Assessment of the Active Presence of Higher Education Institutions on LinkedIn and Facebook: Comparative Analysis among SNU, UniMelb, and UCT

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Abstract. *Introduction.* Effective digital communication is vital for universities in the modern competitive world, where public visibility, transparency and accountability matter. Maintaining active presence in social media ensures keeping up with the pace on the international academic arena. This involves choosing the platform that best suits the needs of the university. *Methods.* On the grounds of replicating the empirical *Active Presence* model introduced by Capriotti, Oliveira and Carretón (2024), this study employs quantitative content analysis of official *LinkedIn* and *Facebook* accounts of 3 top universities from different world regions, specifically, Seoul National University (Asia), University of Melbourne (Australia), and University of Cape Town (Africa). The sample includes 234 posts from March 2025. The aim of the research was to analyze their Level of Activity and Type of Presence, and to evaluate the Level of Active Presence of those universities on the chosen social media platforms. *Analysis.* By analyzing the Level of Active Presence, strategic patterns, platform-specific behaviors, and regional variations of social media usage can be seen. *Results.* The findings underscore the predominance of proprietary content and the widespread Passive Funnel strategy, where universities focus on proprietary presence with low activity. *Conclusions.* The study reinforces the need for a well-planned social media communication strategy for universities.

Keywords: higher education institutions; active presence; digital communication; social media; funnel strategy.

Aukštojo mokslo institucijų raiškos LinkedIn ir Facebook'e vertinimas: lyginamoji Seulo nacionalinio universiteto, Melburno universiteto ir Keiptauno universiteto analizė

Santrauka. *Įžanga.* Šiuolaikiniame konkurencija paremtame pasaulyje universitetams gyvybiškai svarbus efektyvus bendravimas skaitmeninėje erdvėje. Čia vertinami matomumas visuomenei, skaidrumas bei atsakomybė už pateikiamą informaciją. Aktyvus dalyvavimas socialinėje medijoje leidžia žengti tarptautinės akademinės bendruomenės ritmu. Vienas iš svarbių skaitmeninės veiklos aspektų yra platformos, geriausiai atitinkančios konkretaus universiteto poreikius, pasirinkimas. *Metodai.* Capriotti, Oliveira ir Carretón (2024) pristatė *Aktyvaus dalyvavimo* (angl. *Active Presence*) empirinį tyrimo modelį. Juo remiantis, šiame tyrime atliekama kiekybinė trijų elitinių universitetų *LinkedIn* ir *Facebook*'o oficialių paskyrų turinio analizė. Šie universitetai – Seulo nacionalinis universitetas (Pietų Korėja, Azija), UniMelb (Melburno universitetas, Australija) bei Keiptauno universitetas (Pietų Afrikos Respublika, Afrika) – parinkti atstovauti skirtingus regionus. Tyrime analizuojami 234 pranešimai, ankstyviausias iš kurių buvo paskelbtas 2025 metų kovo mėnesį. Šiuo tyrimu siekiama analizuoti universitetų paskyrų aktyvumo lygį bei dalyvavimo skaitmeninėje erdvėje pobūdį bei įvertinti jų aktyvaus dalyvavimo lygį pasirinktose socialinės medijos platformose. *Analitinis tyrimas.* Ištyrus aktyvaus dalyvavimo lygį, galima nustatyti tyrimo dalyvių raiškos strateginius dėsningumus, raiškos tendencijas konkrečiose platformose bei regioninę strategijų įvairovę. *Rezultatai.* Tyrimo rezultatai atskleidė autorinio (t. y., unikalaus, o ne atkartoto) turinio dominavimą paskyrose bei plačiai paplitusią „pasyvaus piltuvėlio" strategiją, kadangi universitetai prioritetu laiko autorinės informacijos pateikimą, išlaikydami menką aktyvumo lygį. *Išvados.* Tyrimo rezultatai naujai atskleidžia universitetų poreikį efektyviai planuoti savąsias socialinių medijų komunikacijos strategijas.

Raktiniai žodžiai: aukštojo mokslo institucijos; aktyvi raiška; skaitmeninis bendravimas; socialinės medijos; piltuvėlio strategija.

Introduction

In the contemporary global landscape, *Higher Education Institutions* (HEIs) are expected to demonstrate their relevance and impact through both traditional academic outputs and effective public communication. As global demands for quality education, transparency, and responsiveness have been intensifying, universities today are facing an increasing pressure to operate with business-like efficiency, thus, they must adopt strategic communication approaches as well. Nowadays, their success highly depends on the extent of effectiveness of use strategic communication to manage stakeholder relations, cultivate public image, reinforce institutional identity, and establish trust among diverse publics. Within this highly evolving environment, institutional communication is crucial for not only building visibility but also for reinforcing legitimacy, institutional identity, and stakeholder trust.

The landscape of institutional communication has undergone a significant transformation, especially with the emergence of social media like *Facebook* and *LinkedIn*. These channels have evolved into powerful resources for HEIs to foster two-way interaction, strengthen a sense of belonging to the academic community and share news and accomplishments. Social networks are an important channel for strategic corporate communication, and active presence on *Facebook* and *LinkedIn* increases brand digital visibility, facilitating two-way communication between an organization and its publics (Capriotti, Zeler, & Oliveira, 2021). For universities, the use of social media can be beneficial in understanding their audiences better, while also serving as a source of information in the

area of higher education, helping them stand out, and boosting their academic reputation (Eger, Egerová, Tomczyk, Krystoň, & Czeglédi, 2021; Foroudi P., Dinnie, Kitchen, Melewar, & Foroudi M. M, 2017).

There is a growing need to understand the mechanisms and benefits of using social media for institutional communication purposes. To address this need, this research uses the methodology introduced by Capriotti, Oliveira and Carretón (2024) – a model of competitive analysis of social media strategies. The sample selected for this study consists of three leading universities, representing different global regions: Seoul National University (SNU) from Asia, the University of Cape Town (UCT) from Africa, and the University of Melbourne from Australia and Oceania. By analyzing the official LinkedIn and Facebook platforms, the research identifies key strategic patterns, behavioral specificity, and differences in the social media approach of these institutions. The research aimed to assess the level of active presence of chosen universities on *LinkedIn* and *Facebook* by analyzing the activity manifested in their official accounts (i.e., the posting frequency) along with their presence (original, shared, or hybrid content).

The research findings revealed that the overall daily mean was 1.27 posts per university, with *LinkedIn* being the most active network and Facebook ranking at a medium-high level. UCT was the most active on both platforms (2.5 posts/day), followed by the University of Melbourne (0.97 posts/day) and the SNU with 0.79 posts/day. All the universities showed more activity on *LinkedIn* than on *Facebook*, especially the University of Cape Town, which outranked all the other universities in LoA. Overall, this reveals that certain patterns of social media engagement exist across institutions, and, with the objective to gain an overview of how they are addressed and discussed, a literature analysis was conducted.

Literature Review

Social media is gaining popularity day by day, both among individuals and organizations. Understanding this trend is an ingenious and perfectly systematic way to uncover how media activity helps organizations in enhancing their visibility by showcasing their performance online (Albanna, Alalwan, & Al-Emran , 2022, p. 9–10). Social media allows its users to engage with others real-time, regardless of their location (Hennig-Thurau, Malthouse, Friege, Gensler, Lobschat, Rangaswamy, & Skiera, 2010, p. 312). Organizations use social media platforms to engage stakeholders, increase their visibility, and attract more interest. Social presence and active engagement have an enormous impact on electronic word of mouth (eWOM), influencing stakeholders (Algharabat & Pauwels, 2018, p. 145–146). Electronic or online word of mouth significantly affects the audience and consumer behavior, sometimes even more than traditional marketing methods, because word of mouth is considered reliable and accepted by the online audience (Bélanger, Bali, & Longden 2013, p. 15). Opinions voiced and discussed by social media users are visible to everyone, including those not directly involved in any specific social media space but rather using search engines to gather information about the institution in question (Brech,

Messer, Vander Schee, Rauschnabel, & Ivens, 2017, p. 114). Organizations have developed their own social media channels, such as *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *LinkedIn*, and websites to raise their public visibility, spread awareness, share and collect information, and receive feedback. Social media platforms help organizations shape their audience's perceptions by framing their aims, activities, and results. Social media platforms are fostering engagement with key stakeholders and increasing the organization's visibility.

Visibility is one of the most important factors when discussing organizational activities on social media platforms, as it makes organizations easily visible to their potential target audience. It also fosters new networks by engaging individuals with the same interests (Leonardi, 2014, p. 799). Due to social media's inherent visibility, organizations have a chance to raise an ambient awareness. This means that social platform users begin to develop general knowledge and a sense of what the organization is about and what is happening there, without any direct interaction with it (Leonardi, 2015, p. 758). Building upon this attribute, organizations are increasingly integrating social media into their strategic communication and marketing practices.

Social media marketing is a multifunctional and multidisciplinary concept where an institution utilizes social media platforms to attain its organizational aims and goals by engaging with their stakeholders (Felix, Rauschnabel, & Hinsch, 2016, p. 118–119). Universities also started to present themselves on a new marketing avenue – social media platforms – to compete in the higher education market. They had to adopt branding techniques and mechanisms and try to attract an audience through posts, statements, taglines, and campaigns. Social media has become a new marketing tool for universities to promote their services and offers (Bélanger et al., 2013, p. 25–26).

Universities can use social media for three main purposes: institutional promotion and the dissemination of information aimed at students and researchers; fostering engagement and interaction among students, promoting their participation in university life; strengthening the campus community and fostering connections within it (Pawar, 2024, p. 1; Capriotti, Carretón-Ballester, & Losada-Díaz, 2024, p. 42). Many HEIs manage multiple accounts on various social platforms, having one main brand account and a few additional ones for different campuses or internal organizations for more specific audiences. Audiences engage by reacting, commenting, or sharing university content. All of these activities together are defined as interactivity (Brech et al., 2017, p. 114).

Over the last few decades, universities have promoted their internationalization with a view to attracting students from different countries. They started utilizing social media as a cost-effective strategy to gain global visibility and recruit foreign students. HEIs use *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *YouTube*, and other digital platforms to disseminate practical information about studies or campus life. While high school graduates pay significant attention to the social media platforms of the considered universities, their choice is barely influenced by them (Constantinides & Stagno, 2011, p. 20). There are challenges associated with internationalizing a university's social platform. For instance, European higher education social platforms may not be accessible to students from China because of governmental

restrictions on using Western social media platforms. Therefore, universities should diversify their use of social media platforms, while avoiding limiting themselves to *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Twitter*, and other 'Western' social spaces (Zhu, 2019, p. 185).

Not all universities are successful in managing their social media channels. Success depends on the content and frequency of posting. Researchers have proven that universities that post more pictures engage more users, especially if the account administrator persuades users to interact with a post by commenting, reacting, or sharing it (De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012, p. 89; Rauschnabel, Praxmarer, & Ivens, 2012, p. 158–159,). Also, after conducting a content analysis of university websites in the United Kingdom, studies showed that the universities employing emotional branding on social media channels have a higher chance of engaging with their targeted audience (students, staff, researchers, etc.) compared to those universities that communicate only regarding functional matters like study programs and research. Publishing personal stories and including fun content brings more engagement (Chapleo, 2011, p. 40–41).

Beyond the strategic aspects of the posting frequency and content, a university's social media engagement is closely aligned with its broader institutional goals, particularly those related to reputation management, brand identity, and stakeholder relations. Social media serves as a key medium for positioning universities within a competitive higher education landscape by strengthening their visibility and reputation (Eger et al., 2021, p. 243–244). As Lee, Park and Cameron (2018, p. 308–309) note, digital channels significantly expand institutions' capacity to shape their identity and image in the educational marketplace. Moreover, effective use of platforms such as *Twitter* can enhance institutional reputation and stakeholder trust, especially when communicating messages on corporate social responsibility and sustainable development (Grover, Kar, & Ilavarasan, 2019, p. 48). The choice and management of specific social media channels is also related to and should be in line with the institutional goals and intentions. Platforms like *Facebook* are suitable for building community and engagement (Brech et al., 2017 p. 122–123). *Twitter* (now *X*) serves as a medium for real-time communication, dialogue, and information exchange (Kimmons, Veletsianos, & Woodward, 2017, p. 98), while *LinkedIn* holds a strategic position in a professional setting. Universities use *LinkedIn* to maximize contribution to the employability discourse, implement strong professional working networks that is directly in line with the universities' main goal and values, notably, to connect academia with the job market and promote graduate employability (Aguado, Andrés, García-Izquierdo, & Rodríguez, 2019, p. 54–55). In addition to using each platform to achieve specific institutional goals, visual communication also becomes essential, as the use of images on *Twitter* conveys institutional messages (Ebrahim & Seo, 2019, p. 44).

Although research on universities' social media use is growing, many studies still focus on limited platforms or small regional samples. Most examine 'presence' (content type) and 'activity' (posting frequency) separately, while overlooking how these dimensions interact. Such a fragmented approach may lead to an incomplete understanding of universities' digital communication, resulting in disjointed strategies that ignore the link

between 'presence' and posting frequency 'activity'. This lack of integration limits insights into audience engagement, platform-specific nuances, and the ability of universities to achieve broader goals within the global academic ecosystem (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006, p. 317–318).

As social media have taken center stage in how colleges interact with stakeholders worldwide, communicate and brand themselves, its ability to enable real-time communication regardless of location has made it an essential tool for institutional visibility and reputation (Pawar, 2024). Apart from the basic function of recruitment, social media helps higher education institutions compete in a more globalized market by supporting both branding and stakeholder engagement strategies. The systematic review by Pawar (2024) revealed how colleges' social media strategies are changing from being merely present to being more involved in ways that foster relationships and trust with stakeholders. Their research highlights how crucial it is to incorporate visibility and interactivity into marketing for higher education. Furthermore, a comparative study on academic brands conducted by Jiang, Al-Debei and Ali (2025) contends that, in order for universities to improve their standing and reputation in a competitive global marketplace, effective social media tactics are essential. Their findings reinforce the importance of tailoring communication strategies to institutional goals.

The factors that contribute to effective use of university social media are revealed by empirical research. De Vries et al. (2012) identified key factors for effective social media engagement. In their study, they claimed that vividness – in the sense of using images and videos – and interactivity through incorporating questions and calls-to-action, are strong predictors of user engagement on international brand fan pages. While not pertaining to universities, these findings are highly applicable to academic institutions seeking to improve the impact of their posts on social media. Another research by Soares, Limongi and Cohen (2021) examines the quantitative effects of various content types on social media engagement on a university's *Facebook* page. While informational content, like news or events, is more likely to elicit comments, the authors discovered that it is actually the emotional content, such as posts about accomplishments, that really increases likes and shares. Their research demonstrates how colleges can leverage specific post attributes to boost particular kinds of interaction.

Since it is becoming more and more important to use quantitative metrics to assess how students engage with school social media, Tarifa-Rodriguez, Virues-Ortega, Perez-Bustamante Pereira, Calero-Elvira and Cowie (2023) state that behavioral indices, namely, likes, shares, and comments, are trustworthy measures of engagement levels, providing a consistent method for contrasting institutional tactics. As this study shows, universities can operationalize engagement into quantifiable metrics for performance evaluation. Despite an increase in research, few combine these in a comprehensive framework with content strategies and interactivity. With the objective to close this gap, Capriotti et al. (2024) created the *Active Presence Model* for evaluating HEIs' social media performance by integrating

posting performance, interactivity, and content mix. Understanding this framework could lead to more precise and insightful handling of social media communication.

Methods

This study is an empirical replication of the Active Presence model proposed by Capriotti et al. (2024), which incorporates two primary dimensions of institutional social media use. One of these is Activity – the quantitative frequency of content dissemination reflecting an institution's consistency and regularity in engaging stakeholders online. The other is Presence, which is the qualitative nature of the content published, classified as proprietary (entirely original content created and disseminated by the institution), hybrid (third-party content with institutional commentary), or shared (unmodified third-party content, shared without additional comment).

Two parameters are taken into account in order to achieve strategic communication goals effectively, which means that universities should be actively present in the social network. Activity enables and encourages visibility. To analyze the Activity, we need to look at the number of publications and the daily mean frequency (Macready, 2025; Macready & Stanton, 2025). Presence is determined according to the way a social network profile is designed and the type of content published there, whether it is 'proprietary' (creating and disseminating specially produced own content) or 'shared' (sharing other users' content).

Active Presence can be assessed as Passive/Active and Hub/Funnel according to the two parameters by the Type of Presence (ToP) from Highly Shared to Highly Proprietary and the Level of Activity (LoA), from Very Low to Very High, accordingly (Capriotti et al., 2024). The Hub strategy (whether Active or Passive) means that the university uses its social network to redirect followers to other links for information, while the Funnel strategy, on the contrary, is focused on keeping the users at the organizational profile with specially created content.

This theoretical framework informed the current study's operationalization of LoA and ToP metrics, the construction of a '1–5' Likert scale for the Activity intensity (platform-specific intervals), and the 1.0–2.0 Presence weighting. By mapping each university's social media profiles onto this framework, we identify their strategic positioning and capacity for stakeholder engagement.

The main aim of the research was to evaluate the level of active presence of chosen universities on their social platforms by analyzing their activity (posting frequency) and presence (original content, shared, or hybrid), and their combination.

To achieve this aim, the following research questions were defined:

What kind of presence do the sample universities have on *LinkedIn* and *Facebook*?

What is the level of Activity and Type of Presence of these universities on their *LinkedIn* and *Facebook* accounts?

Based on the association between the two parameters, what is the Level of Active Presence of these universities on *LinkedIn* and *Facebook*?

The purposeful research sample consists of 234 posts from the official institutional accounts of three universities, selected based on international rankings and geographical diversity. They represent three different continents: Africa (University of Cape Town, South Africa), Asia (Seoul National University, Republic of Korea), and Australia (University of Melbourne, Australia). The choice was made based on their high international ratings. According to the QS World University Ranking 2025, UCT is #171 worldwide but #1 in Africa. SNU is #31 worldwide, and specifically #6 in Asia, while being #1 in South Korea. Lastly, UniMelb is #113 worldwide and #1 in Australia (based on QS World University Rankings, 2025).

Primarily, each university account was identified and verified. Two crucial social networks were chosen for the study: *Facebook*, due to the largest number of active monthly users, and *LinkedIn* as a first-choice social platform for professional communication. Content analysis was chosen as the primary method. A team of four people was responsible for finding and retrieving the publications and recording the data in Excel templates. Data were collected from *Facebook* and *LinkedIn* over a one-month period of academic activity in March 2025, which coincided with the beginning of a new semester and the time for opening admissions.

The activity of the universities was measured by comparing the daily mean number of posts to the recommended frequency ranges, which were 1–2 posts per day for *Facebook*, and 0.5–1 posts per day on *LinkedIn*. Presence was divided into three categories: proprietary, hybrid, and shared (as explained above).

Universities across continents often adopt distinct communication strategies shaped by their cultural, economic, and technological contexts. Facebook and LinkedIn are global platforms, but their usage and effectiveness vary by region. Analyzing these differences helps to understand how institutions in different development contexts use digital tools for visibility and outreach. The chosen universities were assessed by the Level of Active Presence (LoAP), which consists of the Level of Activity (LoA) and the Type of Presence

Table 1. **Level of Activity (LoA) measurement (based on Capriotti, Oliveira, & Carretón, 2024, p. 1042)**

ACTIVITY	General (daily mean)	Facebook (daily mean)	Twitter (daily mean)	LinkedIn (daily mean)	Value Assigned (Level of Activity) (LoA)	Level of Activity (LoA) (Likert Scale)
None	0	0	0	0	0 points	No Activity (0–0.9 p.)
Low	0.1–4.5	0.1–0.9	0.1–2.9	0.1–0.4	1.0–2.0 points	Very low (1.0–1.7 p.) / Low (1.8–2.5 p.)
Medium	4.6–8.0	1.0–2.0	3.0–5.0	0.5–1.0	2.1–3.0 points	Medium-Low (2.6–3.0 p.) / Medium-High (3.1–3.5 p.)
High	8.1–11.5	2.1–3.0	5.1–7.0	1.1–1.5	3.1–4.0 points	High (3.6–4.2 p.) / Very high (4.3–5.0 p.)
Very High	11.6–15+	3.1–4+	7.1–9+	1.6–2+	4.1–5.0 points	

(ToP). LoA was measured on a '0–5'-point Likert scale, as suggested by the authors (see Table 1). It was based on the daily mean number of posts, using an equivalence table.

ToP was measured on a scale of 1–2 points, based on the content of proprietary (2), shared (1), and hybrid (1.5) posts. A dispersion matrix was used to visualize the positioning of the universities based on their ToP and LoA results, and four strategies were defined: Active Funnel, Passive Funnel, Active Hub, and Passive Hub.

Results

Key findings reveal that the overall daily mean is 1.27 posts per university (see Table 2). *LinkedIn* is the most active network (1.42 posts/day), whilst *Facebook* accumulates only an overall daily mean of 1.12 posts/day, which gives us an insight that HEIs' overall activity level on *Facebook* is medium-high. On the other hand, LinkedIn falls in a very high category of the activity level. Combining both platforms' daily means, the African UCT showed the highest activity (2.5 posts/day), followed by the Australian UniMelb with an overall daily mean of 0.97 posts/day. The Asian SNU accumulated 0.79 posts/day as its daily mean. All the HEIs showed more activity on *LinkedIn* than on *Facebook*, especially the UCT, which outranked all the other universities in LoA.

Table 2. **Level of Activity (LoA) of the three universities**

University	Platform	Posts	Daily Mean	Likert LoA	Category
UCT	LinkedIn	68	2.19	**5.0**	Very High Activity
	Facebook	59	1.90	2.9	Medium-Low Activity
UniMelb	LinkedIn	34	1.17	1.58	Very Low Activity
	Facebook	24	0.77	1.39	Very Low Activity
SNU	LinkedIn	28	0.90	2.8	Medium-Low Activity
	Facebook	21	0.68	1.7	Low Activity

Regarding the Type of Presence, the overall percentage of proprietary content across all universities and platforms is 98.83%. *Facebook* has a slightly higher average number of proprietary content (99.00%) than LinkedIn (98.67%). Regarding the category of Presence, SNU stands out with a perfect score of 100% of proprietary content across *LinkedIn* and *Facebook*. The UCT follows closely with a proprietary content rate of 98.5%, and *UniMelb* scores 98% of proprietary content across both platforms.

Regarding the content, SNU prioritizes *Facebook* for daily communication and event announcements, while using *LinkedIn* for more academic purposes, focusing on research news. The same goes for UniMelb, which utilizes *Facebook* for everyday communication with students, while focusing on research and academia on *LinkedIn*. The UCT demonstrates a different approach with a homogeneous feed on *Facebook* and *LinkedIn*, where

almost all the content is duplicated across the platforms, with around 15% more research news on *LinkedIn*.

Table 3. **Type of Presence (ToP) of the three universities**

University	Platform	Proprietary Content %	ToP Score	ToP Category
UCT	LinkedIn	100%	2	Highly Proprietary
	Facebook	97%	1.97	Highly Proprietary
UniMelb	LinkedIn	97%	1.97	Highly Proprietary
	Facebook	100%	2	Highly Proprietary
SNU	LinkedIn	100%	2	Highly Proprietary
	Facebook	100%	2	Highly Proprietary

The LoAP analysis (see Figure 1) showed that the African University of Cape Town has a LoA of 1.90 (Medium-Low Activity) and a highly proprietary *Facebook* presence, putting it in the Passive Funnel category. On the other hand, UCT scores 2.19 daily mean (High Activity) on *LinkedIn* with fully proprietary content, which puts the UCT *LinkedIn* platform in the Active Funnel strategy.

As a representative of Asia, Seoul National University accumulates a 0.68 daily mean (Low Activity) and has a highly proprietary presence on *Facebook*. By virtue of showing better results on *LinkedIn*, SNU collected a 0.90 daily mean (Medium-Low Activity) with a fully proprietary presence. Both SNU platforms fall into the Passive Funnel category of strategy.

The Australian University of Melbourne demonstrated a low *Facebook* activity level (0.77 daily mean) with a fully proprietary presence. At the same time, UniMelb demonstrated high activity on *LinkedIn* (1.10 daily mean) with a highly proprietary presence, which is located in the Passive Funnel in both cases.

The dominant Active Presence strategy was the Passive Funnel (where universities focus on proprietary presence, but demonstrate low activity), and it was adopted in ~83% of cases. The Active Funnel strategy (proprietary presence with high activity) was implemented just by UCT *LinkedIn*, which is ~17% of the cases. It is essential to highlight that there was no case of adopting Passive or Active Hub strategies, while focusing more on sharing content.

The study findings conclude that not all universities adhered to the recommended posting frequencies. For instance, Seoul National University and the University of Melbourne did not meet the recommended posting frequency on *Facebook*; still, all three universities under research adhered to the recommended posting frequency on *LinkedIn*. They adapt their communication strategy to the logic of each network, but lower activity levels and a strictly proprietary approach might restrict communication efforts and limit their networking potential.
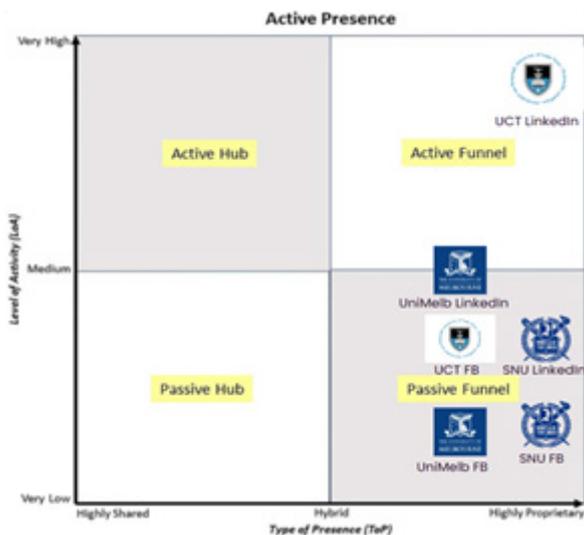
Figure 1. **Active presence of the three universities (based on Capriotti, Oliveira, & Carretón, 2024, p. 1039)**

Discussion

The University of Cape Town showcases distinct social media engagement patterns across its *Facebook* and *LinkedIn* platforms. *LinkedIn* emerged as its most active channel, with a total of 68 posts during the study period, achieving a daily mean of 2.19 and earning a perfect 5.0 score on the Likert scale. This places UCT directly in the Active Funnel category. However, its content remains entirely proprietary (100%), reflecting a controlled, institution-led communication approach focused on on-platform engagement.

In contrast, UCT's Facebook presence, although still relatively active with 59 posts and a daily mean of 1.90, ranks lower in activity with a Likert score of 2.9, placing it in the Medium-Low Activity category. The platform has a strong proprietary tone, with 97% original content. This aligns with the Passive Funnel strategy, suggesting that *Facebook* serves primarily as a purposefully selected institutional space rather than a driver of dialogic engagement.

The University of Melbourne UniMelb exhibits significantly lower levels of activity across both platforms. On *Facebook*, UniMelb published 24 posts within the observed period, yielding a daily mean of 0.77 and a Likert score of 1.39, clearly falling below the recommended engagement levels and positioning it in the Very Low Activity bracket. Despite the lower frequency, all content was proprietary, leading to a Highly Proprietary Type of Presence and a Passive Funnel classification.

LinkedIn activity at UniMelb is more frequent, with 34 posts and a daily mean of 1.17. Nevertheless, this translated into a Likert score of as low as 1.58 – which is still within the

Very Low Activity range according to the model. Similar to its *Facebook* strategy, UniMelb's *LinkedIn* content is overwhelmingly proprietary (97%), reinforcing a consistent institutional voice. This also places its *LinkedIn* strategy within the Passive Funnel category.

Seoul National University SNU follows a pattern similar to UniMelb in terms of both activity and presence. On *Facebook*, SNU published 21 posts during the observed period, resulting in a daily mean of 0.68 and a Likert score of 1.34, placing it in the Very Low Activity category. All posts were 100% proprietary, indicating a Highly Proprietary Type of Presence. This combination aligns with a Passive Funnel strategy, consistent with the institutional communication patterns observed in previous research.

On LinkedIn, SNU showed slightly more consistent engagement with 31 posts, achieving a daily mean of 1.03 and a Likert score of 1.76. While this places it within the upper end of the recommended daily mean range (0.5–1.0), the activity level still falls into the Very Low Activity category according to the Likert-based model. What concerns the presence in *Facebook*, all content was again 100% proprietary, reinforcing a Passive Funnel approach. This pattern reflects a strong institutional voice but limits dialogic or co-creative engagement.

Limitations

Despite addressing the important topic, the current research has certain limitations, such as the sample scope size and a short timeframe, which limit generalizability of the findings and the capture of long-term trends or seasonal segmentation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

To sum up, UCT stands out for its high engagement, especially on LinkedIn, and is the only university in this sample operating within the Active Funnel model. UniMelb and SNU demonstrate strong brand consistency and proprietary content strategies but maintain limited engagement activity, leading to Passive Funnel strategies across both platforms. Across all three universities, proprietary content dominates, limiting opportunities for more interactive or community-driven communication styles. This cross-case analysis reveals a widespread institutional preference for proprietary content and conservative publishing strategies, especially on *Facebook*. Moreover, it demonstrates that platform potential is maximized when high activity levels are paired with strategic engagement, as exemplified by UCT's *LinkedIn* performance.

The findings are in line with Capriotti et al.'s (2024) model, which confirms the use of proprietary content and the high frequency of the Passive Funnel strategy across diverse universities. The model suggests the global preference for controlled institution messages. The observations of high *LinkedIn* activity align with Arévalo, Bon and Pizarro's (2017) insights explaining regional preferences for professional networking platforms. This sample states that an active engagement degree is institution-specific rather than a universal

approach. The findings are also in line with other research. Fähnrich et al. (2020) claim that top-ranked universities apply more audience-oriented and strategic approaches leading to a high engagement level on *Facebook*. An example of a Canadian case study indicates that universities use *Facebook* actively to build their brand identity (Bélanger et al., 2013). Furthermore, universities using more visual and interactive materials receive more likes on social media posts (De Vries et al., 2012; Rauschnabel et al., 2012); however, this practice is not yet effectively used.

The results have significant importance and implications for developing university communication strategies to achieve active engagement. The shift from controlled messages is crucial to promote visibility and encourage stakeholder trust.

Future research recommendations would be to seek a broader geographical coverage, an expanded sample size and more methods. The study could also cover a broader range of social media platforms so that to provide richer and more holistic understanding of the digital communication strategy employed by universities.

Author contributions

Daria Levina: project administration, investigation, writing – original draft, writing – review and editing.

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