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# COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF SPANISH UNIVERSITIES: FINAL CONSIDERATIONS AND RANKINGS

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** The communication strategies developed by universities can influence their position in academic rankings. The objective is to analyze the possible correlation between the type and quantity of university communication strategies and their ranking position. **Methodology:** It is based on the qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) technique. It consists of collecting, classifying, calibrating and analyzing data by assigning values with the aim of identifying underlying patterns and relationships.

**Results:** The results determine that the greater and more varied the implementation of communication strategies, the better position universities occupy in the rankings.

**Discussion:** Similarities and some differences are observed in terms of the development and implementation of the different types of communication strategies examined. **Conclusions:** The main conclusion is the confirmation that the Spanish universities best positioned in the rankings use a wide array of similar communication strategies to present themselves and apply to the international university scene, as institutions of high academic, teaching and research quality.

**Keywords:** institutional communication, university, communication strategies, academic rankings.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, competition affects countries and their societies in various spheres. University institutions are not immune to the role that competition plays both within and beyond national borders, and both inside and outside the classroom. In recent decades, academic rankings have proliferated, as well as their media and communication relevance. The race to appear at the top of international rankings means that university leaders must devise a series of strategies aimed at achieving the highest academic quality, and that of all other aspects emanating from the university, with the goal of providing excellent service in teaching, academics, and research. Inextricably linked to these communication strategies is another objective: to meet the need to compete with others; to gain prominence in the university landscape; to have a better image and prestige compared to rival universities; to create the best brand; and also to appear in the top positions of the rankings (Grau, 2015).

Academic rankings are part of a university's calling card (Grau, 2023). Most universities publicize their position as part of their presentation and prestigious image. This information is directed at society and, above all, at stakeholders, because a relatively good ranking represents a concise and direct way to demonstrate efficiency and accountability (Grau, 2023). A prominent position in academic rankings contributes to attracting talent, new students, faculty, and researchers. It also constitutes an effective tool in relation to impact and economic efficiency, data that are highly valuable for public and private investment. Therefore, rankings are used, more or less explicitly, by both universities and government agencies as an information mechanism to project a positive image or to demonstrate accountability (Grau, 2023).

The economic context is a relevant factor. University institutions are not exempt from the capitalist economic system that governs Western states like Spain, which other academics have termed academic capitalism (Chomsky, 2013; Guechá Hernández, 2018) or cognitive capitalism (Sierra Caballero, 2016). When applied to the realm of knowledge, teaching, and university research, this means that institutions are shaped by business competitiveness and commercialization (Collins & Gil-Sung, 2016). Consequently, universities develop marketing strategies similar to those of any other business, such as deploying institutional communication that reaches the level of a strategy for resilience and growth (Simancas-González & García-López, 2022). These economic factors mean that the positioning of universities in academic rankings also constitutes an effective tool for economic efficiency, due to its capacity to attract public and private investment.

These factors motivate the relevance and interest in conducting studies on university communication, such as comparative analyses of communication strategy trends or studies of new communication tools used by universities (Simancas-González & García-López, 2022; de Aguilera Moyano et al., 2010). Similarly, this study aims to examine and compare communication strategies designed by Spanish universities that rank highest in main international rankings.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

This study examines the communication strategies designed and developed by the 30 Spanish universities that rank highest in the 6 main international academic rankings. Then, based on the obtained data, the possible correlation between these strategies and the universities' rankings will be explored.

Academic rankings provide valuable information for comparing universities. Although they have biases and limitations due to the difficulty of comprehensively measuring such complex institutions with diverse societal functions, they provide useful, comparable information about universities (Grau, 2023). Rankings gather objective information such as scientific output, human and financial resources employed, student enrollment figures, and academic performance. They also consider subjective information such as research and teaching quality, the efficiency of financial investments, and student opinion and satisfaction surveys. This information enables comparisons of university quality between different countries and between universities within the same country, which is the focus of this study (Spain).

Given that communication strategies can influence the position these institutions occupy in the rankings, the interest lies in analyzing this causal relationship, as one of the objectives that this study intends to address.

In summary, the objective of the study is addressed through the following specific objectives:

- (1) To identify the 30 best-positioned Spanish universities in the 6 main international academic rankings
- (2) To record and describe the communication strategies used by the selected Spanish universities: organic strategies, web strategies and social networks, strategies that involve traditional and proprietary media
- (3) To study the correlation between the communication strategies developed by Spanish universities with respect to the final position they occupy in the rankings.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology developed in this study is based on the qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) technique. This involves collecting, classifying, calibrating, and analyzing data by assigning values to identify underlying patterns and relationships (Stewart, 2024). The QCA process is structured as follows:

### 3.1. Research Questions, Case Selection, and Causal Conditions

#### 3.1.1. Research Questions

- (1) What communication strategies do the highest-ranked Spanish universities use?
- (2) Is there a relationship between the communication strategies developed by Spanish universities and the final position these institutions occupy in the rankings?

### 3.1.2. Cases (Table 1)

They are composed of a selection of the 30 Spanish universities that occupy the highest positions based on the 6 main international rankings in the academic field.

**Table 1.**

*Identification of the cases under study: best positioned Spanish universities and main international rankings in the university field (2024 editions).*

<b>Cases</b>	
<b>Top-Ranked Spanish Universities</b>	
1 Autonomous University of Barcelona	16 Rovira i Virgili University
2 Complutense University of Madrid	17 Carlos III University of Madrid
3 University of Barcelona	18 University of La Laguna
4 University of Granada	19 University of the Balearic Islands
5 University of Valencia	20 University of Santiago de Compostela
6 University of the Basque Country	21 University of Alcalá
7 Pompeu Fabra University	22 University of Alicante
8 Autonomous University of Madrid	23 University of Cantabria
9 University of Navarra	24 University of Castilla-La Mancha
10 University of Seville	25 University of Málaga
11 University of Zaragoza	26 University of Murcia
12 Polytechnic University of Catalonia	27 University of Oviedo
13 Polytechnic University of Valencia	28 Ramon Llull University
14 University of Salamanca	29 University of Córdoba
15 Polytechnic University of Madrid	30 Jaume I University
<b>International Rankings in the University Field</b>	
1 <a href="#">Webometrics Ranking of World Universities and CSIC</a>	
2 <a href="#">Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) – Shanghai Ranking</a>	
3 <a href="#">The US News rankings – Global Universities Ranking</a>	
4 <a href="#">Times Higher Education (THE) – World University Rankings</a>	
5 <a href="#">Global 2000 list by the center for world university rankings</a>	
6 <a href="#">QS World University Rankings 2024: Top global universities</a>	

**Source:** Elaborated by the author, 2024.

### 3.1.3. Causal Conditions (Table 2)

The causal conditions are the communication strategies considered<sup>1</sup> for scrutiny regarding their compliance/non-compliance by the highest-ranked Spanish universities in the selected rankings. Examining these causal conditions answers research question 1. The subsequent analysis answers research question 2.

The communication strategies subject to examination are:

- (A) Organic strategies: Those that constitute the organic structure of universities, the form of hierarchical and functional organization within each university institution.
- (B) Web strategies and social media: Those that refer to the existence and development of institutional web pages, with a greater or lesser degree of specialization, by centers, areas or others, and the existence of social networks, by the proper name of the social platform.
- (C) Strategies that involve the media:
  - (C.1.) Traditional media: Appearance of universities in traditional media (press, TV, radio), for institutional advertising or for the dissemination of other academic tasks or areas.
  - (C.2.) Own media or communication channels: creation and implementation of university-managed media outlets (TV, radio, publications).

**Table 2.**

*Naming and Description of the Cases (Causal Conditions) of the Study.*

<b>Causal Conditions</b>	
<b>(A) Organic Strategies</b>	Director of communications or communications manager
	Specific communications department
	Branch of the communications department
<b>(B) Web strategies and social media</b>	University's main website
	Specialized websites
	Social media
<b>(C.1.) Traditional media</b>	Institutional appearances and advertising on TV, radio, and in the press
<b>(C.2.) Own media or communication channels</b>	Publications, TV, radio, podcasts

**Source:** Elaborated by the author, 2024.

<sup>1</sup> The communication strategies selected for analysis and evaluation were chosen by the author based on the possibilities and characteristics offered by these items, as they are publicly accessible and can be consulted externally. The information presented can be verified by consulting and researching the information published by the universities studied, through their websites and other dissemination channels.

### 3.2. Calibration of Causal Conditions (Table 3):

In this study, the results are binary (yes/no), depending on whether or not the causal condition is met in each case. The multivalued QCA system was chosen to provide more context to the results, thanks to the possibilities offered by its calibration, as stipulated in Table 3. The calibration of the results consists of assigning values to each causal condition (Stewart, 2024). In the multivalued QCA, causal conditions are calibrated to indicate the degree of fulfillment (values between 0, 1, and 2 depending on the degree of fulfillment).

**Table 3.**

*Calibration of Causal Conditions With Values of 0 (not met), 1 or 2 (met).*

Causal Conditions	Calibration (0-1-2)	
	No = 0	Yes = 1 or 2
<b>Organic Strategies</b>		
Director of communications or communications manager	0	1
Specific communication organic unit	0	1
Communication branching unit	0	1
<b>Web strategies and social media</b>		
University's main website	0	1
Specialized websites	0	1
Social networks	0	1 (1-2) 2 (>2)
<b>Traditional media</b>		
Institutional appearances and advertising on TV, radio, and in the press	0	1
<b>Own media outlets</b>		
Publications, TV, radio, podcasts	0	1 (1) 2 (>1)

**Source:** Elaborated by the author, 2024.

## 4. RESULTS

Once the calibration values for obtaining the first category of results (level 1 results) have been defined, a matrix is configured with the combinations of causal conditions for each case. Then, by summing the level 1 results, the level 2 results are extracted. The data matrix with the possible combinations is shown below (Table 4):

- **Level 1 results:** calculated from a multi-value calibration, where: no=0, yes=1 or 2 (depending on the causal conditions).
- **Level 2 results:** calculated from the sum of the Level 1 results, where: 0-4.9=failure, 5-6.9=pass, and 7-10=success.

The numerical results of level 2 refer to the “failure”, “pass” or “success” in the use, development and implementation of communication strategies by universities.

**Table 4.**

Matrix with all elements for QCA (cases, causal conditions, level 1 and level 2 results and values for calibration).

Causal Conditions										
Organic Strategies		Web strategies and social media				Traditional media		Own media outlets		Level 2 Results  0-4.9 = failure  5-6.9 = pass  7-10 = success  Totals 0 - 10
Director of communications or communications manager	Specific communication organic unit	Communication branching unit	University's main website	Specialized websites	Social networks	TV appearance, radio, press	Publications (publishing houses, magazines), TV, radio, podcasts			
0 (no) - 1 (yes)	0 (no) - 1 (yes)	0 (no) - 1 (yes)	0 (no) - 1 (yes)	0 (no) - 1 (yes)	0 (no) 1 (1-2) 2 (>2)	0 (no) - 1 (yes)	0 (no) 1 (1) 2 (>1)			
1 (yes)	1 (yes)	1 (yes)	1 (yes)	1 (yes)	2 (>2)	1 (yes)	2 (>1)			
(1) Yes	(1) Yes	(0) No	(1) Yes	(1) Yes	(2) Yes	(1) Yes	(2) Yes	(success) 9		
<b>CASES Spanish universities</b>	Example: UAB	Unit Chief	Communications Unit together with press	Without subunits	Existence of a main university website	Underdevelopment of websites by departments, research centers, and others	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Telegram	Mentions on TV, radio, and in the press. Dissemination on the university's website about media presence and appearances.	UABràdio, UABplay (tv.), podcasts, magazines and publications	

**Source:** Elaborated by the author, 2024.

The results (levels 1 and 2) of the 30 specific cases that were studied (3.1.2), subjected to the described causal conditions (3.1.3), and calculated according to the calibration standards (3.2) are shown below (table 5):

Level 1 Results |  Level 2 Results

**Table 5.**

Results levels 1 and 2 of the cases studied (the 30 best positioned Spanish universities in the main international rankings).

Causal conditions			
Organic strategies	Web strategies and social media	Traditional media	Own media outlets

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		Director of communications or Specific organic communication	Communication Branching unit	University's main website	Specialized websites	Social networks	Appearances on TV, radio, and in the press	Publications (editorials, newspapers, magazines), TV, radio, podcasts	
<b>1</b>	UAB	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	2 <b>9</b>
<b>2</b>	UCM	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	2 <b>9</b>
<b>3</b>	UB	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2 <b>10</b>
<b>4</b>	UGr	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	2 <b>9</b>
<b>5</b>	UdV	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2 <b>10</b>
<b>6</b>	UPV/EHU	0	1	0	1	1	2	1	1 <b>7</b>
<b>7</b>	UPF	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	2 <b>9</b>
<b>8</b>	UAM	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	2 <b>9</b>
<b>9</b>	UNav	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	2 <b>9</b>
<b>10</b>	US	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	2 <b>9</b>
<b>11</b>	UniZar	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	2 <b>9</b>
<b>12</b>	UPC	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	2 <b>9</b>
<b>13</b>	UPV	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	2 <b>9</b>
<b>14</b>	USal	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	2 <b>9</b>
<b>15</b>	UPM	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	2 <b>9</b>
<b>16</b>	URV	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2 <b>10</b>
<b>17</b>	UC3M	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2 <b>10</b>
<b>18</b>	ULL	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	2 <b>9</b>
<b>19</b>	UIB	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	2 <b>9</b>
<b>20</b>	USC	0	1	0	1	1	2	1	2 <b>8</b>
<b>21</b>	UAH	1	0	0	1	1	2	1	2 <b>8</b>
<b>22</b>	UA	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	2 <b>9</b>
<b>23</b>	UniCan	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	2 <b>9</b>
<b>24</b>	UCLM	0	1	0	1	1	2	1	1 <b>7</b>
<b>25</b>	UMA	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	2 <b>9</b>
<b>26</b>	UM	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	2 <b>9</b>
<b>27</b>	UniOvi	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	2 <b>9</b>
<b>28</b>	URL	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1 <b>8</b>
<b>29</b>	UCO	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	2 <b>9</b>
<b>30</b>	UJI	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2 <b>10</b>

**Source:** Elaborated by the author, 2024.

The final step in the QCA process involves establishing a truth table (Table 6) (Stewart, 2024), which is configured in a more visual flowchart format (Figure 1). With the values

obtained from the cases confronted with causal conditions, that is, the results of levels 1 and 2, it is possible to define truths (reasons) that answer the research questions formulated at the beginning of the study.

**Table 6.**

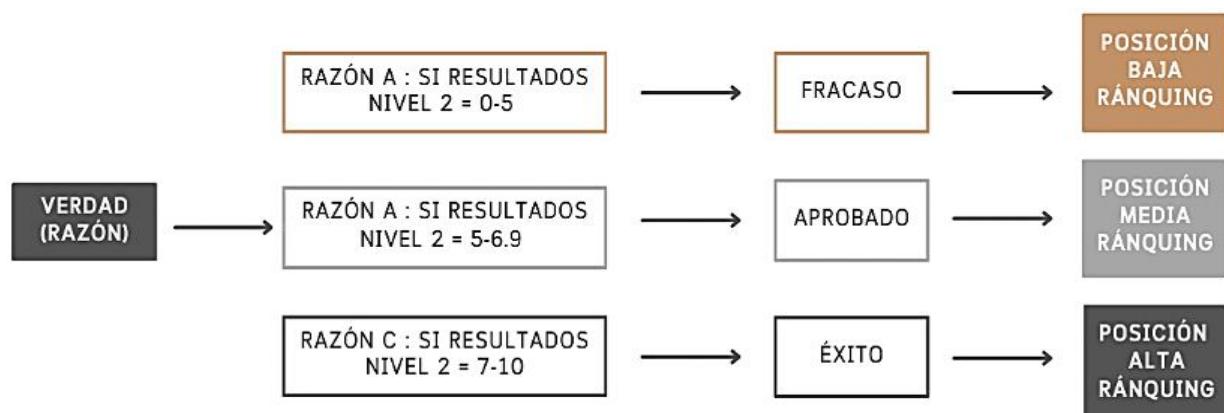
*Truth table. Reasons resulting from the level 2 results.*

Truth (reasons)			
Reason A	If level 2 results = 0-5	Failure	Low ranking position
Reason B	If level 2 results = 5-6.9	Pass	Average ranking position
Reason C	If level 2 results = 7-10	Success	High ranking position

**Source:** Elaborated by the author, 2024.

**Figure 1.**

*Flowchart showing the correlation between the truths (reasons), the level 2 results, and the results on the final considerations and the positions in the rankings.*



**Source:** Elaborated by the author, 2024.

Once the truth table was configured and the diagram applied to the 30 cases in this study (the 30 Spanish universities), the truths (reasons) were confirmed in all cases. The figures numerically indicate the results of each combination (level 2 results), allowing for the association to be established with the results regarding the final considerations and the positions in the rankings (classified into three stages).

The results show that the correlation between "cases—causal conditions—results—truths" is verified as follows: the greater the degree (score) of communication strategies implemented by Spanish universities, the greater the guarantee (achievement) of occupying high positions in international university rankings.

All of this allows for an analysis and interpretation of the results from a qualitative perspective, indicating which combinations of causal conditions are necessary or sufficient for the desired final result, and thus affirming or denying the verification of possible truths (reasons): in the analysis of the results in qualitative terms, the relationship is observed that, the greater the degree of implementation of communication strategies by Spanish universities, the better their positioning in international rankings (answer to research question 2 of section 3.1.1).

The results shown in the truth table and flowchart indicate that a greater and more varied implementation of communication strategies guarantees better positioning in international rankings. This is clearly demonstrated by the results regarding the use of diverse communication strategies by universities that achieve a good final ranking.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The main conclusion is that the Spanish universities best positioned in the rankings use a wide range of communication strategies to promote themselves on the international university scene as institutions of high academic, teaching and research quality.

Empirically, it can be concluded that the greater the implementation of communication strategies, the better the ranking positions universities achieve. However, while the correlation observed—in the truth table and flowchart—is conclusive regarding the use of a variety of communication strategies by the highest-ranked universities, strictly speaking, it has not been possible to prove the consequences if universities do not implement communication strategies. That is, it has not been possible to determine whether the non-implementation of communication strategies and techniques would negatively affect the results achieved. Since this study was interested in factually observing the first correlation presented, the objective has been met and the causal relationship has been addressed, after observing that the highest-ranked Spanish universities use communication strategies of the same or similar types to publicize their academic, teaching, and research activities, both to inform potential users (students, new professors, or researchers) and to highlight their achievements to society as a whole. Previous studies (Romero Delgado, 2018) support this view, emphasizing that universities need to disseminate their research, position their academic value, attract talent, and achieve leading positions. Other authors refer to the university as an information enterprise (Barrios-Hernández & Olivero-Vega, 2020) and highlight the importance of effective information management in all areas of a university, from research and teaching to strategic decision-making and reputation building. Romero Delgado (2018) concurs with this premise, supporting the idea that the university has become an information organization. For this reason, universities employ technical business management tools, such as communication strategies, focused on efficiency, productivity, and competitiveness.

The study confirms that the top-ranked Spanish universities develop and implement various communication strategies to publicize their academic activities. While the most natural and inherent goal seems to be informing potential users (students, faculty, or researchers), other objectives also play a significant role, such as highlighting their academic achievements to the wider community, maintaining prestige and a positive brand compared to other universities, attracting prospective students, recruiting talented faculty and researchers, generating interest in research groups, and even attracting investment. Other previous studies (Solorzano Soto & Bravo Placeres, 2023) reinforce the idea that, based on the experience of actions framed within higher education institutions, the evolution of universities is not separate from the new trends of social, technological and cultural development that are occurring, thus, it is worth considering that in the era of globalization, internationalization and growth of

university activity, the communication that each institution projects to the outside is directly related to the search for academic excellence (Solorzano Soto & Bravo Placeres, 2023).

In this vein, empirical evidence and a review of the literature demonstrate that universities, when they highlight their ranking positions as a calling card (Grau, 2023) to present themselves to society, do so to cultivate prestige and maintain a positive image and brand. The information gleaned from rankings contributes to the perceptions and opinions formed by stakeholders. Therefore, a relatively good ranking is a concise and direct way to convey efficiency and accountability (Grau, 2023). This is not a guarantee of attracting the entire target audience, as several factors are at play. However, a prominent ranking can contribute to attracting talent, whether new students, researchers, or faculty.

Specifically, the communication strategies implemented by Spanish universities include: the use of their own communication channels, frequent use of social media, the development of specialized websites, and the organic structuring of the communication area (in terms of human and material resources), among others (response to research question 1 in section 3.1.1). It has been empirically proven that the Spanish universities with the highest rankings internationally tend to incorporate more than one communication technique and channel. Several studies reinforce this evidence: a wide variety of theoretical assessments have been developed that highlight the importance of communication management in positioning (Solorzano Soto & Bravo Placeres, 2023). Thus, in terms of international positioning, universities have managed to build new scenarios of possibilities, alliances, and cooperation that allow them to optimize resources and become more competitive, through communication tools that have consolidated their position as institutions (Solorzano Soto & Bravo Placeres, 2023).

By comparing similarities and differences in the implementation of communication strategies by type, it has been observed that, for example, with regard to organic strategies, universities use multiple forms of intra-university organization to structure their communication departments or units. On the one hand, some universities have clearly defined communication directors and positions. On the other hand, other universities do not have defined positions of responsibility. As a general strategy, in the area of organizing communication personnel, it is observed that all universities do, in one way or another, give importance to this area. Evidence of this is the creation of organizational structures that not only have their own regulations and policies, but also infrastructure (facilities and services), and are staffed with human resources with defined and specific profiles in the field of communication.

Regarding web and social media strategies, or in other words, strategies involving digital communication, it is observed that all Spanish universities have a main website and other specialized pages categorized by faculties, departments, degree programs, etc. Furthermore, they present a branching and segmentation of information according to areas of interest. In this sense, while all the universities analyzed use these website communication tools, there are differences in the level of segmentation and specialization applied. Some even have websites for specific degree programs,

especially for master's and postgraduate programs, rather than for undergraduate or doctoral studies. Higher rankings are associated with a greater number and more specificity of websites, as well as a higher frequency of publication and updates. Regarding social media, the use of X and Instagram stands out above the average, as does LinkedIn, which is the platform with a professional and academic character (Aguado Guadalupe, 2015; Hernández et al., 2014; Costa-Sánchez & Corbacho-Valencia, 2015). On the other hand, the incorporation of more disruptive social networks such as TikTok, Telegram, and Flickr is observed, although these are still used to a lesser extent and their use is not widespread in the vast majority of universities, at least not today. Aside from the differences between universities in their preference for one social network over another, the most notable differences in this regard are in the frequency of posts. Along these lines, we find previous studies such as "Use of social networks by Andalusian public universities. Content analysis of the official Twitter account" (Simón Onieva, 2016). Other research suggests that digital communication is not just about managing social media (networks), but rather aims to broaden the scope of communication to much more complex areas such as big data, small data, social media skills assessment, audience identification, behavioral patterns, and so on. And all this without losing the essence of strategic communication (Puertas Hidalgo et al., 2020). In any case, it is clear that we are in the era of the learning society, which implies new ways of managing data in strategic communication activities. Therefore, digitalization demands changes in how organizations manage information (Klewes et al., 2017), such as strategies that involve digital communication and, specifically, new digital media of communication, such as social networks.

Regarding the presence of Spanish universities in traditional media and their relationship with these outlets, it is observed that contact and collaboration are greater among the higher-ranked universities. Conversely, universities with lower or less recognized rankings have a smaller presence in traditional media such as radio, television, and newspapers. In this regard, the case study by the research group Repiso et al. (2016) is interesting, as they conducted an analysis of the presence and interaction of Spanish universities in the Spanish national press. Also noteworthy is an innovative communication strategy that connects universities with traditional media: the study by De Vicente Domínguez and Sierra Sánchez (2023) on organizational communication strategies that manage direct knowledge exchange between faculty researchers and media professionals. They called this the "expert guide" communication tool. This research offers an initial historical perspective on the creation and implementation of a media relations service: the University of Navarra's expert guide. Higher education institutions are increasingly investing more resources in expanding their reach beyond the university campus (De Vicente Domínguez & Sierra Sánchez, 2023). The "expert guide", as a tool designed to increase the university's media presence, is useful for organizations that wish to implement it. It is a prime example of best practices in innovation and university communication. The same study reveals two precedents for this communication tool: research analyzing the methodology used by the University of La Laguna's communications office to create its "expert guide", by Rodríguez Wangüemert and González Afonso (2005); and another contribution, by López-Hernández and Domínguez Delgado (2017), describing how a digital directory of expert sources was managed at the University of Seville.

There are also communication strategies related to the availability and implementation of university-owned communication channels. Not all universities have their own communication channels; these are more common in better-positioned universities that have the resources and funds to cover the costs of such communication tools (publishing houses, their own publications such as newspapers or magazines, TV, radio, podcasts).

Nevertheless, the study's results are conclusive regarding the existence of a relationship between greater implementation of communication strategies by Spanish universities and a higher position in academic rankings. However, the role of other factors must be considered, as this relationship is not the result of a single link. Rankings typically take into account multiple factors to determine a university's international standing, and communication has been proven to be a key factor. In this sense, both this study and previous ones verify that communication strategies exert a significant influence on university positioning, as they contribute to increased international visibility and publicity, greater media presence, greater accessibility and dissemination of academic activity, facilitated international collaborations among researchers, and the creation of alliances between universities and companies or other sectors of economic activity. They also promote the attraction and retention of talent, international mobility programs, and knowledge transfer. All these elements are related to achieving better results in academic quality assessments, which in turn leads to a stronger reputation. Communication management has become a tool for building and maintaining a positive image and a solid reputation for the organization (Martín-Santana et al., 2019). Therefore, the effective use of communication strategies is fundamental to guaranteeing the prestige, reputation, and positive brand of universities in a globalized and competitive landscape. Indeed, in the international context, university communication has become essential for the success and positioning of academic institutions (Solorzano Soto & Bravo Placeres, 2023). Researchers such as De Filippo et al. (2017) point in this direction, arguing that universities currently face a dual challenge: the need to create alliances with other institutions to optimize resources and complement capabilities, and the need to achieve greater international visibility as a strategy for obtaining resources and international positioning.

Ultimately, universities have an impact on the communities they serve. For this reason, they must view communication as both an opportunity and a necessity to disseminate their scientific contributions, to transfer knowledge to their diverse audiences, and, above all, to contribute to the transformation and progress of society (Solorzano Soto & Bravo Placeres, 2023). The position and reputation of universities also influence their economic impact, as they constitute an effective tool, providing a valuable set of data for public and private investment. Therefore, rankings are used, more or less explicitly, by universities and government agencies as a means of communication to project a positive image or to demonstrate accountability (Grau, 2023). The economic impact resulting from the implementation of communication strategies is a measurable value based on several factors. For example, institutional advertising in the media can increase university enrollment and attract international talent. This, in turn, leads to the acquisition of investment funds to finance research groups and centers. The

highest expression of excellence is achieved when economic impact directly contributes to scientific and medical advancements that benefit society as a whole.

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