (Wells, 1994). This process of transformation of external culture into internal culture implies that any psychological function in a person's development emerges two times (Wells,

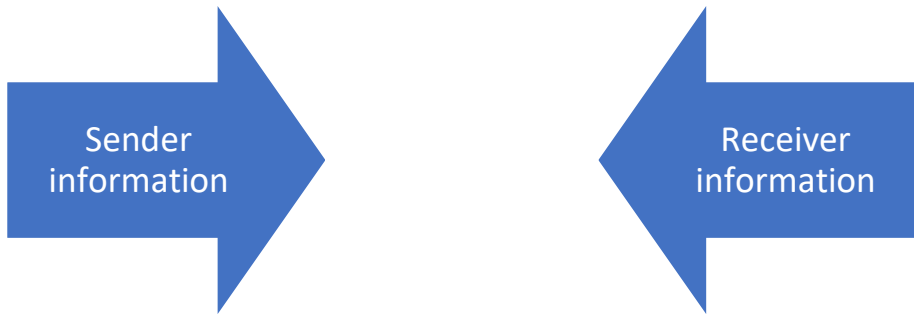
1994). The first time it appears on the social level (the external perspective), and, later, on the individual level (the internal perspective) (Wells, 1994).

On the basis of Vygotsky's Law of Development, two phases of interiorization are determined. Phase 1 includes social activity, and Phase 2 deals with person's action. Recently, the process of interiorization based on the Vygostky's Law of Development was extended by a middle phase. A new version of the process of interiorization includes a connecting phase defined as the unity of perspectives (Zaščerinska, 2013). Extended version of the process of interiorization is shown in Figure 4.



*Figure 4 Phases of the extended process of interiorization based on the Vygotsky's Law of Development* (adapted from Ahrens & Zaščerinska, 2012)

The application of the updated model of the process of interiorization, presented in Figure 4, to the communication process reveals that the process of communication being widely accepted as information exchange is not relevant any longer. The model of the process of interiorization, presented in Figure 4, demonstrates that communication has been transformed into information interaction. This new vision of the process of interiorization supports the opinion that information is not transferred in a linear way from the sender to the receiver. The model of the process of interiorization, presented in Figure 4, promotes the understanding of the communication process that there is a simultaneous information exchange between the sender and the receiver as depicted in Figure 5. The information sent by both the sender and the receiver intersects, impacts each other and becomes richer in content. On the basis of communication as a means of non-linear process, new knowledge is created by participating persons.



*Figure 5 Communication as a non-linear process* (adapted from Ahrens, Zascerinska, Bikova, Aleksejeva, Zascerinskis, & Gukovica, 2023)

The process of sustainable communications and results of this process are interconnected as well. Table 5 illustrates their links.

*Table 5 Links between sustainable communications and its results* (adapted from Ahrens, Zascerinska, Bikova, Aleksejeva, Zascerinskis, & Gukovica, 2023)

<b>Element of sustainable communication</b>	<b>The process</b>	<b>Result of the process</b>
<b>Definition</b>	Sustainable communication	Sustainability
<i>Notion</i>	<i>Information exchange</i>	<i>Person’s skills and attitudes to sustainable development</i>

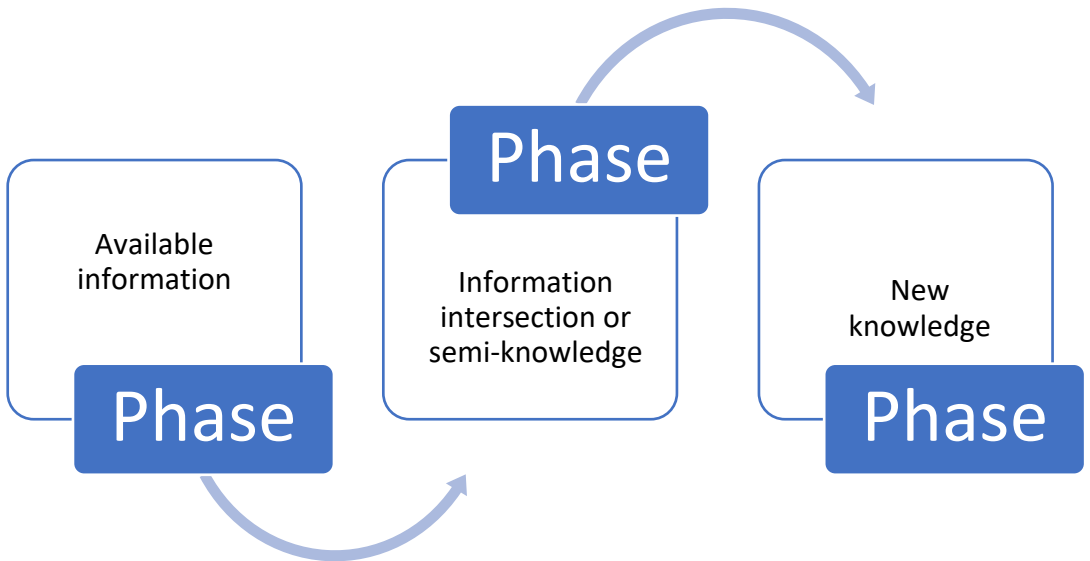
Analysis of the process of interiorization reveals that sustainable communication is not a linear process, it has a cyclic nature (Ahrens, Zašcerinska, Lange, & Aleksejeva, 2021). Consequently, it can be repeated as many times as required. The need for repeating is reflected by achieved results. If achieved results are satisfactory and improvements are expected, the process can be re-started.

Sustainable communication has social nature (Ahrens, Zaščerinska, Lange, & Aļeksejeva, 2021). Communication changes within and by society (Ahrens, Zaščerinska, Lange, & Aļeksejeva, 2021). Moments of changes in communication are mirrored by the links between data, information, and new knowledge. As soon as data are collected, analysed and converted into information, as well as information is interpreted, new knowledge is created. The emergence of new knowledge creates the need for a new round of sustainable communication. Also, the appearance of new knowledge brings a deeper understanding of the complexity of the surrounding environment. This leads to a new level of sustainability.

Also, sustainable communication is characterised by its bi-module nature (Ahrens, Zaščerinska, Lange, & Aļeksejeva, 2021). Sustainable communication is built on the realisation of both perspectives (external and social, on the one hand, and internal and individual, on the other hand). Ignorance or dominance of one of the perspectives might have a non-desirable effect on sustainable communication as well as sustainability due to the disequilibrium.

Integration of the links between information and knowledge, on the one hand, and external and internal perspectives, on the other hand, determines the implementation of the process of sustainable communication in three phases as revealed in Figure 6.





*Figure 6 Procedural aspects of sustainable communication* (adapted from Ahrens, Zascerinska, Bikova, Aleksejeva, Zascerinskis, & Gukovica, 2023)

The links between information and knowledge push the process of sustainable communication to move in three phases. The process starts with Phase 1 that deals with available information. The process continues with Phase 2 that provides information intersection, also known as semi-knowledge. The process finishes with Phase 3 that aims at constructing new knowledge.

Each phase is clearly separated from each other. Each phase of the process is built on the previous one. For the creation of new knowledge, the implementation of the three phases have to take place. The three phases have to be sequentially implemented. If a result is not achieved in one of the phases, the next phase does not have to start. It is recommended to complete a present phase before moving to the next one.

## V. Tips for The Trainers

**TIP 1:** An issue to be considered by trainers is that trainers intend to organise an interactive process. However, very often instead of an interactive communication process they implement a linear process that moves in one direction. In the linear process, “the sender receives a stimulus and encodes a message for the receiver. The receiver interprets the message and returns feedback to the first point” (Llopis-Lorente, Díez, Sánchez, Marcos, Sancenón, Martínez-Ruiz, Villalonga, & Martínez-Máñez, 2017, p. 3). Afterward, the sender becomes the receiver, and the receiver appears as the sender, they exchange their roles (Llopis-Lorente, Díez, Sánchez, Marcos, Sancenón, Martínez-Ruiz, Villalonga, & Martínez-Máñez, 2017). And the communication model is repeated.

In a situation of two persons’ communication, one person, for example, is discussing an issue, the other person shows, even can be non-consciously, his/her reaction by the use of different supportive sounds, facial expressions, or other means of non-verbal communication. Consequently, individuals do not communicate in a sequential way but they simultaneously interact with each other. Non-verbal communication is part of communication. In non-verbal communication, information is exchanged via gestures, eye contact, body movement, etc. The reaction of the second person observed by the speaking person might lead to the communication transformation that, in turn, can influence communication sustainability.

**TIP 2:** There is a difference between the process and a result of the process. Therefore, it is important to differentiate between sustainable communication and sustainability communication. Sustainable communication is defined to be the process. Sustainability communication is the result of the sustainable communication process. The process of sustainable communication is implemented in three phases. It starts with the evaluation of available information and is further aimed at the creation of new knowledge.

**TIP 3:** For the implementation of sustainable communication, it is important to evolve both perspectives, namely external (social) and internal (individual). Sustainable communication starts with the social perspective and moves through the system of perspectives to the individual one. A domination of one of the perspectives will lead to disbalance in communication and sustainability as they are inter-linked.

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## CHAPTER 2

# SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES FOR HEIS

Dr. Ana Filipa Oliveira<sup>1</sup>

Ana Lamy<sup>2</sup>

Prof. Timóteo Rodrigues<sup>3</sup>

The last few decades have marked a profound change in how people and institutions communicate, mainly due to the growth and solidification of digital tools. Social networks, in particular, have emerged as powerful communication tools, providing new opportunities for institutions to reach their target audiences and create solid and involved communities - these platforms are redefining how individuals socialise and how people relate to organisations (Reuben[3], 2008). The same applies to higher education institutions (HEIs). Social media channels have become relevant communication and marketing tools, playing a fundamental role in how these institutions engage with different stakeholders—students, alumni, teachers, researchers, and potential candidates. These platforms appear to be dynamic and interactive spaces for sharing information, promoting events,

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<sup>1</sup> Lusófona University/ CICANT, ana.filipa.oliveira@ulusofona.pt, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3655-9984>

<sup>2</sup> Lusófona University, f8043@ulusofona.pt, <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-5434-8625>

<sup>3</sup> Lusófona University, timoteo.rodrigues@ulusofona.pt, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2861-0604>

highlighting academic achievements, and strengthening institutional identity.

Social networks have also become essential for building and solidifying HEIs in the market, providing new tools for strategic communication. With the wide variety of formats and content they offer — from informative posts to educational videos — institutions are finding new ways to establish closer and more authentic connections with their target audiences. An appropriate approach to social media can contribute to attracting new talent, fostering new partnerships, and improving global recognition.

However, there are strategic issues with HEIs using social media. Using social media demands a more profound comprehension of communication as a transformational process and what a content strategy comprises than just knowing its features and the best formats. In a time when social media is king, HEIs success depends on implementing innovative tactics and creative ways to maximise their online presence.

By the end of this chapter, readers should be able to:

- Identify different social media channels and their unique features;
- Understand the importance of defining sound and transparent social media strategies sustained in specific objectives for each channel or platform;
- Define key metrics and tools to track the effectiveness of social media strategies;
- Identify and prevent common mistakes and risks in managing online reputation and handling negative feedback.

## **I. Understanding the Role of Social Media in Higher Education**

In recent years, digital communication strategy has become a crucial component of organisations' more comprehensive strategic communication efforts. Defining how organisations present their identity and values, distribute their messages, and interact with stakeholders via digital platforms is vital. Social media is integral to higher education institutions' communication strategies in this intensely mediated context. They can present new ways of promoting an institution's mission, values and identity, attract scholars and staff, and even attract potential partners and patrons. Besides this, in an era of information overload, social media platforms can offer advanced targeting and personalisation options, opportunities for interacting and engaging in real-time communication with audiences, and leverage compelling visual elements to captivate the audience. The basis for fulfilling these promises is a sustained communication strategy aligned with the institution's mission and identity. From the good old Facebook to the modern and irreverent TikTok, all social networks are based on shared principles: networking, communication, knowledge generation and experience sharing (Capriotti & Zeler, 2023; Zeler & Capriotti, 2014[9]; Paintsil & Kim, 2022)[5]. All these criteria are crucial for higher educational institutions.

In the following paragraphs, we present an overview of the current social media landscape, explore the opportunities and challenges of using each, and discuss the importance of planning to ensure an efficient communication strategy.

### ***1.1. From the roots to the digital strategies***

The roots of social networks go back to the 1990s when the first digital platforms that allowed users to connect and communicate instantaneously began to emerge. However, in the early 2000s, with Friendster (2002) and later MySpace and LinkedIn (2003), social networks became popular and gradually became their

place in routine activities. The following years, with the appearance of Facebook (2004) and Twitter (2006), profoundly marked how individuals connect and interact - whether for social networking or enhancing social capital (Ellison et al. 2007[6] ), developing customer relationships (Eriksson & Larsson 2014[7] ), or online engagement and marketing (Cvijikj & Michahelles 2013[8] ).

Gradually, social networks became an integral part of people's daily lives. Moreover, organisations, too, began to realise the potential of these platforms for commercial and institutional communication. Rather than reaching out and exploring different marketing approaches, social media opened up the potential to improve business-related interactions with target audiences in a more personalised way (Chugh & Ruhi, 2018[9] ). So, while in its early days, the use of social media for business purposes served to promote products and services and increase brand visibility, over time, social media has become a comprehensive business communication channel addressing areas such as customer service, talent recruitment, reputation management and stakeholder relationship development. In addition, and in light of recent history, social networks have proved to be crucial communication platforms for managing interaction and the reputation of organisations in times of crisis, ensuring communication and interactivity and, thus, the institutions' social presence (Sobaih et al., 2020[10] ).

Cuenca-Fontbona and colleagues (2022[11] ) highlight that, due to the abovementioned potential, social media are a fundamental part of a strategic communication plan nowadays. Working with them, however, requires mastery of several interdependent dimensions (Capriotti & Zeler, 2023). Firstly, the posting performance. This concerns, on the one hand, the frequency of publication and, on the other, the type of content shared. Finding the right balance between the two will be fundamental if each institution understands which publication dynamics, types of content and frequency best suit its objectives and strategy (Capriotti & Zeler, 2023).

Secondly, a focus on interactivity. Interactivity is one of the critical aspects of Web 2.0 and one that has revolutionised the way we use the internet and digital tools - including social networks. Focusing communication strategies on the dialogue and contact fostered by social networks will benefit relations between the organisation and its stakeholders. To this end, the communication approach and resources are aspects that deserve attention on the part of organisations since they can dictate the success of their communication on social networks. According to Theunissen and Wan Noordin[12] (2012), the most successful organisations create dialogue environments that facilitate stakeholder engagement. Thus, by defining consistent digital communication strategies, HEIs can promote online users' engagement (Eberle[13] et al., 2013), leading to meaningful interactions with their stakeholders (Capriotti & Zeler, 2020).

Finally, content combination is an aspect that profoundly relates to selecting, prioritising and combining different types of content related to the HEI's activities (Fähnrich et al., 2020). Social networks enable the dissemination of different types of content, allowing each HEI to devise its intervention plan. Therefore, and as Capriotti and Zeler refer Universities must decide the essential contents (the number of critical topics to talk about in their institutional communication through social networks) and the combination of contents (those with higher and lower presence) (pp. 4, 2023).

### ***1.2. Opportunities and Challenges of Social Media***

For a long time, higher education institutions were solely organisations that provided advanced training opportunities for individuals belonging to a particular group - especially those looking for first-cycle training to enter the labour market later. With the social and technological changes that have taken place over the last two decades, higher education institutions have been forced to renew their organisation and diversify their curricular offer. Consequently, Marketing

specialists, PR departments and Communications offices have been encouraged to redefine their marketing and communication strategies. In this sense, in the last decade, online platforms, particularly social networks, have been gaining prominence in the online communication strategy of these institutions.

Starting with the advantages, using social networks in the context of higher education institutions presents a number of opportunities worth highlighting. Firstly, they make it possible to establish contact and conversations in real-time with current and future students, staff and other stakeholders. This aspect stands out as HEIs can share news, information on events, resources developed, and updates on activities carried out by faculty members, researchers and others through social media. Doing so opens the door to establishing more instant communication channels and meaningful stakeholder interaction (Capriotti & Zeler, 2023). There is also the potential of building and strengthening communities, enabling HEIs to foster a sense of belonging among their audiences. This can be achieved either through the potential to create differentiating and striking content or through curating meaningful content that impacts target audiences - thus strengthening relationships, building trust, and cultivating loyalty (Junco et al., 2014). Lastly, social media allow institutions to go beyond traditional communication channels and to carry out basic tasks that are essential to the survival of institutions (Sobaih et al., 2020) [15]; Fishman, 2012[16] ): student recruitment, alumni engagement, fundraising, and patron relations. Furthermore, social media provide HEIs with low-cost communication and dissemination opportunities (Davies & Hara, 2017), which might be relevant when managing tight Marketing and Communication budgets.

Though, there is still a long way to go. After analysing the communication strategy of 70 higher education institutions based in the United States, Europe, and Latin America, Capriotti & Zeler (2023) concluded that although organisations are gradually integrating communication tools aimed at encouraging interaction with the different stakeholders, institutions

predominantly rely on monologues. Besides this, the authors (Capriotti & Zeler, 2023) point out that although institutions are considering social media channels already as part of their communication strategies, the majority still use them as positioning instruments (p. 11), meaning that there is a tendency to prioritise institutional content over materials associates with teaching and research. Institutional themes tend to generate higher levels of user engagement than those related to teaching, research and commitment (Capriotti et al., 2023[17] ) - something that may result in a restricted utilisation of social media platforms and the messages disseminated. The concerns raised by these and other authors (e.g. Fährnich et al., 2020[18]; Theunissen et al., 2012[19] ) prompt the inquiry into whether universities are effectively using the platforms to engage users in meaningful interaction or if they are instrumentally using these channels - to disseminate generalist information. There seems to be a need to continue reflecting on the impacts that this can have on community engagement and feedback.

As social media and digital communication quickly change, new challenges and opportunities arise. While multiple platforms can be challenging to manage, they can also provide specific channels for target key audiences. If, on the one hand, each channel has its demographics and characteristics, managing a high number of platforms is demanding in terms of content creation and curation, monitoring and planning. It might be hard to keep up with all trends, features and algorithmic updates. This requires team communication and marketing managers to update through ongoing research, monitoring and training constantly. There is also the matter of consistency - finding, improving and maintaining a voice while managing a wide range of social media channels can be challenging, particularly if we consider each channel's specificities (audience, features and content). It takes consistent planning and monitoring to ensure that an organisation communicates effectively and shares a unified message through all channels. The final challenge that we highlight is the competition and the saturation. As with



any other media, social media platforms are competitive communication spaces where all brands and organisations are battling to gain attention and recognition from their target audiences. More than a need, to be creative is a demand - differentiating from the competitors and capturing the audience's interest dictates the success of an organisation.

### ***1.3. More Than Sharing: Selecting and Planning***

In social media, the process of content sharing goes beyond content creation. Strategic planning and a sound definition of goals and objectives are paramount for organisations to establish a clear connection between their 1) communication goals, 2) key process indicators and the 3) expected impact (Scott[20],2015).

Defining suitable goals for communication in social media involves deciding what to post and when to post, reflecting on organisational priorities and identifying the needs and expectations of the target audiences. From brand awareness to fostering community engagement and even managing reputation, each goal must be aligned with the mission, values, and demographic characteristics of its target audience. Therefore, developing a digital communication plan that considers all these aspects will be the basis of success for organisations. Rather than promoting lengthy descriptions of the organisation's mission and sharing events and training, it will be essential for these plans to be aligned with the organisation's overall business objectives. Social platforms will thus take their place as complementary communication channels where engaged communities are built and solidified through the sharing of values, knowledge and experiences.

## **II. Establishing Key Objectives, Strategies and Identifying Best Practices**

Although many studies provide scientific knowledge for understanding marketing in general, when immersed in a strategic dimension, we need more clarity in

providing a holistic framework for social media marketing (Felix et al., pp. 118). So far, we have been reflecting on the importance of the use of social media by higher education institutions, considering the opportunities available in an increasingly digital world and the challenges posed by these new dynamics. Planning is one of the key factors these institutions adopt to make better use of their networks in order to provide a more effective response to these issues. This necessarily involves a specific approach regarding defining objectives and determining strategies that should support this planning.

### ***2.1. Objectives and Strategies of Social Media Marketing For HEI***

Derived from the Greek term 'holo' (meaning whole/complete), the word 'holistic' holds a relationship of interdependence between the whole and its parts (Holistic, n.d.). In this case, social media marketing encompasses the entire subject matter and its parts, as well as the various strategies to be taken for action on these platforms. Thus, the use of social media marketing will depend, as already mentioned, on delineating and implementing strategies, which, in turn, will imply, first and foremost, a definition of objectives.

All organisational communication, including that of HEIs, must be integrated, coherent, and consistent since these institutions aggregate diverse educational offerings, audiences, and areas of activity under varied constraints. In the digital realm, the reality is no different. Although the primary purpose is to communicate, we can think of two primary communicative objectives. Firstly, there is a desire to reach more and more people, whether current or potential future students, faculty, or other types of partners, to enhance and grow their activity. On the other hand, differentiating oneself from the competition becomes extremely important in positioning the brand name at the top of the public's thoughts and online searches (Maresova et al., 2020). In the next point, we will see some successful cases of prominent international institutions with a presence in the digital realm to understand their actions per these objectives.

However, more is needed to have in mind what one aims to achieve. It is also necessary to map out the steps to get there. In general, a digital strategy is nothing more than a communication plan based on the following points:



Image 1 - Digital strategy step by step

A quick overview of the scheme allows us to understand that, firstly, the steps to be followed for an institution's presence in the digital realm must be specified, such as the communicative objectives to be achieved. Then, it is essential to conduct an in-depth study of the organisation's characteristics, its competitors, and the current state of the environment in which it operates (since the digital reality can vary depending on the country or region). Furthermore, it is necessary to gather information about the digital environment's behaviour, for example, in terms of metrics, hashtags, and types of content, to understand the current context and anticipate changes that may occur soon. Knowing and evaluating the institution's financial scenario and the human and material resources available to implement the plan is also essential.

Regarding the set of actions designed to respond to the briefing, it is necessary to consider the target audiences, the messages to be conveyed, and the most suitable platforms to use, considering each objective. Finally, the construction of a program will guide the implementation of each planned action so that observation and evaluation can be carried out through indicators of the status of each task and the results generated insofar as they respond, negatively or affirmatively, to the

initial objectives. Also in this last point, the focus of analysis should be on specific concepts of digital marketing, such as interaction, traffic, and conversion (Marques, 2022).

## ***2.2. HEI's Best Practices in Social Media***

In a scientific study, Maresova et al. (2020) address the performance of the top ten universities in the world in the digital realm. This designation refers to the year 2017, conferred by the QS University Rankings, according to categories related to "academic reputation, employer reputation, faculty-student ratio, international faculty, international students, and citations per faculty member" (Maresova et al., 2020, p. 4). Our attention is thus focused on the investigated universe, composed of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT); Harvard University (HU); University of Cambridge (CU); Stanford University (SU); California Institute of Technology (Caltech); University of Oxford; University et al. (UCL); ETH Zurich—Swiss Federal Institute of Technology; Imperial College London; and the University of Chicago.

All of them, at the time of the study, had activity on the social media platforms Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook. However, as the latter is the most dynamic network overall, both by institutions and their audiences, it was adopted as the primary source of observation and discussion. The conclusions drawn from the analysis of these four platforms reveal distinctive facts. On the one hand, there are multiple posts in a single day on the Facebook social network, on Instagram, and Twitter. This decreases to one or two posts per day, while on YouTube, the frequency shifts from daily to monthly. This shows us that even with different strategies for different platforms, integrated digital communication results in growing followers without the need to resort to paid advertisements (in the study, only about 3% of the sample was identified as paid content).

Furthermore, it is worth noting the strategic focus on visual content (more photos and videos and less text) and emotional character, that is, with the sharing of stories of individuals connected to the institution, recognition of certain personalities, highlighting historical milestones, and the dissemination of relevant news and studies. All of this contributes positively to establishing stronger connections with the audience and a greater likelihood of increasing traffic in the digital space and conversion to the offerings of each institution (Maresova et al., 2020).

### **III. Social Media Strategies**

In the current moment we find ourselves in, the digital space is already as, or even more, important than physical space. We bear in mind that many national and international organisations, including Higher Education Institutions, maintain an official online presence. However, more than just having a website, the internet offers a plethora of platforms, namely social media. It is already estimated that by 2024, approximately 94% of internet users will also be present on social media, prompting us to consider the importance of their use and the advantages of understanding some of the characteristics and modes of operation of these networks (Datareportal, n.d.). In this context, we have selected, in descending order of total number of users, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, and others, such as TikTok or X (formerly Twitter).

#### ***3.1. Facebook***

The study presented earlier shows that Facebook is the social network with the most significant number of users, boasting a total of around 3 billion since its inception in 2004, with monthly visits steadily increasing. Currently, it is the preferred network for the age group, both male and female, aged 55 and above, and generally used to connect with close acquaintances, friends, and family (interestingly, the most sought-after activity among all social media users). Following this, photo and video sharing come next, combining these with text being the key to publishable content. Conversely, regarding click-through rates and advertising, the most affected audience falls between the ages of 35 and 64 (Datareportal, n.d.).

We are thus faced with the world's largest and most popular social network, encompassing a diversity of audiences and types of content that can be shared. In terms of advertising, it records high levels of interaction, visibility, and sales for the brands present here. Additionally, the fact that most Facebook users are also Instagram users allows for boosting and elevating every detail of this scenario. Analytically, Marques (2022) emphasises the importance of monitoring the evolution of the following parameters: number of followers, reach, interaction, views, and sales acquired. (Marques, 2022).

### ***3.2. YouTube***

Since 2005, YouTube has amassed around 2.5 billion users, making it the second-largest social network in the world. However, compared to Facebook, YouTube's advertising reach has not kept pace with the latter's growth. This fact could be pointed out as its main weakness, which may also explain the current absence of nominations among the top ten favourite platforms of social media users (Datareportal, n.d.). Regarding its audience, the predominant age group is 25 to 34, followed by 35 to 44, with more men than women using this social network. The most consumed content relates to video and live formats, and it is important to associate them with:

- digital elements of the brand, such as the website and official pages on other networks;
- language that is closer and more connected to the target audience and
- advertisements that allow for more revenue and reach new audiences.

The result will be, comfortably, greater visibility and recognition. However, it is crucial to focus our attention on the analysis of certain metrics such as the number of subscribers, likes, views, and website visits and the conversion of these into sales of the products and services offered by the brand or, in this case, the institution (Marques, 2022).

### ***3.3. Instagram***

Founded in 2010, Instagram already has around 2 billion users. Despite recording a lower number than Facebook, its growth has been significant year after year. In 2023 alone, the advertising reach of this network exceeded that of Facebook by seven percentage points. Another curiosity lies in the relationship established

between the use of each social network by the global community of these platforms. Once again, in the last year, it was observed that Instagram was the most used network by Facebook, YouTube, and X/Twitter users and the second most used by TikTok and LinkedIn users, always holding a prominent position. This confers high recognition value and justifies an urgency in directing brands to establish their presence on this platform.

As for its audiences, they are currently distributed relatively evenly between male and female genders, with greater adherence from groups aged between 18-24 and 25-34. Hence, the main reason why this network is widely sought after for sharing photos and videos. Its use for entertainment purposes and searching for brands/products is also explained (Datareportal, n.d.).

In conclusion, the content that works best for the Instagram social network is photography, video, stories, and carousel posts. In the advertising context, it is a network that provides high levels of interaction and visibility for brands, working, on the one hand, based on hashtags and what is "trending" and on the other hand, responding very positively to creative and original communication that fosters closeness to the audience. To achieve this, monitoring metrics such as the number of followers, reach and interaction in posts, and website visits is necessary. (Marques, 2022).

### ***3.4. LinkedIn***

LinkedIn has garnered approximately 1 billion users between 2003 (the year of its creation) and 2024. The fact is that, in the last year, similar to Instagram, this network saw a more significant increase in its advertising reach than the Facebook social network. Its users are also the ones who use Facebook and Instagram most, allowing for a strategic alliance between these three platforms for corporate and institutional advertising scenarios. What is also noteworthy here is the almost monopolistic presence of users between the ages of 25 and 34 (Business of Apps, n.d.).

Therefore, although LinkedIn is not generally one of the most used platforms, its most common activities are searching for current news and events and searching for brands/products. In this case, content sharing relating to long texts, accompanied by images, photographs, or videos, but also directing to links, articles, and news with academic, business, and general knowledge value stands

out. This way, the growth of projects, businesses, and other professional opportunities is encouraged in a communication considered, above all, B2B (business to business), but also B2G (business to government) and B2C (business to consumer).

Ultimately, LinkedIn aims to find a more segmented audience for the brands/organisations present on it, encourage a "perfect match" between individual profiles and professional pages, and, consequently, nurture brand visibility and recognition, as well as the desired interaction and conversion in this context. This shows us the indicators to evaluate in terms of the number and quality of followers, profile connections, website visits, post views, and interactions, among others (Marques, 2022).

### ***3.5. Other Social Media Channels***

Two other social networks can and should be analysed when considering the presentation of brands to their audience in the digital sphere. The first one is the most recent, TikTok, with around 1.6 billion current users, corresponding to its expansion and growth prospects. In a platform with more female users than male user and more young and young adult users between the ages of 18 and 24, what is observed is extraordinarily the preference of this social network for consuming entertainment content. It is also a social network that prioritises moving images (video) more than all others, serving to entertain the public and showcase products, brands and events or current news. Its persuasive power is very relevant, for example, in the famous #booktok phenomenon, which encourages younger people to adopt reading habits and consume more books. From this practical example, we can also conclude, and now analytically, the importance of studying hashtags to increase views on brands/institutions' publications and, consequently, their interaction and visibility (Datareportal, n.d.).

Regarding X/Twitter, this is a platform that currently has 619 million users. It has been losing advertising strength in recent times, due to the fluctuations it has been experiencing somewhat constantly, which ultimately affects the trust of the audience and the brands present on it. A year ago, significantly more men than women were using this social network. Nowadays, we can ascertain that the female age group that prefers this network is between 16-24, while the male age group is between 25-34, with minimal differences for 16-24 and 35-44 age groups. X/Twitter is substantially sought after by its audience for research on current news



and events or occurrences and then for searching for products/brands and entertainment content (Datareportal, n.d.).

The most shareable content is in text format, but also images, photographs, and videos. Currently, it already offers the possibility of going live. Hashtags prove, once again, to be an important way to stay close to the audience searching for viral phenomena and current events or specific brands. Thus, the analysis of results should be done according to the number of followers, reach and interaction in publications, and clicks/visits on shared links and websites.

#### **IV. Discussion and TIPS: Which channels to choose?**

Considering all the aspects above mentioned, it is clear that an efficient social media planning requires choosing effective channels to communicate with target audiences. Therefore:

- LinkedIn and Facebook can greatly contribute to building professional networks with current students and alumni.
- X (ex-Twitter) can be useful to posting trending content or posting in real time, particularly news or announcements.
- Instagram and Pinterest - highly visual platforms - are a great way to build brand image through emotion.
- TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube are perfect for video content. Particularly YouTube allows institutions to build a fanbase around a dedicated video channel.

Even if each platform can serve its own purpose, there is a golden rule: storytelling and compelling narratives are key. Stories that combine short videos, good photos, quirky captions, and popular filters can enhance HEIs digital performance and overall recognition.

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# CHAPTER 3

## CONTENT DEVELOPMENT FOR SOCIAL PROMOTION

Egemen Kahraman<sup>1</sup>

Content development for social promotion involves creating engaging and relevant material to be shared on social media platforms to reach and attract target audiences. In the technological era, understanding the basics of content-based marketing and promotion on social media is crucial (Herdiansyah et al., 2022). By involving target audiences in the creation of promotional content sense of community and belonging can be fostered, leading to more effective engagement.

Content development for social promotion in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is a critical aspect that aligns with the evolving role of HEIs in society. Over the years, HEIs have faced increasing pressure to engage more actively with societal needs and promote sustainable practices (Prantl et al., 2021). Additionally, the role of HEIs in fostering social innovation and sustainability has gained prominence, with studies emphasizing the importance of co-creation and knowledge management in driving social change (Kumari et al., 2019). Moreover, the utilization of digital transformation and social media has become essential for HEIs to communicate effectively with stakeholders and promote their social agendas (Trevisan et al., 2023). Social media platforms have provided HEIs with new avenues to engage with students, alumni, and the wider community, enhancing brand equity and customer engagement (Perera, 2020).

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<sup>1</sup> Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, egemenkahraman@mu.edu.tr, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4171-7628>

Strategic development of content for social promotion is not only pivotal for enhancing engagement and building community but also serves as a cornerstone for Higher Education Institutions to fulfill their societal obligations. The integration of digital transformation and social media in HEIs' operations has revolutionized the way they interact with stakeholders, fostering a culture of co-creation and knowledge sharing that is essential for social innovation. As HEIs continue to navigate the challenges of the digital era, their commitment to sustainable practices and active societal engagement through effective content promotion will remain integral to their success and relevance in the 21st century. This evolution reflects a broader shift towards a more interconnected and responsive educational landscape, where the power of social media is harnessed to drive positive change and build a more informed and engaged global community.

Accordingly the learning objectives of this chapter are:

**Strategic Planning Mastery:** Understand and apply strategic planning principles to content development, ensuring alignment with overarching brand goals and audience engagement strategies.

**Targeted Content Design:** Develop the ability to craft content tailored to specific audience segments, enhancing relevance and fostering deeper connections with the audience.

**Platform-Specific Content Optimization:** Gain expertise in optimizing content for different social media platforms, leveraging platform-specific features to increase content visibility and engagement.

**Theoretical Insights Application:** Learn to apply theoretical concepts such as the psychology of social sharing and social proof to create content that is more likely to be shared and become viral.

## **I. Strategic Planning for Content Development**

Strategic planning is a crucial process that involves setting long-term goals, aligning resources, and implementing actions to achieve the institution's mission

and vision. Several studies highlight the significance of strategic planning in higher education institutions (Marukhlenko, 2017; Evmenov et al., 2021). Strategic planning serves as a roadmap for universities to navigate the dynamic landscape of education, adapt to changing demographics, and enhance their competitiveness.

Effective strategic planning involves a comprehensive analysis of internal and external factors, such as sustainability, innovation, and quality management (Sanchez et al., 2022). By incorporating elements like SWOT analysis, balanced scorecards, and performance measurement, institutions can identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to inform their content development strategies (Kim & Rehg, 2018). Moreover, strategic planning aids in aligning institutional goals with societal needs, ensuring relevance and responsiveness.

### ***1.1. Identifying target audience demographics and psychographics***

In strategic planning for content creation in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), identifying the target audience's demographics and psychographics is very important for effective communication and engagement. Psychographic segmentation, which delves into the values, beliefs, interests, and lifestyles of the audience, complements demographic segmentation by providing a deeper understanding of the audience (Stalgaitis et al., 2022). By understanding the psychographic and demographic traits that drive consumer behavior, institutions can tailor their content to resonate with specific audience segments (Woolf et al., 2015).

Research emphasizes that a well-defined target audience simplifies outreach efforts and makes them more cost-effective and impactful by customizing content based on geographic, psychographic, and demographic characteristics (Morales

et al., 2021). Prior to targeting specific audience segments, thorough audience research is essential, considering demographics, psychographics, socioeconomics, culture, and individual dispositions that influence community behaviors (Brown-Devlin et al., 2020).

Psychographic segmentation offers insights that demographic segmentation alone cannot provide, as it allows for the incorporation of values, identities, and interests into messaging strategies, enhancing persuasion and engagement. Psychographic segmentation is distinct from demographic segmentation. While demographic segmentation categorizes consumers primarily by age and gender, psychographic segmentation delves into the varying behaviors and thought processes of individuals. Demographics focus on grouping people based on shared characteristics, but psychographics reveal the diversity in people's actions and mindsets, beyond mere appearances. (Vincent & Selvarani, 2011).

In the context of HEIs, understanding the psychographics of the target audience can inform social media marketing strategies, helping institutions navigate managerial implications and promotional activities effectively. By utilizing psychographic data, HEIs can develop content that aligns with the values and interests of their audience, enhancing engagement and connection with stakeholders.

Socio-demographic	Geographic	Behavioral	Psychographic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sex</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Occupation</li> <li>• Income</li> <li>• Marital status</li> <li>• Family size</li> <li>• Ethnicity/language</li> <li>• Religion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban, rural, peri-urban</li> <li>• Region, district, community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant behavior</li> <li>• Stage of change/readiness to change</li> <li>• Frequency of behavior</li> <li>• Consistency of behavior</li> <li>• Duration of behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefits sought</li> <li>• Values</li> <li>• Activities</li> <li>• Interests</li> <li>• Attitudes, opinions</li> <li>• Personality</li> <li>• Preferences</li> </ul>

Figure 1 - Determine Segmentation Criteria

(retrived from : <https://thecompassforsbc.org/how-to-guide/how-do-audience-segmentation>)

### ***1.2. Defining brand messaging for HEIs***

To establish effective brand messaging for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), it is crucial to consider various aspects of marketing communication strategies. highlight the importance of Internet marketing communication tools for HEIs in the digital era to enhance competitive positioning within the market (Kisiofek et al., 2021). Additionally, Perera (2020) explores the impact of Social Brand Engagement (SBE) on Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) in HEIs, emphasizing the role of brand credibility and electronic word-of-mouth in influencing brand choice intention among undergraduates. This underscores the significance of engaging with audiences through social media platforms to boost brand equity.

Furthermore, investigate the role of social media in building brand equity for HEIs, shedding light on how these institutions focus on branding through social media channels (Mehmood et al., 2021). This research underscores the importance of Social Media (SM) as a vital tool for HEIs to effectively communicate their brand messages. When crafting brand messaging for HEIs, it is essential to consider the effectiveness of different message appeals. discuss visual brand



centrality and its impact on customer engagement on platforms like Instagram (Rietveld et al., 2020). Understanding how to make the brand element the central focus of the message can enhance engagement and resonate with the audience.

Defining brand messaging for HEIs involves leveraging Internet marketing communication tools, engaging with social media platforms, and understanding the impact of brand engagement on brand equity. By incorporating these insights into their strategies, HEIs can effectively communicate their brand messages, engage with their target audience, and strengthen their competitive position in the market.

### ***1.3. Determining Content Types and Channels for Distribution***

To determine digital content types and channels for distribution, it is essential to consider various aspects highlighted in the literature. Venkitachalam & Bosua (2019) emphasize that the type of organization plays a crucial role in shaping digital content strategy choices. Risdianto & Apiri (2022) categorize digital content into two types: items created primarily in machine-readable formats and those converted from traditional formats (e.g., printed text, and recorded pamphlets, manuscripts, motion pictures and sound). This distinction is vital in understanding the origins and formats of digital content.

Moreover, the study by Reyna et al. (2017) presents a taxonomy of digital media types, considering conceptual, functional, and audiovisual domains. Understanding these different domains can aid in creating diverse and engaging digital content. Furthermore, Sawaftah et al. (2021) discuss the stimulation of brand defense through different types of digital content marketing, emphasizing the role of owned, earned, and paid media. This underscores the significance of utilizing various content types to engage audiences effectively. Additionally, Maass et al. (2007) introduce a logical container model for digital information goods, referencing formalized semantic descriptions to classify key information

types. This approach can enhance the organization and retrieval of digital content.

By considering the organization type, categorization of digital content types, taxonomy of digital media, secure distribution channels, and diverse content marketing strategies, one can effectively determine digital content types and channels for distribution. This comprehensive approach ensures that digital content is not only well-categorized but also strategically distributed to reach the intended audience through various channels.

## **II. Content Creation and Curation**

Content creation in the digital age is a complex process that involves adapting to platform changes, engaging diverse audiences, and strategically planning for the creation and distribution of content. Content creators are challenged to evolve their practices to align with the dynamic landscape of social media platforms (Arriagada & Ibáñez, 2020). Older adults are increasingly acknowledged as active contributors in the digital realm, with content creation serving as a way to enhance their digital skills and participation (Reuter et al., 2021). In academic environments, content strategy plays a critical role in planning for the creation, delivery, and governance of valuable and user-friendly content (McDonald & Burkhardt, 2022).

Transcreation, a concept involving the translation and creation of new content, emphasizes the significance of cultural perspectives in content creation (Zhu et al., 2021). Platforms like YouTube have become essential in content creation, enabling the adjustment of content practices based on immediate consumer feedback. In the realm of social media, strategies for content creation are pivotal in engaging audiences and constructing brand communities. The production of digital audiovisual content during the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of brand identity and innovative content for audience engagement (Gryllakis & Matsiola, 2022). Effective content strategy entails planning for the

creation, publication, and governance of content to guarantee its usefulness and usability.

Designing content for target audiences of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is a critical aspect that requires a deep understanding of stakeholder perspectives, intercultural communication, and technology-enhanced learning strategies. Stakeholders play a significant role in influencing the content and structure of HEIs (Miller et al., 2014). Content strategy in HEIs extends to various aspects, including social media branding, curriculum development, and brand personality. Understanding the needs of target audiences is essential in developing effective web content strategies for universities (Ying-ying & Ding, 2023).

In conclusion, content creation spans various domains, from social media platforms to academic libraries, and from linguistic diversity to brand engagement. The evolving landscape of content creation necessitates strategic planning, cultural sensitivity, and audience engagement to ensure the effectiveness and relevance of the content produced.

### **2.1. Curating relevant content to supplement original creations.**

Content curation involves the systematic process of gathering, organizing, and presenting information. Digital curation is highlighted as a core competency in current learning environments, emphasizing the importance of tools that focus not only on content collection but also on maximizing the potential of the curation process (Yakovleva & Kulikova, 2022). Furthermore, the role of content curation in educational settings is underscored, linking it to digital literacy and student agency (Trianto & Novani, 2022). In the realm of business, content curation is viewed as a proactive approach that involves the selection, analysis, and reinterpretation of existing products and services to provide new value.

Dale (2014) posits that there are quintessential abilities necessary for adept content curation, which include:

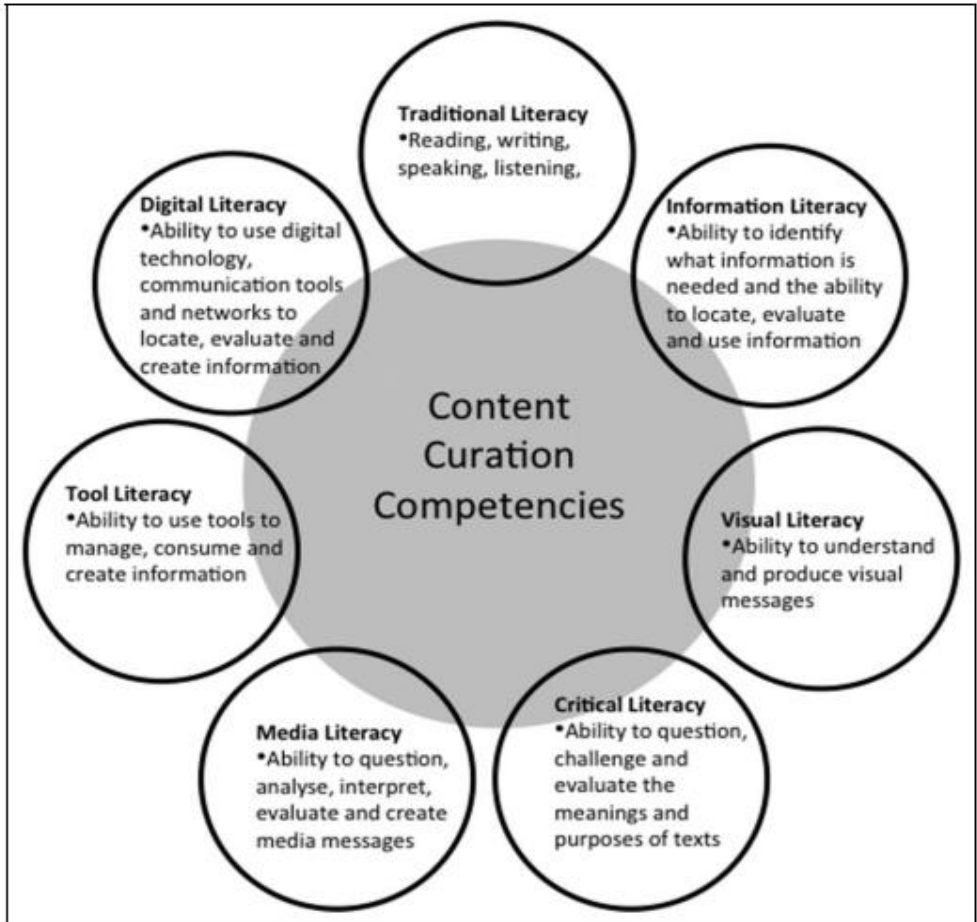
**Proficiency in utilizing various platforms** (like social media, search engines, and syndicated feeds) to discover and sift through pertinent data;

**Systematizing information** through methods such as categorization, tagging, and scheduling;

**Engagement in networking** by being active in both personal and professional circles to bolster and refine learning experiences;

**Employing critical thinking and sense-making** to evaluate and interpret information;

**Enhancing content with personal insights** and value by employing narrative techniques.



(Source : Dale, 2014)

The concept of content curation extends to various platforms, including social media, where businesses leverage curation strategies to engage and retain customers effectively (Theadora et al., 2022). Additionally, the influence of content curation on user-brand involvement, as seen in music streaming platforms, demonstrates its significance in building loyalty and enhancing user experience (Aw et al., 2022). Moreover, the role of content curation in the context of social media influencers is highlighted, emphasizing its impact on fostering parasocial relationships and favorable endorsement outcomes. Wolf and

Mulholland (2013) presents main content curation tool categories as follows:

**Storytelling:** Crafting narratives by interweaving web-based content, with a focus on social media platforms like Twitter.

Example: Storify

**Collecting:** Amassing web content under specific thematic categories, which often involves creating links between themes.

Example: BagTheWeb, Pearltrees, Pinterest

**Learning:** Developing educational activities derived from web content.

Example: Learnist, LiveBinders

**Clipping:** Gathering excerpts from the web, such as segments of text and images from websites.

Example: Clipboard

**Publishing:** Assembling a personalized newspaper by handpicking news articles from various sources related to a particular subject.

Example: Paper.li, Scoop.it

## *2.2. Crafting Compelling Narratives to Engage The Audience*

Crafting compelling narratives to engage audiences is a multifaceted process that involves leveraging the power of storytelling to captivate and persuade. Research indicates that narratives have the potential to sway audiences' attitudes by maximizing engagement with the story world and minimizing elements that could trigger skepticism (Dahlstrom, 2021). In the realm of politics, narratives are strategically constructed to evoke emotional responses and moral imperatives, emphasizing intersections with national narratives to create compelling stories (Gellwitzki & Houde, 2022). Furthermore, high-quality personal narratives are effective in engaging audiences, with characteristics such as authenticity and impact playing crucial roles.

In the context of science communication, narratives are utilized to engage audiences in scientific content, such as through online videos like "Star Trek: Discovery," demonstrating the effectiveness of narrative formats in conveying complex topics (Noor & Manturuk, 2023). Visual narratives, including storytelling, are commonly employed to inform, persuade, and educate audiences

across various domains (Pressgrove & Bowman, 2020). Organizations aiming for social impact can utilize transformative storytelling frameworks to convey their mission, engage audiences, and inspire action.

Eludire (2014) suggesting these strategies for constructing engaging narratives in content marketing ( Retrieved from : <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/crafting-engaging-narratives-content-marketing-art-eludire-phd-uglvf>) :

Understanding Your Audience: Investigating and profiling your audience to tailor stories that resonate with their interests.

Multimedia Integration: Enhancing narratives with visual elements like imagery and videos.

Customer Stories: Using authentic customer experiences to strengthen credibility.

Consistent Brand Storytelling: Maintaining a uniform narrative across channels.

Interactive Content Creation: Engaging audiences through polls, quizzes, and videos.

However, ineffective storytelling can hinder audience engagement, particularly in heritage communication, where non-compelling narratives fail to effectively transmit cultural heritage to audiences. Studies have shown that crisis communication narratives can enhance audience engagement by reducing negative emotions and fostering dialogic communication (Yang et al., 2010).

Overall, narratives play a crucial role in engaging audiences across diverse fields, from science and politics to social impact and cultural heritage. By understanding the elements that make narratives compelling, organizations and communicators can effectively capture audience attention, convey messages, and inspire action.

### ***2.3. Utilizing Multimedia Elements to Enhance Content Appeal***

Utilizing multimedia elements in content development for social promotion can significantly enhance the appeal and effectiveness of the material. Research has shown that incorporating multimedia elements such as images, videos, and interactive features can lead to improved academic achievement (Kiat et al., 2020). Multimedia elements not only allow for self-paced learning but also have

a positive impact on student engagement and motivation (Mandernach, 2009). They can facilitate deeper understanding of content and encourage learners to think more critically about the material being presented.

Moreover, multimedia content has the potential to make information more engaging and memorable. Studies have demonstrated that multimedia can enhance information recall and processing, especially when incorporating innovative elements like olfactory media (Ademoye & Ghinea, 2013). Additionally, multimedia elements can contribute to the overall level of engagement, particularly in educational settings (Rubegni & Landoni, 2016). By creating interactive and immersive experiences through multimedia, educators can effectively communicate information and increase student involvement in the learning process (Pauschenwein et al., 2013).

Parker (2014) summarizes the Effects of Multimedia on Audience Interaction as follows (Retrieved from : <https://www.socialcali.com/the-power-of-multimedia-enhancing-your-content-strategy>) :

**Visual Appeal:** Incorporating visual elements like pictures, infographics, and videos significantly boosts user engagement. Research indicates that visually enriched posts garner more attention, interactions, and shares compared to those with only text.

**Emotional Connection:** Multimedia assets have the power to stir emotions and craft compelling stories. Videos are particularly effective in weaving narratives that strike a chord with viewers, fostering deeper engagement and a stronger connection to the brand.

**Interactivity:** Multimedia that invites user interaction, including quizzes, surveys, and dynamic infographics, promotes audience involvement. Such engagement not only maintains user interest but also yields insightful data for content developers.

**Information Retention:** The use of multimedia aids in the retention and understanding of information. By simplifying intricate ideas into manageable segments through visual and audiovisual aids, audiences find it easier to grasp and recall the intended message.

**Shareability :** Multimedia is inherently more shareable, particularly across social networks. Content that is both visually appealing and



interactive tends to be circulated more widely by users, enhancing visibility and the potential for viral spread.

**Adaptability for Mobile Access:** As mobile device usage continues to rise, multimedia content has become increasingly accessible. Content optimized for mobile consumption, such as videos and images, can effectively reach viewers anytime, anywhere.

Furthermore, the use of multimedia in social promotion can extend beyond traditional educational settings. Multimedia elements are widely used in social media platforms to increase content popularity and engagement (Xun et al., 2013). Incorporating multimedia elements like videos, animations, and interactive features can attract and retain the attention of the audience, leading to a more impactful social promotion strategy.

The multimedia and content distribution landscape is rapidly transforming, with several trends poised to influence its future. Interactive and immersive content is at the forefront, with augmented and virtual reality expected to revolutionize user engagement and open new avenues for brand-audience interaction. Personalization and customization will cater to the increasing demand for tailored experiences, leading to content that adapts to individual behaviors and preferences. The emergence of voice search and smart speakers necessitates multimedia optimization for voice queries, compelling brands to revise their content strategies for better discoverability. Additionally, the rising emphasis on sustainability and social responsibility will likely result in content that underscores eco-friendly practices and champions social causes. Lastly, advancements in artificial intelligence and machine learning promise more sophisticated content personalization, offering recommendations aligned with user preferences. Collectively, these trends signify a dynamic shift towards more engaging, responsible, and user-centric multimedia experiences (Retrieved from : <https://aicontentfy.com/en/blog/role-of-multimedia-in-enhancing-content-distribution>) .

In conclusion, leveraging multimedia elements in content development for social promotion can enhance engagement, improve information retention, and create more interactive and memorable experiences for the audience. By incorporating various multimedia formats and interactive features, content creators can effectively communicate their message and increase the appeal of their promotions.

### **III. Content Optimization for Social Platforms**

To optimize content for social platforms in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), it is crucial to consider various factors highlighted in academic research. Studies emphasize the importance of leveraging social media for enhancing student engagement, recruitment, and communication efficiency (Soares et al., 2021; Balushi et al., 2022). HEIs can benefit from utilizing platforms like Facebook, Weibo, and WeChat to engage with diverse audiences, including international students. Moreover, the use of social media can facilitate bidirectional communication, information sharing, and content flow, especially during challenging times like the COVID-19 pandemic (Rusakova et al., 2022).

Content optimization strategies should focus on promoting co-creation for social innovation, encouraging collaborative learning tools, and providing continuous quality educational support through social media platforms (Trevisan et al., 2023). Additionally, HEIs should explore opportunities to integrate sustainability initiatives into their digital transformation efforts, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Yturzaeta, 2020). By incorporating social responsibility and sustainability values into education, HEIs can contribute to global action and create value for society.

It is essential to understand students' experiences with social media for learning purposes and to adapt to the shift towards informal learning platforms. By harnessing the power of social media, HEIs can enhance their visibility, engage

with stakeholders, and promote their unique value propositions effectively. Some of the best practices for optimizing your content for different social media platforms (Retrieved from : <https://www.linkedin.com/advice/0/what-some-best-practices-optimizing-your-content>) :

**Goals & Metrics:** Set clear objectives and metrics before content creation to align with platform-specific outcomes and audiences, using metrics like reach and engagement to measure success.

**Algorithm Insights:** Understand each platform's algorithm to optimize content visibility and use analytics for strategic improvements.

**Content Customization:** Adapt content format and style to meet the unique demands of each platform's audience.

**Hashtags & Keywords:** Use relevant hashtags and keywords to enhance content discoverability and reach the target audience.

**Audience Interaction:** Engage actively with the audience to build trust and loyalty, which is crucial in influencer marketing.

**Continuous Optimization:** Test and refine content based on performance metrics, using tools like Google Analytics, and benchmark against industry standards.

Optimizing content for social platforms in HEIs requires a strategic approach that integrates student engagement, sustainability initiatives, corporate governance practices, and effective social media marketing strategies. By leveraging the insights from academic research, HEIs can enhance their online presence, communicate their value proposition, and foster meaningful interactions with their target audiences.

#### **IV. Theoretical Underpinnings: Understanding the Psychology of Social Sharing**

Understanding the psychology of social sharing involves exploring various motivational factors that influence individuals' decisions to share knowledge, experiences, or information on social platforms. Research has delved into different aspects of social sharing, such as knowledge sharing within organizations (Vuori & Okkonen, 2012), the impact of social capital on

knowledge sharing intentions (Xing et al., 2017), the correlation between personality traits and social sharing motivation (Zhang & Zhan, 2022), and the exploration of sharing behaviors across different social media platforms

Studies have highlighted that sharing is often an internally motivated behavior, influenced by factors like recognition needs, cognitive needs, social needs, and entertainment needs (Park & Lee, 2021). Additionally, the desire to provide proof of social links and support, the need to vent, and strengthen social connections are common motives for accepting and sharing emotional episodes (Delelis & Christophe, 2016). Moreover, pro-social behavior and collectivism have been linked to knowledge sharing and innovative behavior (Pian et al., 2019), emphasizing the role of altruism and social motives in sharing practices.

Furthermore, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations play a significant role in determining individuals' willingness to share information or experiences on social media platforms. The dynamics of motivation in socially shared learning have been explored, highlighting the importance of understanding the underlying motives for sharing in educational contexts (Järvelä et al., 2008). Additionally, the role of personality factors, such as agreeableness and popularity, has been studied in relation to motives for sharing content on social networking sites (Vanherle et al., 2022).

Overall, the psychology of social sharing is a complex interplay of individual motivations, social needs, and environmental factors that influence why people choose to share knowledge, experiences, or information on various platforms. Understanding these motivational factors is crucial for comprehending the underlying mechanisms that drive social sharing behaviors in both online and offline settings.

#### 4.1. Effects of Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory, as articulated by , emphasizes the interplay between personal factors, behavior, and the environment in shaping human behavior (Bandura, 1999). Within this framework, factors such as self-efficacy, goals, outcome expectations, and socio-structural elements play a crucial role in influencing behavior (Imam et al., 2023). This theory has been applied in various contexts, such as academic self-regulation among students with learning disabilities (Ruban et al., 2003), collective action and social cohesiveness (Lozano et al., 2012), and eco-brand orientation of consumers (Roxas & Marte, 2022).

Moreover, research has shown that social cognitive theory is instrumental in understanding technological interests among high school students the influence of organizational social networks on collaborative innovation (Miao et al., 2023), and the career paths of accounting students (Gunawan et al., 2021). It has also been utilized to explore the impact of social cognition on the self-rated health of the elderly as well as in predicting student outcomes and graduation rates (Palmer & Erford, 2012).

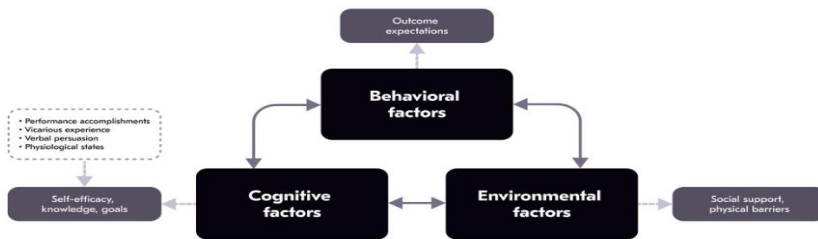


Figure 3 : Social Cognitive Theory(SCT)

(Source : <https://www.besci.org/models/social-cognitive-theory>)

Furthermore, studies have highlighted the role of social cognitive theory in areas such as career choice goals among minority groups (Gushue & Whitson, 2006), exercise adherence (Courneya & McAuley, 1995), and the effectiveness of communication campaigns (Hornik, 2003). The theory has also been integrated with other frameworks, such as social capital theory, to investigate the relationship between family social capital and career advancement (Su et al., 2023).

In essence, Social Cognitive Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how cognitive processes, social influences, and environmental factors interact to shape behaviour across various domains, making it a valuable tool for researchers and practitioners alike.

#### ***4.2. Exploring the Content Virality***

Content virality is a multifaceted phenomenon that has been extensively researched across various disciplines. Scholars have investigated the factors contributing to content virality in different contexts. Social proof, a psychological phenomenon where people assume the actions of others in an attempt to reflect correct behavior, plays a significant role in determining the virality of content on social media platforms. Various studies have delved into the factors influencing content virality. Berger & Milkman (2012) found that Positive content tends to spread more widely than negative content, although the connection between emotions and social sharing is not solely determined by the emotional tone. The extent of virality is influenced in part by physiological arousal. Content eliciting intense positive emotions (such as awe) or negative emotions (like anger or anxiety) tends to be more contagious. Conversely, content evoking low-arousal or deactivating emotions (such as sadness) is less likely to go viral. Additionally, firm-generated content (FGC) on different social media platforms can impact viral marketing success (Zhang et al., 2023). The presence of social ties embedded in

these platforms influences the motives for social dissemination, affecting the spread of viral content.

Moreover, the emotional impact of content is crucial in determining its virality. Gómez et al. (2020) highlighted that content evoking strong emotions, whether positive or negative, is more likely to become viral. This emotional aspect is further supported by the study of (Coates, 2017), emphasizing the rapid spread of emotionally resonant media content and its impact on reshaping social processes.

Furthermore, the concept of social proof is directly linked to the dissemination of viral content. Talib & Saat (2017) discussed the use of social proof techniques, such as increasing the number of followers or providing social community recommendations, to enhance online sales and engagement. This aligns with the idea that social influence in content distribution networks can significantly impact the popularity and reach of content (Sharara et al., 2011). Impact of social proof on content virality is multifaceted, encompassing emotional resonance, social ties, and the perceived value of the content. Leveraging these factors effectively can enhance the virality of content on social media platforms, ultimately influencing engagement, reach, and brand awareness.

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# CHAPTER 4

## ENHANCING TEAMWORK AND COLLABORATION

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Liudmyla Hulciaeva<sup>1</sup>

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Andrii Oliinyk<sup>2</sup>

Teamwork and collaboration are vital across all sectors, including Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), corporate environments, non-profit organizations, and government agencies. The foundational principles—such as effective communication, shared goals, and trust—are universally applicable and essential for achieving collective success. In HEIs, these principles are especially critical in creating impactful sustainability communication campaigns.

However, fostering collaboration in HEIs presents unique challenges. Interdisciplinary boundaries, faculty resistance, hierarchical structures, resource allocation, and ingrained cultural norms can create barriers to teamwork. These challenges, while not unique to HEIs, are critical to address. By promoting open communication, fostering a culture of collaboration, and dismantling silos, HEIs can overcome these obstacles and build stronger, more cohesive teams.

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<sup>1</sup>Kyiv business school, Academy of Labour, Social Relations and Tourism, l.hulciaeva@socosvita.kiev.ua, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0045-8551>

<sup>2</sup> Kyiv Business School, State University of Trade and Economics, a.oliinyk@knute.edu.ua, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4589-703X>



The role of social media in collaboration cannot be overlooked. Social media platforms offer new avenues for communication, collaborative learning, and connecting with sustainability-focused organizations. Beyond HEIs, businesses and government agencies can also harness social media to enhance collaboration, engage stakeholders, and advance their sustainability efforts. Strategies for effectively implementing social media for teamwork, such as choosing the right platforms, building community, and managing communication, are universally applicable across different sectors. One effective approach to optimizing collaboration is the application of the relational coordination model. This model emphasizes the importance of managing relationships and communication across social networks, enhancing internal and external collaboration. HEIs can apply this model to improve their digital teamwork and coordination, with far-reaching implications for other sectors looking to strengthen collaboration through digital platforms.

In conclusion, by embracing the principles of teamwork and collaboration, overcoming challenges specific to HEIs, and leveraging social media's power, institutions can drive more effective sustainability communication. Lessons learned in HEIs can be applied broadly, contributing to the achievement of sustainability goals across a variety of contexts.

## **I. Core Elements of Effective Teamwork and Collaboration**

### ***1.1. The Foundation of Teamwork and Collaboration in HEIs***

In higher educational institutions, the value of teamwork and collaboration cannot be overstated. This importance resonates across various sectors, spanning from military endeavors to space exploration, healthcare, aviation, and beyond. Undoubtedly, teamwork stands as a fundamental element for achieving success in diverse applied contexts (Dalenberg et al., 2009). Fundamentally, teamwork entails the amalgamation of individual contributions toward a common goal (Mathieu et al., 2017). Central to the effectiveness of teams are the processes of

teamwork. These processes encompass the behaviors and interactions that empower teams to attain their desired objectives (Salas et al., 2009).

Teamwork processes are commonly divided into three categories: transition, action, and interpersonal processes, all of which play vital roles in enhancing team effectiveness (Marks et al., 2001). Transition processes, such as mission analysis and strategy formulation, establish the foundation for task completion. Action processes, which involve monitoring progress and coordinating activities, facilitate the implementation of tasks. Meanwhile, interpersonal processes, including conflict management and emotional regulation, promote positive relationships and emotional stability within the team (LePine et al., 2008).

The contemporary labor market demands a new approach to education, particularly during bachelor programs, where graduates are expected to possess practical experience. Employers seek specialists capable of collaborating within teams and adapting to evolving professional landscapes. Both students and employees are required to engage with colleagues in various group sizes, ranging from small teams to larger groups, within workplace settings. However, the responsibility for preparing individuals for such collaborative environments extends beyond the active role of lecturers alone. Lecturers must incorporate alternative teaching methods to equip students for group or teamwork alongside individual work. One effective method involves engaging students in problem-solving activities or collaborative tasks, thereby fostering teamwork skills and facilitating the development of cooperative abilities. Additionally, the large cohort of students offers opportunities for deliberate team organization. Group work can be structured by assigning students to smaller teams of 3-6 members, encouraging cooperation in task completion. Moreover, teamwork facilitates the accumulation of valuable experiences in cooperation, accountability, communication, consensus-building, social responsiveness, and time management (Kadocsa, 2006). Lecturers must possess an understanding of cooperative skills, individual responsibilities, and interdependence within groups to effectively plan suitable

teaching methodologies and facilitate effective collaboration between lecturers and student groups.

A team represents more than just a collection of individuals and their interactions. In today's organizational landscape, teamwork is increasingly crucial for various reasons. Primarily, it fosters loyalty, enables responses to innovative and adaptable tasks, and enhances efficiency. The effects of teamwork are interdependent, operating at the organizational, group, and individual levels. By embracing teamwork, organizations can achieve quality assurance, expedite processes, drive innovation, enhance behavioral control, expand their scope of work, and foster personal and social development (Titkos, 1998). Bencsik highlights the importance of balanced teamwork as a fundamental aspect of successful organizational functioning (Bencsik, 2003). Whether in education, interactions with economic actors, successful project bidding, or the establishment of spin-off ventures, teamwork among teachers is essential.

### ***1.2. Key Aspects of Successful Teamwork and Collaboration***

In the context of enhancing teamwork and collaboration within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), exploring the influence of social media information on interpersonal trust in new virtual work partners is crucial. This subchapter delves into the key aspects of successful teamwork and collaboration, drawing insights from the impact of social media information on trust development in virtual work settings (Watanuki & Moraes, 2019).

1. **Effective Communication.** Effective communication remains paramount in fostering successful teamwork, whether in physical or virtual environments. While face-to-face interactions may be limited in virtual collaborations, the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools enables individuals to communicate and collaborate seamlessly across distances. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter, provide avenues for

exchanging information and building connections. By leveraging these platforms, team members can engage in dialogue, share insights, and coordinate tasks, thereby facilitating effective communication essential for cohesive teamwork.

2. **Shared Goals and Vision.** Establishing shared goals and a common vision is essential for aligning team efforts and driving collective action. In the absence of physical proximity, virtual work partners must have a clear understanding of the objectives they are working towards. Social media platforms offer opportunities for individuals to share their professional backgrounds, interests, and aspirations, laying the foundation for common goals and mutual understanding. By articulating SMART goals and fostering discussions around shared objectives, teams can harness the potential of social media to cultivate a sense of purpose and direction, driving collaboration towards meaningful outcomes.

3. **Trust and Interpersonal Dynamics.** Building trust among virtual work partners is critical for fostering collaboration and innovation. Interpersonal trust, defined as the confidence in and willingness to act on the basis of another person's words, actions, and decisions, forms the bedrock of effective teamwork. Social media profiles serve as a window into individuals' personalities, experiences, and reputations, offering valuable insights that can influence trust perceptions. By leveraging social media information, individuals can gauge the trustworthiness of their virtual work partners, thereby fostering a sense of reliability and mutual respect essential for successful collaboration.

4. **Effective Conflict Resolution.** Conflict is inevitable in any collaborative endeavor, but how it is managed can either strengthen or derail teamwork. Embracing conflict as an opportunity for growth and learning allows teams to address underlying issues and arrive at creative solutions. Implementing effective conflict resolution strategies, such as active listening, empathy, and compromise, helps mitigate tensions and foster constructive dialogue. Encouraging a culture of

respectful dissent and providing mechanisms for resolving conflicts ensures that team dynamics remain healthy and productive.

Successful teamwork and collaboration in HEIs require a combination of effective communication, shared goals, trust, and conflict resolution skills. By prioritizing these key aspects, teams can harness the collective potential of diverse talents and perspectives to drive meaningful change and innovation. As changemakers, individuals within HEIs have the opportunity to leverage these principles to create sustainable impact and foster a culture of collaboration and excellence.

### ***1.3. Challenges of Fostering Collaboration in HEIs***

Fostering collaboration in HEIs presents its own set of challenges. Here are some of the key obstacles faced in cultivating collaboration within HEIs (Shahrukh, 2023):

**Interdisciplinary boundaries.** HEIs often consist of various departments and disciplines, each with its own academic culture, language, and methodologies. Bridging these interdisciplinary boundaries to encourage collaboration can be difficult. Faculty and students may struggle to find common ground for joint projects or research initiatives when their areas of expertise differ significantly.

**Faculty resistance.** In some cases, faculty members may be resistant to collaboration due to concerns about losing autonomy or recognition for their individual work. Traditional academic structures often prioritize individual achievement over collective endeavors, making it challenging to incentivize collaboration among faculty members.

Hierarchical structures. HEIs typically have hierarchical structures that can hinder collaboration, particularly between faculty and students or among different academic ranks. Power dynamics within departments or research groups may discourage open dialogue and the exchange of ideas, leading to a lack of meaningful collaboration.

Resource allocation. Limited resources, such as funding, time, and access to research facilities, can pose significant barriers to collaboration within HEIs. Competition for resources may create an environment where collaboration is seen as a zero-sum game, with individuals or departments reluctant to share or pool resources for joint initiatives.

Cultural norms. Academic culture within HEIs may prioritize individual achievement and competition over cooperation and teamwork. This cultural norm can discourage collaboration among students and faculty alike, as individuals may be hesitant to share ideas or collaborate for fear of being overshadowed by their peers.

One of the primary challenges in international collaboration is navigating cultural differences effectively (Table 1). Partnering institutions often come from diverse cultural backgrounds, which can lead to misunderstandings, miscommunication, and clashes in working styles. Overcoming these differences requires heightened cultural intelligence, adaptability, and a commitment to fostering cultural awareness among collaborators (Hilmiati & Listiawati, 2022). Harmonizing academic quality and standards across diverse educational systems poses a significant challenge in international collaboration. Differences in curriculum structures, assessment methods, and accreditation standards can complicate collaborative efforts and undermine the credibility of joint initiatives. Establishing adaptable frameworks that uphold rigorous academic standards while allowing for flexibility is essential to ensure the quality and integrity of collaborative programs (Agustina et al., 2023; Faisal & Kisman, 2020).

International collaboration introduces logistical complexities such as different time zones, varied academic calendars, and logistical hurdles in coordinating joint initiatives. Effective project management and organizational strategies are crucial in overcoming these challenges, requiring careful planning, clear communication protocols, and the use of advanced technologies to facilitate collaboration across borders (Rajabalee & Santally, 2021). Institutions engaged in international collaboration often face financial constraints due to the costs associated with travel, technology infrastructure, and resource allocation. Innovative funding models, strategic resource allocation, and partnerships with external stakeholders are essential to mitigate financial barriers and create sustainable collaboration frameworks (Nugroho et al., 2023).

Compliance with legal and regulatory requirements in multiple jurisdictions can pose challenges for international collaboration. Differences in intellectual property laws, data protection regulations, and visa requirements may impact the ability of institutions to collaborate effectively and ethically across borders. Establishing clear legal frameworks and protocols for addressing regulatory compliance issues is crucial to ensure the legality and ethicality of collaborative endeavors (Abdullah, 2017).

**Table 1. The challenges and opportunities associated with international collaboration**

Challenges	Opportunities
Cultural Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Expanding Access to Global Knowledge Resources</li> <li>-Fostering Diverse Perspectives</li> </ul>
Academic Quality and Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Enhancing Research Productivity</li> <li>-Preparing Students for a Globally Interconnected Workforce</li> </ul>

Logistical Complexities	-Utilizing Advanced Technologies for Communication-Clear Communication Protocols for Time Zone Coordination
Funding and Resource Constraints	-Exploring Innovative Funding Models -Strategic Resource Allocation

Source: Watanuki & Moraes, 2019

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that involves structural changes, cultural shifts, and targeted interventions. HEIs can promote collaboration by fostering interdisciplinary initiatives, providing incentives for collaborative research, creating supportive environments that encourage open communication and teamwork, and investing in resources that facilitate collaboration, such as shared research facilities or collaborative technology platforms. Additionally, promoting a culture of collaboration through institutional policies and initiatives can help shift norms and expectations within HEIs, making collaboration a valued and integral part of academic life.

## **II. Revealing Collaboration Features of Social Media**

### ***2.1. The use of Social Media as a Communication tool.***

Social media has become a powerful tool for communication and collaboration within educational institutions. Studies consistently demonstrate its positive impact on student engagement and teamwork.

Research by Mohamad (2018) highlights several benefits of social networks in e-learning environments. These include increased student motivation and understanding, and the facilitation of collaborative learning methods through platforms like Facebook.



Similar findings come from Madhusudhan (2012). Their study, conducted with over 160 students at Delhi University, India, revealed that over 71% of participants experienced improved collaborative learning through online social networks (OSNs). Additionally, Hussain (2012) found that nearly 90% of students in a Pakistani university considered Facebook helpful for academic activities, particularly for exchanging information with international peers.

LaRue's (2012) research at the University of Pittsburgh's Nursing Department further emphasizes the value of social networks for group-based learning. This aligns with Waycott et al.'s (2013) study in Australia, which observed increased student excitement and motivation when using OSNs for research projects.

Thompson et al. (2014) argue that the social aspect of learning is as crucial as the cognitive aspect. They suggest that these elements are interconnected and should be considered together for effective learning. They also highlight the ability of students to work both independently and collaboratively. This underscores the importance of educators utilizing social networks to foster greater cooperation and teamwork within educational activities.

Facebook's "reflective" feature, designed for peers to provide feedback, aligns seamlessly with the social context of learning, embodying qualities of effective educational technology. According to Facebook, its collaborative and conversational features actively promote user engagement. Research indicates that students utilize Facebook for group connections, networking, and accessing educational resources. Despite its prevalent use for personal networking, Facebook often intersects with academic objectives, occasionally distracting students from classroom activities. However, Facebook's potential as a formal educational tool has gained traction in recent years, although its utilization for serious academic study remains relatively limited. A comprehensive analysis of undergraduate students' Facebook posts in the United Kingdom revealed a trend: students utilized the platform to assert their identity as university attendees,

sharing insights and experiences related to their academic journey. While evidence supporting Facebook's widespread adoption as an educational tool remains inconclusive, maintaining high standards within educational systems is crucial to ensure the delivery of top-notch services amidst fierce competition across all sectors (Sanwal et. la, 2023).

Platforms like YouTube have become ubiquitous among young people, offering a vast repository of videos and photos for sharing and consumption. Students are increasingly engaging with this multimedia content, actively shaping their own learning experiences through video creation and consumption. Recognizing this trend, educators are integrating video-sharing technologies into constructivist classrooms as a means to captivate students' interest in learning.

YouTube, in particular, has emerged as a valuable educational resource, with a growing number of teachers leveraging its vast library of content to elucidate important events and concepts, particularly in subjects like English language learning. Students find educational videos on YouTube not only informative but also entertaining, fostering a dynamic and engaging learning environment. Numerous studies corroborate the efficacy of videos in facilitating learning and motivating learners.

However, the effectiveness of YouTube as a learning tool hinges on its alignment with predetermined learning goals and objectives. Instructional videos must prioritize content that reinforces language proficiency, skill development, and social etiquette, among other educational objectives. Moreover, educators can encourage student participation by facilitating the creation and sharing of student-generated content on platforms hosting instructional videos.

YouTube videos serve as valuable instructional tools for achieving student-centered learning objectives and enhancing educational experiences. They offer a dynamic platform through which students can engage with diverse content and

learning materials. Not only do instructional videos facilitate the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, but they also provide opportunities for students to create and share their own content.

To maximize the educational potential of YouTube, teachers should actively engage students in critical thinking about how they can utilize the platform's videos to foster meaningful social learning experiences collaboratively. By harnessing the interactive and collaborative nature of YouTube, educators can create dynamic learning environments that empower students to actively participate in their own educational journeys.

## ***2.2. Social Media-Based Collaborative and Learning Performance***

The utilization of social media platforms fosters greater participation and learning across all sectors of society, particularly through social media-based collaborative learning, which has been shown to positively influence student learning outcomes, performance, and confidence (Rashid et al., 2020). Online social environments and networking sites offer extensive opportunities for communication, enabling students to interact with their peers and mentors, thus facilitating collaborative learning. Research by Ertmer et al. (2014) demonstrates that students using social media platforms tend to complete assignments more effectively, benefiting from active and collaborative learning experiences. Additionally, individuals with strong cognitive abilities and skills tend to derive the greatest benefits from social media-based collaborative learning, enabling them to meet deadlines and excel in their tasks (Nand et al., 2019).

There is a positive impact of social media-based collaborative learning on students' learning abilities, particularly noting the heightened responsiveness of mentors within closely-knit social media learning groups. This increased interaction ensures that students receive timely feedback from both their peers and mentors, facilitating the swift completion and timely publication of their work.

### **2.3. Building connections through engaging with sustainability-focused organizations**

Sustainability- focused organizations a diverse range of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and initiatives devoted to advancing sustainability principles throughout society. Their mission is clear: tackle environmental, social, and economic hurdles to foster a harmonious and just global landscape for both present and future inhabitants.

At the forefront of advocacy, research, and action, these organizations champion sustainable methodologies and policies. From sparking public consciousness to executing impactful projects, they serve as catalysts for progress, uniting governmental bodies, businesses, communities, and individuals in the pursuit of a more conscientious and sustainable world.

Sustainability- focused organizations span a broad spectrum, delving into realms like environmental preservation, climate action, social equity, poverty mitigation, sustainable farming, renewable energy, waste management, and beyond. Their endeavors range from lobbying for policy reforms to disseminating educational materials, spearheading community endeavors, conducting scientific inquiries, and advocating for sustainable business strategies:

Collaborating with sustainability-focused organizations, higher educational institutions have a unique opportunity to develop content that champions eco-friendly behaviors. Imagine engaging videos or visually captivating infographics highlighting campus-wide sustainability initiatives like robust recycling programs, innovative energy-saving measures, and green transportation alternatives. Through strategic social media marketing (SMM), institutions can effectively disseminate these initiatives, fostering awareness and motivating their audience to embrace environmentally responsible practices (Mathieu et al., 2017).

Illustrating sustainable alliances, institutions can spotlight their partnerships with sustainability-focused organizations via social media platforms. For instance, suppose a university teams up with an environmental NGO for a tree-planting initiative. In that case, they can craft posts elucidating the collaboration's purpose, objectives, and achievements. This not only amplifies awareness regarding the institution's dedication but also showcases concrete steps toward sustainability, inspiring community involvement and backing for the shared cause (Shahrukh, 2023).

Boosting awareness of sustainable gatherings, higher educational institutions frequently arrange workshops, seminars, and conferences centered on sustainability themes. By partnering with sustainability-focused organizations, they can effectively promote these events across social media platforms. Disseminating event particulars, agendas, and bios of prominent speakers can broaden the reach and entice participation from both academia and the general public, fostering meaningful engagement with sustainability initiatives.

Participating in social media challenges presents an innovative avenue for collaboration between institutions and sustainability organizations. Together, they can orchestrate challenges geared towards spotlighting various sustainability concerns. Take, for example, a "Plastic-Free Week Challenge," wherein participants chronicle their endeavors to curb plastic consumption. Such initiatives not only spur engagement and interaction but also cultivate a collective sense of community involvement, magnifying the reach and efficacy of sustainability campaigns (Madhusudhan, 2012)

Highlighting achievements resulting from collaborative endeavors between institutions and sustainability organizations offers compelling narratives. These success stories, ranging from impactful community clean-up initiatives to the adoption of sustainable campus practices, serve as powerful testimonials to the collective impact of joint efforts. Through strategic social media dissemination,

these stories resonate with audiences, inspiring them to engage and contribute to similar endeavors, thereby amplifying the ripple effect of sustainability initiatives.

Engaging in dynamic webinars and interactive Q&A sessions presents a dynamic opportunity for institutions to connect with their audience on social media platforms. By inviting sustainability-focused organizations as guest speakers, these events become forums for in-depth discussions on pertinent sustainability topics, offering valuable insights and addressing audience inquiries. Leveraging the combined expertise of both the institution and the organization, these sessions deliver a rich educational experience, fostering dialogue, and empowering individuals to take meaningful action towards a more sustainable future.

Championing sustainable education, higher educational institutions can join forces with sustainability organizations to spotlight their array of sustainability-focused courses and workshops. Leveraging social media platforms, they can illuminate the curriculum, faculty proficiency, and the myriad benefits of enrollment. This collaborative effort not only draws prospective students but also resonates with the organization's mission of advancing sustainability education, forging a symbiotic relationship that advances knowledge and fosters sustainable practices.

### **III. Building a Collaborative Culture**

#### ***3.1. Promoting a Culture of Collaboration***

In the realm of higher education, fostering a culture of collaboration is paramount for sustainable communication. This culture thrives when individuals exhibit traits of integrity, maturity, and abundance mindset. Integrity encompasses the commitment to promises, fostering trust among peers and stakeholders. Maturity strikes a balance between courage and respect, allowing for the free expression of ideas while valuing others' perspectives. An abundance mindset assumes ample resources for all and encourages innovative, third-alternative solutions.

Within this culture, effective communication and organizational skills are essential. Individuals must possess the ability to comprehend others thoroughly and articulate their own thoughts clearly. Moreover, proficiency in planning, executing tasks, and problem-solving collaboratively enhances team dynamics and productivity.

Managers of HEIs play an important role in providing strategic direction, fostering a vision, and cultivating a motivated team grounded in mutual respect. Efficiency and performance are synergized, emphasizing outcomes over procedural methods. By embracing these strategies (figure 1), higher education institutions can leverage social media platforms to nurture a culture of collaboration, empowering teams to thrive in an environment of trust and innovation (Bucăța, & Rizescu, 2017).



Figure 1 - Organizational culture and communication (Bucăța, & Rizescu, 2017)

Effective communication is a cornerstone for every organization, particularly in higher education institutions (HEIs) leveraging social media for sustainable communication. It serves as a conduit for achieving critical organizational objectives, encompassing various facets such as products, services, brands, and performance, all while upholding organizational goals and fostering personal connections. These connections, whether with customers, suppliers, competitors, employees, or broader audiences, are integral to the fabric of organizational success (Slatten & Sander, 2011).

Organizational communication within HEIs can be categorized into internal and external realms. Internal communication facilitates the transmission of information among staff, fostering engagement and alignment with organizational objectives. External communication, on the other hand, facilitates connections with stakeholders such as suppliers, distributors, consumers, and the general public, shaping the institution's reputation and promoting its offerings.

Communication is fundamentally a relational process, facilitating the exchange, understanding, and influence between parties. It encompasses the transmission, receipt, processing, and utilization of information, playing a vital role in the optimal functioning of HEIs. Effective communication necessitates specialized personnel capable of managing both internal and external communication channels.

Internally, effective communication fosters team cohesion, harmonizing relationships between employees, and fostering a shared understanding of organizational objectives. Tools like periodic newsletters disseminated via email or print can facilitate internal communication and keep employees informed and engaged.

Externally, communication management strategies are essential for conveying messages to the general public, shaping the institution's identity, brand, and



reputation. Integrated campaigns, consultations, advertisements, and other forms of communication play a crucial role in informing stakeholders about the institution's activities and initiatives (Vidales, 2011).

Efficient communication between employers and employees in HEIs requires ongoing feedback mechanisms, such as regular surveys to gauge employee satisfaction and open channels for dialogue. Recognition of employees' contributions and achievements is paramount for fostering motivation and enhancing organizational performance.

In cultivating a collaborative culture, HEIs must recognize the inherent value of their employees and work to establish relationships built on trust, respect, and open communication. By acknowledging and appreciating employees' efforts, institutions can foster a culture of mutual respect and collaboration, driving innovation and success.

Ultimately, effective communication strategies, both internally and externally, are essential for promoting collaboration, enhancing organizational effectiveness, and achieving sustainable growth in higher education institutions. Leveraging social media platforms, HEIs can amplify their communication efforts and foster a culture of collaboration that empowers individuals and drives collective success.

### ***3.2. Encouraging Open Communication, Trust, and Respect Among Team Members***

In the realm of internal corporate communication, HEIs should prioritize the involvement of individuals. The efficacy with which tasks are carried out is paramount, especially considering the collaborative nature of teamwork. Management oversees coordination, planning, organization, and alignment with predetermined objectives, along with budget management and performance evaluations stemming from these efforts. These management functions inject dynamism into organizational operations.

The workforce, as the agents executing tasks to achieve objectives, stands to benefit or suffer from the outcomes of strategic decisions. Consequently, managers, tasked with executing management functions, rely heavily on communication processes to ensure clarity in coordinating activities, making informed decisions, implementing strategies, and fostering partnerships and collaborations. Communication, in a managerial context, serves as the conduit for informing and guiding individuals towards optimal outcomes. Effective communication involves not just structuring thoughts coherently but also crafting messages that resonate with recipients, capturing their attention and facilitating understanding.

Moreover, communication facilitates interaction within working teams, and managers play a pivotal role in establishing connectivity among organizational members through adept and strategic communication. Proper communication ensures seamless progression of organizational activities, enabling managers to convey messages accurately and elicit desired responses, thereby laying the groundwork for effective management activities, both internally and externally (figure 2).



Figure 2 - The internal corporate communications process (Miller, 2012)

Effective managerial communication necessitates careful consideration of several conditions (Burnside-Lawry, 2011):

- Clarity and precision. Messages should be formulated concisely and precisely to ensure easy and complete understanding.
- Prompt transmission. Communication should be swiftly disseminated to relevant parties.
- Fluency and reversibility. Communication channels must facilitate fluent and reversible exchanges.
- Common language. Both the sender and receiver should use a common language to enhance comprehension.
- Simplified channels. Communication channels should be simplified to streamline the exchange process.

- Flexibility and adaptability. The communication system should be flexible and adaptable to various situations.

Effective communication is indispensable for fulfilling these prerequisites, which are essential for organizational effectiveness. Communication management serves as a form of interpersonal leadership, endowing managers with specific powers such as forecasting, training, organization, coordination, control, and evaluation. Within these parameters, managers can optimize task allocation, facilitate employee communication, inform decision-making processes, and develop comprehensive plans.

#### **IV. Strategies for Implementing Social Media in Teamwork and Collaboration**

##### ***4.1. Identifying needs and selecting the most appropriate platform(s).***

HEIs must carefully assess their needs and objectives to select the most suitable platforms for sustainable communication. Each platform offers unique advantages, catering to diverse audiences and communication styles within the educational community (Digital Marketing Institute, 2023).

Understanding platform benefits:

LinkedIn and Facebook. These platforms excel in fostering professional networks, connecting HEIs with current students, alumni, and industry professionals. HEIs can leverage these platforms to showcase academic achievements, alumni success stories, and career opportunities.

Twitter. Ideal for real-time updates, news dissemination, and engaging with trending topics, Twitter enables HEIs to maintain an active presence and share timely announcements with their audience.

Visual Platforms (Pinterest, Instagram). Captivating visual content is key to building brand image and engaging with prospective students. Platforms like Pinterest and Instagram offer HEIs the opportunity to showcase campus life, student achievements, and academic events through compelling imagery.

Short Video Platforms (TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat). Short-form video content has emerged as a powerful tool for engaging Gen Z audiences. HEIs can leverage platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and Snapchat to create captivating videos that offer glimpses into campus life, student experiences, and academic endeavors.

YouTube. As the leading video-sharing platform, YouTube enables HEIs to establish a dedicated channel for sharing informative content, campus tours, faculty interviews, and student testimonials. HEIs can build a loyal subscriber base and enhance their visibility within the digital landscape.

Social media stories have transformed the way HEIs engage with their audience, offering a dynamic blend of short videos, captivating photos, and interactive features. By embracing platforms like Instagram and Facebook Stories, HEIs can share authentic, relatable content that resonates with prospective students and fosters a sense of community.

In addition to social media platforms, HEIs can leverage blogging platforms such as WordPress and Medium to amplify their brand presence through content marketing. Faculty-authored blogs, student testimonials, and alumni reflections offer valuable insights into campus life and academic pursuits. By consistently producing high-quality content, HEIs can enhance their organic search rankings and attract prospective students seeking authentic information about college options.

## ***4.2. Building a HEI community***

Creating a thriving HEI (Higher Education Institution) community requires a strategic and thoughtful approach. By emphasizing key strategies, institutions can cultivate an environment where members feel connected, engaged, and valued (Chaudhary, 2024).

1. **Defining a Clear Community Direction.** A vibrant HEI community is founded on a compelling purpose that encourages active participation and collaboration among its members. Institutions should align the community's purpose with their educational mission and values, resonating with the academic and personal aspirations of students, faculty, and staff. By articulating a shared vision and purpose, institutions inspire engagement and commitment among community members.

2. **Crafting a Comprehensive Mission Statement.** A concise and impactful mission statement is essential for guiding the activities and goals of the HEI community. It should accurately reflect the diverse needs and objectives of its members. Involving stakeholders in the mission statement development process ensures its relevance and inclusivity.

3. **Fostering Belonging and Engagement.** The vitality of an HEI community hinges on active participation and collaboration. This entails involving members in meaningful discussions, valuing their contributions, and providing platforms for interaction and knowledge exchange. Institutions empower students, faculty, and staff to share their insights, ask questions, and express opinions by facilitating dialogue and creating inclusive spaces.

4. **Utilizing Online Platforms and Tools.** Selecting appropriate online platforms that align with the HEI community's objectives and demographics is crucial. Institutions can leverage social media platforms, specialized forums, and collaborative software to foster engagement. By choosing platforms that resonate

with their community's preferences, institutions enhance communication and connectivity.

5. Evaluating Performance and Adjusting Strategies. Building an HEI community is an iterative process that requires ongoing assessment and adaptation. Institutions should analyze relevant data and metrics to gauge community effectiveness. Monitoring engagement levels, membership growth, and satisfaction rates provides valuable feedback for refining community-building initiatives.

At the heart of an HEI community are the relationships between members and the institution. Institutions should prioritize fostering connections by actively engaging with comments, providing personalized support, and recognizing the contributions of community members. Celebrating student achievements, honoring faculty excellence, and empowering campus leaders demonstrate appreciation for the diverse talents and contributions within the HEI community.

### ***4.3. Managing teamwork and communication in HEI in social networks***

The effective model for building teamwork and communication is structured around relationship ties and communication ties, focusing on fostering shared goals, knowledge, and respect among participants (table 2).

1. Shared objectives. The key to ensuring high-quality teamwork lies in the mutual sharing of knowledge and experiences among team members, fostering interpersonal relationships based on shared objectives and values. Establishing clear objectives at the team level is paramount for task completion and the acceptance of ideas generated through cooperation. Shared objectives not only enhance productivity but also improve team morale and support. While competition among team members may boost motivation, cooperation and support are ultimately more beneficial for achieving team objectives. Shared

objectives promote productivity, facilitate task prioritization, and ensure a common understanding of work rules. According to Gittell, (2010), shared objectives enable stakeholders to develop connections that accommodate diverse perspectives, leading to compatible conclusions and effective collaboration.

2. Shared knowledge. Shared knowledge within work teams is essential for effective collaboration and task performance. It involves compatible or similar knowledge among team members, leading to shared expectations and facilitating coordination. Knowledge generation occurs through bidirectional communication processes at both individual and team levels, fostering teamwork spirit. Effective knowledge exchange fosters trust and enhances team effectiveness, as highlighted by Storck & Lettenmaier, (2000) and Herbsleb, and Moizra, (2001). Coordination problems and project failures can result from a lack of information exchange. Integration of knowledge from diverse disciplines and team members is crucial for productive team interaction and efficient processes. Shared knowledge involves providing relevant information and know-how to support others in their work, whether through verbal or written communication, networking with experts, or knowledge documentation. In a corporate setting, shared knowledge contributes to knowledge application, innovation, and competitive advantage. There is the importance of understanding how individual objectives relate to the broader goals of the team, enabling a dynamic where every member comprehends the implications of their actions on other tasks and roles within the group.

3. Mutual respect. Mutual respect and open communication are fundamental for fostering high-quality teamwork. Team members must freely share information and ideas, as lack of respect can hinder the integration of collective knowledge and experience in common tasks. Collaborative success hinges on mutual respect, where team members support each other's contributions and ideas instead of engaging in conflict. Respectful interactions are crucial for maintaining a positive work climate and enhancing productivity within teams. In environments where mutual respect prevails, members can freely express their talents and ideas,



leading to effective coordination and problem-solving. Gittel, (2010) model emphasizes various communication dimensions, including frequent, timely, accurate, and problem-solving communication, as essential components of successful teamwork.

4. Frequent communication. Continual and frequent communication is indispensable for effective teamwork, fostering feedback, error correction, idea generation, and problem-solving. This constant interaction stimulates creativity, enhances decision-making processes, and reduces uncertainty in complex tasks, as per information processing theory. Moreover, frequent communication lays the groundwork for coordinating team efforts, aligning collective goals, fostering shared mental models, and building trust within the team. Team performance hinges on the team's ability to achieve quality, cost, and time objectives. The team leader plays a vital role in facilitating and coordinating communication among members, fostering relationships, and creating proximity through repeated interaction.

5. Timely communication. Timely communication is crucial for achieving organizational goals, as delays can impede success. Effective communication is a cornerstone of quality teamwork, enabling information exchange, idea sharing, coordination of efforts, and feedback. In today's context, ensuring that relevant information reaches the right person at the right time is paramount. Communication encompasses understanding, networking, and utilizing networks to facilitate information exchange within teams. The communication style of an organization is closely tied to its growth, with open and accurate communication fostering employee engagement and trust.

6. Accurate communication. Accurate communication is strongly linked to employee productivity and group work effectiveness. Precise communication, including clarity over policies and organizational routines, positively impacts productivity. Direct communication among team members is essential to avoid

delays and errors that may occur when information is relayed through intermediaries. Openness among team members is crucial for effective communication, as withholding important information can hinder knowledge integration and teamwork. The accuracy of information exchange is vital for implementing organizational strategies and human resources policies successfully. Strategic misalignment can result from a lack of precise communication between managers, highlighting the critical importance of accurate communication within teams.

7. Problem solving communication. Problem-solving communication is crucial for effective teamwork, particularly in groups characterized by high interdependence. Stakeholders must commit to a communication policy focused on resolving issues, as blaming others or shirking responsibilities can negatively impact outcomes. Communication problems are often perceived as stemming from coordination issues within teams, emphasizing the essential role of communication in collaborative problem-solving. Problems in teamwork may arise when actions of one or more members are incompatible with others, particularly when conflicting objectives emerge. Embracing problem-solving communication allows teams to adapt flexibly to unforeseen circumstances, contributing significantly to teamwork quality. Quality relationships built on frequent, accurate, and timely communication facilitate effective problem-solving and work processes. The relational coordination model, as proposed by Gittell, (2010), has been successfully applied across various industries, including healthcare and education, demonstrating its efficacy in enhancing organizational excellence and satisfaction. Coordination, characterized by integrating work amidst task interdependencies, is positively associated with competitive outcomes in organizations. Relational coordination, facilitated by frequent, high-quality communication, shared objectives and knowledge, and mutual respect, fosters excellence and competitiveness, particularly in upper educational institutions. While communication mechanisms may not pose significant issues in educational

settings, barriers to excellence may arise from a lack of shared objectives and mutual respect. Therefore, enhancing coordination among educators, internal organization, and learning objectives is essential for improving the quality of upper education systems, ultimately determining their success and achievement of objectives.

Table 2. Dimensions and elements for the Relational Coordination Model

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Elements</b>	<b>Description</b>
Relational Dimensions	Shared objectives	Shared objectives offer teamwork members strong linkages and facilitate the conclusions on how answering to new information.
	Shared knowledge	It is important that the members of a team own the global knowledge that it is required to better know how changes impact in the process
	Mutual respect	The respect for the rest of the members of the team creates strong linkages amongst them
	Frequent communication	Frequent communication helps to build relationships.
	Timely communication	Communication can be frequent however of low quality. For certain work interdependencies, delays in the communication can be transformed into fatal errors.

Communication dimensions	Accurate communication	Apart from frequent and on time, communication must be accurate. Otherwise, important mistakes can also take place
	Problem solving communication	Interdependent tasks often generate problems that must be solved together

Source: Smith, et la. (2011)

#### ***4.4. Application of relational coordination model in higher education institutions to optimize the use of digital social networks***

The application of the relational coordination model in higher education institutions (HEIs) represents a strategic approach to leverage digital social networks for enhancing both internal and external relationships. With the ubiquitous presence of digital social networks in contemporary society, their integration into the operational framework of HEIs has become imperative. These platforms have not only revolutionized personal and professional interactions but have also presented a unique opportunity for institutions to redefine their communication strategies.

HEIs must acknowledge digital social networks as more than mere technological tools; they are extensions of personal relationships and vital components of organizational communication. Rather than viewing them as substitutes for face-to-face interactions, HEIs should embrace them as facilitators of enriched human experiences. These platforms enable institutions to maintain daily contact with a broader audience than would be feasible through traditional means, thereby fostering an environment of continuous engagement and information dissemination.

The relational coordination model provides a structured framework for HEIs to optimize their utilization of digital social networks. By emphasizing the importance of interconnectedness and mutual respect among team members, this model guides institutions in effectively managing their online presence and enhancing communication dynamics. Digital social networks, when aligned with the principles of relational coordination, offer opportunities for HEIs to strengthen internal relationships, thereby improving organizational effectiveness and academic quality.

Platforms such as Vine or Instagram serve as catalysts for trust-building within teams, facilitating the exchange of information and fostering a shared sense of institutional culture. In HEIs with multiple branches spread across diverse geographical locations, digital social networks serve as invaluable communication channels, transcending geographical barriers and ensuring seamless information exchange. Moreover, the establishment of corporate groups on professional networking platforms like LinkedIn or Facebook fosters a sense of community and solidarity among employees, contributing to a cohesive organizational identity.

Effective internal relations are paramount for HEIs to achieve their institutional objectives and cultivate a positive corporate culture. Digital social networks, when managed adeptly, serve as powerful tools for enhancing internal communication and coordination. By embracing the principles of the relational coordination model, HEIs can navigate the complexities of online communication, ensuring that their digital presence aligns with organizational goals and values.

Furthermore, digital social networks play a pivotal role in HEIs' recruitment efforts and overall competitiveness. These platforms enable institutions to engage

with prospective students, alumni, and the broader community, thereby enhancing their visibility and attractiveness. Implementing a comprehensive social media marketing plan, meticulously aligned with institutional objectives and departmental goals, requires effective coordination among team members. Community Managers, entrusted with the responsibility of managing institutional relationships online, play a central role in optimizing the use of digital social networks. By fostering active and participatory communities, these managers contribute to the realization of HEI objectives and the cultivation of a vibrant online presence.

In essence, the application of the relational coordination model in HEIs serves as a guiding framework for leveraging digital social networks to their fullest potential. By embracing digital communication channels and fostering collaboration among team members, institutions can enhance their internal dynamics, strengthen their external relationships, and ultimately achieve their overarching objectives in today's digital age.

## **V. Discussion and Conclusion**

Effective teamwork and collaboration are important for the success of (HEIs). It is emphasized the importance of core elements like communication and shared goals, along with the challenges such as interdisciplinary boundaries and cultural differences. Overcoming these challenges requires structural changes, cultural shifts, and targeted interventions to foster a collaborative culture within HEIs.

Fostering collaboration within HEIs is essential for nurturing innovation and excellence. Addressing these challenges and promoting a culture of collaboration will enable HEIs to thrive in today's dynamic global landscape.

Social media platforms offer valuable opportunities for collaboration and learning within educational institutions. Research underscores the positive impact of social

media on student engagement, collaborative learning, and performance. Moreover, partnerships with sustainability-focused organizations enable HEIs to promote eco-friendly behaviors, showcase sustainability initiatives, and foster community engagement through strategic social media marketing. By leveraging social media effectively, HEIs can enhance collaboration, learning outcomes, and sustainability efforts, thereby enriching the educational experience and contributing to a more sustainable future.

Building a collaborative culture within higher education institutions (HEIs) is essential for fostering sustainable communication and organizational effectiveness. This culture thrives on integrity, maturity, and an abundance mindset, supported by effective communication and organizational skills. HEIs must prioritize open communication, trust, and respect among team members to drive collaboration and innovation. Leveraging social media platforms can amplify communication efforts, empower teams, and cultivate a culture of collaboration that drives collective success. Effective managerial communication plays a crucial role in coordinating activities, fostering partnerships, and guiding individuals towards optimal outcomes. By embracing these principles, HEIs can enhance internal cohesion, strengthen external relationships, and achieve sustainable growth in today's dynamic educational landscape.

Implementing social media in teamwork and collaboration within higher education institutions (HEIs) requires a strategic approach tailored to the institution's needs and objectives. By carefully selecting appropriate platforms and fostering a thriving HEI community, institutions can enhance communication, engagement, and collaboration among team members. Embracing the principles of the relational coordination model provides a structured framework for optimizing the use of digital social networks, both internally and externally. Through effective management of digital communication channels, HEIs can strengthen relationships, enhance organizational effectiveness, and achieve their overarching objectives in today's digital age.

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# CHAPTER 5

## MEASURING SUCCESS IN SUSTAINABLE COMMUNICATION

Wojciech Duranowski PHD<sup>1</sup>

Zbigniew Dąbrowski<sup>2</sup>

As in any field, so in sustainable social media communication, it is important to monitor and measure the impact we have on our environment. We are keen to ensure that our actions are positively received by the audiences we are targeting - at the same time, we also want to make sure that the quality of our initiatives and expressions remains as high as possible. These truths apply to all social media speech, but are particularly relevant for educators and those disseminating informative and educational content. The following chapter aims to introduce you to the principles and techniques for monitoring your social media activity. By learning about the most popular and easy-to-use evaluation tools, you will be able to self-manage and modify your social media activities in such a way as to create online content even more effectively.

Among the key objectives of this chapter are:

- To introduce audiences to the advantages of measuring the impact that their actions have when communicating sustainably online
- To demonstrate the application and use of impact measurement tools in sustainable communication

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<sup>1</sup> Opole University, wduranowski@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3984-6332>

<sup>2</sup> Chairman of the Zofia Zamenhof Foundation, zbigniew.dabrowski@zofiazamenhof.pl

To identify best practices in measuring sustainable communication and present practical examples of their application

## **I. Defining Success in Sustainable Communication**

To be successful in any field, it is first necessary to define internally what we will mean by success. In the case of sustainable communication, it is useful to refer to the three key pillars on which we should base our actions: transparency, lasting impact on audiences and the communication of ethical content.

Transparency is often cited as the first value of sustainable communication. This is due to the demand of our audience to be able to verify the information we provide online. We live in a world of fake news and disinformation, where almost everything can be distorted or presented in a skewed light using artificial intelligence. Even when carefully checking the sources of our information, we have to take into account the fact that some data may have been altered or distorted. This is why it is so important to take careful account of direct sources and to be open in terms of presenting the thinking and deductions that led us to a given conclusion or opinion.

A popular activity among internet users is to follow up on information sources and verify them. To enable them to do so, we should cite and reference our work exhaustively. This is particularly important when it comes to presenting research and referencing the results of other educators. In order to be part of a society responsible for the content we publish, we must be open to entering into discussions and confronting other points of view.

The second pillar of success in sustainable communication is to make a lasting impact on our audience by maintaining long-term engagement with our audience. This is linked to the extraordinary opportunity offered to us by social media, which is online networking. We are not limited by geographical or even language barriers - we are able not only to make new contacts, but also to maintain acquaintances and connections that can lead to innovative solutions and ideas.

The key to long-term engagement is to stay in constant contact. However, this does not mean being online 24/7. Such behaviour is not only detrimental to our work-life balance, but what's more, it can lead to professional burnout or social media addiction - both of which are highly detrimental to mental health. The right behaviours include such positive role models as:

- Interacting with our audience. Whether by responding to comments under our posts or starting discussions on forums or during live events. The key is to reach out to the audience and show interest in their opinions. In the virtual world, there is no clean divide between sender and receiver, as we can all be creators of content and create scientific output together.
- Maintaining a consistent narrative. When you create educational content, you attract a specific audience. That's why it's important to stay consistent with our own premise: sticking to a specific theme (although the occasional deviation from a theme isn't necessarily a bad thing, it's all within the bounds of common sense) and speaking honestly about topics of interest. For our community to have a chance of survival, we need to be authentic.
- Acting in harmony with the algorithms. While it would seem that we create our publication schedule ourselves, relying on the research and mechanisms of the platforms we use can be helpful in keeping our audience interested in our posts. Thus, for example, for Instagram, the best time to post for engagement is generally between 7 a.m. and 8 a.m. on weekdays. For LinkedIn, the best time to post is generally between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. on weekdays. There are many rules and patterns to follow - most of which we can read about online or discover on our own by observing activity on our profiles. However, more important than following strict guidelines is to remain constant in one's activities and stick to predetermined schedules.

The third element important to successful sustainable communication is publishing ethical content. This might seem identical to the first pillar - and to some extent it is - but moral principles run deeper. When we create a community, through our actions we share the values that we ourselves hold. This is where our intentions matter as much as what specific information we choose to share. An ethical account is one that is reliable, verified and, on top of that, communicated

in such a way that it does not cause harm to our audience and, at the same time, aims to do good. This broad definition can be illustrated with an example. When we want to introduce our audience to a particular issue, we should present it objectively. Of course, we can have our own opinion on a subject and expressing it is advisable. What we should also take into account, however, is the way in which we express ourselves. Hateful comments and unfounded accusations or criticism should be avoided. It is also important to genuinely show two sides of a coin to allow our audience to form their own opinion on the subject.

There is no single blueprint to define success in sustainable communication. Taking the above elements into account will certainly bring us closer to creating a model that works for us and our audience, but we should always keep in mind the purpose with which we are creating content and building communities. Through our own experiences and observations, we will be able to assess whether we have succeeded in achieving our objectives.

To measure our success, however, it is important to present it in a measurable form. How do we do this? We can use, for example, the SMART goal-setting method. The acronym stands for specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound goals. This technique will find applications in every area of life and, thanks to its versatility, is easy to apply. It will give us a basis for creating specific values and elements, which we will then be able to examine and determine the degree to which they are realised and, as a result, measure our success.

## **II. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Sustainable Communication**

You may be familiar with the term KPI or Key Performance Indicator from other sources, as they are commonly used, especially in corporations and businesses to measure performance, such as sales or development. In the same way, we can use them to measure the extent to which we have succeeded in applying sustainable

communication. To organise potentially useful KPIs, they can be divided into three main groups: environmental, social and economic impact metrics.

Environmental impact metrics are easier to measure from an institutional level than an individual user level, but they are worth knowing. You may be, or will be in the future, responsible for running your team's or university's online communications - in which case it will be useful to know how to measure:

Digital footprint analysis. It is primarily concerned with the use of electricity to maintain the servers with which you communicate. However, it also covers issues such as the carbon footprint generated to maintain your online activities. The aim of sustainable communication is to reduce the digital footprint, as electricity generation consumes resources and emits harmful substances into the environment.

Sustainable practices adoption rate. This is a measure that is very easy to adapt to our individual needs. By observing industry and market trends, we are able to assess what policies and behaviours our colleagues and competitors are using. Based on this, we are able to create an index of actions that are worth using to ensure the sustainability of our communications. The more of these we implement into our arsenal of activities, the higher the index we can achieve.

Waste reduction. This indicator is primarily about the focus on online and digital communication, rather than relying on printed materials. There are situations in which we cannot completely abandon the analogue form of communication, but in many cases, thanks to the ubiquity of digitalisation, we are able to use primarily digital forms of communication with others - our students, colleagues, stakeholders or shareholders.



Resource utilisation efficiency. This is a very universal indicator that stimulates us to actively evaluate our actions. The use of digital space is not environmentally neutral either, so we should be mindful of the things we choose to publish and store. By optimising the resources we have, we can mean, for example, regularly reviewing the material on our drives and deleting those we will no longer use. Another way is to keep your inbox tidy and delete spam and old, useless emails.

Social impact metrics can be used by anyone - it doesn't matter if you run your university's social media profile or just manage your personal account on any social media platform. Within its framework, we can measure:

Stakeholder engagement. Through viewing statistics and analysing who is actively interacting with us online, we are able to study the extent to which different stakeholder groups are engaged with our online activities on an ongoing basis. Each content creator has its own objectives, but as educators, we can safely assume that we are all interested in reaching a wide audience interested in furthering their knowledge in the area we specialise in.

Diversity and inclusivity metrics. Account settings on most platforms and portals allow us to analyse the characteristics of the population that interacts (views, likes, comments) with the content we publish. This is a very valuable tool that provides us with the opportunity to control who our content reaches in the first place. Often, platforms suggest content to their users based on an algorithm that learns by watching their preferences. If we perceive that our content is not reaching our intended group or that a group is under-represented among our audience, we can take proactive measures to reach that group, such as using appropriate hashtags or joining community groups where our audience frequently looks.

Awareness and education impact. You can observe and study changes in your audience's attitudes and beliefs on an ongoing basis, for example by using online opinion polls or surveys. Questionnaires of a few minutes' duration are eagerly

filled in by internet users, and through them you are able to monitor whether your content is actually having an impact on your audience. This allows you to adapt your content or explore issues that are of particular interest to your community.

Behavioural changes. You can also go one step further and analyse not only the opinions but also the behaviour of your audience. Observe how they communicate with each other in the comments section or what other actions and initiatives related to sustainable communication they take part in.

Economic impact metrics will focus on businesses and the economic aspects of our initiatives.

Cost-benefit analysis. You can continuously examine and compare which aspects of sustainable communication save you resources and funds, and which still need to be refined to be as effective as traditional forms of communication using the same inputs.

Funding and grants acquisition. Take advantage of support for sustainable communication initiatives offered by various institutions, such as the European Union or government programmes. In the digital age, many organisations can receive funding to implement environmentally and socially friendly solutions, which in turn will translate into concrete changes in the behaviour of entire audiences.

Revenue generation. If you are running any revenue-generating initiatives, you can track what percentage of this is due to engaging with initiatives that promote sustainable communications. Social media activity is conducive to revenue-generating activities, and incorporating it with the promotion of environmentally supportive ideas has a doubly positive effect.

Operational savings. You can also keep track of the savings you will make by using modern technology to communicate. The easiest way to do this is by

analysing what resources and means you would need to attend meetings or conferences organised far from where you live. Would you be able to afford such a trip? Or would you be able to buy a hard copy of a publication that you would get cheaper online? All these measures add up.

The KPIs agreed above are just examples from the three most influential groups of factors. For each of you, it is worth creating your own set of indicators, correlated with the goals you want to achieve. For inspiration, look online or consult other content creators on the Internet. You can also expand your set of KPIs to include groups of indicators that measure your level of recognition and online reputation, or the impact you have on policymakers in your community. The possibilities are extensive.

### **III. Tools and Techniques for Measuring Success**

Effective measurement of success in higher education communication strategies, especially those focusing on sustainability goals, requires a multi-faceted approach. You need to be aware of what you want to measure. The next step is knowing the ways in which you can take those measurements. Many platforms already have tools incorporated into their operational systems, but there are also dedicated apps and websites for controlling and following the impact you are making on social media and on the Internet overall.

#### Social media analytics tools

Social media platforms are pivotal in modern communication strategies. Analytics tools like Hootsuite and Sprout Social offer comprehensive insights into social media performance, helping institutions track engagement, reach, and the impact of their sustainability messaging.

Hootsuite. This tool allows users to manage multiple social media accounts from a single dashboard. It offers analytics that help track follower growth, engagement

rates, and the effectiveness of specific campaigns. Hootsuite's analytics can provide detailed reports on audience demographics, post performance, and overall social media health, making it easier to adjust strategies in real-time. Using this comprehensive tool you are able to track many of the KPIs described in the previous section.

Sprout Social. Similar to Hootsuite, Sprout Social provides robust analytics and reporting features. It includes advanced social listening capabilities, which can track keywords, hashtags, and brand mentions related to sustainability initiatives. This tool helps in understanding audience sentiment and engagement patterns, enabling higher education institutions to tailor their messages more effectively.

Many social media platforms offer their own analytics tools, such as Facebook Insights and Twitter Analytics. These native tools provide detailed metrics on user interactions, post reach, and audience demographics. They are very useful if you are creating content on one or two platforms since they tend to have more personalised tools for monitoring the specific platform. The most important thing in choosing your analytic tool is keeping in mind your goal and checking the data you want to know. It is easy to get overwhelmed with the amount of possibilities that is why you should always look back to your definition of success.

### Survey and feedback tools

Direct input from your stakeholders and general audience is crucial for measuring the success of communication strategies. No one will be able to tell you better and more clearly what works and is valuable in your way of communication than the people who are its direct recipients. There are several ways to get feedback from our audience. Below you will read about some of the most popular methods.

Tools like **SurveyMonkey** and **Google Forms** enable the creation and distribution of surveys to students, faculty and other stakeholders. These platforms offer various question types, including multiple-choice, Likert scales,

and open-ended questions, making it possible to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. Surveys can be used to assess awareness and perceptions of sustainability initiatives, gauge satisfaction with communication efforts and identify areas for improvement. The best part about them is that you can personalise them and get the specific data you are looking for. It is crucial for monitoring sustainable communication, as it in itself is a rather unique topic that can be measured in lots of ways.

On the other hand, a more dynamic way to gather information among your audience can be achieved through Internet polls. Integrating quick polls into social media posts, newsletters, and websites can provide immediate feedback on specific questions. Tools like **Poll Everywhere** and **Slido** are excellent for real-time audience engagement during events or presentations, offering instant insights that can be used to gauge opinions and adjust strategies on the fly. They can also be used as links under posts on current topics and as parts of discussion to estimate the opinions of the community.

However, those are not the only types of communication you can have with your audience to receive some information back from them. Customised feedback forms, available through platforms like **Typeform**, can be embedded in emails or websites to collect ongoing input from stakeholders. These forms are particularly useful for gathering detailed comments and suggestions, providing a deeper understanding of stakeholder needs and concerns. Make sure you are utilising them correctly. Not every situation or discussion calls for detailed feedback from the community. Make sure that you are open to receiving these types of comments (if you are interested in them) but make them optional, so your followers do not get discouraged with the amount of work it takes to engage with your content.

If you are looking for more complex forms of analysing the data and information gathered from your audience, you may be interested in trying out some content analysis tools. Qualitative analysis tools can help you assess the effectiveness and

alignment of your messaging with the principles of sustainable communication. Among some of the most user-friendly and popular choices you can find:

**NVivo.** This software is designed for qualitative and mixed-methods research. It can analyse text data from various sources, including social media posts, survey responses, and feedback forms. By coding and categorising data, NVivo helps identify common themes, patterns, and sentiments related to sustainability communication.

**Atlas.ti.** Similar to NVivo, it offers powerful tools for qualitative data analysis. It allows users to visualise complex relationships between different data points, making it easier to see how various aspects of sustainability messaging are perceived by stakeholders. This tool is particularly useful for in-depth content analysis of written and multimedia materials.

**Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC).** It is a text analysis software that quantifies the presence of various linguistic and psychological categories in written communication. It can be used to measure the emotional tone, cognitive complexity, and social orientation of sustainability messages, providing insights into how these messages are likely to be received by different audiences.

Those softwares are used for various reasons throughout different sectors and industries. You may not need such detailed expertises for your everyday use and control over your presence and impact on social media, but it is important to keep in mind that there are many ways to measure the impression you are making on others online. Keep your options open and switch between different types of methods until you find the one that suits your needs the most.

## IV. Best Practices

Case Study 1: University of California, Berkeley - Campus sustainability initiatives

The University of California, Berkeley has long been a leader in sustainability, and its approach to sustainable communication is a testament to its commitment. The university employs a multi-channel strategy to communicate its sustainability initiatives effectively to students, staff, and the broader community.

### **Sustainable communication practices:**

- **Transparent reporting:** UC Berkeley publishes an annual Sustainability Report that details its environmental performance, challenges, and future plans. This report is available online, ensuring transparency and accessibility for all stakeholders. The report includes detailed metrics on energy use, waste reduction, and water conservation, providing a comprehensive overview of the university's sustainability efforts.
- **Engaging content:** The university's social media channels, including Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, regularly feature updates on sustainability projects, events, and achievements. Posts are visually appealing, often incorporating infographics and videos to engage the audience. Interactive campaigns, such as the #BerkeleySustainabilityChallenge, encourage the community to share their own sustainability efforts, fostering a sense of collective responsibility and engagement.
- **Educational outreach:** UC Berkeley runs workshops, webinars, and online courses focused on sustainability. These sessions are promoted through social media and email newsletters, ensuring wide reach and participation.

The university uses tools like Google Analytics and social media analytics to track engagement metrics such as likes, shares, comments, and website traffic. Surveys and feedback forms are distributed regularly to assess the effectiveness of communication strategies and gather input from the community.

Results include:

- Increased participation in sustainability programs and events.
- Positive feedback from students and staff, with many reporting increased awareness and adoption of sustainable practices.
- Significant improvements in key sustainability metrics, such as reduced energy consumption and waste generation.

### Case Study 2: National Geographic - Educational content on sustainability

National Geographic, a globally recognized media organisation, leverages its vast reach to promote sustainability through educational content. The organisation's communication strategy effectively combines compelling storytelling with scientific rigour to inspire action on environmental issues.

#### **Sustainable communication practices:**

- **Multimedia storytelling:** National Geographic uses a combination of articles, documentaries, photo essays, and interactive web features to convey complex sustainability topics in an engaging manner.
- **Community engagement:** National Geographic encourages user-generated content through initiatives like the "Your Shot" photo community, where photographers share images and stories related to sustainability. The organisation hosts webinars, virtual events, and Q&A sessions with experts, fostering direct interaction with its audience.
- **Collaborations and campaigns:** Collaborative projects with environmental organisations amplify the reach and impact of sustainability messages. For example, the "Planet or Plastic?" campaign raises awareness about plastic pollution and promotes actionable solutions.

Analytics tools are used to monitor engagement across digital platforms, including social media interactions, video views, and website visits.

#### Results include:

- High levels of audience engagement and increased awareness of environmental issues.
- Recognition and awards for impactful storytelling and educational initiatives.



- Positive changes in audience behaviour, such as reduced plastic use and increased participation in conservation activities.

## **V. Conclusion**

The above chapter was intended to introduce you to the goals and principles of measuring the impact you can have through sustainable communication on your audience. The key to understanding this topic is not only to know the tools and techniques for measuring success, but to start at the beginning and define what it means for you to be successful. Each of us has our own objectives in our actions and it is up to us to determine the direction our initiatives will take.

Modern technology means that not only can we communicate with larger audiences spread across the globe, but at the same time we are able to monitor and shape the impact we have on them. It is important to be aware of the impact of our actions, as we are responsible for the words and content we publish. Our universal goal is to have a positive impact on others and at the same time offset negative phenomena, such as climate change caused by overuse of resources. In our day-to-day communication activities, we should be mindful of our actions and strive to carry out communication that is environmentally neutral, yet effective and friendly to our audience as well as ourselves.

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**Merkez/Mağaza**  
**53. Sokak No: 29**

**Bahçelievler / ANKARA**

**Tel : (0 312) 223 77 73 - 223 77 17**

**info@gazikitabevi.com.tr • www.gazikitabevi.com.tr**



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