

Unleashing Arts And Cultural Outputs In Managing University Reputation

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ABSTRACT

In today's intensely competitive educational landscape, university reputation has become a major conversation point. Research has demonstrated the importance of a university's reputation in influencing prospective students' choices about which universities to attend. Using ranking and rating systems to assess a university's reputation is a common practice. The majority of these strategies are based on standards connected to the university's research output. This method highlights the 'outcome by design' idea, which states that the data, observation, or measurement to be collected must be defined during the planning phase of any activities or programmes. Consequently, the accumulated information can be transformed into significant outputs such as complete reports, documentation, and analysis for academic publications. Using this strategy, the university is going to be able to capitalize on these outputs to enhance its score on numerous significant ranking methodology indicators, ensuring that its reputation is at its highest possible level.

Keywords: Managing, Reputation, University Ranking, Outcome by Design

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In general, reputation is essential for the success of any business and organization (Herbig & Milewicz, 1993). A positive reputation can attract customers, investors, and partners, leading to growth and profitability. Conversely, a negative reputation can result in lost sales, decreased market share, and damaged relationships with stakeholders. In today's digital age, reputation management has become even more critical as information spreads rapidly through social media and online platforms (Helm & Klode, 2011; Kaul et al., 2015). Universities and Higher Learning Institutions around the world are experiencing the same challenges in managing their reputation because reputation will significantly impact their ability to perform their basic functions - Teaching and learning, research and serving the community (Ressler & Abratt, 2009). Highly reputable universities will not have issues attracting and retaining students and staff, as well as getting more funding for research and community engagement (Huenneke et al., 2017). In contrast, if the university has a low or bad reputation, it will struggle in all these areas, which can ultimately lead it to question its reason for existence, especially for private institutions, since they may be unable to sustain its operations (Merchant et al., 2014; Munisamy et al., 2014).

Ranking and rating, on the other hand, are two methods gaining popularity for measuring the quality of universities (Harman, 2011). Even though there is not a single ranking methodology that can accurately measure all the performance elements of a university fairly, at least the majority of the approaches sufficiently provide useful data for the universities to benchmark their performance against others. By critically analyzing the different indicators considered for different types of ranking, the basic SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis can be done so the university can objectively identify the areas for improvement to improve its position in ranking. For top performers in rankings, these universities will promote their excellent achievements widely as part of their public relations strategy to communicate with their stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, industrial partners, and the broader community, through press releases, social media, newsletters, and events. In other words, their good ranking positioning is very significant to their visibility and branding, which will ultimately enhance their reputation.

If we take a closer look at the ranking methodologies of established rankings such as Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) and Times Higher Education (THE), a large portion of the measured elements is associated with research outputs. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of QS and THE indicators for the world university ranking. For THE, adding up the research-related indicators' weightage (Research + Citations + Industry Income) yields an aggregate value of 62.5%, indicating that the methodology used for THE is biased towards research performance. In contrast, despite a much lower weightage being given to research output in QS (Citations = 20%), the Academic Reputation indicators (40%) can be indirectly associated with research. This is because the scoring of these indicators was entirely based on a survey conducted among academics on the perceptions of peers. If academicians at any university achieve a high number of publications and citations, there is a high chance that their college and collaborators will acknowledge their expertise and be prolific, which in turn results in more nominations from their partners and collaborators who participated in the survey instrument. Therefore, combinations of those two indicators (Citations + Academic Reputation) will give 60% of the total score, strongly suggesting that research outputs are significant for QS ranking methodology as well.

Table 1 QS & THE Indicators Breakdown by Weightage (Web-1 & Web-2)

QS Indicators	Weightage	THE Indicators	Weightage
<i>Academic Reputation</i>	40	Teaching	30
Employer Reputation	10	Research	30
Faculty Student Ratio	20	Citations	30
Citations	20	International Outlook	7.5
International Faculty	5	Industry Income	2.5
International Student	5		
TOTAL	100		100

2.0 CLOSE LOOP FRAMEWORK

The feasibility of the proposed framework will entirely depend on a deep understanding of how the outputs of art and design disciplines should be strategic to produce value-added information, which then can be materialized to become substantial research outputs of the university. Instead of planning typical activities and programmes, the organizer must, at

the planning stage, systematically include the elements in Figure 1 whenever possible. This is to enable a ‘closed loop process’ where, consciously, everybody involved clearly understands their role and task when executing the activities or programme.



Figure 1: Elements Considered for Outcome Based Framework

Figure 2 exhibits the typical process flow that did not involve any value-added strategy during the planning stage. Since there is no allocation for specific measurable tasks, the reporting produced at the end of the day may only have general and basic information which contains unstructured data and which is not suitable for further research element processing. However, if the ‘Outcome by Design’ framework is followed as shown in Figure 3, there will be certain elements which need to be conducted at specific execution stages which will be gathered towards the completion of the process. With a great attention given to the types of data needed, a very rich research resource can be produced and subsequently can be used for multi-type of analysis and synthesis not only to produce comprehensive report but also to produce high quality research outcomes.

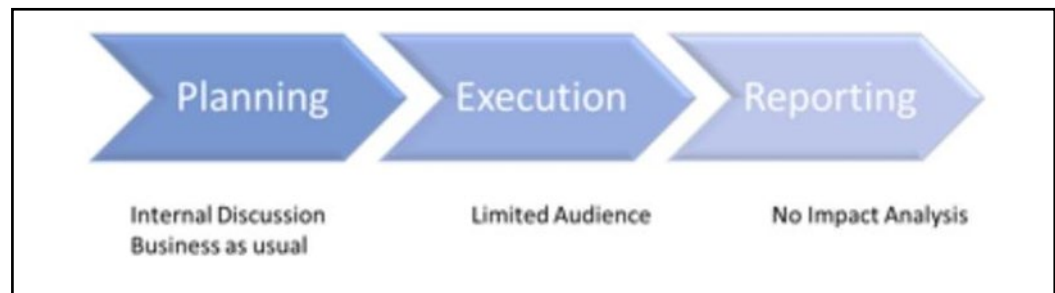


Figure 2: Typical Process Flow for Arts and Design

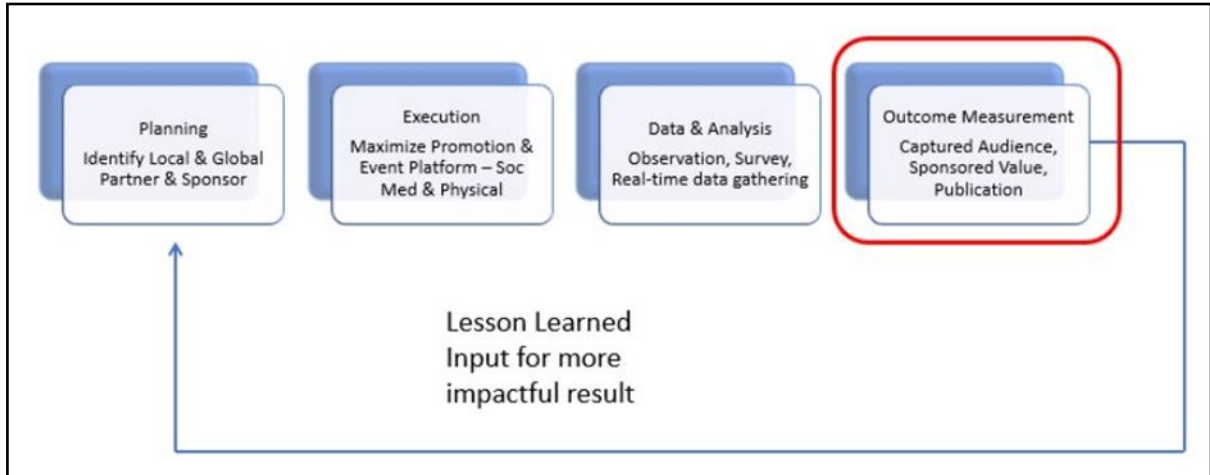


Figure 3: Close The Loop Process Flow to Support Outcome by Design Concept.

3.0 CASE STUDY: POTENTIAL RESEARCH OUTPUT FOR UITM

As most rankings utilized Scopus publications as their main research output reference (Aguillo et al., 2010), this case study analysis will be based on data retrieved from the Scopus database. A snapshot of the ten (10) years of publication record from 2013 to 2022 reveals a consistently growing trend of total publications for Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) which is one of the largest public universities located throughout Malaysia. Initially, the average publication output for three years is about 2000 and will gradually increase exceeding 4000 publications in 2022 (Figure 4).

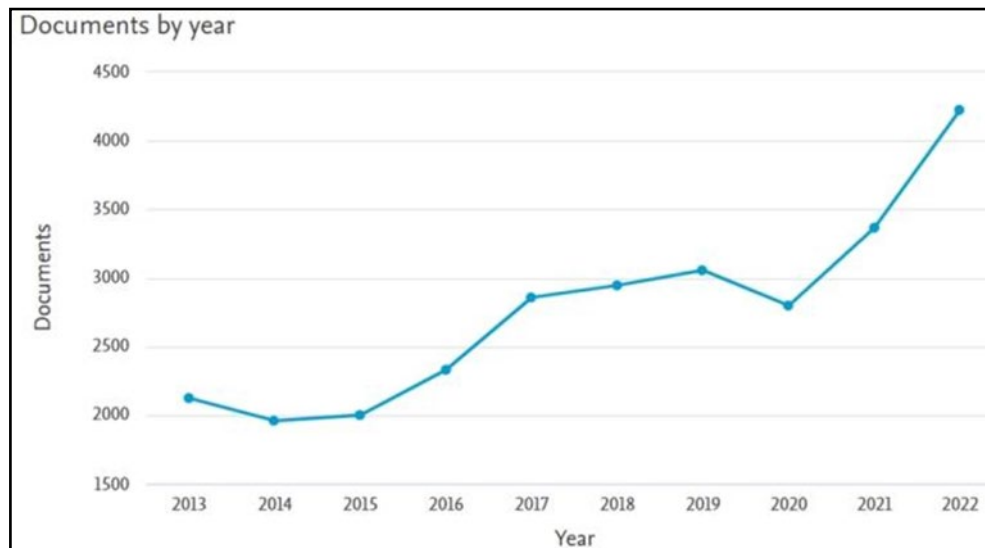


Figure 5: Arts and Cultural Publication Records from 2013 to 2022.

When UiTM management initiated a specific Performance Indicator (PI), namely Cultural Works and Exhibition, starting in 2021, it was intended to drive better compilation and recording of initiatives, activities and programs conducted under the Art and Cultural discipline throughout the year. With a specific target in mind, the College of Creative Arts, which combines the three main creative faculties: Faculty of Art and Design, Faculty of Film, Theatre and Animation and Faculty of Music (Web-3), can establish and increase the performance of this PI from year to year, as shown in Figure 6. With only 147 activities recorded in 2021, the number has increased by 26.5% in 2022 with a total of 186 activities.

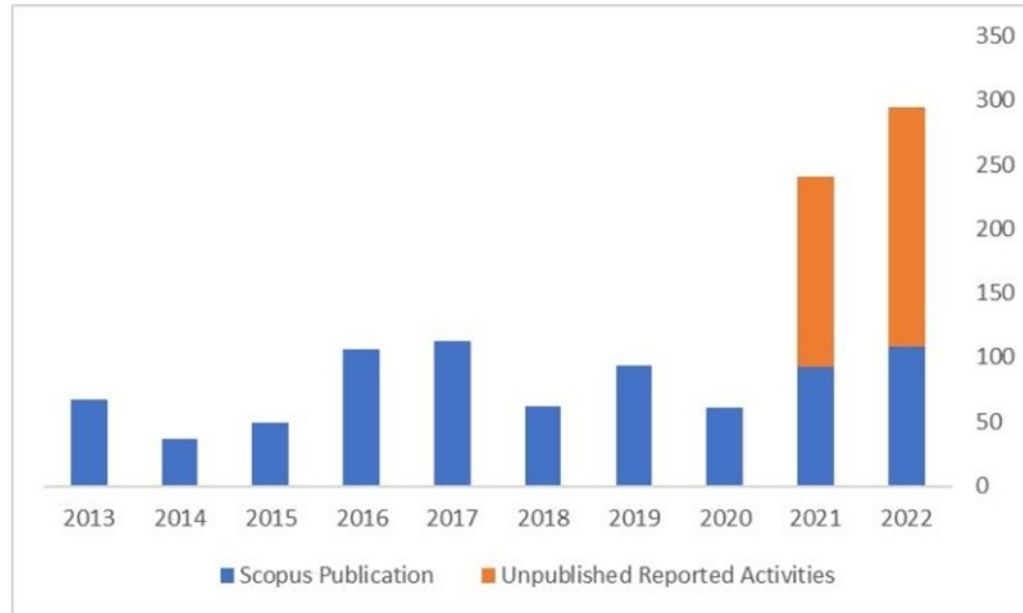


Figure 6: Scopus Publication vs Art & Design Reports Trend

Leveraging the suggested Output by Design framework, we can assume that all these recorded activities have the potential to produce at least one output. If every output of the activities can be translated into an academic write-up, we can project that this situation will significantly improve the publication output every year. Considering this situation, where each activity can be translated into one publication, the total number of publications for Art and Culture is projected to increase by 2-3 times the current publication rate, as illustrated in Figure 6. In return, the high number of research outputs will create a positive impact on the reputation of UiTM through publications and citation measurements and at the same time will help to enhance UiTM's academic visibility. Ultimately, this impact led to higher chances of getting more citations as well as academic and employer ranking nominations by partners and collaborators of UiTM around the globe.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the "Outcome by Design" framework presents a strategic approach for universities to leverage arts and cultural outputs in enhancing their reputation. By intentionally designing arts and cultural activities with clear research outcomes, institutions can transform creative works into measurable academic contributions. This approach helps align these traditionally underrepresented fields with the broader goal of improving research outputs, which significantly influence university rankings. The framework emphasizes embedding measurable elements into the planning and execution of arts and design activities. This allows for the systematic collection of data that can be translated into research publications, enhancing visibility in academic spheres. As seen in the case of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), applying this model can significantly increase publication rates, helping universities boost their presence in rankings like QS and THE, which heavily weight research output and citations.

Additionally, this approach fosters cross-disciplinary collaboration, encouraging the integration of creative outputs into broader academic research. Such collaboration strengthens the research ecosystem, enabling arts and design contributions to be valued not only for their cultural significance but also for their academic potential. This could lead to greater academic recognition, improved university visibility, and new partnerships.

Overall, the "Outcome by Design" framework offers universities a pathway to maximize the academic value of their arts and cultural disciplines, driving higher research outputs and improving their global standing. By strategically incorporating these activities into a research-focused framework, universities can enhance their reputation and long-term success in the competitive higher education landscape.

ETHICS STATEMENTS

Please include an ethical statement confirming that approval was obtained from an ethical committee with an approval number and that relevant informed consent was obtained from respondents.

AUTHOR STATEMENTS

Ir. Dr. Amirul Abd Rashid wrote the problem statement and literature review. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Religiana Hendarti performed the data collection and data analysis. Liyana Mohd Ramly continues with the conclusion and visualization. Norasikin Alimom validates for final writing, review and editing.

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DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The authors agree that this research was conducted without any self-benefit, commercial or financial conflicts and declare no conflicts of interest with UiTM.

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