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Developing Recommendations for SOME Marketing Practices for the Case Organisation

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences

Master's Degree

Degree Programme in Business Informatics

Master's Thesis

May 23, 2024

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Zinaida Grabovskaia, PhL., Senior Lecturer, for her continuous support, constructive guidance, and encouragement throughout my research. Her valuable insights and suggestions helped me improve my work quality during this thesis. I also sincerely thank Metropolia UAS for their support and for providing me with the thesis topic.

I am also grateful to Darja Kononova, one of our stakeholders from Metropolia UAS, for sharing their insights, valuable ideas, and constructive information about the SOME channels of our case organisation. My special thanks to Tapio Rimpioja and Tiina Heikkinen from Metropolia UAS, who have helped me to provide detailed statistical data and information about the number of international students studying in Finland.

I would like to extend my thanks to the Master's BI students for sharing their wonderful experiences and feedback on SOME channels and how SOME channels helped them to make the decision to choose Metropolia UAS and the Master's BI Programme. Lastly, I am also grateful to my classmates and cohort members for their help in sharing their experiences on how social media helped them choose the Master BI programme. And special thanks to my partner, my brother and my parents, whose support and patience have been a source of strength throughout this journey.

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Helsinki, Finland
May 23 2024

Abstract

Author: Poonam Gurung
Title: Developing Recommendations for SOME Marketing Practices for the Case Organisation
Number of Pages: 103 pages + 2 appendices
Date: 23 May 2024
Degree: Master of Business Administration
Degree Programme: Business Informatics
Instructor: Zinaida Grabovskaia, PhL, Senior Lecturer

This thesis was built to develop recommendations for SOME marketing practices for the case organisation (Metropolia UASs). This study mainly focuses on providing ideas to the case organisation on how current SOME channels and activities can be improved from the eyes of its international students.

This study adopted an applied action research method (AAR) and qualitative research approach by interviewing stakeholders and Master's students in Business Informatics at Metropolia UAS. The current state analysis (CSA) shows some observations about SOME practices of Metropolia UAS, Metropolia Business School and the Master BI Programme. The current state analysis also included a comparison of SOME activities and channels (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter) between six UASs with the biggest number of international students.

In the conceptual framework and literature review, the SOSTAC model and Content strategy model were used. In the proposal building, the SOSTAC model was followed in 6 key elements: situation analysis, objectives, strategy, tactics, action and controls; and the content strategy was incorporated via its 4 elements: content types, content agility, posting day and content context. The proposal also contained the recommended measurement of engagement through 3 KPI elements: likes, comments and shares.

These proposed recommendations for SOME marketing channels, which followed the SOSTAC model and Content strategy model, were supported by the stakeholders as they seem to address the current challenges identified by CSA.

Keywords

Social media, marketing communication, SOME, SOSTAC, content strategy

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List of Abbreviations

AAR	Applied Action Research
BBA	Bachelor of Business Administration
BI	Business Informatics
CSA	Current State Analysis
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EM	European Master
FOMO	Fear of Missing Out
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IBL	International Business and Logistics
IWS	International Week of Sustainability
MBS	Metropolia Business School
SMART	Specific Measurable Actionable Relevant Time-related
SMM	Social Media Marketing
SOME	Social media
SOSTAC	Situation Analysis Objectives Strategy Tactics Actions Control
UAS	University of Applied Science

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1 Introduction

Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences, commonly known as UASs, stand out by providing hands-on, practical education to prepare their students for the turbulent working dynamics of the professional world. As the Finnish UASs continue to attract students from all around the world, the presence of international learners has become an important part of the learning environment on many campuses. It has also brought a new, rich cultural experience within the Finnish educational system.

In an age defined by digital mastery and its agility, the educational sector needs to explore new ways of social interconnectedness. As rightly said by Erik Qualman (2019), “We don’t have a choice on whether we do social media; the question is how well we do it.”. In an era when universities aim for global recognition and attract a diverse student body, crafting effective digital marketing approaches is vital. These strategies not only provide a competitive advantage to the higher educational sector but also directly impact student enrolments and, therefore, the financial sustainability of the institution. Moreover, a well-executed digital marketing plan can contribute to brand building on a global scale, shaping positive perceptions and positioning a UAS as an attractive choice for international students. Importantly, embracing digital marketing trends also showcases the organisation’s adaptability to technological advancement.

This study dives into digital marketing practices employed by different Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences. The goal is to explore existing digital marketing practices and learn from them in order to improve digital marketing practices used for supporting/informing international applicants by the case organisation.

1.1 Business Context

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, situated in the vibrant capital region of Helsinki, Finland, stands as a pillar of excellence in higher academic education. Renowned for its extensive and innovative approach, Metropolia UAS offers a diverse array of programs spanning technology, social and health care, business, engineering, and culture. Metropolia's four modern campuses provide a dynamic learning environment conducive to academic growth and exploration. The university's comprehensive offerings include bachelor's and master's programs, along with vocational education, catering to the diverse educational needs of both local and

international students. It places a strong emphasis on research development and innovation, actively engaging in projects that contribute to societal advancement and collaboration with various organisations and industries. As a reliable partner and innovator in higher education, Metropolia UAS continues to lead the way in shaping the future of education and industry.

The case organisation of this thesis is the Master's degree programme in Business Informatics at Metropolia UAS. The Programme is tailored for business and engineering professionals seeking to enhance their managerial and strategic competencies in utilising business information systems effectively. This comprehensive programme addresses the increasing challenges of digitalisation and digital transformation in both business operations and everyday work life. With a blend of theoretical coursework and practical experiences, students delve into key topics such as project management, digital innovation and strategies, data analysis, business intelligence, and fostering business growth and innovation. The curriculum is meticulously designed to tackle complex business challenges in the rapidly evolving global market. Students pursuing a Master of Business Administration degree complete a 90-credit programme over two years, while those enrolled in the Master of Engineering program undertake a 60-credit curriculum spanning 1.5 years. This unique blend of academic rigour and practical application ensures that graduates are well-equipped to excel in today's dynamic and technology-driven business landscape. www.metropolia.fi. (n.d.). *Business Informatics, Master's Degree | Metropolia UAS*.

1.2 Business Challenge, Objective and Outcome

Digital marketing is continuously evolving. It includes various platforms and channels such as social media platforms, search engines, email marketing and much more. One of the key challenges of the case organisation is to understand what their applicants and students need and compare it to the practices currently used by other institutions in the same sector and determine some effective channels and practices to reach the target audience of international applicants.

As each channel has its own dynamics, user demographics and algorithms, it is also important to identify the right content on the right channel so as to allocate and reallocate resources efficiently. Developing a comprehensive approach that would utilise diverse digital marketing practices while maintaining a strong and consistent brand message

poses a considerable business challenge for any organisation. Therefore, a good approach may be to learn from what is currently done, understand the current landscape, channels and practices used by other Finnish UASs, and subsequently craft their own up-to-date, effective approach. Accordingly,

The objective of this thesis is to analyse SOME digital marketing of Finnish UASs and create recommendations for SOME marketing practices for the case organisation.

The outcome of this thesis is the recommendations for developing digital marketing practices for the case organisation, based on the lessons learnt from best practices in digital marketing of leading UASs in Finland. The recommendations should help to support/inform international applicants by the case organisation.

1.3 Thesis Outline

The thesis focuses on developing digital marketing practices aimed at international applicants to the case organisation, Master's Programme in Business Informatics at Metropolia UAS, Finland. Specifically, it delves into identifying and selecting relevant digital marketing practices that can be used to enhance the visibility of the case organisation compared to other universities. It will be done by benchmarking digital marketing practices used for attracting a diverse pool of international students. This thesis topic starts with an exploration of the dynamic arena of digital marketing within the Finnish UASs. As many Finnish higher educational institutions seek to go beyond geographical constraints, understanding their digital marketing practices should help the case organisation improve its own practices.

The study will employ qualitative research methods, by combining qualitative analysis of existing digital marketing practices by Finnish UASs and interviews and questionnaires conducted with various stakeholders in the case organisation, including international students. This approach allows for identifying and analysing existing digital marketing practices and formulating recommendations for developing the digital marketing practices in the case organisation.

This thesis is designed into seven sections; each part serves its unique purpose by throwing light on research on digital marketing practices employed for international students by different Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences. Section 1 serves as an

introduction, setting the stage for the thesis by offering a broad overview of the study. It includes 'business contexts context', 'business challenge, objective and outcome', and 'thesis outline'. Section 2 is a very crucial part where it outlines the methodological background of the study. It lays the groundwork for the entire research process by stating the research approach chosen, research design and data collection and analysis. Section 3 focuses on the outcomes derived from analysing the current state analysis, which involves an overview and key findings from the current state analysis, assessing existing practices, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and selecting the focus area. Section 4 explores existing digital marketing practices in the industry for international students to construct the best practices available. It also focuses on the conceptual framework of the thesis as it provides the theoretical foundation of the study. Section 5 offers a blueprint and initial digital marketing proposal on the insights gained from the literature review, research and current state analysis. This section skims and scans the practice which the study plans to implement. Section 6 reports the outcome of implementing the proposed plan in a real-time setting with the case organisation. This section validates and helps to make the final proposal with recommendations, as it focuses on the efficiency of the digital marketing approach. Section 7 is the last course of the thesis, which culminates it by synthesising key findings, noting their implications, and offering potential recommendations for future application. This part ties the entire journey and provides a summary.

2 Method and Material

This section describes the research approach, research design, and data collection and analysis methods used in this Thesis.

2.1 Research Approach

According to the American sociologist Earl Robert Babbie, “Research is a systematic inquiry to describe, explain, predict, and control the observed phenomenon. It involves inductive and deductive methods.” (Babbie, 1993.)

Research relies on existing and/or current data and analysis, enveloping various types of research such as basic research, applied research, problem-oriented research, problem-solving research, and experiments. Basic research means to advance fundamental scientific knowledge through data collection, and its primary focus is on knowledge exploration and analysis. On the other side, applied research efforts to address problems and resolve real-life problems by using logical and practical methods.

Research approach is the blend combine of research methods and techniques adopted to the subject matter. The research approach sharpens the types of research family for example (basic and applied), the research strategy (experimental, survey, review), and specific research methods that emphasise particular data collecting techniques and data analysis methods, which helps researchers in selecting the most appropriate methods for further investigation and pursue of knowledge. Fleetwood, (2018.)

The research approach serves as the methodological framework that shapes the design and execution of a study. Sheppard, (2020) explains that it provides an organised plan to answer research questions and attain the study objective.

In the domain of social science research, researchers often adopt either a qualitative, quantitative or mixed-method approach as it offers unique methodologies tailored to the nature of the research problem. Qualitative research is a method of inquiry that delves into the complex dimensions of human behaviour, feelings, experiences, and phenomena. It builds understanding through non-numerical data collection methods. (Taherdoost 2022.) In this approach, data is derived from in-depth interviews, focus

groups, participant observations, documents, and artefacts. The research design is process-oriented and flexible, allowing the process to evolve. Researchers play a direct role in interacting with participants by fostering a close relationship to account for humanness. Quantitative research is a structured and systematic method that focuses on analysing numerical data using methods such as surveys, experiments, and planned observations, thus focusing on objectivity. It employs the process of collecting and analysing large volumes of data in order to identify trends, develop fruitful insights, and identify patterns and relationships within the data. Validity and reliability are very important considerations to ensure the accuracy and consistency of numbers. Sheppard, (2020.) Finally, the mixed-method research approach is an inclusive methodology that combines elements of both qualitative and quantitative research within a single study. This approach takes advantage of both methods, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the research questions. Sheppard, (2020.)

Research methods, also known as data collection tools, consist of many systematic procedures used by researchers to investigate and answer research questions during research approaches. Surveys involve the use of questionnaires and interviews with large numbers of audiences in order to collect data. For experiments, on the other hand, we can manipulate variables in controlled settings to give cause-and-effect relationships. Observations involve systematic and structured monitoring of behaviour under certain conditions or under a situation. Document analysis is a qualitative research method which involves a systematic examination of written, visual or audio material to extract information. Case studies offer an in-depth examination of specific instances through textual, visual or audio content. Focused groups involve facilitating group discussions and meta-analysis combines results from multiple studies. The study goal, research questions, and nature of the investigation choose the selection of research methods. Booth, (2023.)

Applied action research “is not own methodology but a group of different research methodologies that are used according to a situation or an objective for development” (Kananen 2013). The research approach accepted in this study delivers the primary foundation, as it aims to provide concrete answers and practical solutions for specific problems or subjects. Action research delivers tangible changes to enhance the improvement in the constructive framework through research and proposing practical solutions. (Kananen, 2013). This approach is based on observation, analysis, data collection, and drawing from current situations or particular problems.

In this study, the research approach is Applied action research (AAR) (Kananen 2013) Methodology is used. By keeping all the angles in mind and also the multi-dimensional nature of digital marketing, a qualitative approach was selected. This approach will allow for combining quantitative analysis of digital marketing practices with qualitative vision from the related stakeholders. Surveys and analytics can point to facts, while interviews and questionnaires will give more qualitative input. In addition, other actions are tackled such as benchmarking and analysis of current communication activities done in different social media (SOME) channels. This will then be valuable for selecting refined digital marketing practices for the case organisation.

2.2 Research Design

Research design is an organised and logical plan that guides the entire research process. It defines how the data will be gathered, scrutinised and depicted to address our research questions and outcomes. According to Singh (2023), a well-thought-out research design addresses some features such as clear purpose, data collection, resources, questions, time frame etc. Different types of research design can cater to different study goals and offer different strengths with their limitations. In this thesis, the following research design was used, as shown in Figure 1.

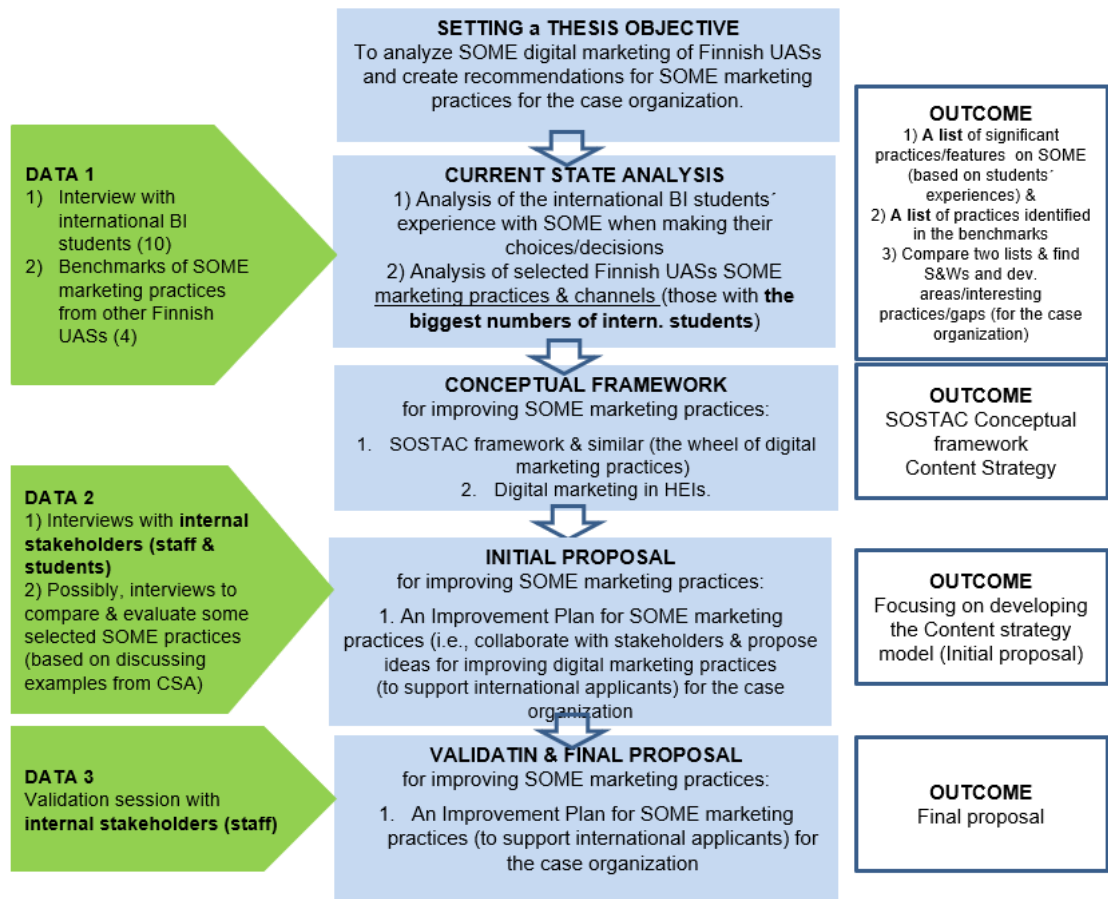


Figure 1. Research design of this thesis.

As shown in Figure 1, this thesis starts by setting the objective recommendations for SOME marketing practices for the case organisation. The thesis moves to the current state analysis (CSA) in the next stage.

The next step of a conceptual framework is to improve SOME marketing practices with the help of the SOSTAC framework – the wheel of digital marketing practices, which stands for ‘situation, objectives, strategy, tactics, action, and control.’ The conceptual framework is used to create recommendations that are more customer-centric and easier to take action.

The next step is to build the proposal based on the inputs from the current state analysis and conceptual framework. It also collects data through various sources, similar to the current state analysis, but in a co-creative manner and with the goal of developing recommendations. Then the thesis moves to the final proposal, which consists of the recommendations for the case organisation.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

“Table 1 shows details of Data collections 1-3 used in this study.”

Table 1. Details of Data collections 1-3 used in this study.

	Participants/role	Data type	Topic, description	Date, length	Documented as
Data 1, for the Current state analysis (Section 3 or 4)					
1	Respondent 1: BI international student 2022-2023	Online interview	Interview about past process based on the respondent's experiences with case company SOME	Feb 2024, 30 min	Field notes
2	Respondent 2: BI international student 2022-2023	Online interview	Interview about past process based on the respondent's experiences with case company SOME	Feb 2024, 30 min	Field notes and recording
3	Respondent 3: BI international student 2022-2023	Online interview	Interview about past process based on the respondent's experiences with case company SOME	Feb 2024, 20 min	Field notes and recording
4	Respondent 4: BI international student 2022-2023	Online interview	Interview about past process based on the respondent's experiences with case company SOME	Feb 2024, 25 min	Field notes
5	Respondent 5: BI international student 2022-2023	Questionnaire	Interview about past process based on the respondent's experiences with case company SOME	March 2024	Respondent reply
6	Respondent 6: BI international student 2022-2023	Online interview	Interview about past process based on the respondent's experiences with case company SOME	March 2024, 20 min	Field notes
7	Respondent 7: BI international student 2022-2023	Online interview	Interview about past process based on the respondent's experiences with case company SOME	March 2024, 30 min	Field notes
8	Respondent 8: BI international student 2022-2023	Online interview	Interview about past process based on the respondent's experiences with case company SOME	March 2024, 30 min	Field notes and recording
9	Respondent 9: BI international student 2022-2023	Questionnaire	Interview about past process based on the respondent's experiences with case company SOME	March 2024	Respondent reply
10	Respondent 10: BI international student 2022-2023	Online interview	Interview about past process based on the respondent's experiences with case company SOME	March 2024, 25 min	Field notes and recording

Data 2, for Proposal building (Section 5)					
8	Respondent 11: Key stakeholders in the BI Programme & staff	Teams (Online) Interviews & discussions.	Proposal building	May 2024	Field notes
Data 3, from Validation (Section 6)					
9	Respondent 12: Key stakeholders in the BI Programme & staff	Teams (Online) Interviews & discussions.	Validation, and evaluation of the Proposal	May 2024	Field notes and recording

As seen from Table 1, data for this Thesis was collected in three rounds. The first round, Data 1, was conducted for the current state analysis by taking online interviews with BI international students of the year 2022-2023. Where we asked about their experiences with SOME of the case companies while enrolling for the master's study and how it helped them with their choice.

Data 2 was collected in the second round to gather suggestions from the case company/unit for developing the proposal. This data included the suggestions and recommendations from the stakeholders. Data 2, was conducted for building the proposal in section 5.

In the third round, Data 3 was collected during piloting/testing and then validation discussions on the initial proposal. Data 3 included feedback for the proposal from the case organisation experts. Data 3 was collected for the validation process in section 6.

"In this study, the interviews and questionnaires made the primary method of data collection. The interviews were conducted as semi-structured, online interviews, held on Google Meet and Zoom, with questions created in advance. Some of the interviews were recorded and the field notes were taken for all. Questionnaires were sent to some in order to get responses to the interview questions. The interview/survey questions and summaries of field notes of interviews can be found in Appendices 1 and 2".

3 Current State Analysis of SOME Marketing Practices in the Case Organisation Compared to Other UASs

“This section discusses the results from the current state analysis”. Note that your thesis may have a Literature review and best practice first. Adjust the sequence of your sections so that they will reflect your Research design.

3.1 Overview of the Current State Analysis

The current state analysis (CSA) employed various methods. Initially, it evaluates the present condition of social media (SOME) channels, especially within Metropolia UAS, Metropolia Business School (MBS) and BI Programme. It implicated gathering data from interviews with stakeholders, employees, instructors, and students. Additionally, data was collected by analysing Metropolia UAS's official webpage, various SOME channels, MBS SOME channels separately, and BI Programme marketing activities. The data collected period extended from the 1st of January 2024 to the 1st of April 2024 and enhanced more information from a student survey which was conducted in March 2024. The findings from all these efforts were incorporated into the strengths and weaknesses (S&W) of the current SOME activities.

Afterwards, the analysis involved examining the benchmark in SOME activities and their corresponding channels. This implied an online search of benchmark websites and their SOME channels, encompassing different Finnish UAS in and outside of Helsinki. The criteria for selecting these benchmarks were detailed in the analysis examples.

Lastly, the study gathered the needs and preferences of the BI Programme. These steps conjointly provide the strengths and weakness assessment for Metropolia's SOME activities, MBS SOME activities and BI's SOME activities in comparison to the benchmarks.

This section delves into the analysis of social media (SOME) activities at two specific levels with the case organisation. Initially, it scans the SOME activities of Metropolia UAS as a whole by evaluating its overall digital presence and engagement practice. Subsequently, the focus shifts to the SOME activities specific to Metropolia Business School by providing insights into how digital marketing is used to highlight, communicate and promote this particular school and its programmes.

The next step involves benchmarking with SOME digital marketing practices of some competing Finnish UASs, such as Haaga-Helia, Laurea, JAMK and LAB, to identify the differences with the case organisation. This comparison will help shed light on the respective SOME activities across various platforms including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. By performing this analysis, the goal is to gain an extensive understanding of the current SOME landscape, identify potential areas of improvement and learn from some best practices. The findings will uncover some important inputs for formulating recommendations to enhance the case organisation's digital marketing practices, ultimately providing better support and information to international students.

It involved gathering data from interviews with stakeholders, employees, instructors, and students. Additionally, data was collected by analysing Metropolia UAS's official webpage, various SOME channels, MBS SOME channels separately, and BI Programme marketing activities. The data collection period was from the 1st of January 2024 to the 1st of April 2024, and more enhanced information from a student survey which was conducted in March 2024.

3.2 Description of the Case Organisation's SOME Practices

This section gives an overview of the current context and social media communication practices used by Metropolia University of Applied Sciences (UAS) and Metropolia Business School. By exploring the current landscape and digital marketing activities of this case organisation, the study aims to outline its digital presence and engagement techniques on various digital platforms.

3.2.1 SOME Practices on Metropolia UAS's Level

Based on the analysis of current SOME practices, the case organisation has maintained active accounts across several platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, and its official website. Below there is more explanation and information about SOME practices and social media handles. Table 3 shows all the details about the SOME practices of the case organisation, its content, posts, student groups, advertisement, official webpages info, bilingual posts and other details.

Table 2. Metropolia UAS's SOME activities

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences					
Details/Activities	Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn	Twitter	Website
Page	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Content/post	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Student groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Likes/comments	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Bilingual post	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Advertisement	✓	✓			
User experience	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Contact information					✓
Course information					✓
Feedback					✓
Job vacancy					✓
Latest event update	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Blogs/experiences	✓	✓			✓
Live chat					✓

As shown in Table 2, there are various SOME activities by the case organisation across various platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, and its official webpage.

Facebook: The case company UAS maintains an active presence on Facebook through “Metropolia Ammattikorkeakoulu”. This page is dedicated to the entire university in common, which has 16,000 followers and 15,000 likes as of March 18, 2024. This page regularly shares posts covering various topics such as event information, lucky draw, trends, circular economy, student life, graduation events, student union activities, projects, personal testimonials/blogs, and conferences. As seen in Figure 2 for example, it highlights student union ‘Metka’ events and a post where student ambassador shared their first-hand experience. While each post attracts a good number of likes, there is room for improvement in fostering audience engagement through increased comments. Notably, the posts are bilingual, primarily in English with some in Finnish, catering to a wider audience base.

Table 3 shows that case organisation has an active presence on Facebook about their post, content, student groups and others.

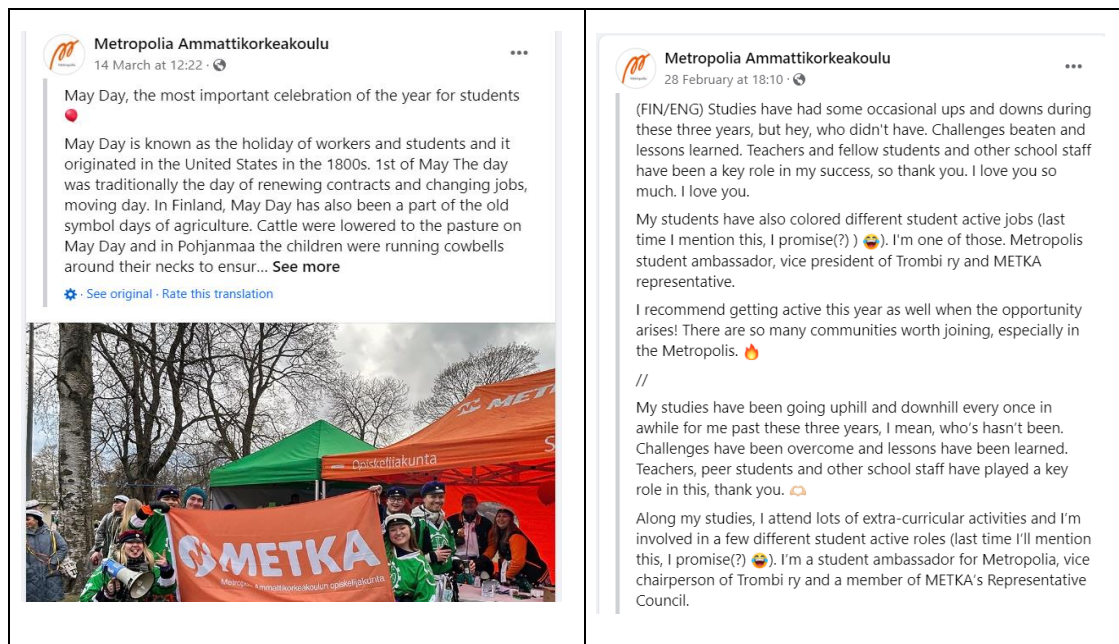


Figure 2. Examples of SOME materials on the Facebook channel (informing about student life and experience) (Metropolia Ammatikorkeakoulu. 2024. Vappu, tuo opiskelijoiden vuoden tärkein juhla. Facebook.)

As shown in Figure 3, international students can book a video meeting with a student ambassador to ask relevant questions about the studies, course and further experience/information another picture shows the student union 'Metka' event for newcomer students.

Instagram: The case company UAS maintains an active presence on Instagram through the account "Metropolia_uas". It is dedicated to the entire university in common, which has 110,000 followers with 2155 posts; this page shares similar content as Facebook and additionally uploads stories regarding student life, experiences, exchange students and other details. Notably, the posts are bilingual, primarily in English with some in Finnish, catering to a wider audience base.

Table 3 shows that the Instagram page has similar content/posts, students' ambassadors and students' lives and actively uploads stories.

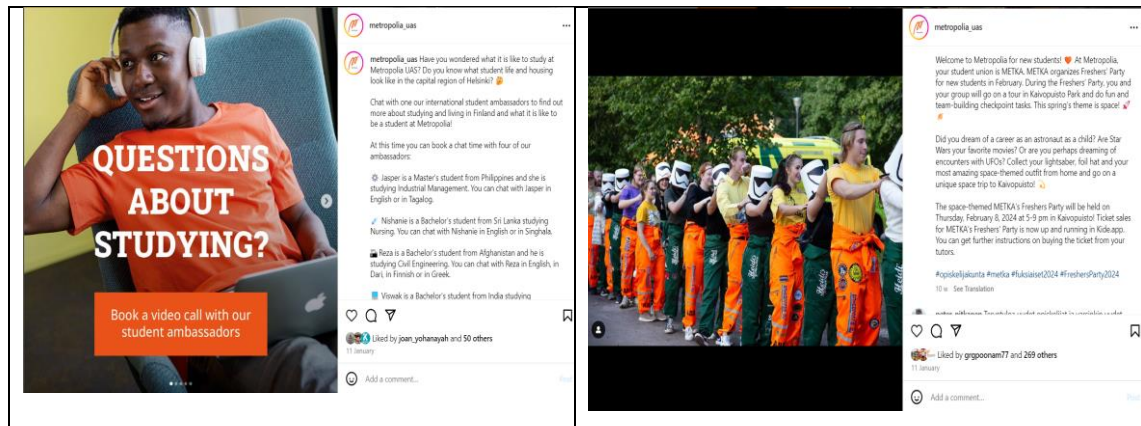


Figure 3. Example of SOME materials on the Instagram channel inviting to talk to the Student Ambassador and Metka event for welcoming new students (metropolia_uas. 2024. Have you wondered what it is like to study at Metropolia UAS?. Instagram.)

Twitter: The case company UAS maintains an active presence on Twitter (X) through the account “Metropolia”. It is dedicated to the entire university in common, which has 1031 followers with many posts related to the university, student projects, highlighting its official website, student ambassadors, campuses, contact forum events and much more, Notably, the posts are primarily in Finnish, and some in English, catering to a wider audience base.

LinkedIn: The case organisation started their page on this platform in 2008. There are 53,000 followers with 40,000 alumni. The content is quite similar to the Facebook page and is quite active for the post.

Official webpage: The case organisation’s official webpage is quite elaborated with detailed information about studying at Metropolia, research, development and innovation activities, services and customer work, annual reviews, strategies, open jobs, contact information, latest updates, and events, and much more to help the student extract valid and point to point information about the university and its offerings. The website is very easy to go through and has a good interface.

Table 3 shows that the case organisation’s official webpage is quite active and contains all the detailed information about the course, contact information, job vacancies, live chat options, feedback and the latest events updates.

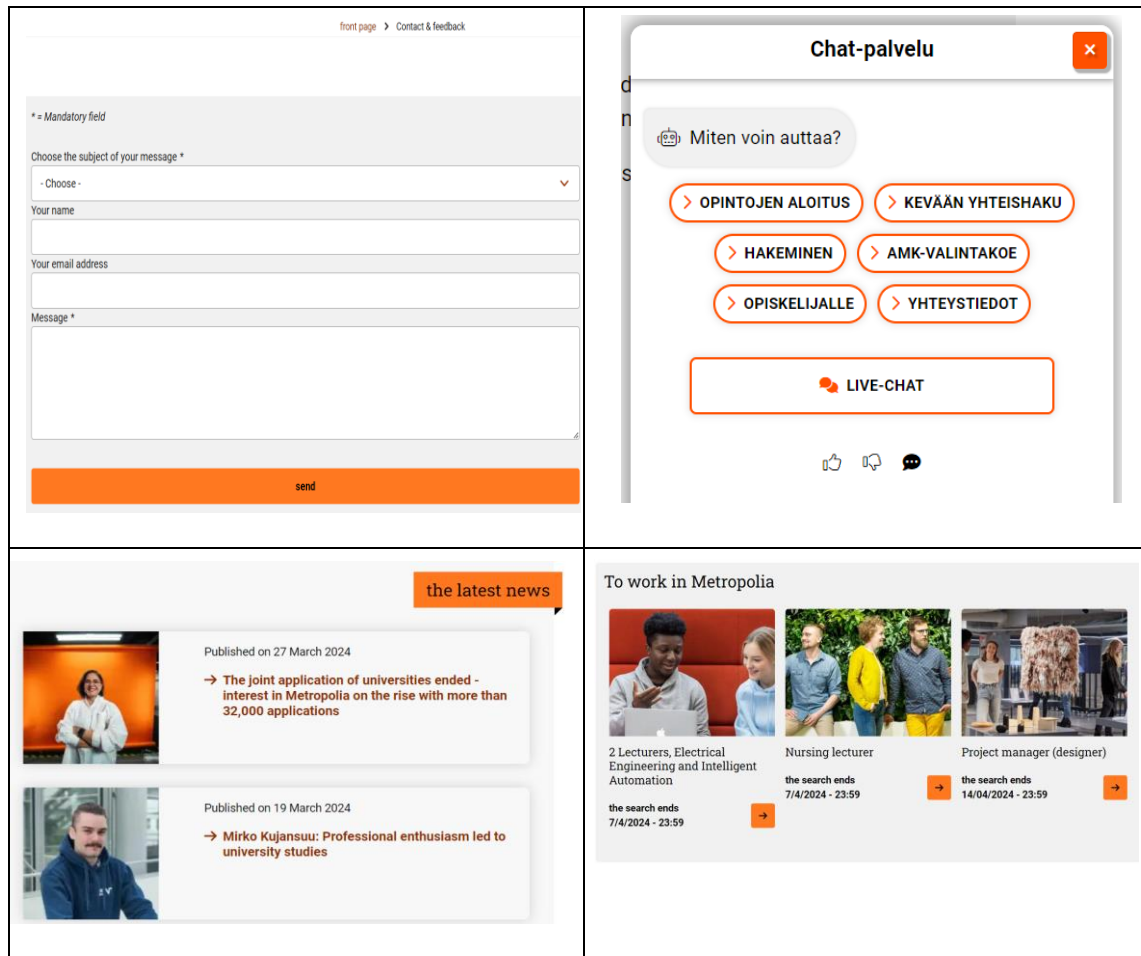


Figure 4. Screenshots from the case organisation's official webpage showing 'contact & feedback', 'live chat', 'latest news' and 'to work in Metropolia'. www.metropolia.fi. (n.d.). 27 March 2024.

To summarise the above information from the social media handles and the posts shown, it highlights diverse content but with lesser viewers comments. Also, the comment response rate has been good to keep the audience informed. The webpage especially stands out as particularly useful, offering fruitful and easily accessible information about the university, including upcoming events, campus details, program offerings with associated fees, contact details of relevant persons, and much more. Additionally, the case company advertises on Facebook and LinkedIn, although there is potential for advertisement expansion to other social media platforms. While it has established a visible presence on these SOME channels, it has also created content offerings that are substantial and aimed at providing users with relevant information. However, there is room for enhancement to support and inform international students better.

Table 3. Summary of Metropolia UAS's SOME activities (over 3 months, 1st January -1st April 2024).

Over 3 months	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	LinkedIn
1. Student life (Examples: Exchange students to Amsterdam UAS, 31 March 2024. (LinkedIn) - Metropolia students' traditional go-kart races were held on 8 th March 2024 (Facebook)	23	4	30	7
2. Campus/modern (Example: - Started a joint project between Metropolia and Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu (MPKK) on 6 th Feb 2024 on Facebook - Metropolia's unique platform Hiilitalli is developing carbon garage binding with sustainable development, 25 th Jan 2024 on Facebook - Metropolia CEO-Principal Riitta Konkola was elected Arene Raider post on 16 th Jan 2024 on Facebook	4	4	1	2
3. Events organisation (Example: - Metropolia has put a good circulation together recycling event, on 20 March 2024 (Facebook) - World Economic Forum on 14 th Feb 2024 on Facebook	9	12	1	5
4. Admission and exam (Example: The first joint application of spring 2024 is open on 8 th Jan 2024 on Facebook)	1	-	9	3
5. Info about specific program/course (Example: 3AMK's unique study periods in the spring 9 th Jan 2024 on Facebook)	2	-	1	-

Table 3 summarises the analysis of all SOME activities with the post on different social media within three months from 1st January to 1st April 2024. It shows that there are more than 23 posts on Facebook and 35 posts on Instagram about the students' lives, student's journeys, and exchange students; however, there are few posts on events, admission posts and campus posts. It seems that it is more active on Facebook and Instagram compared to other SOME channels.

3.2.2 Activities on Metropolia Business School's Level

Table 4 shows that the Metropolia Business School holds its own SOME activities through various channels such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The LinkedIn account is active as a whole for Metropolia UAS, but it does not have its own separate account. Below is more explanation and information about SOME practices and social media handles.

Table 4. Metropolia Business School SOME activities

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences				
Details/Activities	Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn	Twitter
Page	✓	✓	✓	✓
Content/post	✓	✓	✓	✓
Student groups	✓	✓	✓	✓
Likes/comments	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bilingual post	✓	✓	✓	✓
Advertisement	✓	✓		
User experience	✓	✓	✓	✓
Contact information				
Course information				
Feedback				
Job vacancy				
Latest event update	✓	✓	✓	✓
Blogs/experiences	✓	✓		

As shown in Table 5, Metropolia Business School reports across various platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, as it does not have a separate LinkedIn account. MBS is not available on the LinkedIn channel. One page is available named "EMA/IBL/EM Alumni of Metropolia business school"; it is only for pass-out and graduate students from EMA/IBL/EM.

Facebook: The case company's Business School maintains an active presence on Facebook, which has 2,100 followers and 2,000 likes as of March 18, 2024. This page also regularly shares posts covering various topics such as event information, lucky

draw, trends, circular economy, student life, graduation events, student union activities, projects, personal testimonials/blogs, and conferences. While each post attracts a good number of likes, there is room for improvement in fostering audience engagement through increased comments. Notably, the posts are bilingual, primarily in English with some in Finnish, catering to a wider audience base.

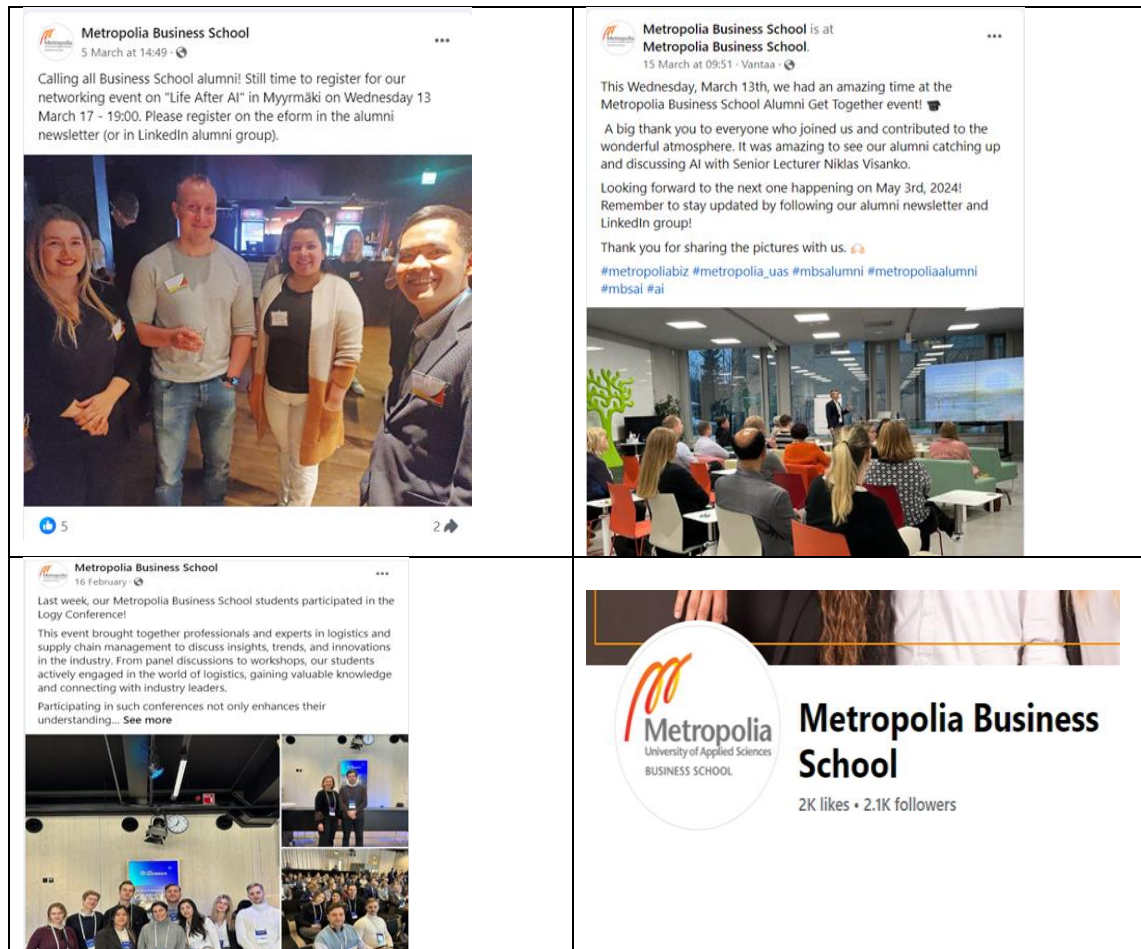


Figure 5. Examples of SOME materials of Metropolia Business School on Facebook channel: Informing about student life and MBS alumni get-together events on 13th March 2024) (Metropolia Ammatikorkeakoulu. 2024. Calling all Business School alumni! Facebook.; Metropolia Business School. 2024. Metropolia Business School students participated in the Logy Conference! Facebook.)

Instagram: The case company's Business School maintains an active presence on Instagram through the account "Metropoliabiz." It focuses on the business school and campus, which has 1617 followers with 836 posts. This page shares similar content as Facebook additionally uploads stories regarding student life, experiences, exchange students and other details. Notably, the posts are bilingual, primarily in English with some in Finnish, catering to a wider audience base.

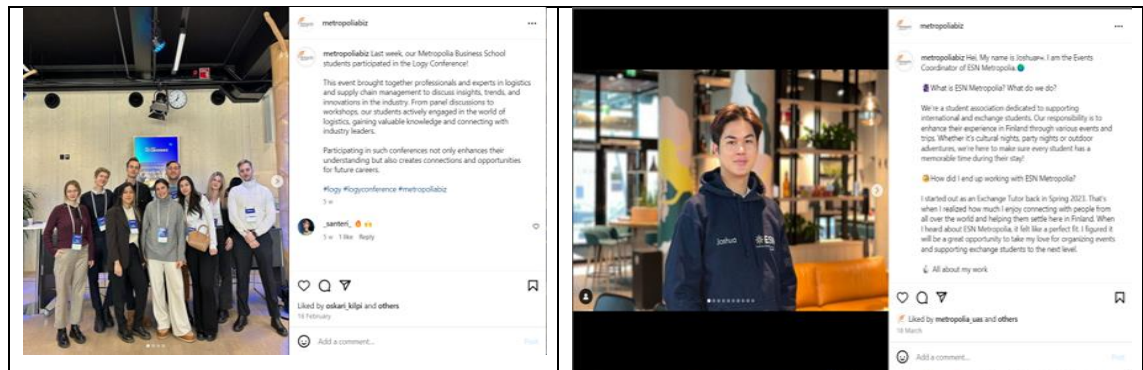


Figure 6. Examples of SOME materials of Metropolia Business School on Instagram channel informing about a Logy conference and events coordinating of ESN Metropolia (metropolia biz. 2024. Last week, our Metropolia Business School students participated in the Logy Conference! Instagram.; metropoliabiz. 2024, the Student's name is Joshua an Events Coordinator of ESN Metropolia.)

Twitter: The case company's Business School maintains an active presence on Twitter (X) through the account "Metropolia Business School." This page focuses on the business school and its campus and has 1289 followers with many posts related to business course enrollment, lecturers, contact forum events and much more. Notably, the posts are primarily in Finnish, and some in English, catering to a wider audience base.

To summarise the above information from the social media handles and the posts shown, it highlights diverse content with fewer viewers and comments compared to the above official page. As this is specifically for business school so, the content and posts are also more informative about the business school campus and its events. The engagement and regular posting of content keep their followers informed and engaging.

Table 5. Summary of Metropolia Business School (MBS) SOME activities (over three months, 1 January -1 April 2024).

Over 3 months	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
1. Student life (Examples: - Organised match by Trombi and Kiekko-Vantaa, match between Kiekko-Vantaa vs. FPS on 22 nd Feb 2024 on Facebook - Sharing experience of tutor journey post on 12 th Feb 2024 on Facebook.	12	5	18
2. Campus/modern (Example-	-	-	-
3. Events organisation (Example: Metropolia Business School Alumni Get Together event on 15 th March 2024 on Facebook - Metropolia Business School students participated in the Logy Conference on 16 th Feb 2024 on Facebook	8	3	5
4. Admission (Example: Joint Application for our international BBA degrees is open 3 - 17 January 2024 (post on 2nd Jan 2024 on Facebook)	1	5	-
5. Info about specific program/course (Example:	-	-	-

Table 6 summarises the analysis of all SOME activities with the post on different social media within three months from 1st January to 1st April 2024. It shows that there are more than 12 posts on Facebook and 18 posts on Instagram about the students' lives, student's journeys, and exchange students; however, there are few posts on events and admission posts. This MBS page focuses on the business school and its campus, so it seems to be little active as compared to Metropolia UAS. MBS is not available LinkedIn channel. One page is available named "EMA/IBL/EM Alumni of Metropolia Business School"; it is only for pass-out and graduate students from EMA/IBL/EM.

3.2.3 Activities on the Level of Master's Programmed in Business Informatics

Metropolia UAS and Metropolia Business School are active on social media channels, but unfortunately, presently, the Master's BI Programme is not active on any social media channel. This business informatics master programme does not have its own channel but participates in these two organisations above. Based on the analysis, the case organisation has maintained active in making blogs named "Masterminds –

Maisteriainesta”. In these blogs, students talk about their student’s journey and their student life. Below, there is more explanation and information about blog handles.

Figure 7 shows the example of a dedicated blog channel for master’s students by Metropolia UAS. BI Masters’s alumni publish this blog channel, exchange students, and BI Master’s instructors, and about the events organised by the BI Master’s program.



Figure 7. Examples of a dedicated blog channel for Master’s students by Metropolia UAS (Masterminds - Maisteriainesta 2024). Note the SOME channels of Metropolia in the right top corner!

Figure 7 shows the blog channel used by Metropolia UAS’s Master’s alumni students and exchange students, where they explain the adopting and developing strategy for software development, which aims to significantly increase the work speed of the software delivery process and help to ensure the software is issued. Both are the topic of my master’s thesis and the successful story of master’s BI alumnus students who completed their master's thesis in Dec 2023.

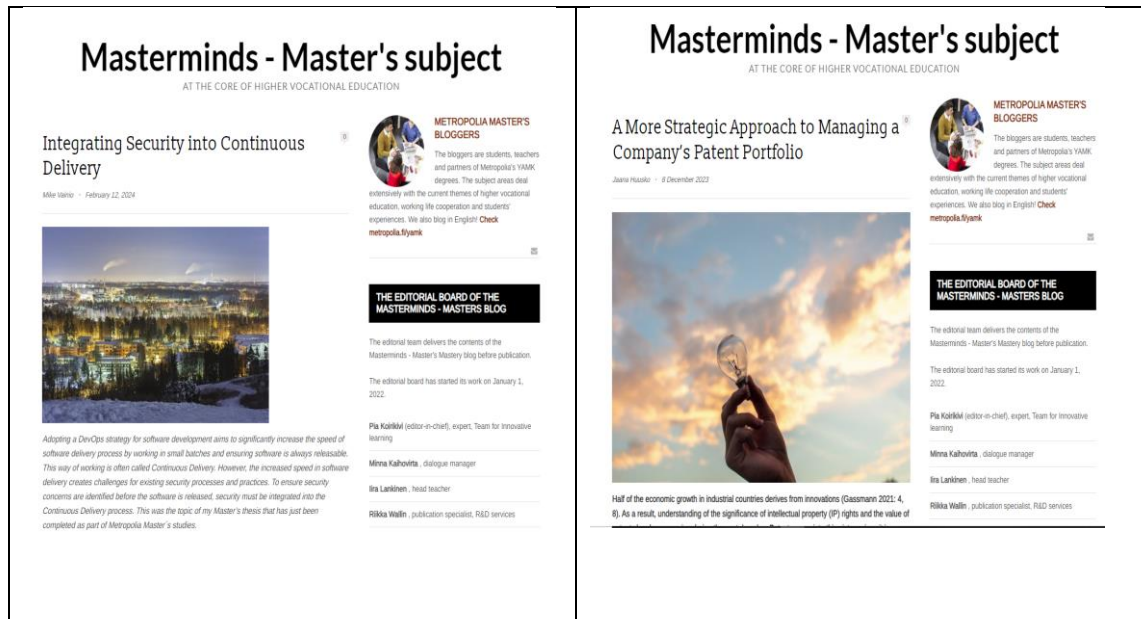


Figure 8. Examples of a dedicated blog channel for Master's students by Metropolia UAS (Masterminds - Maisteriainesta 2024). Note the SOME channels of Metropolia in the right top corner.

As shown in Figure 8, the dedicated blog channel is used by Metropolia UAS's master's alumni students and exchange students. It explains adopting a strategy for software development, the main target of which is to increase the work speed of the software delivery process approximately and help ensure the software is issued. This blog explains the continuous delivery and integrity of security software development, and another objective was to improve the patenting process in the case company and increase the commitment of stakeholders by developing a consistent patenting process model. Both are the topic of my master's thesis and the successful story of master's BI alumnus students who completed their master's thesis in Dec 2023.

Also, in addition to the students' journey and success story of their master's thesis, the blogs are published by BI Masters' alumni, exchange students, and BI Master's instructors and about the events organised by BI Master's program.

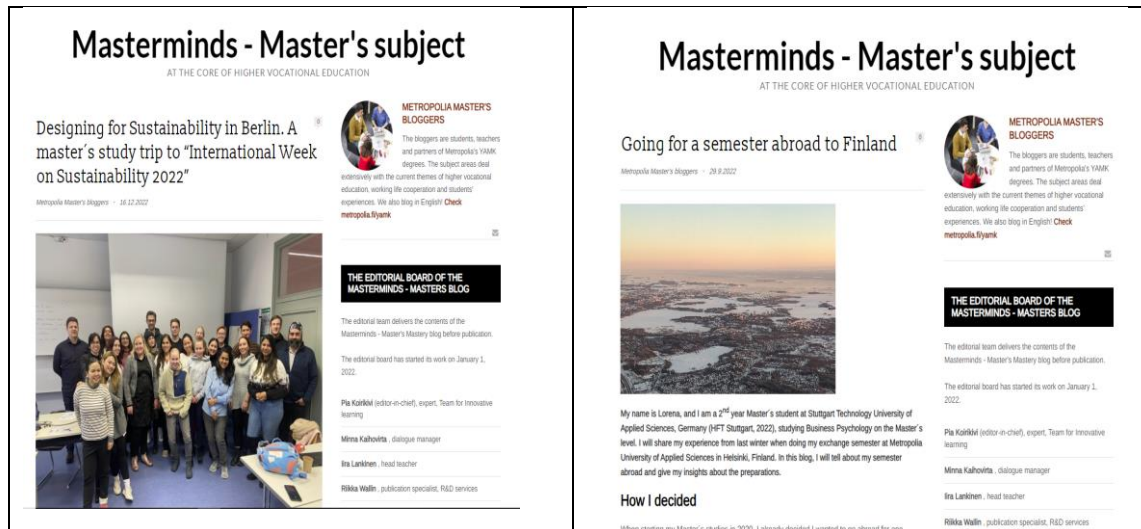


Figure 9. Examples of a dedicated blog channel for Master's students by Metropolia UAS (exchange students and study trips to Berlin in May 2022) (Masterminds - Maisteriainesta 2024).

Figure 9 shows that Since 2019, the Berlin School of Economics and Law has been hosting the annual International Week on Sustainability (IWS) to blend the principle of sustainability into higher education. In 2022, an invitation to master students from Metropolia to participate in workshops from November 18th to 21st offers to earn 3ECTS credits while addressing real-world sustainability challenges. Among 10 students' groups of master students attended this event. Another blog is about the student's journey, "Going for a semester abroad to Finland", where a 2nd-year master's student at Stuttgart Technology UAS, Germany (HFT Stuttgart, 2022), studying business Psychology at a master's level. Students share their experiences about the exchange semester at Metropolia UAS, where students give their insights about the preparations and journey.

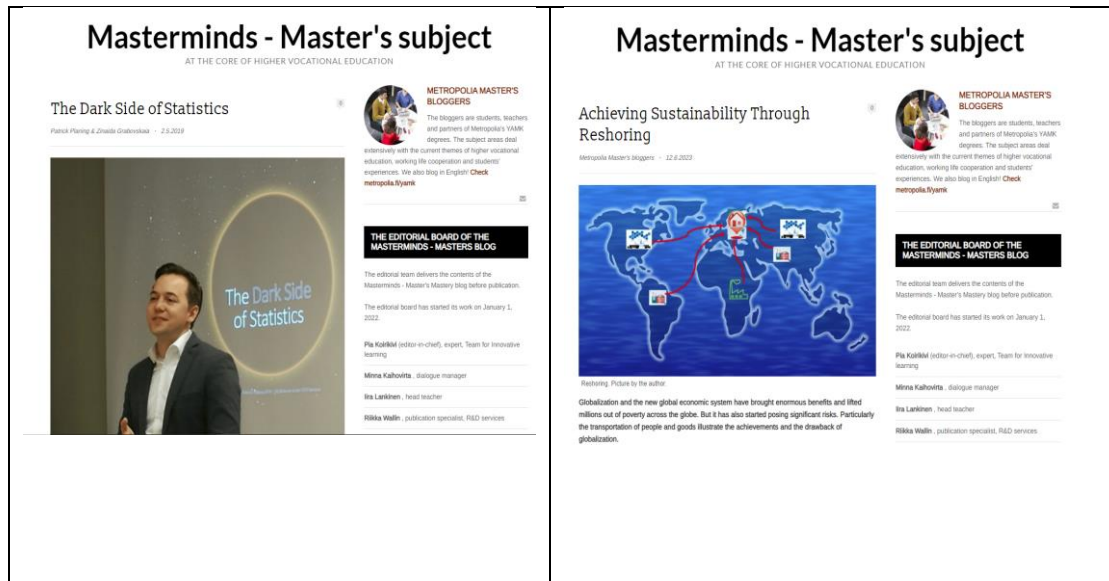


Figure 10. Examples of a dedicated blog channel by master's lectures and co-teachers by Metropolia UAS (explains the sustainability and dark side of statistics on Dec 6, 2023) (Masterminds - Maisteriainesta 2024).

As shown in Figure 10, the dedicated blog channel is used by Metropolia UAS's master's alumni students and exchange students. Prof. Dr. Patrick Planing from Stuttgart Hochschule für Technik, a partner University of Metropolia. "The black side of statistics will become a trap if it is not used professionally. Among the wide use of data analytics and the popularity of statistical tools, we need to understand more and know more about statistics deeply. It will help to avoid its dark side". He shared his insights with the students of the Master's program in Business Informatics during a guest visit to Metropolia University of Applied Sciences.

Another blog explains "Achieving Sustainability through Reshoring" by Satish Kumar, co-teacher at Metropolia. Nowadays, many businesses are focusing more on avoiding risks and securing their supply chains. Many organisations are worried about sustainability, and because of this, many businesses started their operations near home; this phenomenon is called reshoring. Reshoring is defined as bringing back industries somewhere nearby to the country where they started. This helps many organisations/businesses to create balance with eco-friendliness and earn revenue profit, which is more popular in today's business.

To summarise the above information from the dedicated blog named "Masterminds – Maisteriainesta" highlights diverse content and many stories about the students' journey and their lives. It is less popular among the other SOME channels and has fewer viewers

and comments than the other social media handles. As this is specifically for business school and BI alumni, the content and blogs are more informative about business and ongoing business problems and their solutions. Based on the analysis, the case organisation has maintained active in making the blog name “Masterminds – Maisteriainesta”. In these blogs, students talk about their student’s journey and their student life.

3.3 Analysis of the BI Master’s Students Experience with SOME when making their choices/decisions

This section dives into the findings derived from BI Master’s Students’ Experiences with SOME when making their choices/decisions during the admission process.

First, a Google survey was conducted that aimed to establish what information students are searching for from Metropolia’s social media and which are the most important factors that affect students to choose the university and the study program. Below are the details of the Google survey questions.

6. What information you were searching for on Metropolia’s Social media? What * was important to you to find?

- to make sure that this UAS exists and active (to prove that UAS exists)
- to make sure that this UAS is modern and up-to-date (to prove that UAS is cutting edge)
- to build trust / to make your decision to study here
- to learn about UAS student life
- to see the UAS campus
- to find testimonials of students
- to find testimonials from own nationality (your countrymates or compatriots)
- to find information about your programme of choice
- to find tips on how to relocate or integrate in Finland
- to find tips about the country
- Other: _____

Figure 11. Important information that students were searching for from SOME during the admission time.

Figure 11 shows the important information that students were searching for from SOME channels during the time of admission. And what are the other important factors that affect students to choose the university and study programme course.

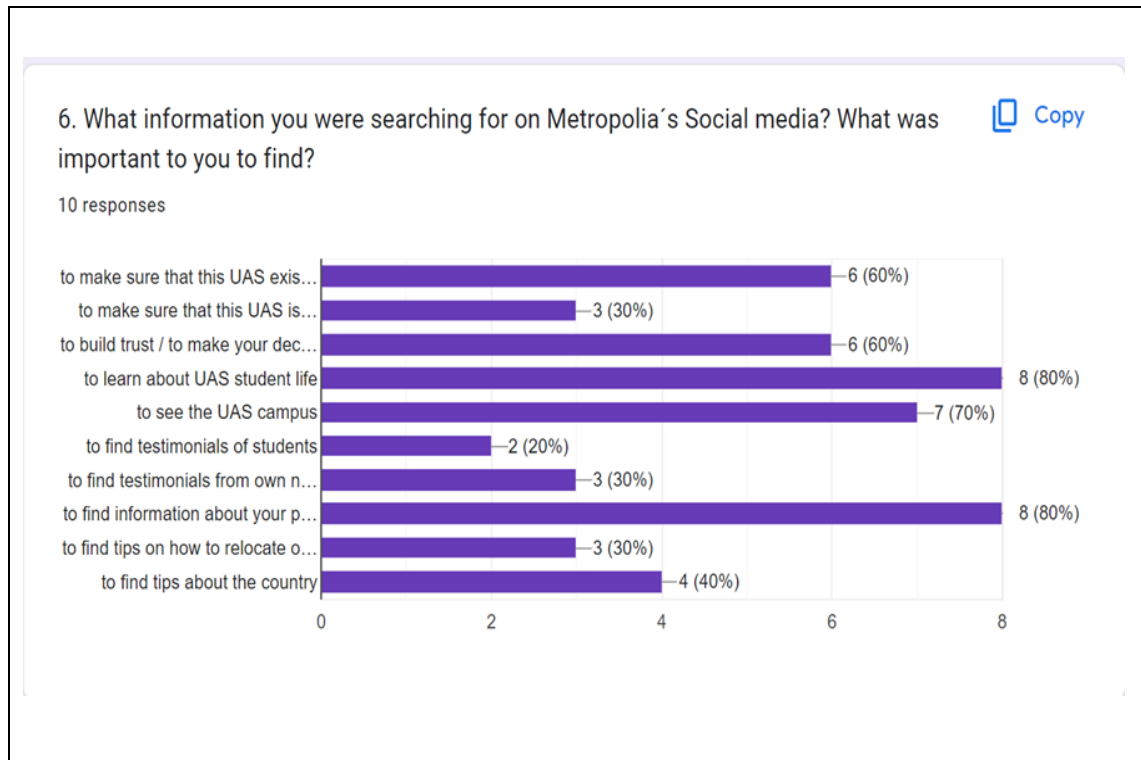


Figure 12. Google Form Survey responses (March 2024).

Figure 12 shows that the highest % of Google survey responses are mainly students who want to learn more about UAS's student life and find more information about the program, which is 80%. Gleichzeitig, 70% want to see the campus, and 60% want to make sure that the UAS exists or not, which helps to build trust within the students and help them make the right decision.

Based on the survey results, the interviews were conducted with 10 BI Master's Students about their experience with SOME when making their choices/decisions during the admission times. Below, each identified point is discussed based on survey and interview results (taken together) from international students.

3.3.1 UAS exists, Modern and Up to Date.

Here, there two main points were highlighted. The first point is “to make sure that this UAS exist and is active (to prove that UAS exist),” which expresses the significance of the case organisation’s presence on social media platforms in providing international students with a glimpse into the case organisation’s outlook before admissions. The latter point, “to make sure that this UAS is modern and up to date (to prove that UAS is cutting edge),” emphasises the importance of the case organisation being equipped with modern facilities and is up to date, aiding international students to visualise the structure and offerings of the organisation.

The survey results (as shown in Figure 12) and interview results both reveal that the former point received a significantly higher weighting of 60%, indicating its predominant importance to international students in terms of showcasing the existence and activity of case organisations before their arrival in the country. The latter point comparatively showed lower weighting in survey results of 30%, and in an interview, it did not emphasise the case organisation’s modernity as significantly as its mere existence.

“I have checked official websites of many Universities, but I wanted to check social media also for the conformation or want to tally with official pages and social media pages.” (Informant 1)

“I checked official webpages most but checked social media also to look about the infrastructure of Campus, how it looks like.” (Informant 2)

These insights showcased from both research gatherings underscore the critical role of the social media platform presence in facilitating international students’ decision-making process.

3.3.2 UAS Campus and Student Life

Here, there are two main points highlighted. The first point, "to learn about UAS student life," underscores the significance of understanding the student experience at the University of Applied Sciences (UAS), which aids prospective international students in envisioning their future life in a new country to study. The latter point is, "to see the UAS campus," which emphasises the importance of the case organisation's physical

infrastructure and layout, providing international students with insights into the campus area and landscape to better grasp the scale and facilities of the institution.

The survey results (as shown in Figure 12) and interview results both reveal that the former point received a significant weighting of 80% in the survey and in an interview, it indicated its high relevance to international students in terms of anticipating their own student life and formulating plans for achieving a work-life-study balance in the future. Additionally, an interview also stressed the importance of understanding the student experience as a crucial factor in international students' decision-making process. The latter point showed quite similar weighting in survey results of 70%, indicating its significance in influencing admission decisions, as the physical campus environment plays a pivotal role in shaping students' perceptions of the institution.

“Apparently, I had a couple of options in master level degree, but I selected Metropolia because of the course background and the subjects.” (Informant 1)

“I checked social media especially Facebook where I found many posts about the student's success story, which helped me to choose Metropolia UAS.” (Informant 2)

These insights from the survey responses and interview discussions displayed the critical role of student life and campus infrastructure in shaping international students' perceptions and decisions regarding their academic pursuits.

3.3.3 Create Trust to Make a Decision.

This section highlights the significance of a key point: "to build trust / to make your decision to study here." This aspect aims to assess whether the case organisation's social media presence instils trust in their international students, influencing their decision to enrol in the organisation. The survey results, as shown in Figure 13, revealed a weighting of 60%, indicating that it is important to have a trust factor in the information received through social media platforms.

“Many success stories are posted on social media, especially LinkedIn, they help to create a trust that I have chosen the correct decision for my life.” (Informant 1)

However, insights from interviews suggest that while having a social media presence is crucial, the level of trust international students place in the information received may not be strong enough to support their life-altering decisions solely. This understanding displays the complex interplay between social media presence and the trustworthiness of information, highlighting the need for further exploration and enhancement of communication strategies to support future international students' decision-making processes effectively.

3.3.4 Information about Programs and Tips for Relocating to the Country.

This section highlights two key points identified in the survey questionnaire. The first point, “Information about the programme,” explains the vital importance of obtaining comprehensive details about the desired course, including its curriculum, potential future career possibilities, and insights into student life during the study period. This information enables international students to envision their future prospects upon completion of the course and to gain a better understanding of what to expect during their academic journey. The second point, “tips to relocate in the country,” explains the importance of receiving guidance and support regarding the relocation process. This includes essential information about the geographical location, integration into the new environment, and assistance with navigating government processes in a new country. While the former point received a high weighting of 80%, indicating its utmost importance to international students in understanding the benefits of the programme, the latter received a weighting of 30% - 40%, underscoring the desire for support and guidance in settling into their new surroundings.

“There were a lot of aspects that helped me to make my decision. I can say the course frame, the background of the course, success stories of students who did the programme and the supervisor assistance.” (Informant 1)

“I have watched many YouTube videos about Finland and the student’s life.” (Informant 2)

“Digital media helped me a lot to select the course, to do some research, to identify the best subjects.” (Informant 3)

These insights derived from both the survey responses and interview discussions highlight the constant need of international students and the importance of providing comprehensive support to facilitate a smooth transition into their academic and personal lives.

3.3.5 Testimonials

This section explains the significance of incorporating testimonials as a component of the case organisation's social media strategy. Testimonials enable prospective international students to gain valuable insights from alumni experiences, fostering trust and credibility through firsthand accounts shared via blogs and other platforms. The survey results shown in Figure 12 attributed a weighting of 20 - 30% to this aspect, indicating its perceived importance. Insights from the interviews suggest that while testimonials offer valuable vision into past experiences, they may not significantly impact the decision-making process of international students.

“Searched several websites, LinkedIn profiles, university official websites and relevant websites, some YouTube videos of ex-students helped me to identify key elements.” (Informant 1)

“I have watched many YouTube videos about Finland and found some student groups on Facebook also where I can see many students from my own country. It helped me a lot.” (Informant 2)

This understanding highlights the role of testimonials in providing additional context and information for students but has a lesser influence on their final decision-making process.

To summarise the above information from Google surveys and interviews, many BI master's students have used social media (SOME) channels for more information and details. Additionally, the interview also stressed the importance of understanding the student experience and students' journey as a crucial factor in international students for the decision-making process. These insights showcased from both research gatherings underscore the critical role of the social media platform presence in facilitating

international students' decision-making process at the time of admission and choosing the relevant course. The webpage especially stands out as particularly useful, offering easily accessible information about the university, including upcoming events, campus details, program offerings with associated fees, contact details of relevant persons, and much more. However, there is room for enhancement to support better and inform international students.

Table 6. Significant features/ topics search on SOME channels (based on the experiences of BI Master's students).

1.	To find more information about the content of the course programme
2.	To learn about the UAS student life and success stories of alumni students
3.	About the course frame and subjects (mixture of business and technology)
4.	To see the infrastructure of UAS or the campus
5.	To make sure the UAS exists and is up-to-date
6.	To build trust/ to make your decision to study
7.	To find tips about the country
8.	Especially it is located in Helsinki (the capital city)

To summarise the above details from Google survey and interview based on the experience of BI programme students when they are searching in social media (SOME) channels at the time of admission. Table 6 explains the significant topics which are more important to international students when they are in the process of making a decision at the time of admission and choosing the relevant course or programme. These insights of international students showcased the critical role of social media (SOME) channels at the time of the admission process and choosing the course.

3.4 Analysis of Selected Finnish UASs' SOME Channels and Practices (4 biggest number of international students)

This section drives into the analysis of selected Finnish UAS's SOME channels and practices. Table 7 below shows the data of the highest number of international students all over Finland. According to the data below, the top four Finnish UAS have been benchmarked and analysed according to their number of highest international students. Below there are more details and more explanations. This data is taken from "Education

Statistics Finland.” This is the total number of international students in Finnish UAS’s year 2022. (Vipunen. fi)

Table 7. Numbers of international students in Finnish UASs 2022 (taken from “Education Statistics Finland” (vipunen. fi).

University of Applied Sciences (UASs)	Higher polytechnic degree (Master) students
Arcada UAS	276
Centria UAS	360
Diaconia UAS	45
Haaga-Helia UAS	717
HAMK UAS	192
Helsinki Metropolia UAS	1 665
HUMAK UAS	12
JAMK UAS	516
Kajaani UAS	63
Karelia UAS	1-4
LAB UAS	672
Lapland UAS	210
Laurea UAS	273
Novia UAS	216
Oulu UAS	156
Satakunta UAS	147
Savonia UAS	66
Seinäjäki UAS	135
South-Eastern Finland UAS	183
Tampere UAS	297
Turku UAS	132
Vaasa UAS	147
Total	6 477

3.4.1 Haaga-Helia UAS (717 international students in 2022)

Based on the analysis of current SOME practices, Haaga-Helia UAS has maintained active accounts across several platforms including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, and its official website. Below there is more explanation and information about SOME practices and social media handles. Table 8 shows all the details about the SOME

practices of the case organisation, such as its content, posts, student groups, advertisement, official page info, bilingual posts, and other details.

Table 8. Haaga-Helia UAS SOME activities.

Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences					
Details/Activities	Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn	Twitter	Website
Page	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Content/post	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Student groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Likes/comments	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Bilingual post	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Advertisement	✓	✓			
User experience	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Contact information					✓
Course information					✓
Feedback					✓
Job vacancy					✓
Latest event update	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Blogs/experiences	✓	✓			✓
Live chat					✓

As shown in Table 8, Haaga-Helia UAS reports across various platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

Facebook: The case organisation UAS maintains an active presence on Facebook, which has 2,000 followers and 2,000 likes as of March 30, 2024. This page also regularly shares posts covering various topics such as event information, trends, circular economy, student life, graduation events, student union activities, projects, personal testimonials/blogs, events and conferences. As seen in Figure 13, for example, highlights Ulyseus's Ambassador at the European Student Ambassador Forum 2024, happening in Warsaw in September, where student shared their first-hand experience and inspired other students across Europe. While each post attracts a good number of likes, there is room for improvement in fostering audience engagement through increased comments.

Notably, the posts are bilingual, primarily in English with some in Finnish, catering to a wider audience base.



Figure 13. Example of SOME material of Haaga-Helia UAS at the European Student Ambassador Forum 2024 on Facebook channel (Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. 2024. Calling all Haaga-Helia students! Want to be at the forefront of discussing higher education's future in Europe?. Facebook.)

Instagram: The case company UAS maintains an active presence on Instagram through the account “Haaga-Helia ammattikorkeakoulu.” It is dedicated to the entire university in common, which has 119,000 followers with 2523 posts; this page shares similar content as Facebook and additionally uploads stories regarding student life, experiences, exchange students and other details. As shown in Figure 14, for example, Haaga-Helia organises various meetings, activities, and events to support international degree students. online Q&A sessions for international students, employment webinars, international master’s student meetups, spring in Finland and many more. Notably, the posts are bilingual, primarily in English with some in Finnish, catering to a wider audience base.

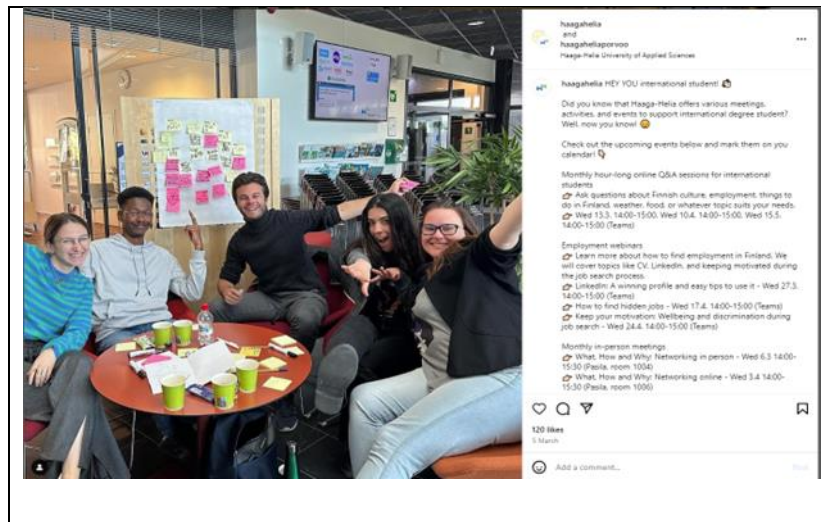


Figure 14. Example of SOME material of Haaga-Helia UAS of various meetings, events, and online Q&A sessions for international students on an Instagram channel (Haaga-Helia. 2024 international student!. Instagram.)

LinkedIn: The case organisation started their page on this platform in 2007. There are 55,000 followers with 38,000 alumni. The content is quite similar to the Facebook page and Instagram page; it is quite active for the post.

Twitter: The case organisation UAS maintains an active presence on Twitter (X) through the account “Haaga-heliaa AMK.” It is dedicated to the entire university in common, which has 5,775 Followers with many posts related to the university, student projects, highlighting its official website, student ambassadors, campuses, contact forum events and much more, Notably, the posts are primarily in Finnish, and some in English, catering to a wider audience base.

Table 9. Summary of Haaga-Helia UAS's SOME activities (over 3 months, 1st January -1st April 2024).

Over 3 months	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	LinkedIn
1. Student life (Examples: -"Ulyseus ambassador at the European Student Ambassador Forum 2024"; 27 th March 2024 on Facebook - Organizing a hybrid course for Peruvian students in March 2024, from the Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas (UPC); 27 th March 2024 on Facebook	28	16	27	15
2. Campus/modern (Example: - Haaga campus' workspace and teaching will move to Pasila, and a new showroom space will be at the end of 2026. Post on 7 th March 2024 on Facebook - looking for a graduate teacher to join our dynamic and exciting college community on 14 th March 2024 on Facebook	5	6	2	4
3. Events organisation (Example: Unlocking Entrepreneurial Potential with AI tools, sports programs, 25 th March 2024 on Facebook	16	10	9	23
4. Admission (Example: The second joint search of the spring is over. March 2024, collected 27,2024 posts)	13	15	14	10
5. Info about specific program/course (Example: double degree programme, offered in partnership between Haaga-Helia and Management Center Innsbruck in Austria 16 th Jan 2024 on Facebook.	3	3	1	3

Table 9 summarises the analysis of all SOME activities with the post on different social media within three months, from the 1st of January to the 1st of April 2024. It shows that there are more than 28 posts on Facebook and 27 posts on Instagram about the students' lives, student's journeys, and events.

3.4.2 LAB UAS (672 international students)

As shown in Table 10, LAB UAS reports across various platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter and its official website. Below there is more explanation and information about SOME practices and social media handles. Table 10 shows all details about the SOME practices of case organisation about its contents, posts, student

groups, advertisements, official webpages info, bilingual posts, and other details and so on.

Table 10. LAB UAS SOME activities

LAB University of Applied Sciences					
Details/Activities	Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn	Twitter	Website
Page	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Content/post	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Student groups	✓	✓	✓		
Likes/comments	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Bilingual post		✓	✓	✓	✓
Advertisement	✓	✓			
User experience	✓	✓	✓		✓
Contact information					✓
Course information					✓
Feedback					
Job vacancy					✓
Latest event update	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Blogs/experiences	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Live chat					✓

As shown in Table 10, LAB UAS reports across various platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

Facebook: The case organisation UAS maintains an active presence on the Facebook account named “LAB University of Applied Science”, which has 6,200 followers and 5,400 likes as of March 30, 2024. This page also regularly shares posts covering various topics such as event information, trends, circular economy, student life, graduation events, student union activities, projects, personal testimonials/blogs, events, and conferences. As seen in Figure 13, for example, highlights the significant decision to study abroad, where the student shares his perspective on the facts that make studying in Finland a truly unique experience. While each post attracts a good number of likes, there is room for improvement in fostering audience engagement through increased

comments. Notably, the posts are bilingual, primarily in English with some in Finnish, catering to a wider audience base.

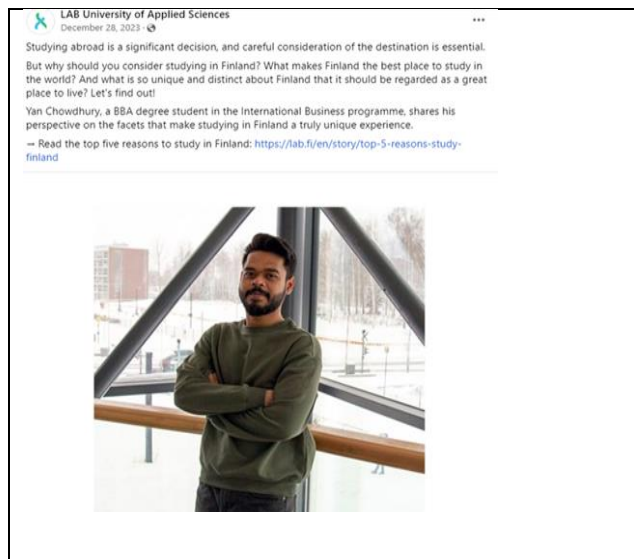


Figure 15. Example of SOME material of LAB UAS on Facebook channel sharing the experience of studying in Finland (LAB University of Applied Sciences. 2023. Studying abroad is a significant decision, and careful consideration of the destination is essential. 28th Dec 2022 Facebook.)

Instagram: The case company UAS maintains an active presence on Instagram through the account “LAB-ammattikorkeakoulu.” It is dedicated to the entire university in common, which has 6152 followers with 364 posts; this page shares similar content as Facebook and additionally uploads stories regarding student life, experiences, exchange students and other details. As shown in Figure 14, for example, welcoming new students by the Student Union KOE. Student Union KOE is here to help new students if they have any questions or need assistance. Notably, the posts are bilingual, primarily in English with some in Finnish, catering to a wider audience base.

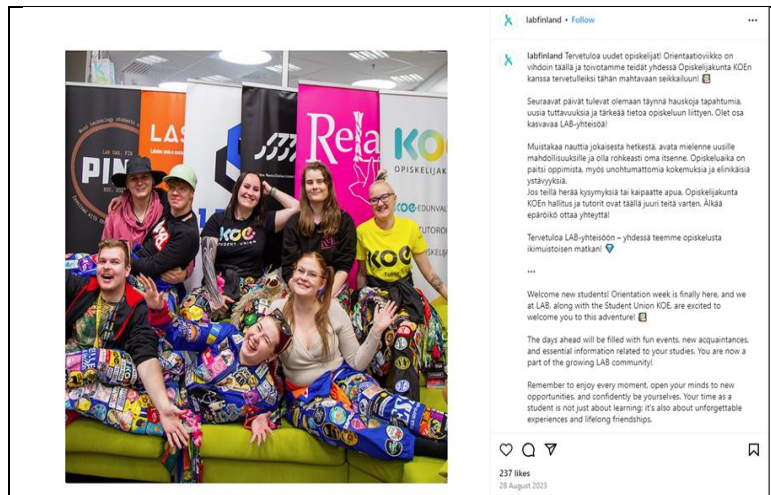


Figure 16. Example of SOME material of LAB UAS on Instagram channel: Welcome new students by student Union KOE, orientation week at LAB, on 28th Aug 2023 (labfinland. 2023. Tervetuloa uudet opiskelijat! Orientaatioviikko on vihdoon täällä ja toivotamme teidät yhdessä Opiskelijakunta KOEn kanssa tervetulleiksi tähän mahtavaan seikkailuun!. Instagram.).

LinkedIn: The case organisation started their page on this platform in 2020. There are 11,000 followers with 8,000 alumni. The content is quite similar to the Facebook page and Instagram page, it is quite active for the post.

Twitter: The case organisation UAS maintains an active presence on Twitter (X) through the account “LABfinland.” It is dedicated to the entire university in common, which has 1,332 Followers with many posts related to the university, student projects, highlighting its official website, student ambassadors, campuses, contact forum events and much more, Notably, the posts are primarily in Finnish, and some in English, catering to a wider audience base.

Table 11. Summary of LAB UAS's SOME activities (over 3 months, 1st January -1st April 2024).

Over 3 months	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	LinkedIn
1. Student life - Companies in Lappeenranta offer up to 35 internships to LAB's automation engineering students.21 st March 2024 on Facebook	9	4	10	12
2. Campus/modern (Example: Kivikoski started as the new development manager at LAB's Design Institute on 26 th March on LinkedIn	3	0	5	6
3. Events organisation (Example: A Graduation program 56 students graduated from LAB in February 2024 5 th March 2024 post on Facebook.	6	6	5	21
4. Admission (Example: The 2 nd joint application search of the spring 28 th March on Facebook	8	4	6	9
5. Info about specific program/course (Example: Digital expertise for business growth on 15 th Feb 2024 on LinkedIn	6	0	3	7

Table 11 explains the analysis of all SOME activities which were posted on different social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn within the time frame of three months, starting from January to March 2024. It shows that there are more than 21 posts on LinkedIn about the events and many programs which are held by the UAS and other organisations. As compared to other UASs, LAB UAS is more active on Instagram and LinkedIn, where it highlights more about the events and admission posts even though there are more posts about students' lives, students' journeys, and exchange students and blogs on Instagram and LinkedIn.

3.4.3 JAMK Jyväskylä UAS (516 international students in 2022)

As shown in Table 12, JAMK UAS reports across various platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter and its official website. Below there is more explanation and information about SOME practices and social media handles. Table 12 shows all the details about the SOME practices of the case organisation, such as its content, posts, student groups, advertisement, official web page info, bilingual posts, and other details.

Table 12. JAMK UAS SOME activities

JAMK University of Applied Sciences					
Details/Activities	Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn	Twitter	Website
Page	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Content/post	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Student groups	✓	✓	✓		
Likes/comments	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Bilingual post		✓	✓	✓	✓
Advertisement		✓			
User experience	✓	✓	✓		✓
Contact information					✓
Course information					✓
Feedback					
Job vacancy					✓
Latest event update	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Blogs/experiences	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Live chat					✓

Facebook: The case organisation UAS maintains an active presence on the Facebook account named “Jamk University of Applied Sciences, International Services”, which has 885 followers and 852 likes as of March 30, 2024. This page has not been very regularly shared post compared to other UAS. However, it also covers various topics such as event information, student life, graduation events, student union activities, projects and events.

As seen in Figure 17, for example, it highlights who will be a tutor for the student union of JAMK UAS. While each post attracted a small number of likes, there was no post after September 2022. There is much room for improvement in fostering audience engagement through increased regular posts and following the trends. Notably, the posts are bilingual, primarily in English with some in Finnish, catering to a wider audience base.



Figure 17. Example of SOME material of JAMK UAS on the Facebook channel about who is becoming the next tutor (Student Union of JAMK University of Applied Sciences. 2022. Tutorhaku on auki NYT!. Facebook.).

Instagram: The case company UAS maintains an active presence on Instagram through the account “Jyväskylän ammattikorkeakoulu.” It is dedicated to the entire university in common, which has 6,475 followers with 1,702 posts. This Instagram page is more active than a Facebook page; it additionally uploads stories regarding student life, experiences, exchange students and other details.

As shown in Figure 17, for example, Jamk Talent Boost and Central Finland Chamber of Commerce @keskisuomenkauppakamari are sharing recent mutual achievements with the public: internships in 6 local companies for Jamk international students. Notably, the posts are bilingual, primarily in English with some in Finnish, catering to a wider audience base.



Figure 18. Example of SOME material of JAMK UAS where JAMK students get internships in 6 local companies on Instagram channel on 19th March 2024 (jamk. fi. 2024. Jamk Talent Boost and Keski-Suomen Kauppakamari . Instagram.)

LinkedIn: The case organisation started their page on this platform. There are 27,000 followers with 20,000 alumni. The content is quite similar to the Instagram page; it is quite active for the posts.

Twitter: The case organisation UAS maintains an active presence on Twitter (X) through the account “Jamk University of Applied Sciences/ Jyväskylän ammattikorkeakoulu” It is dedicated to the entire university in common, which has 5,034 Followers and 4,758 posts in twitter account. All the posts are related to the university, student projects, highlighting its official website, student ambassadors, campuses, contact forum events and much more; notably, the posts are primarily in Finnish and some in English, catering to a wider audience base.

Table 13. Summary of JAMK Jyvaskyla UAS's SOME activities (over 3 months, 1st January - 1st April 2024).

Over 3 months	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	LinkedIn
1. Student life (Example: -Jamki representative team vibes from RESTO competition 26 th March 2024 on Instagram -Recruitment for Jamk social media ambassadors is open on 7 th March 2024 on Instagram	0	3	23	22
2. Campus/Modern -About the campus building and joint application 28 th Feb 2024 on Instagram	0	2	2	4
3. Events organisation Events to celebrate the successful academic year 28 th March 2024 on Instagram Webinar, graduation	0	15	9	22
4. Admission (post related to joint admission) 24 th March 2024 on Instagram	0	10	19	13
5. Info about specific program/course ("Agrologist is like a Swiss link knife" 5 th March 2024 Instagram	0	3	4	6

Table 13 summarises the analysis of all SOME activities which were posted on different social media such as Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn within the time frame of three months, starting from January to March 2024. It shows that there are more than 23 posts on Instagram and LinkedIn about the events and many programs which the UAS and other organisations hold. On Facebook, JAMK UAS has its account, but it has not been active many times; the last post was posted in 2022. Compared to other UAS, JAMK is more active on Instagram and LinkedIn, where it highlights more about the events and admission posts even though there are more posts about students' lives, students' journeys, and exchange students and blogs on Instagram and LinkedIn.

3.4.4 Laurea UAS (273 international students in 2022)

As shown in Table 14, Laurea UAS reports across various platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter and its official website. Below there is more explanation and information about SOME practices and social media handles. Table 14 shows all the details about the SOME practices of the case organisation, its content, posts, student groups, advertisement, official web page info, bilingual posts, and other details.

Table 14. Laurea UAS SOME activities

Laurea University of Applied Sciences					
Details/Activities	Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn	Twitter	Website
Page	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Content/post	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Student groups	✓	✓	✓		
Likes/comments	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Bilingual post			✓	✓	✓
Advertisement	✓	✓			
User experience	✓	✓	✓		✓
Contact information					✓
Course information					✓
Feedback					✓
Job vacancy					✓
Latest event update	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Blogs/experiences	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Live chat					✓

Facebook: The case organisation UAS maintains an active presence on the Facebook account named “Laurea University of Applied Sciences”, which has 1,4000 followers and 1,4000 likes as of March 31, 2024. This page also regularly shares posts covering various topics such as event information, trends, circular economy, student life, graduation events, student union activities, projects, personal testimonials/blogs, events and conferences.

As seen in Figure 17, for example, highlights that Laurea students and other members are hosting an annual international week, and the theme was designing sustainable futures. While each post attracts many likes, there is room for improvement in fostering audience engagement through increased comments. Notably, the posts are bilingual, primarily in English with some in Finnish, catering to a wider audience base.

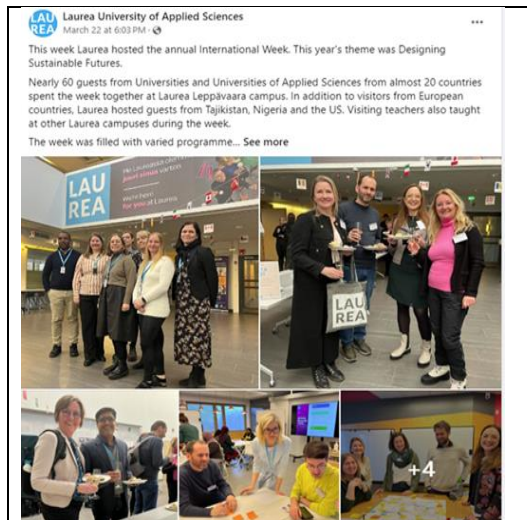


Figure 19. An example of SOME material of Laureia UAS where Laureia and students hosted the annual international week, and the theme was designing sustainable futures (Laureia University of Applied Sciences. 2024. This week Laureia hosted the annual International Week. Facebook.).

Instagram: The case company UAS maintains an active presence on Instagram through the account “Laureia University of Applied Sciences.” It is dedicated to the entire university in common, which has 6,942 followers with 2,160 posts; this page shares similar content as Facebook and additionally uploads stories regarding student life, experiences, exchange students and other details. As shown in Figure 18, for example, here it is a UraFest recruitment event where students have a great opportunity to meet companies in their field and get to talk with them and get more information and tips for the future. Notably, the posts are bilingual, primarily in English with some in Finnish, catering to a wider audience base.

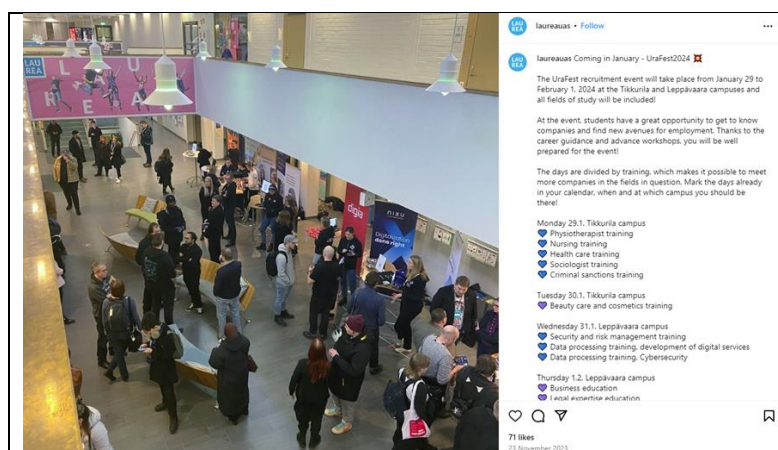


Figure 20. Example of SOME material of Laureia UAS where Laureia hosted the Ura Fest recruitment events for their students to meet different companies on 29th Jan 2024 (laureates. 2023. Tulossa tammikuussa – UraFest2024. Instagram.).

LinkedIn: The case organisation started their page on this platform in 1991. There are 32,000 followers with 22,000 alumni. The content is quite similar to the Facebook page and Instagram page; it is quite active for the post and was founded early.

Twitter: The case organisation UAS maintains an active presence on Twitter (X) through the account “Laurea-amk.” It is dedicated to the entire university in common, with 3,920 Followers with 4805 posts. Most posts are related to the university, student projects, highlighting its official website, student ambassadors, campuses, contact forum events and many more; notably, the posts are primarily in Finnish and some in English, catering to a wider audience base.

Table 15. Summary of Laurea UAS’s SOME activities (over 3 months, 1st January -1st April 2024)

Over 3 months	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	LinkedIn
1. Student life (example): International Textile Redesign Jam, held between Feb and March, students from four different countries were able to solve the real circular economy challenges faced by textile companies.30 th March 2024 on Facebook	23	13	27	9
2. Campus/Modern Vocational career studies launched in collaboration with Prison Health Care on 11 th March 2024 on Facebook	1	1	1	1
3. Events organisation -Laurea hosted the annual International Week and the theme was Designing Sustainable Futures on 22 nd March 2024 on Facebook	19	12	12	10
4. Admission (post related to joint application and admission)28 th March 2024 on Facebook	13	8	18	8
5. Info about specific program/course About the nursing degrees 14 th March 2024 on Facebook	2	1	2	0

Table 15 summarises the SOME activities which were posted on different social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn within the time frame of three months, starting from January to March 2024. It shows that there are more than 23 posts on Facebook and 27 posts on Instagram, more posts of students’ life, student’s journeys, and exchange students and blogs. There are simultaneous posts on admission and events, and the UAS and other organisations hold many programs. As compared to other

UAS, Laurea is more active on Instagram and Facebook, where it highlights more about the student's life, events and admission posts.

3.4.5 Uniform Communication Creates Trust in Social Media

In response to the epidemic growth of social media information and the fuzzy line between truth and false, Metropolia has updated its social media guidelines and brand management approach. The problem arises from unofficial accounts using Metropolia's brand name, promoting the organisation to centralise control for transparency and flexibility. This step aims to preserve credibility and trust, especially in crisis conditions. The case organisation seeks to ensure uniform brand communication across all social media channels to reinforce trust and recognition among stakeholders and other partners. Considering these challenges, ensuring flexibility in the use of the Metropolia logo and implementing guidelines for safe social media practices are compulsory. Communication services will be collaborating with units/degrees to establish operating principles which uphold the Metropolia brand and reputation in this dynamic landscape of social media. (idp. metropolia.fi)

On March 19, 2024, Metropolia's management team decided based on which Metropolia internal actors (units, degrees) can no longer freely set up social media accounts that link to Metropolia. Metropolia plans to move to a progression model where brand management is also tightly regulated on social media (SOME) channels and activities. Since Programmes cannot have their own SOME channels because of the centralized strategy of handling social media which was announced in OMA since April 2024 (from Communication experts/managers at the department and programmes level at Metropolia).

Table 16. List of practices/topics that are identified in benchmark with other Finnish UAS's SOME activities.

Other Finnish UAS's SOME activities				
Haaga-Helia	Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn	Twitter
Page	✓	✓	✓	✓
Content/post	✓	✓	✓	✓
Student groups	✓	✓	✓	✓
Likes/comments	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bilingual post	✓	✓	✓	✓
Advertisement	✓	✓		
User experience	✓	✓	✓	✓
Latest event update	✓	✓	✓	✓
Blogs/experiences	✓	✓		
Laurea	Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn	Twitter
Page	✓	✓	✓	✓
Content/post	✓	✓	✓	✓
Student groups	✓	✓	✓	
Likes/comments	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bilingual post		✓	✓	✓
Advertisement	✓	✓		
User experience	✓	✓	✓	
Latest event update	✓	✓	✓	✓
Blogs/experiences	✓	✓	✓	✓
LAB	Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn	Twitter
Page	✓	✓	✓	✓
Content/post	✓	✓	✓	✓
Student groups	✓	✓	✓	
Likes/comments	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bilingual post		✓	✓	✓
Advertisement	✓	✓		
User experience	✓	✓	✓	
Latest event update	✓	✓	✓	✓
Blogs/experiences	✓	✓	✓	✓
JAMK	Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn	Twitter
Page	✓	✓	✓	✓
Content/post	✓	✓	✓	✓
Student groups	✓	✓	✓	
Likes/comments	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bilingual post		✓	✓	✓
Advertisement		✓		
User experience	✓	✓	✓	
Latest event update	✓	✓	✓	✓
Blogs/experiences	✓	✓	✓	✓

To summarise the above information about the SOME practices used by other Finnish UASs. Table 16 explains the list of practices or topics which are applied by other Finnish UASs based on the highest category of international students, such as Haaga-Helia UAS, LAB UAS, JAMK UAS and Laurea UAS. Among all the UAS, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn are more popular and more active. Among these UAS Haaga-Helia and Laurea are more active and up-to-date and more frequently post on social media. It has more engagements and updates the latest events daily. However, JAMK is not updated on Facebook but is more active on Instagram and LinkedIn.

3.5 Key Findings of the Current State Analysis

Based on the analysis of current state analysis of social media (SOME) channels marketing and communication activities of Metropolia UAS, MBS and BI Programme, it was found that Metropolia and MBS share the most common material types (topics) and contents, except for the BI Programme. BI Programme contains blogs and success stories of alumni students and experts.

The study also identified disparity and areas for development. Metropolia UAS and MBS maintain social media channel accounts such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter, where they regularly post a variety of content, including students' lives, success stories, study-related updates, festival greetings, events and webinars, reminders, admission post and many more. This approach involves creative posting without profit-making objectives. Despite this, there is a need to adopt a blended social media marketing and communication strategy to enhance their global presence.

Metropolia UAS conduct various courses and programmes across its bachelor's and master's degree programs and maintains an active presence on several social media (SOME) channels. Assessing its current SOME activities acknowledges both strengths and weaknesses. Notably, the website of Metropolia UAS stands out as a major strength; it offers comprehensive information on contact details, chat box, courses, feedback and evaluation and inspires alumni success stories, fostering accessibility and motivation. Besides, the case organisation (Metropolia UAS) should strengthen its wide range of engagement across various SOME channels. It continually delivers quality content for awareness, communication and marketing purposes.

For the weakness, the case organisation has a good number of followers, but they have fewer comments compared to competitors. Metropolia UAS's utilisation of its alumni network and student ambassadors further boosts its international appeal. Yet, there is a noticeable absence in promoting the specific courses or programmes, which are interesting to the applicants.

Metropolia UAS and MBS have actively engaged in social media channels with the targeting of maintaining good connections with the current and future students and alumni without expecting any profitable goals. They consistently post popular content such as student life, events, joint applications, and admission on popular platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. It has followed the SOSTAC model for marketing and communication approach.

Master BI Programme furnishes national and international students with a unique blend of engineering and management disciplines, fostering a healthy network and knowledge exchange opportunities. BI Master students who participated in the interview emphasised Metropolia's social media (SOME) materials fall short of meeting students' needs effectively. They have noted a significant absence of detailed course information and relevant content, especially in the Mater BI Programme. However, the Master BI Programme has a dedicated blog named "Masterminds – Maisteriainesta".

Particularly, Master's BI students are concerned about thesis research opportunities because international students are not familiar with real companies or business networking in Finland. So, if there is any information about the thesis research in SOME channels or the success story of alumni students, it will help and motivate the new students. However, the official webpages stand out as a key strength, which provides comprehensive information on the course, curriculum, career prospects and specific contact details for inquiries, and it especially motivates students about the success stories of alumni students.

Although SOME channels offer informative information, there is a noticeable lack of emphasis on the BI Programme, leaving students feeling neglected and unaware of their academic choices. Despite flourishing as a good potential follower, Metropolia's social media channels struggle with poor visibility, low engagement rates, and regularity of posts, which indicated a disconnect between the students and the content provided, affecting less interest and preference. From April 2024 there was centralized strategy in

social media platforms which was announcement in OMA by the management team of Metropolia Communication team. Since different Programmes and courses cannot have their own SOME channels it is the strength as well as weakness (from Communication experts/managers at the department and programmes level at Metropolia).

To address these challenges, it is crucial for Metropolia to re-organise its social media strategy to better cater to student's specific needs and expectations. This involves placing a greater emphasis on providing comprehensive details about the master's BI Programme and highlighting thesis research opportunities within real companies. By tailoring content to meet students' interests and requirements more effectively, case organisations can enhance engagement levels and improve visibility on social media platforms, ultimately fostering a strong connection with the student community and collecting feedback for improvement.

3.5.1 Current SOME Materials and Channels of Metropolia UAS (compared to competitors)

This section explains the current SOME activities posted on social media and their comparison between Metropolia UAS, MBS, and other Finnish UASs.

Table 17. Comparison table of SOME activities between Metropolia UAS, MBS and other Finnish UASs (Over 3 months from 1st Jan to 1st April 2024)

	Over the period of 3 months (1 st January - 1 st April 2024)	Metropolia UAS	MBS	Haaga-Helia	LAB	JAMK	Laurea
Students life	Facebook	23	12	28	9	N/A	23
	Instagram	30	18	27	10	23	27
	LinkedIn	7	N/A	15	12	22	9
	Twitter	4	5	16	4	3	13
Campus	Facebook	4	N/A	5	3	N/A	1
	Instagram	1	N/A	2	5	2	1
	LinkedIn	2	N/A	4	6	4	1
	Twitter	4	N/A	6	N/A	2	1
Events organisation	Facebook	9	8	16	6	N/A	19
	Instagram	1	5	23	5	9	12
	LinkedIn	5	N/A	9	21	22	10
	Twitter	12	3	10	6	15	12
Admissions post	Facebook	2	1	13	8	N/A	13
	Instagram	9	N/A	10	6	19	18
	LinkedIn	3	N/A	14	9	13	8
	Twitter	N/A	5	15	4	10	8
Info about programmes	Facebook	2	N/A	3	6	N/A	2
	Instagram	1	N/A	3	3	4	2
	LinkedIn	N/A	N/A	1	7	6	N/A
	Twitter	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	3	N/A

To summarise the above information from the comparison between Metropolia UAS, MBS, and other Finnish UAS's social media (SOME) activities over a three-month period of time (1st Jan to 1st April 2024). Table 17 explains all the activities posted on different social media like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter over the three months period. It shows that Metropolia UAS has more than 20 posts on Facebook, 30 posts on Instagram, and a few posts on LinkedIn and Twitter about the students' lives and

students' journeys and some more posts about the events and many program organisations by the campus.

Additionally, Haaga-Helia and Laurea are also more active on Facebook, Instagram and even LinkedIn. They also post student life, events and admission posts regularly on social media. On Facebook, JAMK UAS has its account, but it has not been active many times; the last post was posted in 2022. Compared to other UAS, JAMK is more active on Instagram and LinkedIn, where it highlights more about the events and admission posts even though there are more posts about students' lives, students' journeys, and exchange students and blogs on Instagram and LinkedIn.

3.5.2 How Does it Look Like Against the Key Competitors in Addressing These Needs?

When compared to its key competitors, the case organisation appears less proactive in meeting students' needs. Other UASs demonstrate greater activity on social media, frequently posting relevant events, webinars, and seminars. Other UAS also have a large follower base compared to case organisations and consistently share content about student life, success stories of alumni students, upcoming events, available courses, internship programs and training programs. These competitors also exhibit higher engagement levels, with more comments and interactions on their posts. Additionally, they prioritise promoting new joint applications, upcoming events, and programs which are crucial for expected students. They host numerous events for newcomers, fostering networking opportunities and strengthening relationships with both students and external organisations.

In comparison, Metropolia UAS appears less dynamic in addressing students' needs on social media. The case organisation's engagement and content dissemination are comparatively lower, with less focus on essential aspects such as more details about the available course and more information about upcoming events. While there is room for improvement in terms of frequency and variety, there are potential opportunities for networking and relationship-building within the student community and with external stakeholders. There is a lack of live sessions, surveys for improvement, and a budget for paid social media campaigns, indicating a need for case organisation.

To summarise the above information, however, the BI program faces weaknesses, notably a lack of official social media accounts on any platform of social media, but it

holds a dedicated blog named “Masterminds – Maisteriainesta”. It highlights diverse content and many stories about the student’s journey and their life. It is less popular among the other SOME channels and has fewer viewers and comments as compared to the other social media handles. As this is specifically for business school and BI alumni the content and blogs are more informative about business.

This section ends with the current state analysis, and the next step is the conceptual framework of the thesis and available existing knowledge.

4 Existing Knowledge and Best Practices on Social Media Marketing and SOME Marketing Communication

This section discusses available knowledge and best practices regarding social media (SOME) planning and its components. This section mainly aims to gather the best practices and available insights to inform the preparation of the study proposal.

4.1 Social Media: Key Concepts and Approaches

This section gives an overview of Social media key concepts and their applicable approaches. This study focuses on the basis of available existing knowledge and best practices on social media marketing (SMM) and SOME marketing communication.

4.1.1 What is Social Media

Social media is a category of new media specially comprised of internet and mobile tools utilised for sharing and deliberating about information through interactive communication. These web-based activities usually merge technology, telecommunications, and social interaction that allow producers and consumers alike to create and exchange information in a more collective way than previously possible. (Telg and Irani 2012.)

According to Dollarhide (2024), Social media refers to a wide range of digital technologies that facilitate the sharing of ideas and information among users, which includes text and visuals, within virtual networks and communities. Its principal features include user-generated content and encouraging engagement through actions like likes, shares, comments, and discussions.

According to Newberry (2021), more than 4.6 billion people use social media worldwide, representing more than 75% of the existing global population. Thus, social media has become an essential aspect of daily life for many individuals. More specifically, according to Dollarhide (2024), in early 2023, 94.8% of users accessed chat and messaging apps and websites, followed closely by social media platforms. Major social media platforms include Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, and WeChat. Figure 21 shows the number of social media users globally from the year 2017 to 2027 in billions.

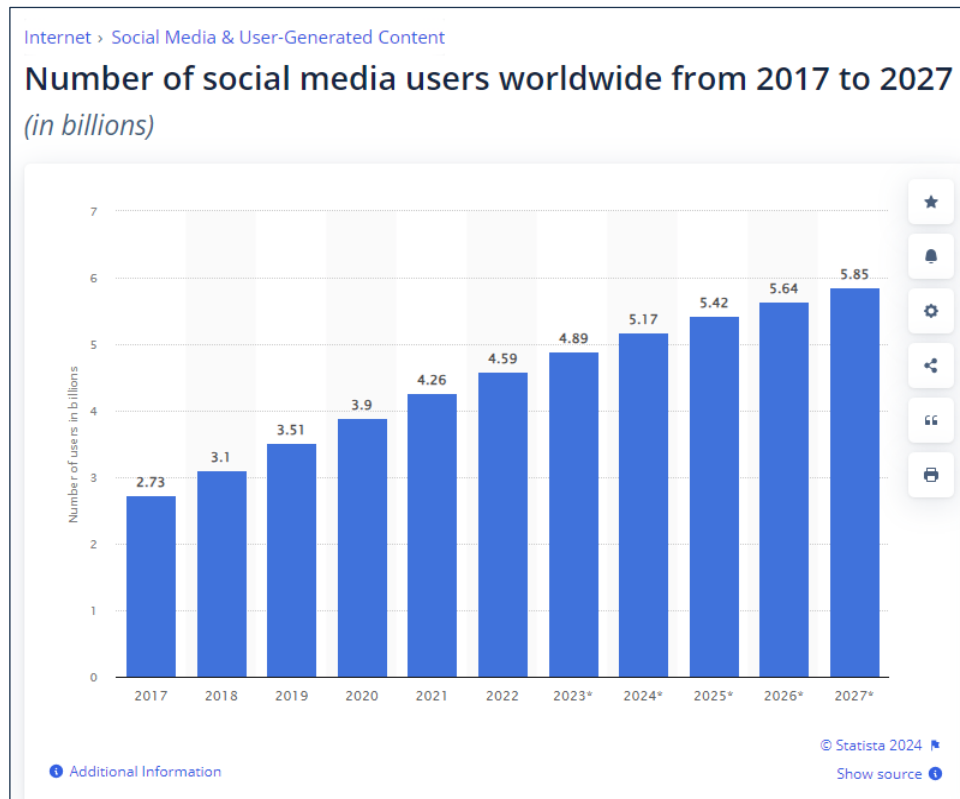


Figure 21. Number of social media users worldwide from 2017 to 2027 (Dixon 2023).

As shown in Figure 21, the number of social media users has increased more than twice globally from the year 2017 to 2027. It shows that in the year 2020, the number of social media users was 3.9 billion, and there was a drastic change over the years 2021, 2022, and 2023 to 4.26 billion, 4.59 billion, and 4.89 billion, respectively. In Figure 21, the increasing ratio of social media users was anticipated to reach 5.85 billion in the coming year 2027. Thus, nowadays, social media is becoming an increasingly important part of many companies' communications.

Social media utilise digital platforms and technologies that facilitate the exchange of information, content sharing, and fostering of community between online users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). These online platforms, which are known as social networking sites, mini-blogging platforms, photo and video sharing platforms, online forums, and messaging apps, all of which play a critical role in promoting communication between the organisation and their audiences. This ideal space for digital user interaction serves as a key medium for connecting digital users. (Van Wissen, 2017.)

4.1.2 What is Social Media Marketing

According to Baluch (2024), *Social media marketing* (SMM) is a way of promoting the brand and products to potential customers through digital marketing through the use of social media platforms. To run an effective social media marketing campaign, there is always a need for a good strategy and proper planning. Content posts on social media will likely be a blend of images, videos, text and stories, which help to portray the brand in a positive way and engage with relevant audiences. (Baluch 2024.)

Social media marketing (SMM) includes activities on social media platforms and engagement to build connections with target consumers to establish the brand, create awareness, sales increment, and drive website traffic. These include different elements like constructive quality content, active engagement with audience and followers, evaluating outcomes, and executing marketing campaigns. SOME marketing initially starts with content publishing, with various business ideas to distribute their content through social media platforms to generate website traffic and sales. However, SOME marketing has evolved beyond its function for broadcasting content. (Mohsin 2022.)

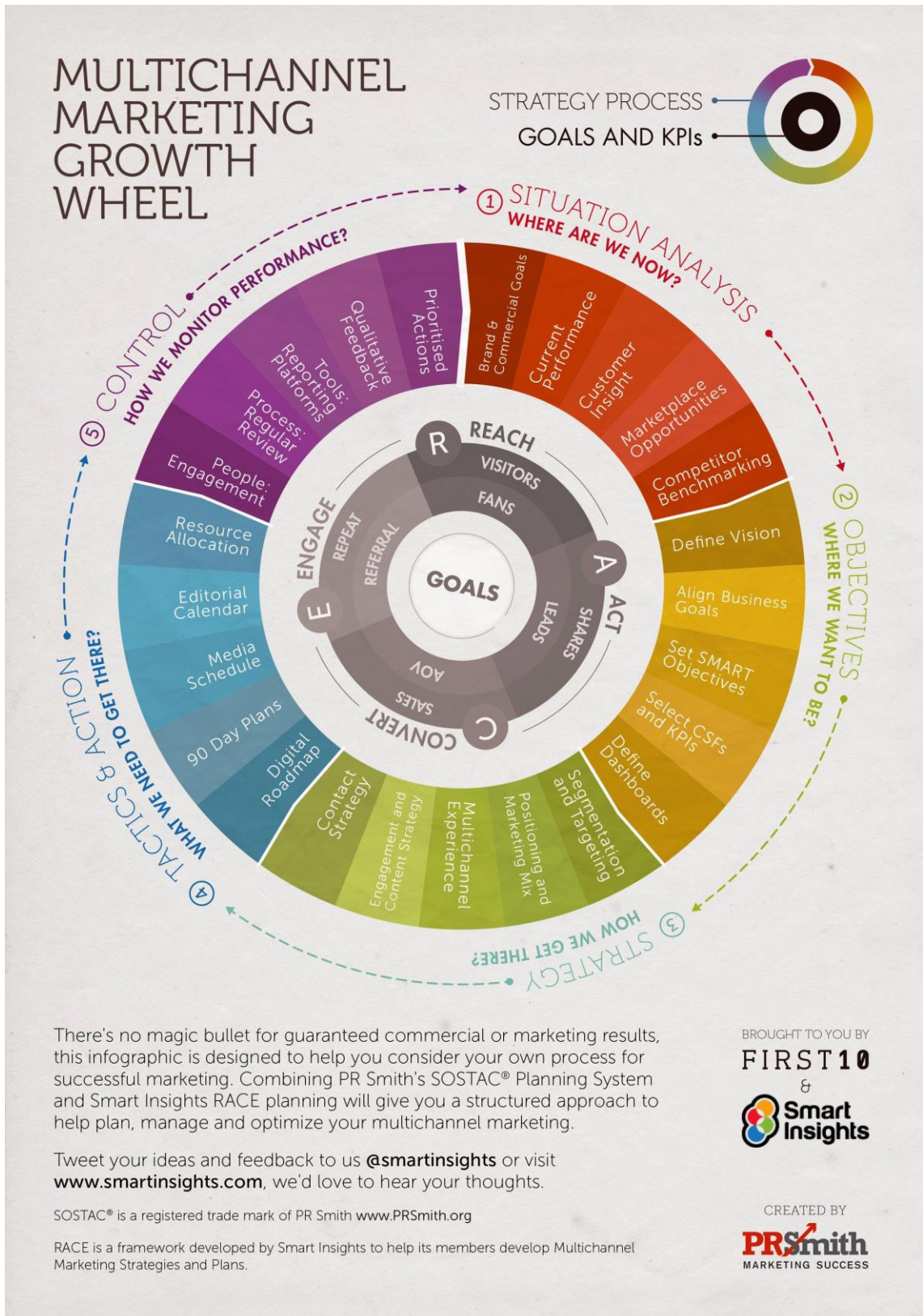
Additionally, to create unique and regular posts, participants interact with comments, shares and likes to evaluate the brand reputation and fostering to build the community. Social media marketing also consists of paid social advertisements, which help to enable the brand to pop up in front of the target audience at the appropriate time. Thus, Social media marketing (SMM) serves as an important tool for organisations to gain better insights to understand their consumers and strengthen relationships with stakeholders (Sabate et al., 2014), and they use such knowledge, to effectively engage and educate their customers (Felix et al, 2017; Soares et al 2021.)

Importantly, Social media marketing advances in information technology created significant transformations in the social and economic landscape, prompting marketing practices towards digital media usage (Bolton et al. 2013; Felix et al., 2017). Such advancements sparked a relevant stream of research promoting an organisation's endeavour to enhance communication and more interactions with customers via social media platforms, aiming to expand market reach (Ryden et al 2015), improve stakeholder relationships (Felix et al 2017), advance brand equity (Bolton et al 2013), build networks, reputation improvement, refine relationship, and differentiate from competitors, etc.

In conclusion, there is a notable concern associated with evaluating hypothetical or individual entities, particularly when there is consequential uncertainty regarding the value of specific consumers. In addition, social intermediaries aim to build trust with digital media in the evaluation process with unique contexts through networks or ranking. (Karpik, 2010). Thus, social media engagement also performs a pivotal role in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), which is discussed next.

4.1.3 Social Media Frameworks

SOSTAC is the conceptual framework or the planning model, originally developed in the 1990s by PR Smith to provide guidance with marketing planning and co-author of Emarketing Excellence. This marketing model helps to build structure plans for various planning activities. (PR Smith Feb 2020). The below Figure 22 will illustrate more about the SOSTAC model.



There's no magic bullet for guaranteed commercial or marketing results, this infographic is designed to help you consider your own process for successful marketing. Combining PR Smith's SOSTAC® Planning System and Smart Insights RACE planning will give you a structured approach to help plan, manage and optimize your multichannel marketing.

Tweet your ideas and feedback to us @smartinsights or visit www.smartinsights.com, we'd love to hear your thoughts.

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Figure 22. SOSTAC Conceptual framework of multichannel marketing growth wheel. (Swan, 2022)

As seen in Figure 22, SOSTAC stands for the main 6 elements:

S – Situation Analysis (Where are we now?)

O – Objectives (Where do we want to get to?)

S – Strategy (How do we get there?)

T – Tactics (How exactly do we get there, details of strategy?)

A – Actions (What is our plan, ensuring the strategy & tactics?)

C – Control (Did we get there, measurement and metrics?)

The six key elements of the SOSTAC model are explained in more detail below.

S – Situation Analysis (Where are we now?)

This situation analysis is the first stage of implementation of SOSTAC models, which involves the assessment of current state analysis (CSA), where the company calculate its present condition: which strategies were adopted, what the outcome was, and what are the internal and external factors that affect the business. This approach is based on understanding the customer preferences and mainly their engagement with the brand and usage of primary platforms, conducting the SWOT analysis which includes strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats associated with the product, organisation or management. Identifying and analysing competitors by price, strategy, materials, service, and reputation and highlighting the key comprehensive list of digital platforms used by the organisation and evaluating the insights and key performance. (Swan, 2022.)

Additionally, it should determine the potential digital audience to provide a fair understanding and clear picture of the existing and targeted audience.

O – Objectives (Where do we want to get to?)

The second stage of the SOSTAC model is objectives, which can be defined as the main strategy of the company. After situation analysis, which provides an overview and clear understanding of the CSA of an organisation. It especially explains where we want to be. PR Smith has referred to 5S goals for the company to create the company's objectives.

5S goals stand for Sell, Serve, Speak, Save and Sizzle. (Swan 2022). Furthermore, it is very important to shift each objective into SMART objectives, which stands for:

1. Specific - Focusing more on a specific topic or challenge.
2. Measurable – Plan to assess the performance.
3. Actionable – Achieved its objectives by improved performance.
4. Relevant – Addressed within the authority of the digital marketing team.
5. Time-related – Set a specific period.

There are several SMART objectives which can be developed in terms of lead generation, acquisition, or engagement. In addition to digital marketing, objectives can be defined, such as increasing sales, brand awareness, creating positive relationships with customers, cost saving and learning from the previous inaccuracy.

S – Strategy (How do we get there?)

Strategy stands for how you plan to get there with regard to fulfilling the objectives. The strategy entails which portions of the market to reach the target destinations. This framework should already identify the specific areas of the organisation, focusing on its key components of digital marketing such as objectives, target markets, positioning, engagement, and data. The organisation always chooses the right strategy to drive on the path of success, while a wrong strategy can lead to downfall. Therefore, it is always essential to choose the appropriate strategy. Digital marketing strategy can be supported on the basis of market conditions and organisational performance. (Swan 2021.)

T – Tactics (How exactly do we get there, details of strategy?)

This section includes the details of the strategy, tactics, and the specific tools of the digital marketing mix that help to obtain the objectives of the company. Tactic tools, which are advertising, salesforce activities, public relations, exhibitions and events, direct mail, and sponsorship. To achieve the objectives, the 7P of the marketing mix can be used, and it helps to focus on the key attributes of the company. 7P of the marketing mix are product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and partnership. (Swan 2021.)

Tactics planning includes developing the content plan, constructing a content plan, counting which topics and platforms can be used for the content calendar, event chart,

or milestone chart showing the tactics have been implemented and continually applying the marketing formula and tactics. (Chaffey 2022).

A – Actions (What is our plan, ensuring the strategy & tactics?)

Action is stage 5 of the digital marketing framework, which mainly focuses on our plan and ensuring the strategy & tactics. The action section covers all the details of the process within tactics that help to ensure their action is executed accurately. Internal marketing plays a pivotal role in well execution, which includes communication, training, and motivation. (Swan, 2021)

Action is needed for implementing the process, followed by tactics such as checklists and guidelines, creating a system and process, defining responsibilities and building structure, providing training and employing internal marketing activities.

C – Control (Did we get there, measurement and metrics?)

The final stage of the SOSTAC plan is to make an action plan or roadmap on how to monitor and control the system to measure the performance which is set correctly and meets the target objectives. The control system should regularly measure the Key performance indicators (KPI) and ensure and track to meet the objectives. Control measures include website performance, web traffic control, content control, cost per lead, conversion rate, share of voice, etc. It is important to monitor regularly for the updated and proper implementation to achieve the target. Here, the control process should be measured by whom, how often, and at what cost, and follow the report procedures which automatically help to control the operations effectively. (Swan 2021.)

Conceptual Framework of Content Strategy (Chauhan & Pillai 2013)

This approach is a content strategy that includes content type, content agility, posting day, and content context. For the engagement of the customers, the number of likes and comments is calculated. All the details for each of them are collected from each and every post and analysed. Likes suggest that people are engaging in some way reacting to the posted content; shares enable followers (or third parties in general) to become volunteer spokespersons since they promote the organisation's content. (Demirer 2022.)

Figure 23 will explain more details about this conceptual model of content strategy.

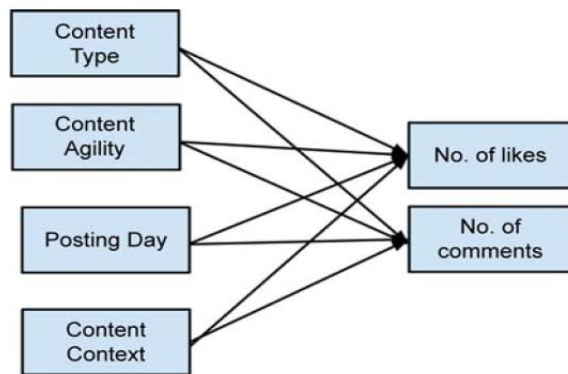


Figure 23. Conceptual model of Content Strategy (Chauhan & Pillai 2013, p. 4).

The leading higher education institutions around the globe are increasingly using social media platforms, to interact and engage with their recent students and alumni students, employees, stakeholders, and collaborators. Harvard Business School has built a strong community with over 20,000 members on Facebook and 15,000 followers on Twitter. (Chauhan & Pillai 2013, p. 2).

This above approach is a study research of a phenomenon of the content strategy to understand the role of the content strategy in higher education institutions. According to Chauhan & Pillai (2013, p. 5), the variables of content strategy are explained more in detail below.

Content type means where the content is posted on social media as a form of text, image, video, website link or a combination of them. According to Chauhan (2013), around 40% of the total posts followed this method of content type. It is important to add an introductory text to each post, which helps readers/users get brief information about the content when they once click on the image and weblink.

Content agility refers to the timing of a whole day during which the post was made and divided the whole day into small slots of around 4 hours each and all the posts were coded accordingly. The majority of the posts were made in half of the day (mid-day to late-night) because the majority of the target audience is students, and they will be free after classes. (Chauhan et al. 2013, p.5.)

Posting day refers to the day on which content was posted. The whole week was categorised into three groups – Monday and Tuesday, which are called early week;

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday are called mid-week; Saturday and Sunday are called weekends. So, a whole week is divided into three groups. Around 48 per cent of the content was posted during the midweek, such as on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. (Chauhan et al. 2013, p.5.)

Content context also explains the importance of the post by reviewing each and every post and then trying to convey its meaning of it. Most of the posts were classified into different categories like news about existing students and alumni students, about the college, business news, education management news and general engagement. (Chauhan et al. 2013, p.5.)

To summarise this above, the content strategy approach includes content type, content agility, posting day, content context, and the engagement of the customers is calculated by the number of likes, shares and comments. So our main thesis topic is also to make an improvement plan for SOME activities for our case organisation. Our main aim is to support or provide relevant information to the new applicants through SOME platforms.

4.2 Social Media Marketing in Higher Education Institutions (HEI)

Social media plays an important role in higher education and helps to increase its popularity in contemporary society. For many, especially younger people, social media is a primary means through which people share information and build connections.

According to Hayes (2023), *Social Media Marketing* (SMM) means digital marketing or e-marketing as well as social media platforms where users build social networks and share information. These tools are also actively used by various businesses to frame companies' brands, boost sales, enhance website traffic, etc. to provide companies with the opportunities to interact with existing customers and to attract new ones. SMM also increasingly uses data analytics tools to empower marketers to calculate their effectiveness and identify more ways to engage. (Hayes 2023.)

Higher education institutions (HEI), as part of the business landscape and public services, are also increasingly using social media marketing to promote their brand presence and to strengthen their competitive advantage. Many public and private higher education institutions are increasingly adopting social networks like Facebook, Twitter,

and LinkedIn in order to attract potential clients. (Salem 2020.) In addition, many institutions' admission offices and marketing departments of HEIs are active on social media platforms to engage with potential students by informing them about their institutions as well as setting up various promotional campaigns (Merrill, 2011).

4.3 How Higher Education Institutions Use Social Media Marketing (platforms, activities, topics, or types of content)

Social media is defined as the various forms of media which allow many people to share information and to communicate using the internet. It is a platform for potential audiences to share videos, ideas, photos, and stories to be in touch with other individuals. Nowadays, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter and Youtube are more popular social media channels, where people get information and get connected to each other. Most individuals can easily access web-based technology with their smartphones, laptops and computers. In today's world, higher education institutions are using social media channels as marketing tools.

According to Constantinides & Zinck Stagno (2012), SMM's main objective is to create content that the target audience uses and shares with their social network to build brand awareness for an organisation. Social media marketing is a advertising tools that play an effective role in creating awareness for a brand and for marketing purposes also. Higher education institutions should focus on their main customer groups, which include the current students, future students and alumni students. (Constantinides & Zinck Stagno, 2012).

Therefore, concluding that higher education institutions (HEIs) should always build branding and marketing to provide awareness to their audience by specifying the success of higher education institutions.

HEIs always create organising and planning activities in social media (SOME) because social media marketing (SMM) will always help to build brand awareness and save time. That is why SMM tools play pivotal roles in creating a systematic flow of programs and activities. HEIs can use the calendar schedule for their upcoming programs and activities, which will really remind the audience and help to avoid redundant activities. It

will help the consumer or target audience to make a pre-planning activity on a weekly or daily basis. It alternately gives a better overview of SOME structure. (Salem 2020.)

Another valuable add factor for SMM is to create quality content. Higher education institutions need to be committed to providing quality and valuable content to ensure that the content is relevant, interesting to the audience and sharable for customers. The content shared should be more educational, more interesting and detailed information about the services and products. Highly quality content always takes more potential time to create such informative posts and always results in more efficiency. SMM can be successful if they can create good quality content, more content to share, and valuable content which helps to build a good and healthy relationship to achieve the target audience.

If higher education institutions create interesting and valuable content and more content to share, then it will be possible for more engagement and sharing among the audience. There should be best services like if the customers ask any questions related to the programme or any relevant topics then always ready to answer the new customer or existing customer without neglecting it. This will be a great opportunity to get new students and promote the alumni students in SOME channels for building a brand in HEIs. (Salem 2020.)

The growing number of higher education institutions in today's world has increased the competition for students (Plewa et al., 2016), especially in Latin America. This growing competition commanded the higher education institutions to look for more strategies to attract the attention of new students and to improve communication with their consumers. Increasing penetration in social media raises the vital role of engagement and brand awareness for potential consumers. As much research suggests, there are many factors that generate engagement in SOME channel posts. As we know, not all brand posts command the same level of engagement, but useful insights always help to enhance engagement in comparison to the corresponding. (Soares et al. 2021.)

Generally, the audience interacts with the post, comments, call to action, profile, share engagement, message or responding and so on. Sharing and more engagement can be upgraded by evaluating current engagement, setting targets and defining benchmarks. More focus on content, providing interesting content to consumers to relate with, which automatically increases the engagement ratio. According to Chen 2020 Sprout social

index, the target audience always looks after their favorite content, such as images 68%, videos 50% and text posts 30% on SOME channels. It will encourage more engagement if ideas like brand inspired are used for social media posts, creating the fear of missing out (FOMO) etc.

Figure 24 shows the best times to post on Facebook and the best times for the highest and lowest engagement for schools and education institutions, and details will be explained below.

Best times to post on Facebook for schools & education

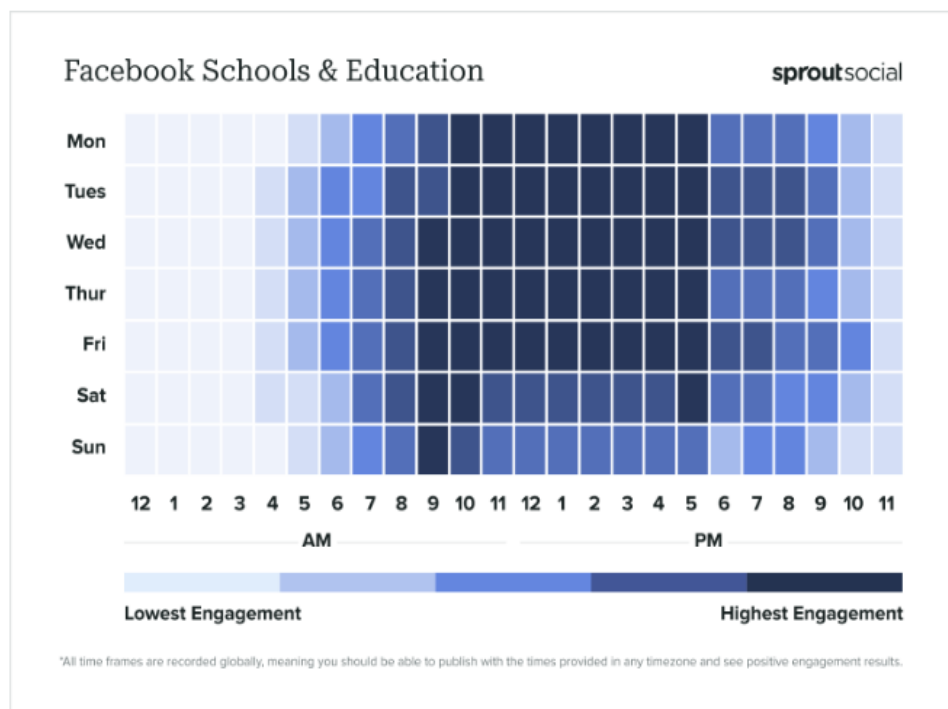


Figure 24. Facebook posts the best time for schools and education (Keutelian, 2023).

As shown in Figure 24, Sprout Social studies reflect the best engagement day and time for uploading posts on Facebook. This above study shows that the best time to post on Facebook for the education sector. It shows the details that every sector has different prospects and impacts on users by uploading the relevant post at a particular time and on a particular day. Here, this above study suggested that education institutions should upload their post from Wednesday to Friday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm for a higher engagement ratio and for positive impact. (Keutelian 2023.)

4.4 Lessons Learn & Best Practices of Using Social Media Marketing: Role of Content & Strategies, Tactics, Activities

According to Maringe & Foskett (2012), the agenda of higher education is internationalisation, which means increasing the number of international students. Higher education worldwide provides demand for sustainability. In the UK, around £20 billion of the total UK economy was contributed by international students, according to the report from Higher Education Policy Institute (Coughlan, 2018a). Nowadays, Australia has overtaken the UK as the 2nd most famous destination for international students after the United States. Afterwards, students are now taken as the customers of higher education products. (Woodall et al. 2014).

Higher education institutions (HEIs) have identified that they should develop some effective strategies to attract international students and lead the market. (Cubillo et al. 2006). HEIs may engage with their students from their own official websites and social media sites (for example, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube) and communicate to build their brands. (Chapleo et al. 2011). According to research on HEIs' social media plays an interactive role in building relationships with recruitment performance. (Yimei Zhu 2019).

According to Sorensen et al. (2023), studying user engagement with social media content is an appealing field for research commanded by quantitative methodology (Trunfio & Rossi, 2021). There are three distinguished steps for user engagement on social media they are 'Consumption'- where users can view the content;, 'Which users react to the content by sharing, liking or commenting; and the last is 'Creation'- where users can publish their own content regarding the brand or company. Most research agrees that they focus on basic quantitative approaches at the level of 'Contribution', for instance, the total number of shares likes, and comments on the post, followed by the number of followers of an account.

4.4.1 Use of Social Media in Higher Education Institutions

In the sphere of social media marketing in higher education institutions, it plays an important role in gaining valuable insights to understand the behaviours of prospective students using social media. Many potential students use social media platforms to

explore different higher education institutions and their offerings. (Shields & Peruta, 2018). Mainly, the motive for using social media by students is to know about study opportunities and obtain insights into students' lives and experiences from current students and alumni students. So, it would be more beneficial and more advantageous for higher education institutions to introduce all this information in an interactive way. (Bonilla et al. 2019, p.5.)

4.4.2 Role of Content, Strategy, and Format of Social Media Platforms

Bonilla et al. (2019) studied the official Instagram account of the University of Barcelona (Instagram, 2018). This study was performed from 1st September 2017 to 30th June 2018. This research analyzed Instagram posts published by the University and a complete observation of academic courses which the University provided. (Bonilla et al. 2019, p.9.) Figure 25 shows the bivariate analysis groups of variables (such as format, content and strategy) and their impact on customer engagement via comments and likes.

Table 1. Summary of the bivariate analysis of the groups of explanatory variables of format, content and strategy.

Variable	Type	Comments	Likes	
Format	Video	$p = 0.368$	$p = 0.024$	
	Photo	$p = 0.481$	$p = 0.544$	
	Series of pictures	$p = 0.137$	$p = 0.333$	
	Number of #	$p = 0.535$	$p = 0.001$	
	Link or @	$p = 0.965$	$p = 0.508$	
Content	News	$p = 0.101$	$p = 0.454$	
	Advertisement	$p = 0.490$	$p = 0.000$	
	Events/Sports	$p = 0.003$	$p = 0.000$	
	Promotion/Marketing	$p = 0.286$	$p = 0.000$	
	Acknowledgement	$p = 0.644$	$p = 0.170$	
	Achievements/Successes	$p = 0.637$	$p = 0.719$	
	Competitions	$p = 0.022$	$p = 0.803$	
	CSR Initiatives	$p = 0.514$	$p = 0.451$	
	City (BCN)	$p = 0.423$	$p = 0.106$	
	University	$p = 0.727$	$p = 0.130$	
	Other places/Posters	$p = 0.617$	$p = 0.051$	
	Strategy	Providing information on the organization	$p = 0.033$	$p = 0.001$
		Generating awareness	$p = 0.537$	$p = 0.075$
Projecting a favourable org. image		$p = 0.057$	$p = 0.056$	
Establishing an interactive channel of communication		$p = 0.000$	$p = 0.167$	
Gaining access to previously inaccessible clients		$p = 0.958$	$p = 0.284$	
Providing opportunity for feedback		$p = 0.002$	$p = 0.390$	
Sales or generating leads for sales		$p = 0.602$	$p = 0.000$	

Note: *** p -value < 0.001, ** p -value < 0.01, * p -value < 0.05.

Table 18. Summary table of bivariate analysis groups of explanatory variables of format, content and strategy (Bonilla et al. 2019, p.10).

Table 18 shows that Content types, such as News, may get a lot of likes ($p=0,454$), but publications about the University get a lot of comments ($p=0,727$). Interestingly, Achievements/Success stories get both, Table 18 shows the result of the proposed

variables and their impact on comments ($p=0,637$) and likes ($p=0,719$). It coincides with other observations about the role of individuals and also remarkable human photos in increasing engagement. Arguably, according to Bonilla et al. (2019, p.10), the Format variables generally show less statistical significance than Content and Strategy. However, in the Format variables of Link or @, their own study shows a positive impact on both the comments and likes. Also, the level of engagement in the photo and video-type activities in format variables is significant. Secondly, in Content variables, the highest level of engagement in the comment section was about the University. After that, following, the higher level of engagement in the comment section was the Achievement/success stories, and then the higher level of engagement goes to Acknowledgement and Advertisement, respectively. However, in the Strategy, the highest level of engagement via comments was in gaining access to previously inaccessible clients and sales or generating leads for sales respectively. But in likes, there was a positive impact from generating awareness. (Bonilla et al. 2019, p.10.)

Summing up, this study suggests important ways to maximise the impact of social media in higher education. According to Bonilla et al. (2019), the level of interaction between higher education users is limited, but for greater response and more impact, Content topics and strategies should be addressed, and social media administrators should be active with the communication management team to consider how the target audience utilises social media platforms for exploring higher education options. The study's aim was to generate more interaction and more level of engagement in the form of comments. In this case, a particular Strategy should be selected, only if it earns a high level of interaction.

Table 19 shows the list of recommendations or various way of using social media (SOME) platforms for higher education based on Kenan (2023).

Table 19. Different ways to use social media for Higher Education (Kenan, 2023).

1.	Create connections with students and alumni.
2.	Give a glimpse into student life through photos and videos.
3.	Extends learning opportunities.
4.	Build the brand identity of the campus.
5.	Use live streaming for events, lectures and discussions.
6.	Include social media links on the school/campus website (for example Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter)
7.	Use chatbots to support students outside of office hours.
8.	Create alumni community groups.

This study explored the benefits and insights of using social media in the education sector by top education institutions. Kenan (2023) concludes that Social media allows higher institutions to instantly and directly communicate with current students, previous students, and faculty members to foster the connection between target audiences. SOME platforms help to attract prospective students, grow alumni networks, keep parents informed, promote on-campus events and webinars and many more. Focusing on creating connections with the alumni community and publishing engagement content will definitely help to increase the enrolment for upcoming years. (Kenan 2023.)

Lastly, the study results demonstrate that a university is able to attract the attention of new students to the campus if the university shares photos of campus events and provides a glimpse of students' lives to showcase what activities newcomers can expect. Higher education institutions can use short-form videos like reels on Instagram and YouTube shorts to help potential students imagine themselves and get ideas about the campus and student life. According to Kenan (2023), other types of content - such as sports, highlighting events and programmes, and extra activities on-campus - also add to the beauty of the campus, which helps to be noticeable from the rest of the campus.

4.5 Conceptual Framework of This Thesis

Next, a conceptual framework of our study is to improve the SOME marketing practices following the SOSTAC framework and based on available learning practices. Table 19 will help to represent the conceptual framework followed by the SOSTAC model. This

section includes the Table of conceptual framework on recommendations of social media in higher education institutions (HEIs).

This framework includes the famous SOSTAC model by Chaffey 2022, another framework, a Content Strategy by Chauhan & Pillai 2013 and the same framework by another author, Demirer 2022. These three levels of the conceptual framework mainly include selected tools, i.e., the SOSTAC model and Content strategy and sub-elements and their key references, respectively.

Table 20. Conceptual framework on Recommendations for Social media in HEIs

SOSTAC (Chaffey 2022)	Content strategy (Chauhan & Pillai 2013) and (Demirer 2022)	Social media in HEIs , based on available literature & best practice (from multiple references):
Situational analysis (<i>Where are we now?</i>)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social media offers universities new tools to help them manage their institutional communication. (Capriotti 2023) - Social media effectively expand their relationship with their audiences. (Capriotti 2023) - Social media popular brand posts in higher education institutions connect with current and prospective students, employees, the general public etc. (Demirer 2022) - Most applicants and students use social media platforms to learn more about HEIs, find information about student life, and review from former students. (Bonilla 2019) - Social media is easily accessible by those in the university demographic since most students use social media. (Bonilla 2019) - Presence on social networks is essential to improving an institute's visibility and helping consolidate the decisions of students and/or future students when they search for more information. (Bonilla 2019)
Objectives (<i>Where do we want to get to?</i>)	<p>Target audiences (Chauhan 2013)</p> <p>Content strategy to build and sustain the popularity of their brand posts. (Demirer 2022)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attract new applicants, engage current students, engage staff, engage other public, sponsors, and journalists (Chauhan 2013); create alumni community groups. (Kenan 2023). - Target different audiences (current students, attract new students, alumni and parents. (Bonilla 2019) - Use Social media to gain a competitive advantage and capture a share of the international market. (Demirer 2022) - Use branding as an effective strategy. (Demirer 2022)
Strategy (<i>How do we get there?</i>)	Content Strategy (Chauhan & Pillai 2013) and (Demirer 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content strategy helps to influence customer engagement via selecting content. (Chauhan 2013) - Content strategy influences the popularity of posts created by leading HEIs (Chauhan 2013) - Content strategy provides information and generates awareness in the audience (Bonilla 2019)

<p>Tactics (<i>How exactly do we get there, details of strategy?</i>)</p>	<p>including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) content types 2) content agility 3) posting day 4) content context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Factors like content type, content agility, content context, posting type, and posting day, are easily measurable and available free of cost. (Demirer, 2022) - Type of post like university-created content (UCC) and then university-shared content (USC) UCC predominate over other types of sharing by a large margin and more interactions. (Capriotti 2023) - own created posts have a more positive impact on the number of likes, comments and shares received (Kim & Yang, 2017) - text + image + weblink was found to be the most common content type. (Chauhan 2013) - University news, alumni news, students' news, education news and general engagement (for, e.g., festival greetings and discussions on current events all contribute to comprehensive engagement and so on. (Demirer, 2022) - The most common reasons for social media usage were finding out information about student life and reading reviews from former students. (Bonilla 2019); Students use social media to research study opportunities and expect to find multiple types of information (e.g. from future job opportunities to student lifestyle). (Bonilla 2019) - the extent of content agility has a significant impact on the number of likes, comments, and shares. (Demirer, 2022) - most user activity on social networking sites occurs during weekdays (Demirer, 2022) - a brand fan page may perform a bridging function whereby members and non-members can have access to and interact with brand posts. (Demirer, 2022) Brand posts were grouped into two categories: created and shared. (Demirer, 2022) - The contents of posts are decisive in the generation of engagement. (Bonilla 2019); Content type and content context were found to have a significant impact on customer engagement. (Chauhan 2013) - <i>the image</i> is the main element in the content of the post and, therefore, decisively affects the engagement of brands with users. (Bonilla 2019) - About 48% of content was posted during mid week during Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. (Chauhan 2013) - About 55% of the total content posted was posted by the institution itself, and the second most common theme was updated about and for their existing students. (Chauhan 2013) - Posting about faculty/student achievement is an efficient approach, which works as an advertisement to improve a university's brand awareness. (Lund. D.B et. al.2020) - Posts about students' and employees' accomplishments received the most interactions of any information type while enrolment. (Lund. D.B et. al.2020); Accomplishment posts have a distinct advantage in gathering comments. (Lund. D.B et. al.2020) - posts about discounts obtain the highest customer engagement. (Lund. D.B et. al.2020) - Facebook followers are more likely to interact with a university's post if it involves a human element (focusing on students, alumni, or employees) (Lund. D.B et. al.2020)
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<p>Actions (What is our plan, ensuring the strategy & tactics?)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Livestreams on social media (Kenan 2023) - Online communities (students and teachers) on social media. (Williams, 2023). - Create alumni groups on social media. (Kenan 2023) - Resource sharing (share videos, articles and other resources, exchange notes, and other study materials) (Williams, 2023). - Share important updates in real-time. (Hootsuite, 2018). - Use social media as a message board. (Hootsuite, 2018). - Utilizing social media for student recruitment by showcasing students' success stories, campus life and academic programs. (Kenan 2023) - Partnerships and collaborations with other industry partners to expand opportunities for students. (Kenan 2023)
<p>Controls (Did we get there, measurement and metrics?)</p>	<p>- engagement is monitored by</p> <p>(1) likes</p> <p>(2) comments</p> <p>(3) shares</p> <p>(Capriotti et al.2023, p 4) and (Demirer 2022)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Three types of interactions (likes, shares and comments) can calculate the Level of Engagement (Capriotti 2023) - "Likes" are more impulsive" (Chauhan 2013) - Likes suggest that people are engaging in some way in reacting to the posted content. (Demirer 2022) - Factors such as comments and recommendations, are more valuable than corporate information (Bonilla 2019) - Comments are the most direct form of online user interaction and dialogue on social networks (Capriotti 2023) - Comments and Likes, which include information about whether the impact is positive or negative. (Bonilla 2019) - Comments are important to create engagement within the audience " (they go deeper in engaging) (Chauhan 2013) - Shares enable followers (or third parties in general) to become volunteer spokespersons since they promote the organisation's content. (Demirer 2022) - Shares are the most important factor in engaging the audience. They go deeper in engaging. (Chauhan 2013)

As shown in Table 20, the conceptual framework on recommendations for social media in higher education institutions. This process is introduced into three steps: the first steps contain relevant concepts and tools, i.e., the SOSTAC framework; the second step is Content strategy, and the third step is social media recommendations based on available literature and best practices from various references. This logic, with various relevant concepts and tools, helps in creating the proposal in section 5. Section 5 focuses on an improvement plan for SOME marketing activities to support international applicants for the case organisation.

5 Building an Improvement Plan for SOME Marketing in HEIs for the Case Organisation

This section blends the results of the current state analysis (CSA), the conceptual framework and a new round of stakeholder inputs for building the proposal.

5.1 Overview of the Proposal Building Stage

The introductory proposal was designed based on the following steps. In the first step, current state analysis (CSA) results were revised (Data 1 collection) from interviewing master BI students. Then, the recommendations from the literature were added. Finally, Data 2 collection was gathered as ideas from stakeholder interviews. All these data 1 & 2 collection help to focus on building the proposal on an improvement plan for SOME platforms or activities to support international applicants of the case organisation.

In the final step phase, the SOSTAC framework and other available literature help prepare the groundwork for improving or developing the SOME communication plan. The main involvement of stakeholders helps to develop the proposal process ahead. Stakeholder of the case organisation help to contribute their insights, views, suggestions and recommendations to make sure the recommended proposals are functional, effective and result-oriented.

Stakeholders came up with very impactful insights and suggestions for the proposal, which will be discussed in Section 5.2 below.

5.2 Findings from Data 2 for the Proposal (pulling together CSA, CF and Data 2)

This section provides a brief overview of the primary contributions of the stakeholders in relation to Data 2. Data collection 2 was learned from the conceptual framework, inputs the insights and suggestions from the literature on developing the improvement plans for SOME marketing communication and practices as well as by the initial findings of CSA (Data 1). Data collection 2 focuses on identifying suggestions and recommendations from the key stakeholders regarding to develop proposed actions.

Table 21 below shows the inputs and suggestions for the building proposal.

Table 21. Conceptual framework (CF) and Key stakeholder Suggestions (findings of Data 2).

CSA results (DATA 1)	CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK, CF			DATA 2, Stakeholder workshop (ideas briefly)	Descriptions of Stakeholder inputs from the workshop (based on DATA 2, in more detail)
<p>Strengths and weaknesses (in relation to CF) of the Case organisations HEI SOME marketing / Metropolia UAS</p>	SOSTAC (Chaffey 2022)	Content strategy (Chauhan & Pillai 2013) and (Demirer 2022)	Social media in HEIs (based on available literature & best practices):		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It uses 5 SOME channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, blogs) 2. Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn are more popular among all social media channels. 3. Dedicated blog channels are more relevant for the existing students. 4. Alumni groups on LinkedIn are more active and more effective for students. 5. Facebook and Instagram channels are more popular among students. 6. Facebook and Instagram channels reflect more about the student's life and their journey, more information about the events, and success stories about students. 	Situational analysis (<i>Where are we now?</i>)		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social media offered universities new tools to help them manage their institutional communication. (Capriotti 2023) 2. Social media effectively expands their relationship with their audiences. (Capriotti 2023) 3. Social media popular brand posts in higher education institutions connect with current and prospective students, employees, the general public etc. (Demirer 2022) 4. Most applicants and students use social media platforms to learn more about HEIs, find information about student life, and review from former students. (Bonilla 2019) 5. Posting about faculty/student achievement is an efficient approach, which works as an advertisement to improve a university's brand awareness. (Lund. D.B et. al.2020) 6. Posts about students' and employees' accomplishments received the most interactions of any information type while enrolment. (Lund. D.B et. al.2020); 		<p>- Shared details about posting content on every social media channel because we must target different audiences, different age groups, different interests, and different audiences prefer different social media.</p> <p>- Centralized strategy was announced so programme cannot have their own SOME channels.</p>

<p>See "Metropolia Strategy 2024" (metropolia.fi) & SOME strategy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Consistent communication builds trust on social media" (Salo 5.4.2024 OMA) 2. Programmes and units should not have their own SOME channels, but use the case organisation's existing channels due to branding concerns (Salo, 5.4.2024, OMA) 3. IT services, in cooperation with Communication Services and Risk Management and Security Services, are developing safe guidelines for the use of social media in case organisations. 	<p>Objectives <i>(Where do we want to get to?)</i></p>	<p>Target audiences (Chauhan 2013)</p> <p>Content strategy to build and sustain the popularity of their brand posts. (Demirer 2022)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attract new applicants, engage current students, engage staff, engage other public, sponsors, and journalists (Chauhan 2013); 2. Target different audiences (current students, attract new students, alumni and parents. (Bonilla 2019) 3. Use Social media to gain a competitive advantage and capture a share of the international market. (Demirer 2022) 4. Use branding as an effective strategy. (Demirer 2022) 		
	<p>Strategy <i>(How do we get there?)</i></p>	<p>Content Strategy (Chauhan & Pillai 2013) and (Demirer 2022)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Content strategy helps to influence customer engagement via selecting content. (Chauhan 2013) 2. Content strategy influences the popularity of posts created by leading HEIs (Chauhan 2013) 		<p>Stakeholders shared the information about the centralized strategy used by case organization.</p>
<p><i>(A) Content types</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students' life and their journey (most frequently) 2. About Campus (next) 3. About Events and Webinars (next) 	<p>Tactics <i>(How exactly do we get there, details of strategy?)</i></p>	<p>including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) content types (b) content agility (c) posting day (d) content context 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Type of post like university-created content (UCC) and university-shared content (USC) UCC predominates over-sharing by a large margin and more interactions. (Capriotti 2023) 2. Text + image + Weblink was found to be the most common content type. (Chauhan 2013) 3. Create alumni community groups (Kenan 2023). 	<p>Stakeholders agreed by the role of Content types</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Post anything on social media with the real image of people, the real story. - There should be 2 or 3 posts in a week, not more than that because it will crowd social media. - UAS posting days are early week and mid-week i.e.,

<p>4. Admission posts (very few posts)</p> <p>5. Info about Programmes and Courses (almost missing! Students in interviews wanted this type of content more for making their decisions as applicants).</p> <p><i>(B) Content agility</i> (almost the same as in other Finnish UASs)</p> <p><i>(C) Posting day</i> - no regularities are noticed</p> <p><i>(D) Content context</i> –</p> <p>Relevance of post by reviewing each post (most of the posts are relevant to the alumni news, existing students' news, and about college but missing the program's news)</p>			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Level of engagement by type of presence on social networks. (Capriotti 2023) 5. The study shows the results that the best presence (combination of posts) should be with a clear majority of UCC posts, i.e. around 85% UCC and 15% USC. (Capriotti 2023) 6. UCC predominates over USC by a large margin. This clearly confirms that UCC produces more interactions than USC. (Capriotti 2023) 7. Social media is a communication channel among which users publish messages expressing feelings and emotions; the results suggest that emotional appeal can benefit HEI in terms of user awareness. (Soares 2020) 8. For successful social media marketing and to enhance relationship building with the students, HEIs must share quality information to meet the needs and requirements of the students. (Soares 2020) 9. Brand image is described as the perception and impression of the brand in the mind of the customer to build strong trust and brand loyalty. (Soares 2020) 10. Posting about faculty/student achievement is an efficient approach, which works as an advertisement to improve a university's brand awareness. (Lund. D.B et. al.2020) 11. Posts about students' and employees' accomplishments received the most interactions of any information type during enrollment. (Lund. D.B et. al.2020); Accomplishment posts have a distinct advantage in gathering comments. (Lund. D.B et. al.2020) 12. Posts about discounts obtain the highest customer engagement. (Lund. D.B et. al.2020. 13. Facebook followers are more likely to interact with a university's post if it involves a human element (focusing on students, alumni, or employees) (Lund. D.B et. al.2020) 	<p>Monday, Tuesday, and Friday.</p> <p>- Normally, UAS posts in the evening time because students can check when they are free from class and work.</p> <p>- Social media posts classify different news, events, and stories about students' lives and exchange students</p>
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<p><i>Action already in use at Metropolia UAS:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student ambassadors 2. Blogs/experiences- "Masterminds- Maisteriainesta" 3. Exchange student's experiences 4. Messages from the Student union Metka 5. Alumni groups and get-together events 	<p><i>Actions (What is our plan, ensuring the strategy & tactics?)</i></p>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Livestreams on social media (Kenan 2023) 2. Online communities (students and teachers) on social media. (Williams, 2023). 3. Resource sharing (share videos, articles and other resources, exchange notes, and other study materials) (Williams, 2023). 4. Create alumni groups on social media. (Kenan 2023) 5. Share important updates in real time. (Hootsuite, 2018). 6. Use social media as a message board. (Hootsuite, 2018). 7. Utilizing social media for student recruitment by showcasing students' success stories, campus life and academic programs. (Kenan 2023) 8. Partnerships and collaborations with other industry partners to expand opportunities for students. (Kenan 2023) 9. Use social media for admission by showcasing students' success stories, campus life and academic programs. (Kenan 2023) 10. Presence refers to determining the type of posting that should be promoted on each platform. (Capriotti 2023) 11. Universities must develop strategies in the digital field that foster good institutional visibility as well as dialogue and interaction with their followers. (Capriotti 2023) 	<p>Agreed by Stakeholders</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. stakeholder commented on people's presence and especially on the power of human faces 2. Stakeholder 2: stated that it is difficult to evoke comments from students (due to many reasons, including privacy and not disclosing the names). What to do about it? 3. UAS seek more from comments, but students do not comment more because of privacy reasons. 4. Additionally, Stakeholder 1 suggested: "to use voting - in place of comments - so that to engage of the audience are more and deeper (than just in likes, but anonymously)."
<p>Calculated by three KPIs- Likes, comments and shares</p> <p>Metropolia: It is difficult to calculate the level of engagement</p> <p>Likes- I saw more likes in SOME posts</p> <p>Comments- very few comments or almost missing</p>	<p><i>Controls (Did we get there, measurement and metrics?)</i></p>	<p>Engagement is monitored by</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Likes (2) Comments (3) Shares (Capriotti et al.2023, Demirer 2022) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Three types of interactions (likes, shares and comments) can calculate the Level of Engagement (Capriotti 2023) 2. "Likes" are more impulsive" (Chauhan 2013) 3. Likes suggest that people are engaging in some way in reacting to the posted content. (Demirer 2022) 4. Comments are the most direct form of online user interaction and dialogue on social networks (Capriotti 2023) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stakeholders agreed on the usefulness of these 3 KPIs. 2. Agreed by stakeholders 3. Agreed by stakeholders 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stakeholders agreed on these 3 KPIs. 2. Stakeholder 2: likes are more impulsive and easy to get. 3. Stakeholder 2: stated that it is difficult to evoke comments from students (due to many reasons,

	<p>because of the privacy reasons</p> <p>Shares- very few shares (maybe for privacy reasons)</p>			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Comments are important to create engagement within the audience " (they go deeper in engaging) (Chauhan 2013) 6. Shares enable followers (or third parties in general) to become volunteer spokespersons since they promote the organisation's content. (Demirer 2022) 7. Shares are the most important factor to engage the audience. They go deeper in engaging. (Chauhan 2013) 	<p>4. Agreed by stakeholders</p>	<p>including privacy and not disclosing the names).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. If a post has no image, then there is no engagement, no emotion, and no involvement of people. 5. Additionally, Stakeholder 1 suggested: "to use voting - in place of comments - so that to engage the audience more and deeper(than just in likes, but anonymously).
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As shown in Table 21, the inputs from the conceptual framework and literature, insights and suggestions from stakeholders were collected for drafting the proposal. They have agreed with the key points about the content strategy, content types, and content agility for posting on social media for more engagement of the potential audience according to the three KPIs, i.e. likes, comments and shares in SOME channels. In the details description column, the suggestions from stakeholders are clearly described and structured according to the proposal.

5.3 Initial Proposal

The proposal entails developing the improvement plan for SOME marketing channels. This includes the comprehensive conceptual framework of the SOSTAC model and Content strategy. It outlines the crucial components of SOME communication plan with the relevant measurements for this type of strategy.

5.3.1 Element 1: *Enhance those elements of the SOSTAC where Social media can influence to benefit the case organisation*

Step 1. Situation Analysis (Where are we now?)

It performs the foundation upon which strategies, actions, tactics, and controls are prepared. This stage involves the assessment of current state analysis, where the organisation calculates the present condition (in this study, it was done in Section 3 to understand the existing situation). Key findings of CSA are that Programmes and Courses are almost not visible in Metropolia's SOME channels, compared to other types of Contents (1. Students' lives and their journeys; 2. About Campus; 3. About Events and Webinars; 4. Admission posts, etc.; while students want to know about them.

Furthermore, Metropolia UAS has four main benchmarks, which were discussed earlier in CSA. The primary benchmarks are Haaga-Helia UAS, LAB UAS, JAMK UAS and Laurea UAS. These benchmarks also have SOME channel accounts that are very active and very engaging as compared to case organisations. It is important to keep track of them and be on par.

Step 2. Objective (Where do we want to get to?)

This stage of the SOSTAC model helps to find what to achieve and where to go. As the objectives of the case organisation are to create awareness in SOME channels, all the channels of social media should be used because the case organisation wants to target different audiences with different interests and different ways of engaging them. It means to foster communication with current students, potential students, alumni, and faculty effectively who are part of or want to be in the Finnish education system.

Step 3. Strategy (How do we get there?)

Based on the results of Data Collections 1-2 and situational analysis, the case organisation is choosing a social media communication strategy which helps to reach the mentioned objectives.

Here, *the Content strategy*, tailored for SOME marketing through different SOME channels like Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, should focus on several approaches that have proven their efficiency such as: (1) crafting their own storytelling content, (2) using more human images and (3) publishing achievement/success stories to enhance more engagement and achieving objectives.

Step 4. Tactics and Actions (How exactly do we get there, details of strategy & tactics?)

- *This element of SOSTAC was identified as a "sweet spot" for improvement in SOME*

There are several tactics and actions that can be employed for SOME marketing, such as creating one's own storytelling content, refining Facebook presence, tagging influencers, repurposing best content and brand posts, or even live sessions and other key roles (based on Data 1-2). In practice, it means developing a *marketing mix* and ensuring the strategy and tactics are accomplished with excellence and passion.

Furthermore, it is recommended that there should be **A Content Strategy Model** recommending the content types (e.g. with real images of humans, real stories, etc). It is recommended that there should be 2 or 3 posts in a week to create engagement with the audience. Social media posts classify the various news regarding the events, stories about student life, exchange students, and sharing alumni groups' success stories, which motivate current students and future students through SOME channels.

Step 5. Controls (Did we get their measurement & metrics?)

This final stage of the SOSTAC model showcases the measurable progress of objectives. Control is the process of measuring whether the plan and strategy are successful or not. Control is related to the KPI as per the tactics that link back to the objectives. For Social media, KPI can be measured through three factors that are *likes, comments and shares*. With the help of these KPIs, organisations can measure how they can succeed in achieving the objective or not. These KPI tools can be supported by other digital tools such as Google Analytics and many more.

5.3.2 Element 2 of the Initial Proposal: Developing the Content Strategy Model as part of the SOME marketing approach for the case organisation

Part 1. Content Types

It is recommended that content types should be Text + Image + Weblink. It should contain the real image of humans and real stories; if there is a post without the image of humans, then there is no engagement, no emotional attachment and no involvement of people. UAS want to post on every social media channel because they want to target different audiences, different age groups, and different audiences prefer different social media channels.

Part 2. Content Agility

Content agility refers to there should be 2 or 3 posts in a week to create engagement with the audience and general public. If there are many posts, then the target audience will be distracted and more crowded on social media but with less influence. More posts on social media will impact the target audience to follow another influencer.

Part 3. Posting Day

Normally, UAS posting days are early week and mid-week. In an early week, it includes Monday and Tuesday, and Mid-week includes Thursday and Friday. UAS are more actively posting their post on social media in the evening time, and some posts are posted in the morning time also, but usually, more posts are in the evening time because most of the students are free after their classes and other professional working students

have leisure time after the work. So, in the evening time, there is more chance of an active engagement audience as compared to other times.

Part 4. Content Context

Content context refers to social media posts classify the various news regarding events, stories about student life, exchange students, live streams on social media, upcoming events, festival greetings, admission posts, posts regarding different course programme content, creating alumni groups and sharing their success story which motivates current students and future students through SOME channels which are the potential audience of the UAS.

5.4 Summary of the Proposal

The proposal has been prepared on the SOSTAC model and Content Strategy model approach modified from the results of CSA (Data 1), suggestions from stakeholders (Data 2) and inputs from CF and literature review to identify the proposal.

Table 22 below shows the initial proposal with proposal key elements, sub-elements and descriptions of the improvement plan for HEI Social Media marketing for the case organization followed by SOSTAC framework and content strategy.

Table 22. Summary of initial proposal.

Proposal key elements	Proposal sub-elements	Descriptions of the Improvement Plan for HEI Social Media marketing for the Case Organization
SOSTAC framework	S-Situation Analysis O- Objectives S- Strategy T- Tactics A- Actions C- Control	It is a time-proven and reliable approach for Social media. Within the SOSTAC logic, this thesis recommends focusing on developing the Content Strategy Model as the target area for improvement in this thesis.
Content Strategy Model	Including: 1) content types 2) content agility 3) posting day 4) content context	<p>Content types should focus on creating their own storytelling content (especially university-related content and achievement/success) with real images of humans, which include text + image + weblink. Social media posts are more engaging if there is news about events, stories about students' lives and exchange students, news about campus, and info about courses and programs.</p> <p>Authentic images of people and real-life stories are important in social media channels because they evoke engagement, audience involvement and emotions.</p> <p>Without visual/image content posted on social media, there is no connection and no involvement with people.</p> <p>Posting about faculty/student achievement will be a more effective approach, which works as an advertisement to improve a university's brand awareness.</p> <p>Posts about students' and employees' accomplishments received the most interactions and more engagement from customers and provided relevant information to the general public.</p> <p><i>Content agility</i> should be 2 or 3 posts in a week, not more; studies prove it is a good frequency with other universities, and because more frequent posts will overcrowd social media.</p> <p><i>Posting days</i> are early week and mid-week days, i.e., Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. The timing should be morning time, because these are official working hours. Yet, target audiences will mostly read them in the evening times, they are free from class and work.</p> <p><i>Content context</i> - Relevance of post by reviewing each post (most of the posts are relevant to the alumni news, existing students' news, and about college but missing the program's news and discount news) which may be relevant for target audiences.</p>
	For Controls, 3 KPIs can be calculated for engagement: (1) Likes (2) Comments (3) Shares	It is difficult to calculate the level of engagement: - Likes- More likes on SOME posts - Comments- very few comments (because of the privacy reasons) - Shares- very few shares (maybe for privacy reasons)

6 Validation of the Proposal

This section outlines the results of the validation phase and offers insights for further development of the initial proposal. Firstly, it introduces by detailing the procedure for validation conducted. Secondly, it was followed by the recommendations for progressing the initial proposal, and finally, it concluded with the final proposal and recommendations.

6.1 Overview of the Validation Stage

The main aim of this section is to provide details of the validation results of the proposal formulated in Section 5. Key stakeholder of the case organisation have contributed their expert judgment and assessments of the initial proposal. This was collected and analysed as Data 3.

The process of validation was aimed at understanding the case organisation's forecast concerning the drafted initial proposal. The proposal was free to observe from the stakeholder's point of view. Firstly, an online meeting was arranged with the stakeholder to discuss the proposal and get their feedback and suggestions. At this session, all aspect of the proposal was discussed thoroughly, and all the suggestions and key points were noted as feedback for the proposal. Lastly, all these insights are correctly considered further to refine the final proposal.

After this, the next step was to develop the proposal based on Data Collection 3.

6.2 Developments to the Final Proposal (based on Data Collection 3)

This section reflects the details of the recommendations and suggestions for the initial proposal, as gathered during the validation process. Proposal contents are pursued to finalise based on the stakeholder and expert's feedback. Data collection 3 concentrates on improvements and suggestions which are proposed by the stakeholders by the case organisations regarding the proposal outlined in section 5.

As shown in Table 22 below, the stakeholder/expert comments and suggestions were followed to further develop the initial proposal.

Table 23. Expert suggestions (findings of Data 3) for the Final proposal.

	<i>Elements/ Feedback area</i>	<i>Parts commented on in the Validation</i>	<i>Description of the comment/ feedback by experts</i>
1	Content Strategy		Since programme cannot have their own SOME channels (from communication experts/mangers at the department and programme level at Metropolia UAS.
2	Tactics followed by Content strategy	Enhance the quality of content marketing a) Role of Content types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The experts suggested that social media helps Universities to showcase students' everyday lives and deliver authentic content, - Post with real people, real things in real-time. - UCC (University create content) has more customers engaging than others. - Include Influencers in SOME channels - Video content - Including text + images + weblink - Successful stories of students
		b) Content Agility	- Stakeholders state that there should be 2 or 3 posts in a week, not more than that because it will crowd social media.
		c) Posting Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Normally, UAS post their post on social media in the early week and mid-week. Early week, includes Monday and Tuesday, and Mid-week includes Thursday and Friday. - UAS actively posts their post on SOME channels in the morning time because these are the official working hours.
		d) Content Context	- An effective content strategy will attract our own target audience, fulfilling their requirements while advancing business objectives, such as enhancing brand visibility.
3	Control Measurement	For engagement of the customers: three KPIs are measured: (1) Likes (2) Comments (3) Shares	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With the help of this KPI, UAS can measure at what level they stand for. And how they can succeed in achieving the objective. Likes- more likes on SOME posts, which are easy and convenient. Comments- very few comments (because of the privacy reasons) Shares- very few shares(it depends on content)

As seen from Table 22 above, Data Collection 3 focused on the proposal of content strategy of the social media model and target to achieve the objectives of the case organisation. The research study is based on the feedback session from the stakeholders. Suggestions and recommendations were very impactful in building the proposal and applying for the validation process.

“Content which is posted should be more international because it involves different kinds of people, different races, different multi-cultural, different languages, some cultural day events, for example: celebrate Ramadan, Easter, Christmas and so on.

6.3 Recommendations /Action Plans

This section includes the recommendations plan or list by the experts and stakeholders at the time of collecting feedback and suggestions. Table 23 shows the recommended list of posts by Metropolia UAS/MBS about the types and necessary content in social media.

Table 24. Recommendation list for the content posted on social media.

S.No	Metropolia UAS/MBS - Content post
1.	Exchange programme (motivational stories of students exchanging culture, and adopting new things)
2.	Celebrate the achievement/milestones of students and the University.
3.	All facilities and offerings by UAS.
4.	Give a glimpse into student life through photos, videos and storytelling.
5.	Use live streaming for events/programmes, webinars, and lectures.
6.	Application process, application period reminder in every social media and official webpage (for example: Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter)
7.	Participation in events where students can get some kind of certification.
8.	Use live chat or video from the student ambassador.
9.	Celebration events, festivals, cultural events.
10.	Guidance for international students:- after arriving in Finland (primary steps, Finland details)
11.	Current and alumni students' events or programmes where alumni share their experiences and follow their guidelines
12.	News/announcement

7 Conclusion

This is the final section of thesis writing; it summarises the offering of a brief reflection on its findings. This section also contains the self-evaluation at the end and the study's overall effectiveness.

7.1 Executive Summary

Social media marketing has promptly evolved and changed marketing methods. It is now easy to reach the target audience across multiple social media platforms with just one click. However, social media marketing requires integrating a strong organisational strategy.

This thesis study aimed to develop recommendations for SOME marketing practices for the case organisation. The study used the applied action research methodology, starting by analysing the case organisation's current social media (SOME) activities and strategies. The main objective was to identify potential improvements and develop recommendations for SOME marketing practices to enhance the existing target audience.

For the current state analysis (CSA), the documentation of the case organisation was analyzed along with multiple questionnaires and interviews with the Master BI students. Another analysis was used from the various social media channels like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, and its official website. Next, the literature review was conducted to analyse both the academic and business literature review based on best social media practices in higher education institutions. During these steps, a conceptual framework was developed using the very famous SOSTAC model and the Content Strategy model. These models served as the foundation towards building an initial proposal for the case organisation. This proposal suggests various activities for the marketing and communication plan, which includes tactics, action, and control elements. For the engagement measurement, three KPIs were recommended to use; they are likes, shares and comments.

The results of this thesis were to build a proposal for the SOME marketing practices and communication plan in order to support and build awareness among the international applicants for the case organisation (Metropolia University of Applied Sciences). The situational analysis focuses on the current organisation level, the current marketing situation and its efforts, and the case organisation benchmarks with its competitors. This analysis helps to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the existing marketing practices of Metropolia UAS and BI Programme. This proposal included the Content strategy model and measurement elements such as likes, shares, and comments. It was recommended that the measurement KPIs for the engagement of customers should be controlled and monitored by the case organisation. However, it will not be an easy task to control all the measurement KPI elements because of the privacy reasons from the target audiences and general customers.

The final proposal was revised after the suggestions and recommendations from the stakeholders and experts' feedback on the initial proposal. After the help of stakeholders' suggestions and feedback, the final proposal was built with more detailed instructions and clear ideas. The case organisation was suggested to implement the proposal for SOME marketing practices which was based on the SOSTAC marketing model and the Content strategy model. It is proposed to develop recommendations for SOME channels to support international students.

7.2 Managerial Implications (Recommendations toward Implementation)

This section, managerial implications, helps to provide recommendations to develop the SOME marketing practices to support international students and increase awareness, to establish communication on different social media channels to reach the target audiences.

Firstly, various social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter can be used to establish communication and develop awareness among the target audiences because multiple users use multiple social media platforms. Here, it is recommended to consider different social media channels for reliable SOSTAC model logic, followed by focusing on developing the Content strategy and creating effective content which is more informative and more customer-engaging to our case organisation (Metropolia UAS). This model can enhance awareness and facilitate direct

communication with target audiences. Nowadays, higher education institutions employ social media as one of the marketing tools and it is advisable to initiate communication sequentially on popular social media channels.

Secondly, another crucial factor in social media marketing and communications channels is quality content. Users can create more engagement and interaction if there is good content which is really related to our target audience and builds connections between our own communities' alumni groups, current students, employees, staff members and so on. It would be beneficial for the case organisation to build a chain of continuous posting, following the logic of previous and upcoming posts and build connections to our target audiences through continuous posts on social media channels. Additionally, organising live events and some kind of sessions with the alumni and current students to create a positive impact on users and to increase awareness, making all the confusion clear and understandable, which will help them to assist in making their career decisions for target audiences.

Thirdly, centralised marketing on social media channels was introduced during the last phase of this thesis study in April 2024 by the case organisation communication and management team. This centralised method of marketing SOME is quite effective in focusing on the target audiences and building a good relationship with them. This strategy also helps to control the misuse of social media and control negative marketing about the case organisation. These centralised marketing advertisements help with content creation, are beneficial for analysing the market and ultimately improve the mission and vision of the case organisation.

7.3 Thesis Evaluation vs. Its Objective

The objectives of this thesis was to develop recommendations for SOME marketing practices for the case organisation, especially from the eyes of the international students. Based on the outcome of the thesis, however, it meets the expectations, but there are many other factors that should be improved in the near future because day-to-day social media marketing channels and practices are changing and evoke improvement and development. For instance, building a good content strategy and centralised strategy on social media channels can be helpful for the case organisation. Overall, the outcome of

this thesis points to SOME marketing and communication practices that can play a vital role in the improvement of the current situation to achieve the goals.

As for the research quality criteria, validity and reliability of this thesis study were strengthened by different steps. All the references were taken from trustworthy sources, for example, Statista, Social Media Statistics, and Vipunen. fi., Sprout Social and Facebook to build relevance and actual data for this study. Data about the case organisation and programme were collected through interviews with the stakeholders and staff. Other data related to SOME channels were collected through questionnaires and interviewing Master's BI Programme students and from analysing the case organisation's social media account and post. All the information was collected with the consent of all interviewees in a peaceful and soft manner. Validity was also ensured by focusing the research process and methods in the same manner so that accurate results could be achieved.

7.4 Closing Words

Social media is booming day by day; every organization, including higher education institutions, is also using social media marketing channels for their branding and marketing. The rapid growth of social media and increasing user engagement have changed marketing and communication methods. In today's world, many people are using social media platforms, so it has become easy to reach a vast audience with just a click. However, it is necessary to create strong strategies and marketing tools for achieving effective results.

This study recommended marking a good presence in social media channels to build healthy connections with their target audience and create awareness among the current students and prospective students about what UASs are offering, events and programmes, information about the relevant courses and details and many more.

Here, I conclude my thesis work and express my gratitude to thanks my thesis supervisor for guiding me, giving advice and motivate throughout my research and studies. I want to deeply thank other stakeholders for sharing their insights, valuable ideas, and information. I want to thank the Master BI students also for giving their wonderful experience with the SOME channels and how SOME channels helped them to make the decision to choose this Master BI Programme in Metropolia UASs.

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Appendix 1: Written Statement on the use of AI-based tools in this thesis

ATTACHMENT to the Master's Thesis

WRITTEN STATEMENT on the use of AI-based tools in this thesis

by Poonam Gurung, the student of BI Master's Degree Programme

Thesis title: Developing Recommendations for SOME Marketing Practices for the Case Organization

According to the "Guidance for addressing the use of AI-based tools in studies at Metropolia Business School (for written submissions)" from August 2023, I make this statement on the use of AI-based tools in my submitted Master's thesis.

- 1) Which AI-based large language models or other AI-based tools I used
ChatGPT and Grammarly
- 2) In which parts of the thesis which tools were used, and for which tasks (*please make a list*)
 - Chat GPT for meaning, definitions and processes.
 - Grammarly for checking grammar and spelling
- 3) What portion of the text was helped with these tools, for each use
 - ChatGPT was used to understand meaning of vocabularies and processes of different steps
 - Grammarly was used to find grammar and spelling mistake as well as to correct them.
- 4) Which prompts were asked, exactly (*please indicate the page number in the text where used*)
 - ChatGPT was used in Chapter 2 (pages 13-15), Chapter 4 (pages 65-67, 70-72 & 78-80) and Chapter 5 (pages 92-95).
 - Grammarly was used in Full body (pages 9-104) to find grammar and spelling mistakes.
- 5) Here, I describe what continues an ethical and reliable use of AI-based tools that I used (*use, for example, the recommended documents from "MBS Guidance" referred to above*)
I used the AI for understanding the definition and process of different terminology as well as to check grammar and spelling mistakes. All the words in the thesis are written with my own words without relying on AI-based tools.
- 6) Here, I describe how ethically and reliably I used the AI-based tools in my thesis submission
AI-based tools in my thesis were used only to understand the terminologies as well as for language improvement in accordance with study guidelines.

This written statement makes part of my thesis and is done to help in evaluation and assessment.

24.5.2024 Helsinki

(Data and place)



(Signature)

Appendix 2: Interview Questionnaires

In this interview, we discuss your choices in spring 2022 when applying to the Master's Programme at Metropolia UAS.

Please try to remember as much as possible from those times: how and when you applied, how and when you made your choices, what supporting materials were important to you at that time, and which of, for example, digital and social media materials (SOME materials) you read and searched for when making your decision? All these details will help return to these memories and restore the situation in as many details as possible.

Consider these questions, for example, to remember & describe your situation and your choices:

Warming-up questions:

1. When did you apply?
2. How did you choose the BI programme as your target programme? (Have you also considered other programmes?)
3. What helped you to make your choice of BI programme? What was important to you in making your choice?

Digital media questions:

4. Did you at any point check digital media (a website, various online materials, social media)? Which, specifically? Please list and describe those that you checked.
5. What information were you searching for? What was important to you to find?
6. What kind of answers did you get? Were these answers helpful?
7. How would you evaluate the role of digital media in making your choice?

SOME marketing:

8. Which social media channels did you check, specifically (if any)?
9. Any specific social media material you remember, which supported your decision?
10. Which information was important to you in making your decision? (Please list your points/criteria, what was important to you to find?)

How would you evaluate the role of social media in making your choice?

Appendix 3: Online survey form

A questionnaire on using Social media when applying to Metropolia (when being an applicant)

We are Saloni Parikh and Poonam Gurung, 2nd year BI student currently finalizing our thesis on "**Developing Recommendations for SOME Marketing Practices for the BI Master's Programme**". As part of our thesis, we are conducting a questionnaire with our BI international students to gather insights and perspectives on the current situation of Digital & Social media marketing by Metropolia. We are writing this to cordially invite you to participate in the questionnaire, since your experiences and insights are invaluable in developing these recommendations.

The questionnaire will focus on understanding your experiences, challenges and wishes related to Metropolia's marketing when applying to Business Informatics. The questionnaire will be conducted during the period of 1 week, between 15th – 24th of March. **Your participation will be kept anonymous.** The data gathered will be used solely for the purpose of this thesis.

In this survey, we ask you to come back to your life in the spring when you applied to the Master's Programme at Metropolia UAS. Please try to remember as much as possible from those times: how and when you applied, how and when you made your choices, what marketing materials were important to you at that time, and which of, for example, **digital** and **social media** materials you read and searched for when making your decision? All these details will help to improve Metropolia's Social media contents. So, we kindly ask you to look back and restore the situation in as many details as possible.

Thank you very much for your time and contribution! If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact us. Our e-mails are Saloni.Parikh@metropolia.fi and Poonam.Gurung@metropolia.fi

Thank you for your participation!

Saloni & Poonam

* Pakollinen kysymys

1. 1. When did you apply? *

Esimerkki: 7.1.2019

2. 2. How and why did you made your decision to choose BI programme as your target programme? (For example, have you considered also other programmes, which?) *

3. 3. What media materials helped you to make your choice of BI programme? *

4. 4. Did you at any point check digital media (a web-site, online materials, social media)? Which, specifically? Please list and briefly describe those that you checked.

5. 5. Which Social media channels did you check? specifically (if any):

Valitse kaikki sopivat vaihtoehdot.

Facebook

Instagram

LinkedIn

Twitter

YouTube

Muu: _____

6. 6. What information you were searching for on Metropolia's Social media? What was important to you to find? *

Valitse kaikki sopivat vaihtoehdot.

- to make sure that this UAS exists and active (to prove that UAS exists)
- to make sure that this UAS is modern and up-to-date (to prove that UAS is cutting edge)
- to build trust / to make your decision to study here
- to learn about UAS student life
- to see the UAS campus
- to find testimonials of students
- to find testimonials from own nationality (your countrymates or compatriots)
- to find information about your programme of choice
- to find tips on how to relocate or integrate in Finland
- to find tips about the country
- Muu: _____

7. 7. What kind of answers did you get? Were these answers helpful? *

8. 8. Any specific social media material you remember, which supported your decision? *

9. 9. **Why you have checked social media?** What you were searching for, exactly? *

10. 10. How would you evaluate the role of social media in making your choice? Which pieces of information were important to you for making your decision? (Please list your points, **what was important to you to find?**) *
