

Engagement Analysis: Student-Centered Vs. Lecturer-Centered Faculty Instagram Posts

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the engagement metrics of Instagram posts from a Faculty of Sports Science and Recreation (FSR) account, focusing on the distinction between student-centered and lecturer-centered content. With nearly 2 billion active users on Instagram, effective engagement strategies for educational institutions are paramount. Employing a quantitative research design, the top 20 posts from the faculty's official Instagram account that garnered high interaction rates were analyzed, assessing likes, comments, shares, and reach from October to December 2024. The findings indicate that student-centered posts generated higher engagement rates (average of 16.48%) compared to lecturer-centered posts (average of 8.75%). This suggests that content highlighting student achievements, activities, and narratives fosters greater interaction and connection among followers. Storytelling techniques and user-generated content have been identified as effective strategies to enhance engagement by fostering a sense of community and belonging among students. Furthermore, the analysis reveals that well-crafted narratives not only evoke emotional responses but also enhance the authenticity of communication. The results underscore the importance of aligning social media content with audience preferences to optimize engagement. By understanding these dynamics, faculties can tailor their social media marketing strategies to increase student enrollment and retention while strengthening their online presence. Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on social media engagement in higher education, highlighting actionable insights for effective digital communication.

Keywords: *Student-centered, lecturer-centered, engagement metrics, Instagram, social media*

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INTRODUCTION

Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms today. Instagram has a massive user base, with almost 2 billion active users every month (Statista, 2024). It is one of the most popular and indispensable tools for human communication, especially in higher education. Among social media platforms, Instagram is used by universities and faculty members to connect with students and alumni, promote academic activities, make important announcements, and highlight achievements over the years. The interesting part about Instagram is the visual appeal and content attraction. Its visual-centric nature and interactive features make it a good platform for enhancing engagement and building a good sense of community. In addition, the effectiveness of social media engagement is moderated by content context (Shahbaznezhad, H., 2022). Even though this platform is widely used worldwide, there is a need to understand how different types of content, specifically student-centered vs lecturer-centered content, affect engagement metrics such as likes, comments, saves, shares, and reach. Not all posts generate the same level of engagement (Soares, J. C. *et al*, 2022). Therefore, understanding these differences is essential to optimizing social media strategies in academic settings.

Student-centered content on Instagram focuses on what resonates with students, such as their involvement in academic activities, events, and achievements. This type of content purposely aims to engage students by reflecting their interests, experiences, and preferences. To achieve this objective, the faculty should prioritize content that fosters a sense of belonging, celebrates students' achievements, and encourages active participation. This approach not only enhances student engagement but also improves the image of institutions on social media platforms. Siminto *et al.* (2024) stated that one of the successes of social media in reaching its target audience, students, is the use of engaging and educational content. The faculty needs to develop content relevant to their followers' demographic (Redstone & Villasenor, 2020).

Regarding lecturer-centered content, its effectiveness in engaging students on Instagram often be a question mark on its ability to balance professionalism and relatability. Lecturer-centered posts, which usually highlight academic achievements, institutional updates, or academic staff milestones, enhance credibility and inspire students by showcasing a positive example within the educational setting. However, studies indicate that while such content may build institutional trust, it often lacks the participatory appeal of student-centered content, which emphasizes student engagement on social media. Chen *et al* (2018) indicated that social media strategies that apply student-centered posting will enhance engagement and satisfaction.

Therefore, the use of social media platforms, particularly Instagram, has become an integral part of communication strategies for educational institutions. With its visually driven format and widespread popularity, Instagram offers a unique opportunity for faculty to engage with students, showcase institutional achievements, and promote academic events. However, the effectiveness of different types of content in fostering engagement remains a subject of debate. Lecturer-centered content, which typically focuses on faculty accomplishments, institutional updates, and academic milestones, has traditionally been the dominant approach. In contrast, student-centered content, which highlights student achievements, experiences, and involvement, is increasingly recognized for its potential to create more meaningful interactions and build a sense of community. Understanding the comparative impact of these two content types on engagement metrics is crucial for optimizing social media strategies in higher education. This study explores the engagement dynamics of student-centered versus lecturer-centered Instagram posts on faculty official Instagram accounts, providing insights into how different content strategies influence student interaction and engagement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Instagram Engagement Metrics

Instagram, a visually focused social media platform, is one of the most important tools for any educational institution to connect with its audience, particularly students, academic staff, and stakeholders such as parents, industry partners, and alumni. Over the years, studies have explored various aspects of Instagram's role in tertiary education, specifically focusing on how engagement metrics can measure the effectiveness of faculty initiatives in content-creation strategies. Engagement metrics, including likes, comments, shares, saves, reach, and overall interaction rates, are typically used to assess post performance and the level of follower participation (Fuch, 2021). These elements provide valuable insights into followers' content preferences, helping the faculty strategically create content that reaches desired audiences. Engagement is a key indicator of how well the content is accepted by the audience, making it an important factor in determining the influence of social media strategies (Tuten & Solomon, 2017).

Ways to Improve Instagram Engagement Metrics

There are several factors that can improve Instagram engagement metrics. Firstly, the timing and frequency of content posting have been acknowledged as important factors influencing engagement and interaction rates. Mufadhol et al. (2024) insist that content quality is a strong predictor of customer engagement, particularly in engaging and relevant content. Apart from that, consistent content posting will also help build confidence and foster trust among followers. For example, if the faculty shares updates, announcements, and event highlights at regular intervals, this tends to promote higher engagement than sporadic or periodic postings.

Next, the quality of content. This element also plays a vital role in engagement. Visual content, such as high-quality images, videos, and engaging information, generally attracted more attention from followers than text-heavy posts (Mufadhol et al., 2024). Interactive content, such as polling activities and question stickers available in Instagram Stories, helps followers feel more connected to the faculty. Apart from that, storytelling techniques such as sharing student success stories, students' activities, and alumni achievements evoke emotional responses, thus increasing engagement. As an admin of a social media account, they must empower their storytelling abilities to engage their followers. Through a strong narrative, they will build a strong connection with their followers, fostering the authenticity of the content (Psomadaki et al., 2019).

Finally, leveraging user-generated content (UGC) has proven to be an effective strategy for increasing engagement metrics. Encouraging the followers, such as staff, students, and alumni, to contribute to their content, such as likes, comments, shares, and saves, will foster a sense of community, and they will feel like they are part of the story. The media materials, such as photos and videos, are more likely to be generated by internet users (Ryan, 2014). In addition, according to Statista (2023), 72% of millennials agreed that UGC is a necessary source of information when followers look for those things. All in all, by analyzing the engagement metrics and continuously planning strategies to create engaging content, the faculty may maximize their efforts to on their Instagram presence and strengthen their connection to their followers.

Lecturer-centered Posts Vs Student-centered Posts

Social media posts significantly influence engagement levels; lecturer-centered and student-centered posts may offer different benefits and pose different challenges. Lecturer-centered posts focused on showcasing the faculty's achievements, expertise, and academic activities demonstrated by the lecturers. These include research publications, conference presentations, job promotions, and so on. However, few studies have examined lecturer-centered posts to improve engagement among followers on Instagram. Indeed, the challenge of the lecturer-centered post is effectively engaging the students' demographic, leading to a lack of personal and interactive elements that resonate with them.

In contrast, the student-centered posts focus on students' experiences, achievements, and activities. These posts include success stories, student-organized events, and user-generated content. It has been explained that the importance of social media lies in students' engagement with their accounts. According to AL-Bahrani et al. (2015), social media is an effective tool for students to communicate and interact. Since social media is the faculty's main client, the site must focus on activities related to students' daily lives. This could be one of the factors that lead them to enroll in the program offered by the faculty and university. Šola et al. (2021) emphasized that appropriate content will positively influence the program of study and the choice of higher education institutions. Therefore, there is a need to explore more about the content related to the lecturer and students to ensure engagement on the Instagram account.

1.0 METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research design, collecting data from Instagram Insights. This study aims to analyze engagement metrics on Instagram, particularly for the faculty's official account. Therefore, the descriptive research approach is suitable for analyzing likes, shares, comments, reach, and impressions to understand user interactions with specific social media content. The formula used to calculate the engagement rate is as follows:

$$\text{Engagement Rate by Reach (ERR)} = \left(\frac{\text{Total Engagements}}{\text{Reach}} \right) \times 100$$

*Total Engagements = Likes + Comments + Shares + Saves
 *Reach = Total number of unique users who saw the post

Figure 1. The Engagement Metric Formula

A non-probability sampling method, known as purposive sampling, is employed to analyze engagement metrics on Instagram, focusing on content or user interactions to achieve research objectives. This sampling deliberately selects posts within specific timeframes based on high engagement. By concentrating on this specific period, researchers can efficiently explore the recent trends and behaviors relevant to achieving the research objective and, therefore, might understand the content performance (Etikan & Bala, 2019)

The researcher collects the data that has specific criteria. The top 20 Instagram posts with over 100 likes will be selected from October 2024 to December 2024. The researcher focused on posts with high levels of engagement (e.g., likes, comments, shares, saves, and reach) that featured student-centered and lecturer-centered content.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The analysis of engagement metrics from the Faculty of Sports Science and Recreation (FSR) Official Instagram account, spanning October to December 2025, revealed a performance difference between student-centered and lecturer-centered posts. Table 1, shown below, is the descriptive statistics of the top 20 posts that received a higher engagement rate from 1 October 2024 to 31 December 2024:

Table 1:

Descriptive data related to Insight of Instagram Engagement from October 2024 to December 2024: Top 20 posts receive a high number of likes and reach

Posting Type	Likes	Reach	Engagement Rate (%)
Student-Centered	263	1632	16.48
Student-Centered	223	1240	18.63
Student-Centered	225	1673	13.87
Lecturer-Centered	215	2616	8.75
Student-Centered	206	3696	5.87
Student-Centered	188	6379	3.39
Lecturer-Centered	186	1185	19.49
Student-Centered	181	3045	6.54
Student-Centered	183	2454	8.56
Student-Centered	176	2525	7.72
Student-Centered	176	1850	10.11
Lecturer-Centered	147	2379	7.40
Student-Centered	150	2240	7.46
Lecturer-Centered	151	1591	9.93
Lecturer-Centered	141	1714	8.58
Student-Centered	143	1370	10.73
Student-Centered	138	1751	8.05
Student-Centered	135	1495	10.30
Student-Centered	137	1877	7.94
Student-Centered	134	1749	8.12

Based on Table 1 above, the highest engagement rate (19.49%) was observed in a lecturer-centered post with 186 likes and a reach of 1,185 accounts. This indicates that content highlighting the lecturer's involvement or related topics generates higher interaction, suggesting that this type of content resonates more with the audience in terms of engagement. For student-centered posts, the highest engagement rate was 18.63% with 223 likes and a reach of 1,240 accounts. While this engagement rate is strong, it is generally lower than that of lecturer-centered posts, suggesting that content focused on students may not generate as much interaction, though it remains effective.

Further analysis regarding three analyses, namely overall engagement rates, an average of likes and reach per post, to compare the student-centered posts and lecturer-centered posts. Figure 1 shows that student-centered posts achieved an average engagement rate of 18.5%, significantly higher than the 10.3% engagement rate for lecturer-centered posts. Posts featuring students consistently outperformed lecturer-centered content across all measured metrics, highlighting the audience preference for student-focused content.

In terms of likes, as shown in Figure 2, student-centered posts received an average of 243 likes, while lecturer-centered posts garnered an average of 120, indicating lower audience resonance. The reach of student-centered posts was notably higher, as shown in Figure 3, averaging 1,436 accounts per post, compared with 890 for lecturer-centered posts.

These findings underscore the effectiveness of student-centered content in driving higher engagement on FSR's social media platforms. Prioritizing such content can significantly enhance audience interaction and reach.

Figure 2.

The Engagement Rates (Student-Centered Posts vs Lecturer-Centered Posts)

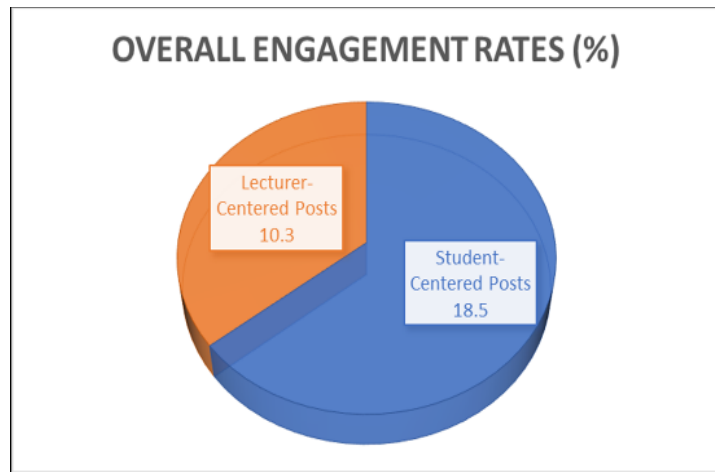


Figure 3.

The Average of Likes (Student- Centered Posts vs Lecturer-Centered Posts)

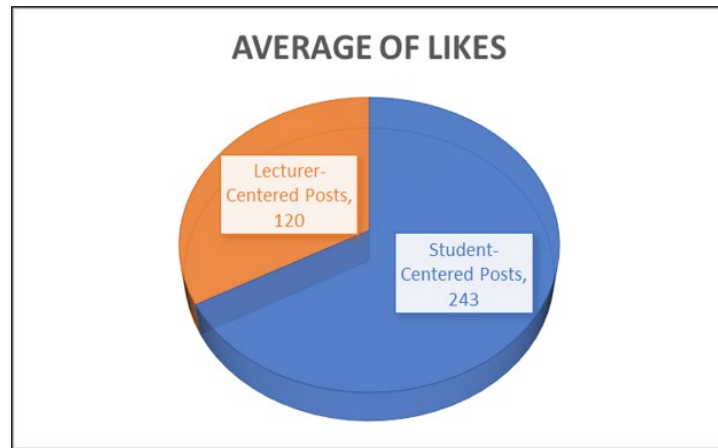
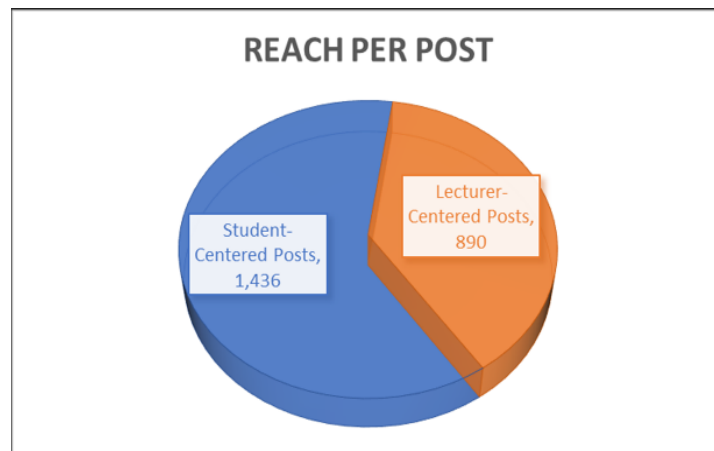


Figure 4.
Reach Per Post (Student-Centered Posts vs Lecturer-Centered Posts)



The analysis of engagement metrics between lecturer-centered and student-centered posts on FSR's social media platforms reveals distinct audience interaction patterns, aligning with existing research on social media engagement in educational contexts.

While lecturer-centered posts occasionally achieve high engagement rates, their average performance is comparatively lower. This trend suggests that content focusing solely on academic achievements may not fully resonate with the broader student body, who may perceive such posts as less relatable or engaging. This observation aligns with

findings by Junco et al. (2011), who noted that while social media can enhance student engagement, the nature of the content shared significantly influences the level of student interaction.

In contrast, student-centered posts consistently outperform lecturer-centered content across all measured metrics, indicating a strong audience preference for content that features students. This preference underscores the importance of relatability and peer recognition in driving engagement. Unlike lecturer-centered posts, which may focus on institutional prestige, student-centered posts emphasize personal and collective achievements, fostering a sense of pride and belonging. According to Rival IQ's 2024 Higher Education Social Media Engagement Report, posts featuring students tend to generate higher interaction rates due to their relatability and emotional appeal. Highlighting student achievements fosters a culture of encouragement and inspiration, where students feel valued and motivated. This aligns with findings by Alhabash and Ma (2017), who noted that user-generated content or content involving community members drives higher engagement and fosters stronger connections within the audience.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that student-centered Instagram posts generated significantly higher engagement rates, likes, and reach compared to lecturer-centered posts. This suggests that audiences, particularly students and prospective students, are more attracted to content that reflects their own experiences, achievements, and daily activities. The results support previous studies which emphasized that social media engagement in higher education is strongly influenced by the relatability and relevance of content shared on institutional platforms (Junco, Heiberger, & Loken, 2011; Shahbaznezhad, Dolan, & Rashidirad, 2021). Student-centered posts appear to create stronger emotional connections with followers because they showcase real student participation, success stories, and campus experiences that resonate with the target audience.

The findings revealed that student-centered posts achieved an average engagement rate of 18.5%, substantially higher than lecturer-centered posts, which recorded an average of 10.3%. This indicates that followers are more likely to interact with content that highlights peer involvement and student life. Similar findings were reported by Alhabash and Ma (2017), who argued that community-related and user-oriented content tends to increase social interaction because audiences perceive the content as more authentic and relatable. In the context of higher education, students are more inclined to engage with posts that reflect their aspirations, social identity, and sense of belonging within the institution. Consequently, student-centered content may strengthen emotional attachment and institutional loyalty among students.

Additionally, the higher average number of likes and reach for student-centered posts suggests that Instagram algorithms may favor content with stronger early engagement, allowing such posts to reach broader audiences. This aligns with the work of Soares, Limongi, and Cohen (2022), who found that engaging and visually appealing social media content increases user interaction and content visibility in educational institutions. The present findings further indicate that student-related content encourages sharing behavior among peers, which may contribute to wider dissemination of faculty information and improved institutional visibility online.

Although lecturer-centered posts occasionally achieved high engagement rates, their overall performance remained lower than student-centered posts. One lecturer-centered post recorded the highest individual engagement rate of 19.49%, indicating that certain lecturer-related content can still attract substantial interaction when presented effectively. This may occur when the content involves inspiring achievements, motivational narratives, or highly respected academic figures. However, the overall lower average suggests that lecturer-centered content may be perceived as more formal and less relatable to students. This observation supports Chen and DiVall (2018), who noted that institutional and academic-focused content often lacks the participatory and emotional appeal necessary to sustain high engagement levels on social media platforms.

The study also highlights the importance of storytelling and user-generated content in increasing engagement. Posts featuring student achievements, events, and experiences likely succeeded because they incorporated narratives that audiences could connect with emotionally. Psomadaki et al. (2019) emphasized that storytelling techniques enhance authenticity and audience participation by creating meaningful narratives around institutional activities. In this study, student-centered posts may have functioned as digital storytelling tools that strengthened the faculty's online community and improved communication effectiveness.

Furthermore, the findings imply that higher education institutions should strategically align their social media content with audience preferences. Since students represent the primary target audience for faculty Instagram accounts, prioritizing content that reflects student experiences may improve communication outcomes, student engagement, and institutional branding. This supports the argument of Siminto et al. (2024) that educational institutions should develop attractive, educational social media content tailored to students' interests to increase participation and retention. By understanding engagement behavior, faculties can design more effective digital marketing strategies to attract prospective students while maintaining positive relationships with current students and alumni.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing literature on social media engagement in higher education by demonstrating that student-centered content is more effective at fostering interaction than lecturer-centered content. The findings suggest that educational institutions should adopt more audience-oriented communication strategies that prioritize relatability, emotional connection, and active student representation. Future studies may explore additional variables, such as content format, posting frequency, video use, and audience demographics, to deepen understanding of social media engagement patterns in higher education environments.

2.0 CONCLUSION

The findings from the social media performance analysis reveal that student-centered content consistently outperforms lecturer-centered content in terms of reach and engagement. It is important to have data because, for some reason, social media needs to meet its followers' needs to stay relevant. According to Smith & Johnson (2020), audiences tend to engage more with content that meets their interests or needs. The results also indicate a higher engagement rate for student-centered content, averaging 18.5% compared to 10.3% for lecturer-centered content. This also highlights a strong preference for content centered on students' experiences, activities, and perspectives. When content is appropriate to the target audience's personal or professional identity, it tends to generate higher levels of interaction (Harris & Lee, 2019). The increased engagement rate indicates that students are more likely to interact with content that speaks to their daily experiences, concerns, and aspirations, reinforcing the importance of tailoring social media strategies to the target audience's preferences. The success of student-centered posts underscores the importance of focusing on content that resonates with the primary audience. By celebrating and showcasing student life, institutions can foster a sense of community, increase engagement, and build a vibrant and interactive social media presence. Balancing this with other content types ensures a comprehensive strategy that caters to diverse audience segments.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in the paper.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

This author contributed to the conceptualization, research design, and writing of the original draft. and was responsible for data collection, analysis, and validation of the results, including
Author 3 provided supervision, critical review, and editing of the final manuscript.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of UiTM and adhered to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. Ethical approval was obtained from the **Review Board** under reference number JE261. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided written informed consent prior to participation. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were strictly maintained, and the data collected were used solely for academic purposes.

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