

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Online Presence and Media Interactions: A Comparative Study of three Nigerian Universities

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## Abstract

The digital age has revolutionized institutional communication, making online presence and media interactions vital tools for universities to engage stakeholders, enhance visibility, and remain competitive. The study compared the online presence and media interactions of three universities in Rivers State, namely, the University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University, and Pamo University of Medical Science. Using mixed methods, the study examines the platforms employed, the extent of visibility achieved, and the effectiveness of media interactions of these universities. Findings reveal that while Facebook is the most utilized platform across all institutions, usage remains largely limited, inconsistent, and transactional in nature. PAMO exhibits the weakest media presence; RSU shows moderate effort with some presence on Instagram, while UNIPORT demonstrates the most structured approach but suffers from inconsistent engagement. Across board, there is a lack of platform diversification, interactive content, and sustained engagement strategies. The study concludes that a significant gap exists between current practices and the strategic potential of online media relations in higher education. It recommends that the universities adopt dynamic, multi-platform strategies with a focus on creative content development, audience engagement, and digital literacy to optimize their online visibility and institutional reputation.

**Keywords:** Online Presence, Media Interaction, Social Media, Social Media Platforms, University Publics.

## 1. Introduction

The past two decades have witnessed an unprecedented acceleration of digital communication, restructuring how knowledge is produced, exchanged, and consumed worldwide (Castells, 2000; Jenkins, 2006). In higher education, this transformation has broadened the competitive arena beyond physical campuses to a global, always-connected marketplace where institutional visibility and engagement are increasingly mediated by social and interactive media platforms (Selwyn, 2012). Nigeria is fully embedded in this shift: the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC, 2024) reports more than 162 million active internet subscriptions, positioning the country among Africa's largest online populations.

With in this environment, online presence has become a critical determinant of universities' attractiveness, credibility, and stakeholder reach (Labrecque et al., 2011). Prospective students, parents, alumni, industry partners, and funding agencies now evaluate institutions through digital channels long before any face-to-face encounter (Stvilia et al., 2009). At the same time, media interaction has evolved from sporadic press liaison into an ongoing, two-way dialogue with journalists, influencers, and platform users (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Effective engagement on Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube therefore demands strategic content curation, community management, and analytics-driven evaluation (Waters et al., 2009; Kietzmann et al., 2011).

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Despite these opportunities, empirical evidence suggests that many African universities struggle to capitalize on digital media. National studies highlight gaps in skills, funding, and infrastructure that blunt the impact of online communication (Essienubong & Olise, 2010; Ndinojuo et al., 2016). Library professionals in Rivers State University and the University of Port Harcourt, for instance, report limited formal training in new-media tasks, leading to transactional rather than dialogic online engagement (Brown & Humphrey, 2022). Comparative snapshots of PAMO University of Medical Sciences, Rivers State University, and the University of Port Harcourt further reveal fragmented platform strategies, none of which fully exploit cross-platform storytelling or real-time interaction (Nwankpa et al., 2021).

Yet scholarly attention to Nigerian higher education communication has been piecemeal: many studies focus on corporate or political contexts (Galloway, 2005; Kirat, 2007) or examine a single university rather than comparing multiple institutions in one geopolitical region. Consequently, little is known about how universities in Rivers State differ in platform choice, content practices, and stakeholder engagement and how these differences affect institutional reputation and competitiveness. It is against this backdrop that the study systematically evaluates the scope, quality, and effectiveness of social media use by three universities in Rivers State: the University of Port Harcourt, (UNIPORT), Rivers State University (RSU), and PAMO University of Medical Sciences (PAMO), and compares their online presence and media interactions. Specifically, the study is driven by three objectives: to ascertain the social media visibility of the select universities; find out the specific social media platforms employed by these universities to engage their target audiences; and to evaluate the effectiveness of these social media platforms in engaging with relevant university publics.

### 1.1 Research Questions

The questions that the study strives to provide answers to are:

- i. How visible are the select universities on social media platforms?
- ii. What specific social media platforms are employed by the select universities to engage their target audiences?
- iii. How effective are the social media platforms used by the select universities in fostering engagement with their publics?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Conceptual Review

#### 2.1.1 Online Presence

Online presence refers to the extent to which individuals, organizations, or institutions are visible and actively engaged on the internet through websites, social media platforms, blogs, and other digital channels. It encompasses all digital interactions that form a public image or digital footprint in the online space. In today's hyperconnected world, a robust online presence is essential for reputation management, stakeholder engagement, information dissemination, and overall visibility (Labrecque et al., 2011).

For institutions such as universities, an effective online presence plays a strategic role in communication, branding, and competitiveness. Through platforms like websites, Facebook, Twitter (now X), Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube, universities can reach diverse audiences including prospective students, alumni, government agencies, media organizations, and international partners. As noted by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media platforms serve not just as communication tools, but also as arenas for brand co-creation, public discourse, and real-time engagement. Therefore, institutions that maintain consistent and professional online interactions are more likely to attract trust, interest, and patronage.

Online presence is not merely about being available on the internet; it involves actively curating content, responding to inquiries, participating in trending conversations, and providing timely updates on activities and achievements. According to Kietzmann et al. (2011), this presence must be managed strategically to align with institutional goals and audience expectations. For example, consistent messaging across platforms strengthens brand identity, while interactive content such as live Q&As, webinars, and virtual tours enhances engagement. Moreover, the significance of online presence has grown with the increasing reliance on digital technologies in education, especially following the global disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Institutions with strong digital infrastructures and media strategies adapted more effectively to remote learning, online admission processes, and virtual community-building (Maringe & Gibbs, 2009). A well-developed online presence can also support internationalization efforts by showcasing academic programs, research output, and global partnerships to a worldwide audience.

## 2.2 Media Interaction

Media interaction refers to the dynamic communication and engagement that occurs between individuals, organizations, or institutions and various forms of media, including traditional (television, radio, newspapers) and digital platforms (social media, blogs, websites). It involves the processes of disseminating information, responding to media inquiries, participating in public discourse, and managing relationships with media stakeholders. Media interaction plays a pivotal role in shaping public perception, enhancing visibility, and influencing narratives in both local and global contexts (McQuail, 2010).

In the context of organizational communication, media interaction is not a passive occurrence but a strategic function that requires planning, responsiveness, and consistency. According to Grunig and Hunt (1984), effective media relations are rooted in the two-way symmetrical communication model, which emphasizes dialogue, mutual understanding, and engagement rather than one-way dissemination of information. Through interactive media practices such as press releases, interviews, live broadcasts, and social media responses, institutions can cultivate positive relationships with journalists, bloggers, influencers, and the general public.

The rise of digital media has transformed the nature and scope of media interaction. Platforms like X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram have enabled real-time interaction with diverse audiences, breaking the traditional gatekeeping model of media communication (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In this participatory media environment, users can comment, share, and react to content, while organizations must be proactive in listening, engaging, and addressing public concerns. This shift has given rise to what Kietzmann et al. (2011) describe as a “conversation economy,” where reputations are shaped by constant dialogue and feedback loops.

For universities, media interaction is essential for public engagement, policy advocacy, student recruitment, and community involvement. Institutions that actively engage with media platforms often enjoy greater visibility, improved public trust, and stronger brand positioning. Media interaction allows universities to communicate their achievements, research findings, events, and initiatives to both internal and external stakeholders. According to Maringe and Gibbs (2009), higher education institutions that adopt a media-savvy approach can differentiate themselves

in an increasingly competitive educational landscape. Media interaction is a critical element of institutional communication strategies. It enhances visibility, fosters stakeholder trust, and facilitates engagement in the public sphere. By adopting a strategic, interactive, and responsive media communication approach, institutions can strengthen their image, influence, and societal impact.

## 2.3 Social Media

Social media represents a paradigm shift in communication by enabling real-time interaction, user-generated content, and decentralized information dissemination (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Unlike traditional media, which is often one-directional and institution-driven, social media empowers users to become both consumers and producers of information, thereby creating dynamic, participatory communication environments. The rise of social media has significantly transformed the ways individuals, organizations, and institutions communicate and engage with stakeholders. Popular platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (now X), Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, TikTok, and WhatsApp have become critical tools for brand building, marketing, public relations, and community engagement (Kietzmann et al., 2011). These platforms allow organizations to bypass traditional gatekeepers in the media, enabling direct communication with target audiences and more immediate feedback mechanisms.

In the educational sector, especially among higher institutions, social media plays a vital role in enhancing visibility, fostering academic engagement, and maintaining active connections with students, alumni, and the wider public. According to Selwyn (2012), social media offers universities opportunities to promote institutional achievements, publicize events, disseminate research outputs, and interact with a global audience. It serves as a tool for digital branding, recruitment, and collaboration, allowing institutions to project their identity and values to a broad and diverse audience.

Additionally, social media supports participatory culture, which emphasizes dialogue, collaboration, and user interaction. Institutions that effectively use social media not only inform but also listen, respond, and co-create content with their audience (Lovejoy et al., 2012). This interactive model fosters trust, builds community, and enhances public perception, especially in a competitive information environment. Social media has become an indispensable

component of modern communication strategies. For organizations, including universities, it offers vast potential for outreach, interaction, and influence. When strategically managed, social media can enhance visibility, improve stakeholder relationships, and drive institutional growth in the digital age.

## 2.4 University Publics

University publics refer to the diverse groups of stakeholders that interact with, are influenced by, or hold an interest in the operations, outputs, and reputation of a university. These publics include both internal and external audiences such as students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents, government agencies, industry partners, media, local communities, and prospective students (Cutlip et al., 2006). Each of these groups has unique expectations, communication needs, and relationships with the institution, making effective engagement and tailored communication essential for institutional success.

Understanding university publics is central to strategic communication and public relations within higher education. According to Grunig and Hunt (1984), publics are segmented based on their levels of awareness, involvement, and activity related to organizational issues. This means that a university's communication strategies must consider the different levels of engagement and information needs of each public. For instance, current students may need timely updates on academic activities and campus events, while alumni are more likely to seek information about networking opportunities, fundraising initiatives, and institutional achievements.

Universities rely heavily on maintaining positive relationships with their publics to build trust, enhance reputation, and foster long-term support. As Maringe and Gibbs (2009) assert, higher education institutions are increasingly viewed as service organizations, and their ability to satisfy various stakeholder groups influences their competitiveness and public standing. For example, universities that communicate effectively with prospective students and parents through websites, social media, and promotional materials tend to attract higher enrollment and improve institutional branding.

Moreover, the advent of digital communication tools has reshaped how universities interact with their publics. Social media platforms, email newsletters, university portals, and virtual events have become vital channels for engagement. These platforms allow for more immediate, interactive, and personalized

communication with stakeholders (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). For instance, social media enables real-time interaction with students and the broader community, fostering a sense of inclusion and participation in institutional life. It is also important for universities to recognize their role as public institutions serving the societal good. As such, their publics extend beyond academic stakeholders to include government regulators, funding agencies, and the general public. Transparent and accountable communication with these groups is essential for maintaining legitimacy and public trust (Rowley, 1997).

## 2.5 Empirical Review

Brown and Humphrey (2022) investigated how online-media-relations competencies influence the job performance of librarians and paraprofessionals at Rivers State University and the University of Port Harcourt. Using purposive sampling, they surveyed fifty-one library staff with a structured questionnaire. Their results show that both libraries lack formal, recurring media-skills training; staff largely depend on conference attendance or self-directed learning to acquire new-media competencies, a gap that ultimately constrains effective digital outreach and service delivery.

Broadening the discussion, Essienubong and Olise (2010) analyzed the impact of emerging communication technologies on media-relations practice across Nigeria. They argue that tools such as the Internet, mobile telephony, and videoconferencing have fundamentally re-shaped public-relations work by collapsing traditional media boundaries. Although these innovations enhance speed and reach, the authors note persistent obstacles that hamper optimal media-relations outcomes.

Similarly, Ndinojuo et al (2016) conceptually mapped the prospects and challenges posed by contemporary digital tools for public relations practitioners in Nigeria. They reaffirmed the centrality of media relations to public relations, emphasizing that new-media technologies expand opportunities for mutually beneficial organization-media relationships. Yet the study catalogued several operational hurdles ranging from inadequate technical skills to unreliable infrastructure that complicate the routine adoption of these tools.

Outside Nigeria, Aucoin and Wright (2021) explored student experiences of faculty mentoring in a large online university, employing a mixed-methods design that combined surveys and interviews.



Participants believed that a dedicated faculty board and an active graduate school could enrich scholarly engagement in virtual settings. Although their study centred on mentoring rather than media relations, its focus on stakeholder perceptions within an online higher education environment parallels the present inquiry, which examines three RiversState-based universities' perceptions and use of online-media strategies.

Collectively, these studies underscore two consistent themes: first, digital tools have become indispensable to effective media engagement in both academic and professional contexts; second, the full benefits of those tools are often curtailed by skill deficits, limited infrastructure, and insufficient institutional support. Addressing these constraints through structured training programmes, sustained funding, and strategic planning will be critical if universities and other knowledge organizations are to harness online media for enhanced visibility and stakeholder interaction.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

#### 3.1 Social Network Theory

Social Network Theory (SNT) offers a compelling framework for understanding how individuals, groups, and institutions form connections that influence behavior, communication, and outcomes. Developed by Jacob Moreno in the 1930s, SNT conceptualizes social relationships as networks composed of nodes (individuals or organizations) and ties (the relationships between them) (Moreno, 1934). These ties may represent friendships, professional associations, information exchange, or other forms of interaction. In a media context, social network theory helps explain how messages disseminate across platforms, how influence is generated, and how visibility can be enhanced through strategic connectivity.

In the context of media presence and interaction, especially for institutions such as universities, SNT offers an overview of how academic institutions can leverage digital platforms to strengthen their relationships with the public, stakeholders, media houses, and other institutions. According to Borgatti and Halgin (2011), social networks are both structural and processual; they provide a map of who is connected to whom and a pathway through which resources like information, attention, and support flow. For universities, media presence functions as a key form of social capital. The more centrally positioned a university is within a media network, the greater its visibility, authority, and influence.

Universities in Rivers State, such as the UNIPORT, RSU, and Pamocan utilize social network structures to enhance media interactions. By maintaining consistent engagement with online platforms (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn), these institutions position themselves at strategic nodes within the broader media landscape. This centrality enables them to quickly disseminate information, react to events, and influence public discourse on education, research, and development. As Brass (2002) notes, actors who occupy central positions in networks often control or influence the flow of information and benefit from faster access to innovations and audiences.

Moreover, social media platforms themselves function as expansive, dynamic social networks. Through regular content sharing, tagging, mentions, and collaborations with media outlets and influencers, universities increase the strength and reach of their network ties. Halgin (2011) explains that even indirect connections can enhance influence through structural holes, allowing organizations to bridge disconnected groups and amplify their message. This type of networking is particularly beneficial in competitive academic environments, where visibility can influence student recruitment, donor interest, and policy engagement.

#### 3.2 Modernization Theory

Modernization Theory, which emerged in the mid-20th century and draws heavily from the earlier works of Max Weber, seeks to explain the transformation of societies from traditional to modern systems through the adoption of rational, technological, and institutional innovations (Weber, 1922; Tipps, 1973). It posits that social progress is achieved as societies adopt modern values, systems, and technologies that promote economic development, bureaucratic governance, and individual autonomy. Applied to institutional contexts such as higher education, Modernization Theory implies that universities must embrace modern tools and practices particularly digital technologies, to remain relevant and impactful in contemporary society.

In the digital age, communication technologies are central to institutional development, especially in enhancing media presence and stakeholder engagement. Universities in Rivers State serve as critical actors in Nigeria's educational advancement. However, the effectiveness of these institutions in disseminating information, engaging the public, and fostering their reputations is increasingly tied to their

ability to leverage modern communication tools. From the perspective of Modernization Theory, the integration of digital platforms such as social media, websites, blogs, and online news portals reflects a necessary evolution toward more advanced, globally competitive institutional systems (Rostow, 1960; Smith, 1982).

Modern communication tools enable universities to project their values, academic achievements, research output, and community impact to wider audiences. This media presence strengthens their public image and stakeholder trust, both of which are essential for institutional growth and influence. According to Schech and Haggis (2000), modernization involves not just technological upgrades but also shifts in cultural and communicative practices. Hence, adopting digital tools for communication is both a technological and cultural transition that aligns universities with global standards and practices.

## 4. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design to facilitate an in-depth exploration of the online media relations strategies employed by three select universities in Rivers State. The population of the study comprised the Communication and Public Relations Officers at the select university, Students and Alumni of these institutions who actively interact with the institution's online media. And a few external stakeholders such as prospective students, parents, and community members who interact with these institutions online. The sample size for this study was 30 distributed as follows:

- Communication/Public Relations Officers: 9 (3 from each institution)
- IT and Digital Media Personnel: 15 (5 from each institution)
- Students or Alumni: 3 (1 from each institution)
- External Stakeholders: 3 (1 from each institution)

This size was determined through purposive selection. Purposive sampling is particularly effective in qualitative research as it enables the selection of information-rich participants who can provide deep insights into the phenomenon being studied (Palinkas et al., 2015). Primary data for this study was collected using semi-structured Interviews. Secondary data was gathered from various sources, including periodicals, journal articles, textbooks, bulletins, observations, statistical reports, and internet resources. Explanation

building was primarily adopted to analyze the qualitative data collected through the semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and observational field notes.

## 5. Results

### RQ1

How visible are the select universities on social media platforms?

Interviews and focus group discussions with alumni, stakeholders, and staff of the select universities highlight that while all three institutions maintain some presence on social media platforms, their overall visibility remains suboptimal. Each institution's approach and strategy significantly impact how well they are perceived online, and the level of visibility achieved is largely dependent on their platform usage, content quality, and consistency. PAMO alumni particularly admit that the school's social media visibility is notably weak. The alumni repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with the institution's reliance on a single platform—Facebook—as the primary medium for communication and outreach. Focus group participants echoed this sentiment, describing PAMO's online presence as minimal at best and out of touch with modern communication trends. RSU alumni insist that the institution's online visibility is still considered average at best. A similar concern was also shared by the RSU staff, with one stating that while Instagram was employed for event promotion, its potential as a platform for storytelling or showcasing student life remains largely untapped. Stakeholders in the focus group also highlighted the absence of a significant presence on other platforms, particularly LinkedIn and X (formerly Twitter), as a missed opportunity. The alumni and stakeholders of the UNIPORT state that the school has a very strong presence on Facebook. But they still decry the lack of effort by the school's media relations to improve the media visibility of the school and their online interaction with their publics on other platforms.

### RQ 2

What specific social media platforms are employed by the select universities to engage their target audiences?

Both the interviews and focus group discussions reveal that Facebook is the dominant platform utilized by the select universities for announcements and information dissemination. Its user-friendly interface appeals to a wide demographic, making it a convenient choice for

both younger and older users. However, the degree to which Facebook and other platforms are employed varies across institutions, reflecting differing levels of strategy and resource allocation.

At RSU, Facebook is actively used for sharing institutional updates and engaging with the community. Additionally, RSU has begun exploring Instagram as a secondary platform, capitalizing on its potential for visually engaging content. Staff members note that Instagram is particularly effective for showcasing high-quality images and short video clips from events. However, despite this exploration, RSU lacks any significant presence on X (formerly Twitter), missing opportunities for real-time interaction and broader engagement.

The UNIPORT also relies heavily on Facebook for its online communication. While the platform serves as a primary tool for announcements and event promotion, UNIPORT's presence on X and Instagram remains underdeveloped. Stakeholders and alumni point out that this limited diversification restricts the university's ability to connect effectively with younger, visually driven audiences and professional networks.

PAMO, meanwhile, focuses almost exclusively on Facebook for its media interactions and information dissemination. Alumni, stakeholders, and IT/communication staff express concern that the platform is not being utilized to its full potential.

### RQ3

How effective are the social media platforms used by the select universities in fostering engagement with their publics?

The interviews and focus group discussions with alumni, stakeholders, and staff from the select universities offer useful information regarding the effectiveness of their social media platforms in fostering engagement. The alumni of PAMO describe the institution's social media engagement as limited and largely transactional. Stakeholders emphasize that Facebook, the university's primary platform, is used predominantly for disseminating announcements and updates, with little focus on fostering meaningful interactions. IT staff confirm that posts rarely elicit significant engagement, such as comments, shares, or dialogue, underscoring the platform's one-dimensional usage. One focus group participant remark that PAMO's content lacks the visual and interactive elements necessary to capture and sustain audience interest, leaving users disengaged. This sentiment

reflects a broader consensus among stakeholders that the institution's approach to social media falls short of its potential to connect with its audience in a meaningful and dynamic way.

RSU's social media presence is relatively stronger, especially on Instagram and Facebook, where users describe its content as visually appealing and structured. Event coverage and updates on student life generate moderate levels of interaction, but the lack of consistency and depth undermines their effectiveness. Respondents in the focus group discussions note that posts are sporadic and fail to leverage features such as polls, live streams, and interactive questions that could foster greater audience participation. While some stakeholders acknowledge Instagram's potential for showcasing events, they emphasize the need for more dynamic content strategies to fully harness its capabilities.

UNIPORT's social media platforms, particularly Facebook, are praised for their strong visual appeal, with updates on events and student life standing out. However, stakeholders point out that the university struggles with consistency, as long gaps between posts diminish its ability to build and maintain an engaged online community. Focus group participants note that this inconsistency, coupled with a narrow focus on event-related content, limits the platforms' overall effectiveness.

## 6. Discussion of Findings

The study reveals significant disparities in the visibility of PAMO, RSU, UNIPORT on social media platforms. PAMO's visibility is limited due to its heavy reliance on Facebook, which restricts its ability to connect with broader audiences, particularly younger tech-savvy individuals. RSU has a broader online presence, using both Facebook and Instagram as primary channels of communication. However, RSU's content strategy exhibits significant gaps in visibility, particularly on X, which limits its ability to reach key audiences. The UNIPORT, on the other hand, demonstrates moderate social media visibility, primarily engaging on Facebook and Instagram, focusing on visually engaging and event-centric content. Our results suggest that visibility on social media is a shared challenge for the select universities, with PAMO being the least visible.

The study reveals that the select universities use various social media platforms to engage their target audiences. PAMO University heavily relies on Facebook, but this limits its ability to connect with



diverse demographics, particularly younger ones. Rivers State University uses both Facebook and Instagram, but struggles to fully utilize these platforms due to a lack of creative content. The UNIPORT uses Facebook and Instagram moderately, focusing on event promotion and student life, but its narrow range limits its effectiveness. All three universities struggle to effectively engage their diverse audiences through a comprehensive range of platforms. This result is in consonance with Adegbola et al (2020) who reported that by their limited presence on the social media, Nigerian universities restrict their ability to reach diverse demographics.

The effectiveness of social media platforms among select universities varies, with notable gaps across institutions. PAMO's engagement is transactional, lacking creative or interactive content, and limiting community engagement. RSU shows marginally better engagement levels due to its use of Facebook and Instagram, but its content strategy remains one-dimensional. The UNIPORT uses Facebook and Instagram for event promotion but struggles to sustain engagement over time. RSU is the most promising in fostering engagement due to its presence on multiple platforms, but its approach remains limited in depth and creativity. As Onah and Nwogbo (2022) have suggested, Nigerian universities can enhance their media relations by adopting content strategies, fostering interactive engagement, and tailoring messages to the specific needs of their diverse audiences.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study reveal significant disparities in how the UNIPORT, RSU, and PAMO utilize and engage with social media platforms to boost their institutional visibility and public interaction. Despite the ubiquity of digital communication tools and the increasing expectations of stakeholders in the digital age, the selected universities have not fully leveraged the strategic potential of online media relations. PAMO demonstrates the weakest online presence, relying almost exclusively on Facebook with minimal efforts to diversify or innovate its content. This one-dimensional approach limits the university's ability to connect with broader and younger digital audiences. RSU, while somewhat more proactive, still lacks a cohesive and interactive strategy that could maximize the potential of its platforms. The UNIPORT shows relatively stronger performance on Facebook, but inconsistency and a narrow focus on event-based content reduce the overall effectiveness of its digital engagement.

Across all institutions, Facebook remains the dominant platform, primarily used for announcements and updates. However, the limited presence on other vital platforms such as Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, and YouTube reflects a missed opportunity for broader engagement and stakeholder connection. Furthermore, the content strategies observed are often transactional, lacking creativity, interactivity, and audience-specific tailoring, which are vital for building meaningful online relationships. This study concludes that while all three universities recognize the importance of maintaining an online presence, their current strategies are fragmented, under-resourced, and not aligned with global best practices in digital communication. In an era where digital visibility and interactivity are integral to institutional relevance and competitiveness, these gaps pose significant limitations to the universities' ability to build strong reputations, engage stakeholders effectively, and attract future students.

The study therefore recommends that to remain relevant and competitive in the digital communication landscape, these universities must adopt more dynamic, inclusive, and strategic approaches to online media relations. This entails diversifying platform use and investing in content development, staff training, and real-time engagement tools that align with the expectations of digitally savvy audiences.

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