university of
groningen

Social Media Strategy

2022 - 2025

1.0   Introduction

Social media has become an integral part of our daily lives. Whether it is sharing an Instagram story with your friends, shopping via a Facebook ad, watching a weekly vlog by your favourite YouTube influencer, or retweeting an interesting tweet by a politician: social media is no longer just used to maintain contact with your friends and family. Nowadays, companies and organizations have incorporated social media channels into their DNA, as they recognize that the use of social media is essential to get in touch with certain target groups and to effectively present themselves to the world.

We know that social media is one of the key ways to maintain contact and build a community, but what do we actually mean by social media, and how do people use these online platforms in their daily lives? Social media is a collective term for online platforms that enable users to publish content with or without editorial or professional intervention. Besides user-generated content, interaction and dialogue between users are key features of social media. It is for this reason that social media is really human work. It places the users at the centre, and the communication that results from it is completely natural. Do not use social media to impress people; use it to make an impact on people.

Some interesting facts:

- In 2020, 1.3 million new users joined a social media platform every day (Hootsuite).
- Each person spends an average of 2 hours and 25 minutes per day on social networks (Hootsuite).
- On average, Millennials log on to social media for an average of 2 hours and 38 minutes per day, while Gen Z logs in for 2 hours and 55 minutes (World Economic Forum).
- It is no secret that social media platforms play a big role in our daily lives. These online platforms can be used to engage with current followers, to reach new target audiences, and ultimately to contribute to a positive reputation.

It cannot be denied that social media must be given a prominent place in our organization. However, in order to maximize our engagement with current and potential followers, our platforms must be organized more effectively. Doing so will also allow us to analyse the dialogue taking place on the platforms and to optimize not only the channels themselves but also the working methods around them. In this way, we can increase our reach, optimize our online reputation, build a real community with each other, and maintain the strong and reliable brand name of the University of Groningen.

2.0   Our three overarching goals

With a rich heritage and an academic tradition dating back to 1614, the University of Groningen is an academic community with a strong sense of belonging and a culture of innovative teaching and research. Within this community, we can be curious, ask questions with an open mind, and engage with each other and with society. In this way, the University enables its students to become active, independent, critical, and responsible citizens of the world. Innovation, open-mindedness, and especially engagement with society are therefore at the heart of the brand strategy of the UG. They are essential to our University's future. Therefore, they are the input for our three social media objectives for the coming years.

2.1   Optimizing online reputation

Our first social media objective is to optimize our online reputation. We will make the University of Groningen more attractive online for different target groups, and we will pay close attention to the needs and wishes of our followers. We also want people to talk about the University on social media platforms, so that we can optimize our reputation. We will do so by:
- Increasing our share-of-voice on the topics of academic freedom, integrity, inclusion, sustainability, and openness.
- Carefully monitoring sentiment, which will allow us to see whether users of platforms have positive or negative interactions. In cases of negative interaction, we will of course intervene in an appropriate manner, so that we can restore our reputation.
- Being consistent in all our communications in look, feel, and tone of voice, in order to strengthen our corporate identity. This way, we will be more easily recognized on social media by current and potential followers.

Our share-of-voice

2.2   Increase brand awareness

Our second social media objective is to increase our brand awareness. Increasing our brand awareness is very important because it makes people remember us more often and more quickly, and it makes you top of mind: if people want to know something about a certain subject, they are more likely to approach or visit the brand they remember online. We will increase our brand awareness by:

- Maximizing our organic presence by posting more frequently on Instagram, TikTok, and LinkedIn, so that the algorithm makes us more visible on the social media platforms. For Instagram, this means an optimal frequency of four feed posts per week. We also want to share stories daily. For LinkedIn, this means four posts, and for TikTok at least one video per week.
- Listening carefully to our followers and responding to their needs, so we can offer more relevant content that has a high chance of being shared in a larger network.
- Actively encouraging people to share content or to participate in social media formats and activities.
- Investigating whether we can set up a partnership with an influencer who can use their niche if we want to convey certain messages on academic freedom, integrity, inclusion, sustainability, and openness.
- Boosting one post each month in a mini campaign to effectively reach potential followers beyond our current group of regular followers. This way, the number of followers should grow quicker than in the previous years.

We will increase our our reach +engagement rate.

2.3   Boost community management

When communicating online, contacts want to feel like they are talking to a 'real person' rather than a robot. If we pay more attention to community management, we can increase our reach and attract new followers. Of course, good community management also has a positive effect on optimizing our online reputation and increasing brand awareness.

- We will pay more attention to answering questions that we receive on the feed and privately. Any user who asks a question should receive a response within 24 hours instead of having to wait for a couple of days.
- We will no longer respond to questions only but also to comments and photos that are shared with us or in which we – as the University of Groningen – are tagged. This way, we will start the conversation, lower the threshold for followers to contact us, and provide the best customer care.
- We will facilitate opportunities that make it easier for followers to connect and help each other. For example, we will set up Facebook groups in which current and future students can easily get in touch with each other.

The ultimate objective is to reduce the amount of incoming questions because we will have created a better awareness of what is going on and because followers will be better able to help each other. On the other hand, we will increase our engagement rate, which will make us more visible on social media platforms, thereby increasing our reach.

3.0   Target audiences of the University of Groningen

As the University of Groningen, we communicate with various target groups, both offline and online. We will first map out the demographic characteristics of these target groups before zooming in on the social media platforms and the target group-specific information linked to them.

Future students

The group of future students is very diverse. Not just in terms of age, but also in terms of cultural background. We can distinguish between future Bachelor's students, who are 16-22 years old, and future Master's students, who are a little older: 18-25 years old. Moreover, some of these students are from the Netherlands, while others live outside the Netherlands – either within or outside Europe. Students who are interested in following a Bachelor's degree programme are mainly active on YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. Students who are looking for a Master's degree programme can be reached through Facebook.

The use of social media platforms is very important for this target group. Through various channels, we can reach new people who might be interested in studying at the UG.

Current students

A large target group of the UG are current students. These students generally fall in the 18-24 age group. Seventy-five percent of our current students are from the Netherlands, while 25% have an international background. Both audiences follow us on Instagram and Facebook, and are less present on Twitter and LinkedIn. Students like to be active and involved with the UG. We can tell by the high engagement rate on the platforms on which these students are active, compared to other groups.

We consider our current students to be a connecting factor when it comes to reaching new students. They can act as UG ambassadors who enjoy sharing their experiences of our University's content with their own network. It is therefore necessary to stay in touch with this target group, and to offer them support where necessary.

Alumni

According to our database, the UG had 144,126 alumni as of 2018. Our alumni are predominantly of Dutch nationality (followed by Chinese, German, and Indonesian). Most of them live in Groningen and the surrounding areas; are aged 20-29 and 30-39, followed by 40-49; studied at FEB, followed by the faculties of Arts, Behavioural and Social Sciences, Medicine, and Law (which is also reflected in the stats); and graduated with a Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, or doctorandus (former Dutch combination programme). Of the alumni, 8.22% (11,853) have donated to the University at least once. 4.52% are couples/live together as partners.

Our social media goal for alumni is to get them involved and engaged with our content on both the alumni social media accounts and on corporate social media accounts. Since our alumni range in age from recently graduated young professionals to pensioners, we engage with them on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Eventually, their engagement should act as a gateway to, for example, donating to the Ubbo Emmius Fund or signing up for further courses or training offered by the UG.

Academics – within and outside the UG

A broad and international target audience consisting of professors, lecturers, and researchers. Most of them are quite active on Twitter and LinkedIn, but they may also be active on other platforms such as Instagram. Our goal is to inform them about what's going on at the UG in terms of science and research and to engage them in projects.

Staff

Within this group, we can distinguish between our current staff and potential staff. Our current UG staff (January 2019) is 42% female, 58% male (academic staff) and 59% female, 41% male (non-academic staff). Our academic staff is 40% international, 60% Dutch. Of the non-academic staff, 6% are international. Our goal is for our staff members to engage with our content—they should be our brand ambassadors. Our current staff members follow us on all platforms they use. Senior (research) academic staff are likely to follow us on Twitter and LinkedIn. Younger staff and support staff are expected to follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

Our potential new staff members, both Dutch and international, are a broad audience. Our main goal is to recruit these new staff members with content based on our Employee Value Proposition. The UG's recruitment and engagement focus is mostly on (senior) academic staff, with an additional focus on female

academics. Most academics are from a slightly older demographic. Academics are active on LinkedIn and Twitter, as well as a range of more specific platforms like ResearchGate.

Media and journalists – national & international

Press and media are important target groups. Our content currently consists mainly of news items about research or corporate policy, to profile the University of Groningen.

Politics and management – local, regional, national & international

This audience is of great importance because of the effect on our corporate reputation. This group is not at all homogeneous. As a public institution, the way these stakeholders view and value our organization should be mostly positive because we depend largely on government funding. Several politicians follow our work quite intensively through social media.

Groningers, Frisians, and inhabitants of North Netherlands

The UG has been here since 1614. We have an intensive relationship with the City (of Talent) and the Northern region (Groningen, Drenthe, Fryslan). We want to show the inhabitants of the Northern Netherlands what the University can mean for them and this region, and how they can interact with us. We pay attention to specific news on our social media channels, and try to engage with the Groningen and Northern audience. For example, we do not often post in English.

Businesses and business relations

Since valorization has become more and more important, the UG is investing in corporate relations. This audience is also of great importance because of the effect on our reputation. They engage with the UG specifically on LinkedIn and Twitter.

4.0 Current situation of the UG social media channels

Now that we know which objectives we have in mind for the UG's social media channels and which target groups we generally deal with, we can take a closer look in this chapter at the corporate social media channels we manage. Below, we will outline facts & figures, target group-specific information, and our plans for the coming year.

4.1   Facebook

Facts & figures
- Facebook had 1.93 billion active users per day in the third quarter of 2021 (Statista).
- Facebook use among teenagers is gradually declining. While 71% of teens still claimed to use the platform in 2015, the number has now dropped to 67% (GlobalWebIndex).
- Videos perform better than other content formats (Social Bakers).
- In addition to the fact that Facebook is frequently used by retailers as an advertising platform, many people are active in Facebook groups.
- Facebook Stories are on the rise: this content format has 500 million daily viewers (TechCrunch).

Current situation at the UG
The University of Groningen Facebook page has over 105,000 followers. Despite signs that the channel's influence is declining worldwide, we still welcome up to 50 new followers every week.

Our current Facebook target group consists of 50% men and 49% women aged 25-34 (52.7%), 18-24 (25.7%), and 35-44 (approximately 10%). Less than 1% of our followers are between 13 and 17 years old. Most of our followers are located in the Netherlands (30,122; 12,752 of which are in Groningen) and in Indonesia (14,056). Other countries where our followers are located are Brazil (7,820), Germany (3,950), India (3,919), and the US (1,979). Our followers are mainly English-speaking (36,621), followed by Dutch-speaking (21,192).

Most of our posts on Facebook are aimed at a broad audience. We share events and webinars, international student blogs, news articles, and science-related

content. We make little use of video content: most posts are supported by static images. We do community management on the platform, but not actively: we regularly respond to other people's posts and manage a [Facebook group for international students](#), in which we post a few updates ourselves.

Future plans
Based on the facts, the trends, and the current situation, these are the starting points for the coming years:
- Even though our growth on Facebook is not very rapid, the platform will continue to be an important part of the media mix if we want to reach prospective students, current students, and alumni.
- We will continue to post 3-4 times a week on average, but will offer more video content on the page – at least once a week – and start with Facebook Stories, which will allow us to increase our reach and attract new followers.
- We know that our Facebook followers are relationship builders.The 'community feeling' is becoming increasingly important on Facebook, so we will offer different ways to achieve this. We will start several Facebook groups and take steps to improve community management, which will enable us to answer questions from our followers faster and better.

4.2   Instagram

Facts & figures:
- At the end of 2019, Instagram Stories had 500 million monthly active users ([Statista](#)).
- 67% of Gen Z and 57% of Millennials use the platform, compared to only 38% of Gen X ([GlobalWebIndex](#)).
- 98% of marketers say Instagram is the most influential platform for influencer marketing ([Sprout Social](#)).
- Posting videos results in more interactions.
- 83% of people use Instagram to discover new products and services ([Facebook for Business](#)).

Current situation at the UG
[The platform](#) has grown tremendously in recent years. The majority of our followers live in Groningen (18.5%; we assume they are students), followed by Jakarta (2.6%), Amsterdam (1.9%), Utrecht (1.0%), and The Hague (0.9%). The majority of our Instagram followers are between the ages of 18-24 (37.7%), followed by 25-34 (40%); 1.2% percent are between the ages of 13-17. Besides the fact that we can reach young people through Instagram, we are convinced that the account is best used in communicating to current students. We are growing by 100-150 new followers every week, but we occasionally have outliers with 300 new followers.

The content we offer is currently focused on reach – we choose to share photos of the University of Groningen and the student cities of Groningen and Leeuwarden. We do not take the majority of the photos ourselves; we often repost from other users. In addition to posting photos, we increasingly often post videos because we have noticed that video content scores better. In our Stories, we often share student blogs, events, and activities that are organized by the UG or another party. We share polls, quizzes and takeovers – which the public appreciates. We very actively manage the community on the channel: under the posts and in the Direct Message box, we try to respond quickly with a 'twinkle in the eye'.

Future plans
Based on the facts, the trends, and the current situation, these are the starting points for the coming years:
- Instagram will be the most important channel for the University of Groningen. We will make every effort to increase our reach on Instagram.
- We will further professionalize the platform and the content that we offer. This means that we must start working with fixed formats, so that we can safeguard the UG's corporate identity and be consistent in our communications. This applies to all departments and faculties that are active on Instagram.
- We will be filling in some of the content in a different way. Because our target group has become older, we will not only offer content for future students but also for our current students.
- Followers are increasingly using Instagram to read important updates about the UG. There will be a slight change in the content of our posts. In addition to sharing fun and relatable content, we will also be more informative.
- We will start collaborating with other accounts through Shared Reels and Instagram Lives for more exposure. Faculties accounts can make us co-owner of their video content, so we can post it as a collab. In this way we could create more exposure for the faculty content and we could increase reach.
- We will increase interactions – not only with new followers, but also with our current followers – by using takeovers, live streams, polls, and other features more often.
- In order to maximize our reach, we will advertise regular organic posts.

4.3   Twitter

Facts & figures:
- Twitter reached 211 million daily active users in the third quarter of 2021 (Statista).
- Tweets with hashtags generate 100% more engagement (Twitter).
- 93% of Twitter users are open to brands engaging in conversations, such as offering help and support (Twitter).

Current situation at the UG

[Twitter](#) is still the main platform for spreading news. It is a relatively formal platform, which allows us to share information easily. The account @univgroningen currently has 58,700 followers. This makes us the second-most followed Dutch university. In 2020, the number of followers grew from 54,100 to 56,600. For the time being, this steady growth appears to be continuing into 2021, despite the lower activity.

Our audience now mainly consists of staff (specifically academics), the media, politicians (who retweet research, for example), and members of the Board of the University. The latter group is itself very active. In particular, Rector Magnificus Cisca Wijmenga and President of the Board Jouke de Vries actively use Twitter and are retweeted by us almost daily. Students are mainly informed through other social media in any case: Twitter is more popular among users in higher age groups (approximately 60% of the users are between 35 and 65).

At the moment, we mainly use Twitter to share news about research and corporate affairs (for example, news about the University of the North). There is now less interaction with our followers through comments. Engagement with followers continues in certain cases where there is criticism or an enquiry about degree programmes at the UG.

Future plans

Based on the facts, the trends, and the current situation, these are the starting points for the coming years:

- In the near future, Twitter will have a less prominent role due to lower occupation. As outlined previously, the interaction with others in particular will become more basic, although urgent questions or criticism will of course continue to be answered in a timely manner.
- We will continue to regularly publish news about research and corporate affairs.
- Account growth is no longer a goal.

4.4   LinkedIn

Facts & figures:

- LinkedIn has more than 800 million active users in 200 countries and regions worldwide ([LinkedIn](#)).
- As of the second quarter of 2021, 60% of LinkedIn users were between the ages of 25 and 34 ([Statista](#)).

- In 2020, LinkedIn was voted the most trusted network ([Business Insider](#)).
- More than 46% of all social media traffic to company websites comes from LinkedIn ([LinkedIn](#)).
- Personal stories are better received than business updates from companies.

Current situation at the UG
[LinkedIn](#) is the UG's largest platform in terms of followers, with more than 200K subscribers (158K subscribers and followers in 2019 – a growth of 26%). The majority of our followers live in Groningen (38.7%), followed by Amsterdam (13.7%) and Utrecht (8.1%). Our followers on LinkedIn are mostly alumni and current staff members in mostly senior positions (33.47%) versus entry positions (33%). Most are employed in the sectors of education (12.7%), business development (10.7%), healthcare (8%), operations (7,1%) and research (6.3%). A majority of our followers work in large companies with 1,000-5,000 employees (21%) or in substantial companies (10,000+ employees).

We have increased the frequency of our posts, because we see that our subscribers appreciate the updates and we do gain hundreds of new followers every week. Posts about UG research lead to high-level discussion. Comments on LinkedIn are mostly directed at the researcher, rather than the institution. Therefore, LinkedIn is a preferred channel for research content and corporate content. It is also an excellent platform to highlight the successes of our staff members and researchers. In addition, we use LinkedIn to highlight our multidisciplinary partnerships, both with internal and external stakeholders and on a local, national, and international level.

Future plans
Based on the facts, the trends, and the current situation, these are the starting points for the coming years:
- We know that LinkedIn users not only want to read about scientific research, but also want to learn more about career opportunities at the UG and what the university is doing in the field of people and the environment, so we will further increase our reach by offering a greater variation in content. Besides sharing science-related content and events, we will structurally integrate updates from HR and the Communications Office in the content mix.
- On this platform, the tone of voice will remain formal but the content will be more personal.
- Despite the fact that we are growing significantly every week, we are going to use more video content to generate more brand awareness.
We will do active community management on the platform to open dialogue on certain topics, to increase the reach.

4.5   TikTok

Facts & figures:
- As of January 2021, TikTok has 689 million active users worldwide (DataReportal).
- In 2020, TikTok was the most downloaded app (Apptopia).
- 41% of TikTok users worldwide are aged between 16 and 24 years old (GlobalWebIndex).
- The engagement rate on TikTok is much higher than on other platforms (Influencer Marketing Hub).
- TikTok users spend more time on the app compared to users of other social media: in 2019, an average session on TikTok lasted nearly 11 minutes (Statista).

Current situation at the UG
In the summer of 2021, the UG launched TikTok as a pilot because this platform – and its users – are entirely new to the University. We post fun, short videos every week and we make sure that users of the platform can easily identify with them. Within a few months, the account has gained over 3K followers and our most popular video has a reach of 273,8K.

Future plans
Based on the facts, the trends, and the current situation, these are the starting points for the coming years:
- We will pay more attention to TikTok by delving deeper into the trends, and by posting regularly on the platform: at least once a week.
- Because the target audience on TikTok is very young compared to the audiences on other social platforms (16-24 years), we will create relatable content with a twinkle in the eye: we're going to create humorous and engaging content and we should be not afraid to push the boundaries.
- We will increase awareness by participating in challenges, using popular hashtags, and organizing livestreams.
- We will encourage collaborations with students and other parties to generate more reach.

4.6   YouTube

Facts & figures
- YouTube is the second largest search engine in the world, after Google (Alexa).
- YouTube expects to see a significant increase in the number of users in the future: by 2025, the number is expected to reach 2.8 million users (Statista).

- 77% of 15-35 year olds in the US use YouTube on a daily basis (Statista).
- Users aged 18 and over spend an average of 41.9 minutes on YouTube every day (Hootsuite).

Current situation at the UG
YouTube is one of the biggest social media platforms used by members of several target audiences. Currently, we have 32K subscribers, of which 54% are male and 46% are female. They are mostly 18-24 (42.4%), followed by 25-34 (26.4%), 35-44 (11.2%), and 13-17 (7.4%). Most subscribers come from the Netherlands (25.2%), followed by India (10.2%) and the United States (4.6%). Our YouTube account is found through traffic from external channels (22.6%) as well: Google Search (29.4%), the UG website (7.1%), and the UG LinkedIn account (5.2%).

There is no focus on YouTube content management at the UG, and there is no strategy in place (for example, a hero-hub-hygiene strategy). There is a lack of emphasis on keyword optimization, findability, consistency in our corporate identity, and community management. There is a lot of potential in this platform, but we would have to increase our efforts on the channel considerably.

Future plans
Based on the facts, the trends, and the current situation, these are the starting points for the coming years:
- We must invest in YouTube, because many Google and YouTube users visit this platform to find information. The University's YouTube channel must be a perfect search engine if people interested in the UG want to gather information on various subjects.
- The creation of a YouTube strategy is necessary, not only to determine the objective and the set-up of the channel but also to draw up guidelines for videos and descriptions, which must be met before they can be published on the platform.
- We must reduce the number of admin roles to create more overview, structure, and consistency.

4.7 Reddit

Facts & figures:
- In 2020, Reddit had 52 million daily active users (Reddit).
- As of autumn 2021, the Reddit app had more than 13 million daily active users worldwide on iOS (Statista).
- Most Reddit users in the US are men, but 15% of US adults say they use the platform (Statista).

Current situation at the UG
The UG is currently not active on Reddit but, because it is regularly mentioned by Redditors, there appears to be an opportunity for community management.
A subreddit for the University (r/universityofgroningen) used to be active at some point but it was banned due to a lack of moderation and use. This ban can be appealed by contacting the Reddit customer service in case there is a wish to reactivate the subreddit. Currently, mentions of the UG occur most frequently on the r/Groningen subreddit (9.6k Redditors), in which prospective students, current students, and alumni discuss various UG-related topics. Some of the posts are related to choosing a degree programme, finding accommodation, or discussing their experiences as students.

Content on Reddit is mostly user-generated and brands do not frequently post. Instead, brands or businesses (in this case, the UG) can open and moderate a subreddit, add related communities and useful links, and 'brand' their communities – but do not necessarily have to create content themselves. This is left up to the users, who use subreddits to ask questions, post photos, and share experiences.

Future plans
Based on the facts, the trends, and the current situation, these are the starting points for the coming years:
• We have no objective to expand our Reddit presence in terms of followers and reach, so we will close this platform.

4.8 WhatsApp

Nearly everyone in Europe uses WhatsApp. WhatsApp can be considered a social medium due to its wide range of social features: messaging, profile creation, photo/video sharing, status updates, stories, and more. We do not currently use WhatsApp in our work and do not consider the platform a social medium. However, we will not completely exclude the use of this platform if we notice that a certain target group has a need for contact via WhatsApp, or if we roll out a campaign in which the platform plays a crucial role in boosting community management.

4.9 Country specific: China

WeChat
This is now mostly managed by the UG's Chinese representative and a member of the International Marketing team, with the support of a student assistant within the International Marketing team. Aside from an online advertising campaign in China to drive up our following on WeChat, we are not planning on doing anything

major with WeChat this year. We have spent quite a lot of time and budget in setting it up but it is now pretty much up and running in the way we would like it. At the moment, we use it as a way to host information about the University and we post a weekly Chinese-language blog about student life. We currently have over 3,100 followers on WeChat while, two years ago, we had just over 1,000 followers on the platform. We are growing in numbers, albeit slowly.

Weibo
This platform is also managed by our Chinese representative. We have the biggest following of any Dutch university, but we are not planning on doing anything major with the platform. The UG account on Weibo is mainly used to post updates throughout the year. Two years ago, we had around 24,113 followers on Weibo; now, we have 70,753 followers on the platform. We may expect a slight further rise in followers after doing some online advertising in China, but not much.

Faculties are very welcome to contribute to our WeiBo and WeChat in terms of collaborating with them to make content for Chinese social media.

5.0   Content

Now that we know how we use the various channels, what the trends are, and which target groups we are reaching, it is important to make use of these insights by translating them into the UG's content guidelines.

5.1 Personalizing content

This may be obvious but users of online platforms like feeling that they are communicating with actual people rather than simply with a brand. They feel better understood, more involved, and their trust increases. This is also beneficial for the UG: an increase of trust among users has a positive influence on our online reputation. How are we going to personalize content?

- We're going to listen better to our target groups by closely monitoring the UG's sentiment and asking for input more often, so that we can offer relevant content at the right time.
- Storytelling will be the common thread in content, to bring messages to life. This way, we can show what we are doing in the community and that we are aware of our impact on people and the environment.
- We will adapt the UG's tone of voice to the target group with which we are communicating.
- The use of user-generated content remains important in order to increase brand awareness and reach.

5.2 Increasing the use of video content

From our own and others' experience, we know that the use of video content is indispensable in the social media landscape. Video content captures the imagination, attracts attention on online platforms, and is a great way to increase brand awareness and engagement with the target audience.

It is important to map out the customer journey – be it that of students, staff members, or external stakeholders – so that viewers can identify with the content of the video.

When producing a video, we need to carefully consider whether it will be time-specific or whether we are producing content that can also be used in the future. In addition, during production we must take into account the platform for which we are producing the video. Each platform has its own specifications when it comes to video content.

The first few seconds of a video determine whether a viewer will continue watching or not. The message or objective must therefore always be clear at the start of the video.

5.3 Professionalizing content

Besides the UG's corporate channels, almost every faculty or department within the organization has its own mix of channels. To make our own and others' channels more professional, it is necessary to take the following steps:

If you work with social media platforms, then some flexibility is desirable in case you need to capitalize on the moment. But in order to structure the posting a little better, we are going to work with recurring themes, which we can spread over a longer period. Themes from the brand strategy – academic freedom, integrity, inclusion, sustainability, and openness – are perfect.

Consistency in communications is key. In addition to the UG tone of voice, we will work with fixed formats, which will be available to the entire UG community.

If you set up an account or want to professionalize it further, there are a number of things you need to take into account. You can read about them in the Social Media Best Practices 2022.

6.0 Monitoring & community management

Social media is not (or no longer) just about sending out messages; it is also very much about building a community. In addition, social media platforms are now used for customer care purposes. By having good community management, the UG can facilitate discussions and quickly help contacts with questions without passing them from pillar to post. We will also be able to contain any negativity surrounding the UG brand.
By community management, we mean what happens after and beyond your social media publishing. It is part customer service, part listening to the internet, and part being active in discussions that relate to your brand. With good community management in place, we are able to optimize our online reputation.

6.1 Monitoring

By monitoring, we mean listening in on and tracking conversations that relate to the University of Groningen. We need to know the online sentiment about the University and what topics are trending. This way, we can get to know our current and prospective followers better, respond to their needs, and build up their trust in the UG. Therefore, we are using Coosto to monitor our progress with optimizing the University's online reputation by keeping track of the University's share of voice for key terms.

6.2 Engaging

When we look for engagement with our target groups, we mean that we want to keep the conversation alive and that we want to contact them in an original way. Community management is key if you want to maintain contact with your followers and attract new ones. Therefore, we are scaling up our community management activities in an effort to encourage conversation about the UG:
We need to encourage followers to share more content about the University of Groningen. We can do so by responding to posts in which the UG is tagged. This can be done by simply liking them or commenting on them.
We have to keep the brand personality of the UG and the corresponding tone of voice in mind, but we can adapt our way of communicating on the platform and to the target group. We should not be afraid to add some 'twinkle in the eye' in our comments, especially when we talk to current and prospective students.
We need to be more proactive about engaging with our community by incorporating community engagement posts and formats into our posting schedule.

6.3 Moderating

Moderation is very important when it comes to optimizing online reputation management. In moderating our platforms, we are weeding out comments and conversations that do not add value and troubleshooting complaints or negative comments. We use Coosto for moderation to get an overview of all comments and conversations. We can then undertake the following actions:
If we have received negative comments and they do not add any value, we will hide them on the channel if possible.
If we receive a question or comment that could potentially pose a risk to our online reputation, we will contact the spokespersons.
Hiding or ignoring negative messages does not mean that we do not enter into a dialogue if a follower asks us a critical question.

6.4 Measuring

By measuring, we mean analysing how our brand is perceived. In order to be able to properly assess how our posts – and thereby the three social media objectives that we have defined for the coming years – are received, we will use Coosto to generate a monthly analysis of the social media channels.

7.0   Organization

With our target audiences and channels in mind, how are we going to develop our organization in a way that allows us to produce content and monitor the social media sphere to reach our goals?

The previous chapters made it clear that we need to go through various processes and steps to achieve our objectives. One part – which we have not yet discussed but which is very important in achieving our objectives – is the organization of the Content team and the cooperation with other departments within and outside the UG.

7.1 Team expansion

The tasks assigned to the Content team and which are social media related are: social media management, webcare & community management, content creation, and social media analysis. Managing the social media channels is now the responsibility of the Digital Content Coordinator, while the rest of the tasks are divided among various student assistants. If we are going to scale up the creation of content – posting more frequently and using more different formats – analysis of the results, further professionalization of the platforms, and optimizing online reputation, then further expansion of the team is necessary. This can be achieved by hiring additional student assistants. In addition, it is desirable to appoint a Social Media Manager, who can focus more on strategy and can set up and develop campaigns and projects, while the Digital Content Coordinator can focus more on executive tasks and other online activities (website, newsletters and blogs) together with the student assistants.

Digital content coordinator + team | Communication | Services | Faculties

Social media manager + team

UG target audiences
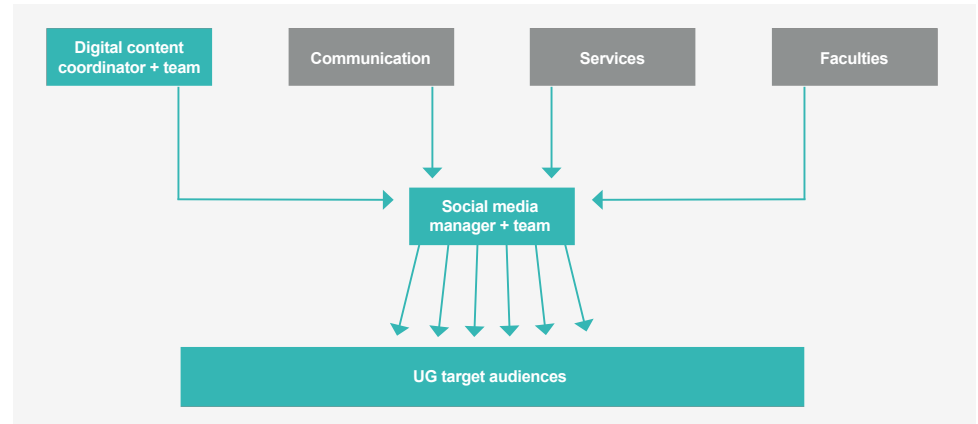
7.2 Group all social media platforms under one person and/or team

At the moment, the channels are divided under two different teams within the Communication Office. In order to have more consistency in tone of voice, look & feel, and community management, it is wise to bring all social media platforms together under one person and/or one department.

7.3 Better cooperation with the Communication Office

Social media channels are communication channels. That is why it is necessary to not isolate social media channels but to integrate them into the mix of communication channels. This allows us to properly weigh up which channels we can use to get a particular message across to a particular target group. By using social media posts, we can offer content in an accessible way and reinforce the themes from the brand strategy.

7.4 Better cooperation between Communication Office and faculties, UG departments, and external stakeholders

It is a fact that, in addition to the UG's corporate channels, there are many other social media channels hosted by faculties and departments within the UG and external stakeholders that also have a link to us as a university. To provide the colleagues who manage these social media platforms with better support in terms of advice and content, it is important that the social media team can be easily found in the organization. The social media team will become more visible by actively seeking contact with internal and external stakeholders by organizing events (such as the Online Marketing Consultation - in Dutch: Online Marketing Overleg), offering consultation hours, and providing a digital space within the UG environment where the team can post content, guidelines and policies, that can then be used or reused by colleagues.

rug.nl