

# **Defining an integrated framework for evaluating the effectiveness of organisations' social media communication strategy**

Paul Capriotti  
Andrea Oliveira  
Ileana Zeler  
Carmen Carretón  
José Carlos Losada  
Rodolfo Martínez

## **Abstract**

This research aims to propose a taxonomic framework to evaluate organisations' communication strategy in social media. It enriches the research into and practice of social media communication strategy by defining and integrating the key dimensions (posting, interactivity and content) in a holistic model (since they have usually been studied separately). This work enhances the understanding of the strategic management of social networks by introducing an integrated framework of social media strategic communication that enables scholars to conduct further research on this topic and offers professionals a practical guide for the strategic management of communication on social media.

## **Keywords**

public relations, corporate communication, digital communication, social media, posting strategy, interactivity strategy, content strategy.

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## **1. Introduction**

Several prestigious international studies from Europe, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and North America, have highlighted the importance of communication strategy for the achievement of organisational objectives. However, several authors have pointed out the lack of clarity around the concept of strategy in the field of communication (Madroñero & Capriotti, 2018; Steyn, 2003; Van Ruler, 1997).

Although there are multiple ways of understanding *strategy*, one key idea is widely assumed: strategy is defined as the structural guidelines or patterns of action that enable an entity to develop its distinctive capabilities over time and adapt to the context in which it operates in order to achieve its goals (Hax & Majluf, 1996; Mintzberg, 1987; Porter, 1996).

Therefore, communication strategy could be defined as a set of decisions that establishes the structural guidelines for an organisation's communication activity in order to achieve its communication objectives and contribute to the organisational goals (Capriotti, 2021; Madroñero & Capriotti, 2018; Steyn, 2003; Van Ruler, 1997). It is a forward-looking schema that guides communication decision-making to ensure coherent and efficient performance of all communication activity and responds to the guidelines defined by the organisational strategy.

The digital arena has become a key environment for strategic communication. Zerfass et al. (2019) indicate that digital communication has acquired a relevant position in organisations' overall strategic communication processes. Over the past 15 years, social media have gained prominence in digital communication strategy and are playing an increasingly dominant role in strategic public relations and communication programmes (Morehouse & Saffer, 2018; Taylor & Kent, 2014; Wang & Yang, 2020; Wigley & Zhang, 2011) to interact and create long-term relationships with publics in the digital environment.

This work proposes a taxonomic framework of social media communication strategy by identifying its key dimensions (posting, interactivity and content). It enriches the field of public relations and communication by deepening the knowledge of the strategic management of social media and by integrating the dimensions into a holistic model (since they have usually been studied separately). It also helps practitioners optimise and improve their social media communication strategy.

## **2. Dialogic Communication and Social Media**

The high penetration of the Internet in society has led to a change in the traditional public relations and communication management. Web 2.0 changes the way in which old communication channels are used, shifting from an informative mainstream approach towards a more conversational and dialogic communication strategies based on interaction and dialogue (Capriotti, Zeler, & Camilleri, 2021; Kang & Sundar, 2016).

The concept of dialogic communication has been dealt with by the literature on public relations and communication for many years (Sommerfeldt & Yang, 2018). Kent and Taylor (2002) identified the principles of dialogic communication in the world wide web era, and these principles were quickly adapted to different digital media, including social media (Johann et al., 2021; Wang & Yang, 2020; Wissen, 2017). Thus, dialogic communication is a well-accepted framework for

creating connections and relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders in the digital landscape (Kent & Taylor, 1998, 2002) and for studying internet-based public relations and communication strategies (Wirtz & Zimbres, 2018).

Social media are considered optimal tools for achieving strategic communication goals (Cuenca-Fontbona et al., 2022). The use of these platforms as a dialogic tool has increased considerably in the last 15 years in the field of public relations and communication (Morehouse & Saffer, 2018; Taylor & Kent, 2014; Wang & Yang, 2020; Wigley & Zhang, 2011). Access to information, the possibility of generating enriching experiences with users, and improved metrics have encouraged many organisations to prioritise digital communication (Linke & Zerfass, 2012). In this sense, organisations found in social media a space to communicate and interact with their stakeholders (Kang & Sundar, 2016). Several studies (DiStaso & McCorkindale, 2013; Taylor & Kent, 2014; Zerfass et al., 2019) demonstrated the importance of these digital platforms in providing enhanced flexibility, customisation and time-saving in the relationship between institutions and their stakeholders.

Social networks become key tools for strategic communication and public relations, enabling organisations to disseminate content, engage in dialogic conversations, and actively listen to their publics (Neill & Moody, 2015). Studies have demonstrated that the consistent use of social networks is essential for improving the effectiveness of communication departments (Cuenca-Fontbona et al., 2022; Zerfass et al., 2019), and that active participation on these platforms also has a positive impact on organisational reputation (Dijkmans et al., 2015; Floredu et al., 2014). Social networks have also become a critical form of social capital that enable organisations leading to increase business value and competitiveness (McCorkindale, 2010). Thus, social networks are becoming more and more integrated into organisations' communication and public relations programmes (Capriotti et al., 2019; DiStaso & McCorkindale, 2013; Johann et al., 2021).

### **3. Dimensions of Social Media Communication Strategy**

Social media communication strategy refers to the overall structural guidelines or patterns that guide the strategic management of social media to achieve digital communication objectives. It determines how entities present themselves, disseminate their content and interact with their stakeholders in the social media environment.

An *active presence* on social networks is crucial for organisations to proactively manage and share their information (Cho et al., 2016; Losada Díaz & Capriotti, 2015), while promoting *interactivity*, conversation and dialogue with stakeholders on social media facilitates relationship building (Valentini, 2015). Additionally, creating and disseminating valuable *content* to users (Kilgour et al., 2015) contributes to defining an organisation's positioning on social media (Capriotti, Losada-Díaz, et al., 2023). Thus, Social Media Communication Strategy comprises three main key dimensions: *posting* strategy, *interactivity* strategy, and *content* strategy (Figure 1).

These three dimensions are very closely interrelated and influence each other mutually, yet they are often studied separately. However, it is essential to comprehensively analyse the three dimensions to gain a global understanding of social media communication strategy.

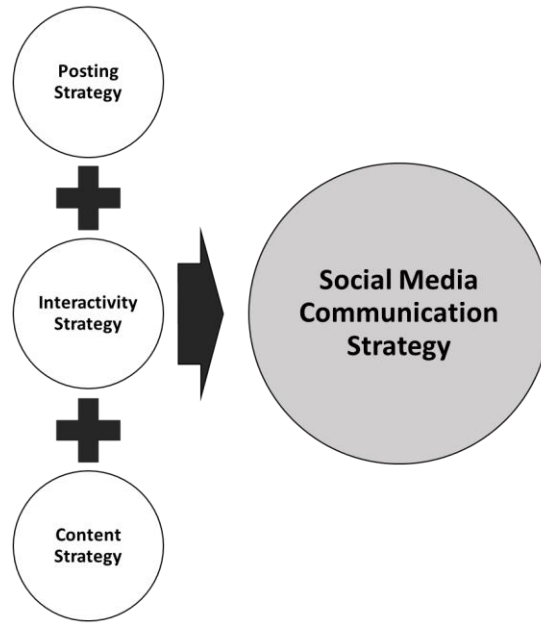


Figure 1. Dimensions of Social Media Communication Strategy

Therefore, a conceptual framework is needed to analyse and design appropriate strategies (Figure 2). Each of these three main dimensions comprises two variables, with their indicators and scales. This leads to developing four types of strategies in each one. This framework has been developed and tested in prior studies (Capriotti, Losada-Díaz, et al., 2023; Capriotti, Martínez-Gras, et al., 2023; Capriotti, Oliveira, et al., 2023; Capriotti & Zeler, 2020; Losada Díaz & Capriotti, 2015).

	Dimensions	Variables	Indicators	Scales	Strategy Types
<b>Social Media Communication Strategy</b>	<b>Posting Strategy</b>	<b>Activity</b>	Level of Activity (LoAC)	<i>Low Activity to High Activity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Passive Hub</i></li> <li>• <i>Active Hub</i></li> </ul>
		<b>Presence</b>	Type of Presence (ToPE)	<i>Highly ECP to Highly ESP</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Passive Funnel</i></li> <li>• <i>Active Funnel</i></li> </ul>
	<b>Interactivity Strategy</b>	<b>General Approach</b>	Level of G. Approach (LoGA)	<i>Very Informational to Very Conversational</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Monologic</i></li> <li>• <i>Extended Monologic</i></li> </ul>
		<b>Resources</b>	Level of Resources (LoRE)	<i>Very Expositive to Very Interactive</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Incipient Dialogic</i></li> <li>• <i>Dialogic</i></li> </ul>
	<b>Content Strategy</b>	<b>Relevance of Contents</b>	Relevance of Topics (RoTO)	<i>Very low relevance to Very high relevance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Balanced</i></li> <li>• <i>Combined</i></li> </ul>
		<b>Combination of Contents</b>	Level of Combination (LoCO)	<i>Low combination to High combination</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Dominant</i></li> <li>• <i>Exclusive</i></li> </ul>

Figure 2. Taxonomic Framework for Social Media Communication Strategy

## 4. Posting Strategy

To have an active presence on social media there is a need to choose the platforms that best adapt to organisations' communication needs with their publics, creating professional profiles and managing them properly. Active social media presence is key to achieving visibility, as it increases users' knowledge about an organisation. In addition, being active in social media increases the possibility of generating conversations with users (Bezawada et al., 2013; Capriotti, Zeler, & Camilleri, 2021), as it facilitates the dissemination of relevant information and promotes communication exchange between an organisation and its publics (Capriotti, Zeler, & Oliveira, 2021).

**Social Media Posting Strategy** refers to designing a consistent presence and being adequately active in social media (Capriotti, Martínez-Gras, et al., 2023; Capriotti, Zeler, & Oliveira, 2021). Thus, organisations can foster an active presence on social media by properly managing the two key elements of their posting strategy: the **Activity** assumed and the **Presence** adopted on each platform. They define the (greater or lesser) degree of the active presence of the communication activity undertaken by entities.

### 4.1. Activity

**Activity** refers to the active and steady use of the social media that facilitates sharing information and encourages interaction between an organisation and users (Capriotti et al., 2019; Capriotti, Zeler, & Camilleri, 2021; Capriotti, Zeler, & Oliveira, 2021). The study of organisations' activity on social media deals with the volume and mean frequency of posts (McLachlan, 2021; Williams, 2020).

However, there is a lack of unanimous consensus on the appropriate frequency of posting on social media. Various studies (Capriotti, Martínez-Gras, et al., 2023; Capriotti, Oliveira, et al., 2023; Capriotti, Zeler, & Oliveira, 2021; Zeler et al., 2019) reveal a huge disparity in terms of the outcomes concerning organisations' activity on social media. The effective frequency of social media posting is difficult to quantify and carries some risks: if organisations post too frequently, they may annoy their followers, while if they post too infrequently, users may forget that they exist (Capriotti, Zeler, & Camilleri, 2021).

The recommended posting activity in social media may vary across sectors, social networks, over time and even among entities conducting studies (Feehan, 2022; McLachlan, 2021; Williams, 2020). It is therefore advisable to periodically check the reports published by agencies and institutions regarding the recommended frequency of posting.

The **Level of Activity (LoAC)** on social media establishes the frequency of posts published by organisations on their platforms, based on the (daily/weekly/monthly) mean number of posts over time (Capriotti, Martínez-Gras, et al., 2023; Capriotti, Oliveira, et al., 2023; Zeler & Capriotti, 2019).

To study organisations' activity on social media, a scale can be defined by assigning a weighted value to the intensity of posting activity, from 1 to 5 points (1= very low number of posts or very low frequency, below the suggested mean) (5= very high volume or very high frequency of posts, above the recommended mean). This allows categorising the data collected for the analysis and interpretation of the results: from *very low* activity to *very high* activity (Table 1).

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Very Low activity</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Very High activity</i>
Low frequency of posts.			High frequency of posts.	

Table 1. Level of Activity (LoAC)

## 4.2. Presence

**Presence** refers to the type of information that best suits the communication needs of entities on social media and determines the type of posting that should be promoted on each platform. It implies having a profile on the chosen social media and defining the type of post, which provides the institution with a public identity (Cho et al., 2016). Some authors affirm that an organisation's presence on social networks as part of its communication strategy is now unquestionable (Losada Díaz & Capriotti, 2015).

Organisations can create and promote their own information, but they can also disseminate information designed and posted by third parties. There are three different types of presence on social media based on posts published (Capriotti, Martínez-Gras, et al., 2023; Capriotti, Oliveira, et al., 2023; Ibrahim et al., 2022):

- *Entity-created posts* (ECP), where the organisation creates and disseminates its own content on its profiles.
- *Entity-shared posts* (ESP), where the organisation shares content created by other parties on its profiles without adding additional customised information or content.
- *Entity-hybrid posts* (EHP), where the organisation shares content developed by other users on its profiles but adding customised information or content.

The adequate combination of these type of posts may vary across social networks and sectors, but studies suggest prioritising the ECP posts (Capriotti, Martínez-Gras, et al., 2023; Capriotti, Oliveira, et al., 2023). It is therefore advisable to periodically check the reports published by agencies and institutions regarding the recommended combination of posts.

The **Type of Presence (ToPE)** identifies the type of posts that organisations publish on their social media profiles (Capriotti, Zeler, & Camilleri, 2021; Cho et al., 2016; Zeler et al., 2019). To study the presence of organisations in social media, a scale can be designed by assigning a weighted value to each type of post by the organisations over time, between 1 and 2 points, where 1= "ESP"; 1.5= "EHP" and 2= "ECP". This allows categorising the data collected for the analysis and the interpretation of the results: from *highly ECP* presence (with a high quantity of entity-created posts) to *highly ESP* presence (with a high number of entity-shared posts) (Table 2).

1		1.5		2
<i>Highly ESP</i>	<i>Moderate ESP</i>	<i>Hybrid</i>	<i>Moderate ECP</i>	<i>Highly ECP</i>
High number of entity-shared posts.			High quantity of entity-created posts.	

Table 2. Type of Presence (ToPE)

## 4.3. Types of Posting Strategies

Finally, the interrelation of these two dimensions (Activity and Presence) will allow recognising the type of posting strategies of organisations in social media.

On the one hand, according to the Level of Activity (LoAC), it is possible to establish organisations' level of communicative activity on their social media over time: from “active” institutions (with a high volume and frequency of publication, above the recommended mean) to “passive” entities (with few or infrequent publications, less than the suggested mean, or with no activity).

On the other hand, the Type of Presence (ToPE) facilitates the identification of entities that have a “funnel” type of presence (mainly ECP), aimed at attracting followers towards their own content and retaining them, or encouraging them to go deeper into their profile, as well as entities that have a “hub” type of presence (mostly ESP), focused on motivating followers with shared content by other authors, generating the option of linking them with other profiles or sites where they can expand on and look in greater depth into these topics.

Combining the type of presence chosen and the level of activity of the entities on social networks will allow establishing four specific types of **Social Media Posting Strategy**:

- “Passive Hub” strategy (low activity with mostly ESP posts)
- “Passive Funnel” strategy (low activity with mostly ECP posts)
- “Active Hub” strategy (high activity with mostly ESP posts)
- “Active Funnel” strategy (high activity with mostly ECP posts)

The integration of these strategies generates a matrix in which to position the different entities according to the Posting Strategy developed in their social profiles (Figure 3). Thus, the choice of a specific combination between the type of presence and the level of activity can define the type of posting strategy of each entity, which will contribute to establishing a certain form of communication with their publics.

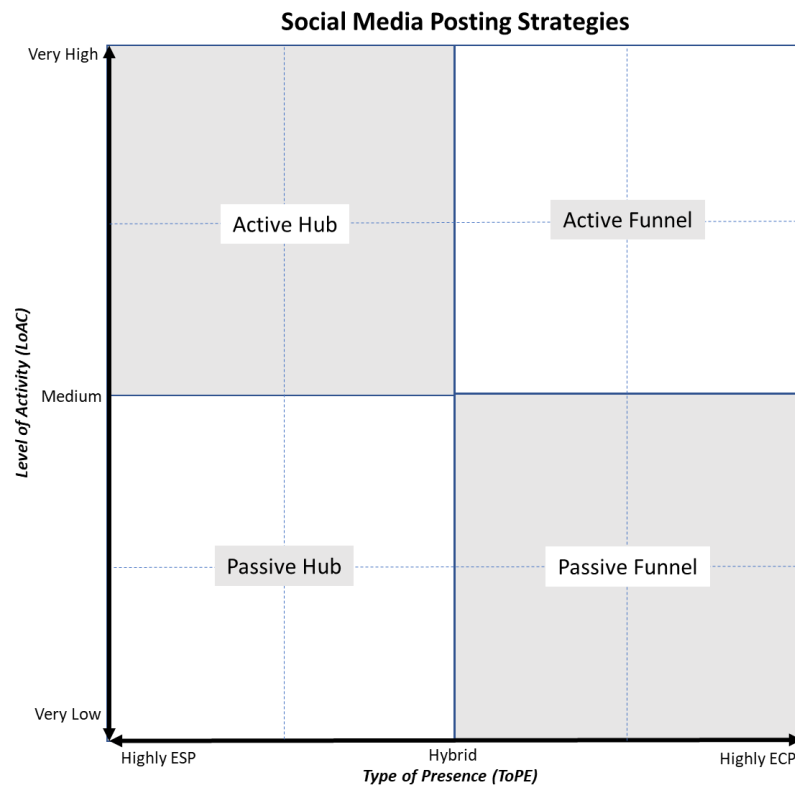


Figure 3. Posting Strategies

## 5. Interactivity Strategy

Having a profile on social media and posting content does not ensure interaction with stakeholders. Web 2.0 has provided opportunities for more symmetrical interactions through dialogic and interactive forms of communication (Jo & Kim, 2003).

Interactivity refers to a constant flow of information, comments, ideas, assessments and experiences between organisations and their publics using Internet resources (Capriotti & Zeler, 2020). It is the cornerstone of dialogic communication (Kent & Taylor, 1998).

According to Kent and Taylor (2021), organisations should create a space on social media that fosters active listening and encourages participation in order to establish a commitment to dialogue. Dialogic communication between organisations and online users occurs when both parties are willing to engage in a communicative exchange (Kent & Taylor, 2002). Theunissen and Wan Noordin (2012) argue that successful organisations design appropriate dialogic environments that facilitate stakeholder engagement. To achieve this, organisations may use their interactivity strategy to create suitable interaction with their stakeholders (Capriotti & Zeler, 2020),

**Social Media Interactivity Strategy** refers to the process of defining and establishing organisations' willingness to interact with their stakeholders in social media, whether through unidirectional dissemination or a dialogic exchange. It involves a continuous exchange of messages between organisations and their stakeholders and requires the use of a particular communicative approach and specific communication resources in the organisation's posts.

Thus, the strategic management of interactivity in social media, which reflects an organisation's willingness to interact, involves two core dimensions: the *General Communicative Approach* used in the organisation's posts and the *Communication Resources* applied in each one. These dimensions determine the (greater or lesser) degree of interactivity of the communication undertaken by entities.

### 5.1. General Communicative Approach

Effective relationships on social media can be promoted through content that stimulates interaction with users (Luarn et al., 2015). Research findings show that there is an increase in the use of the Internet as an interactive communication tool, but the focus is still on the dissemination of information (Ji et al., 2016; Pace et al., 2014; Zeler & Capriotti, 2019).

The **General Communicative Approach** refers to the global informational or relational orientation applied by organisations in their posts on their social media profiles, that encourage (or not) followers to support their content, share it and engage in conversations with entities.

Two broad types of General Communicative Approach have been identified:

- The *informational approach* aims primarily to disseminate information to inform stakeholders and to influence the entities' reputation (Capriotti & Zeler, 2020). It creates and presents content from an informative, descriptive, and expositive perspective, with scarcely interactive tools and resources that foster mainly unidirectional communication.

- The *conversational approach* mainly seeks to establish and build relationships by enabling dialogue and interaction between the organisation and its stakeholders (Capriotti & Zeler, 2020). This approach entails the design of content using directive speech acts (Searle, 1985), including “call to action” components (inviting users to participate and share their opinions, answering questions, making requests, etc.), thus increasing the opportunity for higher user participation. Posts that use this approach are more relational and dialogic and resort to highly interactive tools and resources that promote bidirectional communication.

The recommended general approach may vary across social networks and sectors, and then it is advisable to periodically check the reports published by agencies and institutions about this topic. However, some works suggest that a greater commitment could be generated by messages encouraging people to take action (Abitbol & Lee, 2017). Thus, sharing content that fosters interaction and dialogue contributes to greater engagement with stakeholders (Luarn et al., 2015).

The *Level of General Approach (LoGA)* facilitates the identification of textual or visual components in the posts that establish the way content is designed to encourage the dissemination of information or interaction exchange to a greater or lesser extent (Capriotti & Zeler, 2020).

To analyse organisations’ general approach in social media, a nominal measurement variable can be built with a scale to assign weighted values based on the different types of posts (between 1 and 2 points, where “informational” =1 and "conversational" =2). This allows categorising the data collected for the analysis and the interpretation of the results: from *very informational* (most posts with an informative approach) to *very conversational* (most posts with a conversational approach) (Table 3).

1		1.5		2
<i>Very Informational</i>	<i>Moderate Informational</i>	<i>Hybrid</i>	<i>Moderate Conversational</i>	<i>Very conversational</i>
Most posts with an informative approach			Most posts with a conversational approach	

Table 3. Level of General Approach (LoGA)

## 5.2. Communication Resources

Successful dialogic environments can be encouraged by providing resources to create such an environment (Theunissen & Wan Noordin, 2012). Social media provide several resources to create, disseminate and interact with content. Entities may use various communication resources to convey messages, facilitate information exchange and connect effectively with users on social media by combining several instruments (Capriotti et al., 2019).

Communication resources (texts, images, links, hashtags, emoticons, video, audio, etc.) enable the development of posts to disseminate information and engage in dialogue with users on social media (Fährnich et al., 2020; Luarn et al., 2015). Two main types of resources can be identified:

- *Expositive resources* are tools that facilitate the dissemination of information (i.e., texts, images, emojis, video, audio, GIFs), which foster rather unidirectional communication (Capriotti & Zeler, 2020). They are divided into three types: ‘textual’ (the plain text and emojis in posts: the most basic kind of informational resource); ‘graphic’ (fixed images, photos, graphics, etc.; resources that enable disseminating information in a mainly monological manner), and ‘audiovisual’ (videos, audios, and gifs; expositive resources that generate greater engagement but require a period of attention from users).

- *Interactive resources* are bidirectional tools (i.e., links, hashtags, labels, questionnaires, events) that proactively foster information exchange and elicit user participation and engagement (Capriotti & Zeler, 2020). They are also divided into three types: ‘referential’ (mentions and hashtags that enable connecting the post to other subjects and topics), ‘hypertextual’ (links that enable linking the post to other information), and ‘participatory’ resources (surveys, events, questions, and other components that enable users to express an opinion or assessment).

The suggested combination of resources may vary across social networks and sectors. Although the use of expositive resources is twice as high as that of interactive resources (Brech et al., 2017), some studies suggest (Capriotti et al., 2019; Cho et al., 2014; Wissen, 2017) suggest that stakeholders are more willing to engage in interactions on content that encourages dialogue and conversation. However, it is advisable to periodically check the reports published by agencies and institutions about the adequate combination of resources.

The ***Level of Resources (LoRE)*** examines the tools available in posts that drive the dissemination of information or interaction with the users on social media (Capriotti & Zeler, 2020).

To analyse communication resources, an ordinal measurement variable can be developed that evaluates the resources used (0=does not contain a resource; 1=contains a resource) in each type: expositive (text, graphic and audio-visual) and interactive (referential, hypertextual and participatory). Thus, a scale of assigned weights is established based on the combination of the communicative resource types used in the posts. This allows categorising the data collected for the analysis and the interpretation of the results: from *very expositive* (with a majority application of expositive resources) to *very interactive* (with heavy or majority use of interactive resources) (Table 4).

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Very Expositive</i>	<i>Moderate Expositive</i>	<i>Hybrid</i>	<i>Moderate Interactive</i>	<i>Very Interactive</i>
A majority application of expositive resources			A majority use of interactive resources	

Table 4. Level of Resources (LoRE)

### 5.3. Types of Interactivity Strategies

To encourage interaction on social media, entities must be willing to actively listen and interact with their publics (Capriotti et al., 2019). Communication in the digital context must be oriented towards fostering relationships with stakeholders in order to achieve the desired impact (Capriotti & Zeler, 2020; Johann et al., 2021).

The creation of content that follows a general communicative approach (whether informational or conversational) elicits (or not) opinion, participation or collaboration from users, and combining certain communication resources (expositive and interactive) will determine the orientation of organisations’ social media interactivity strategy.

Thus, the combination of the general approaches defined (informational or conversational) and the types of resources applied (expositive or interactive) in social media will determine the four specific types of **Social Media Interactivity Strategy**:

- “Monologic” strategy (with a mainly informational approach with expositive resources).

- “Extended Monologic” strategy (with a highly informational approach with interactive resources).
- “Incipient Dialogic” strategy (with a significant proportion of conversational approach and expositive resources).
- “Dialogic” strategy (mainly with a conversational approach and interactive resources).

The integration of these strategies generates a matrix that positions the entities and displays the Interactivity Strategy developed in their social profiles (Figure 4). By selecting a specific combination of these two dimensions (general approach and resources) it is possible to identify the monological or dialogical nature of communication between entities and their stakeholders (Capriotti & Zeler, 2020). This identification defines how organisations establish relationships with them.

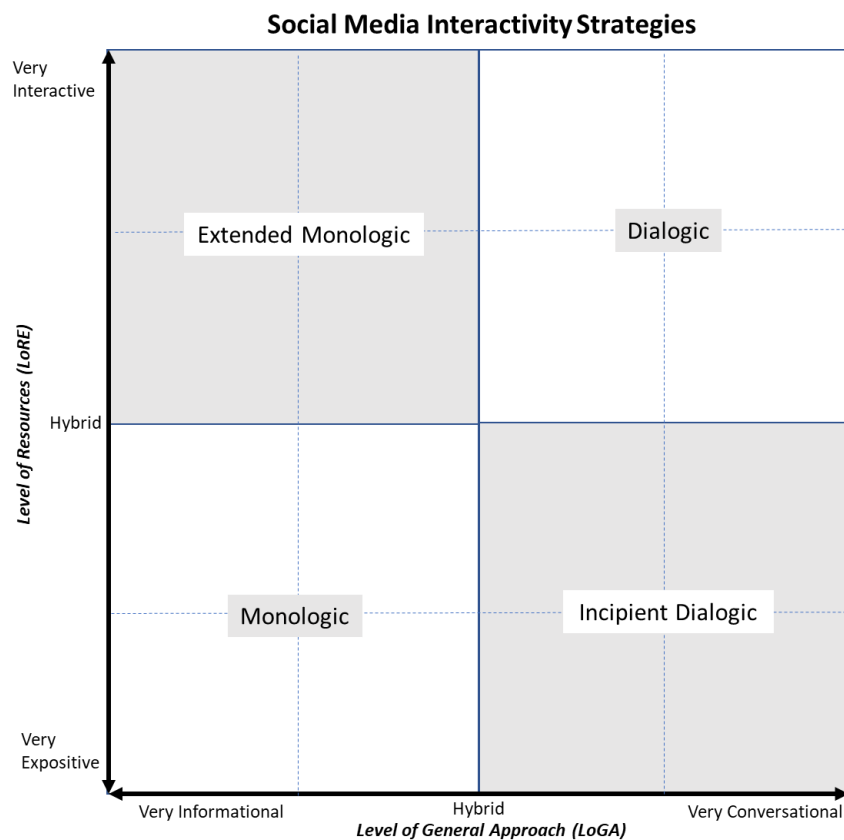


Figure 4. Interactivity Strategies

## 6. Content Strategy

Digital platforms enable organisations to effectively communicate with users, offering significant advantages for disseminating content (Taylor & Kent, 2014). Social media have expanded organisations’ capabilities to mass produce and control the dissemination of information. Entities use digital platforms to spread content about their attributes, characteristics and activities (Balmer, 2008). They design their messages and broadcast them quickly, easily and internationally to their stakeholders (Chaudhri & Wang, 2007). Therefore, content strategy will contribute decisively to determining the desired communicative positioning of the organisation in social networks.

Thus, **Social Media Content Strategy** refers to the selection, prioritisation and combination of a set of different types of content (messages, attributes, concepts, etc.) related to the entities in their social networks (Fährnich et al., 2020).

Content management on social networks should consider the type of content provided by organisations to their stakeholders and how the information is organised and combined over time. Therefore, entities should decide **the volume of contents** (those with higher and lower presence) **and the combination of contents** (how key topics are combined).

### 6.1. Relevance of Contents

Social media are optimal channels for communicating different types of content, contributing to disseminating an entity’s activities (Kilgour et al., 2015). There are two main general content blocks that may be valuable to stakeholders:

- A first general block of contents (essential or basic in nature) are *functional topics* (Capriotti, Losada-Díaz, et al., 2023; Zeler & Capriotti, 2019), which focus on information about the organisation’s daily activities (brands, products, services, activities, processes, people, etc.).
- A second general block of contents (complementing the previous one) are *organisational topics* (Capriotti, Losada-Díaz, et al., 2023; Zeler & Capriotti, 2019), that focus on information about corporate themes (organisational management, results, contextual topics, etc.).

In addition, social media can also be used to share information about all of the aforementioned topics, but from a *sustainability* perspective, based on ESG (Environment, Social and Governance) policies and practices (Russo et al., 2022).

All these types of content may be subdivided into more specific subtopics or must be specifically adapted to each organisation or sector being analysed or planned. This ensures that the typology of topics is suitable for the situation and context of entities.

For the recognition of the **Relevance of Topics (RoTO)**, a scale can be designed based on the percentage of posts of each type of content over total publications, which allows establishing the degree of relevance of each topic: very low (less than 10%); low (10-20%); medium (20-30%); high (30-45%); rather high (45-60%); very high (more than 60%).

This allows categorising the data collected for the analysis and the interpretation of the results: from topics with a *very low relevance* (poor topics, with a low percentage of posts over time) to topics with a *very high relevance* (key topics, with a medium-high percentage of posts over time) of topics on social networks (Table 5). This will enable identifying the quantity of *key topics* (few or several ones, those that have a significant volume over time -20% or more-).

Poor Topics		Key Topics			
<i>Very low relevance</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Rather High</i>	<i>Very high relevance</i>
Low percentage of posts.			High percentage of posts.		

Table 5. Relevance of Topics (RoTO)

## 6.2. Combination of Contents

Entities usually combine key topics in a particular way to give to their communication a specific focus or orientation on their social media profiles. To study the combination of content topics, the percentage presence of each specific topic must be considered for establishing the combination between them (Capriotti, Losada-Díaz, et al., 2023).

Three main general content combinations can be identified, which help to analyse and evaluate the organisation's content strategies on their social media:

- *Low Combination* (concentration): the organisations concentrate their contents, disseminating very few preponderant topics (or only one main key topic) in their communication through social media.
- *Medium Combination* (prioritisation): the entities prioritise some of their contents, having some quite relevant topics in their posts through social media.
- *High Combination* (distribution): the organisations highly distribute the importance of their contents, promoting a set of several important topics in their communication through social media.

To establish the *Level of Combination (LoCO)*, a scale can be developed, based on the combination of the different types of content disseminated by an organisation: low combination (very few key preponderant topics with percentages higher than 45% and the others with less than 20%); medium combination (various key relevant topics, with percentages higher than 30% and lower than 45% and the others with less than 20%); high combination (several key topics, with percentages higher than 20% and lower than 30% and the others with less than 20%). This allows categorising the data collected for the analysis and the interpretation of the results: from a *low combination* (few preponderant topics) to a *high combination* (several important topics) (Table 6).

<i>Low combination</i>	<i>Medium combination</i>	<i>High combination</i>
Few preponderant key topics		Several important key topics

Table 6. Level of Combination (LoCO)

## 6.3. Types of Content Strategy

The appropriate selection and combination of each of the different types of content will define organisations' content strategy on their social media.

Organisations should define the Relevance of Topics (RoTO), from a few key topics (with a high degree of relevance over time) to several key topics (with a medium degree of relevance over time). They must also establish the Level of Combination (LoCO) of key topics, from concentration (a low combination, with few preponderant topics) to distribution (a high combination, with several not-so-relevant topics).

Thus, the quantity of key topics (few/several) and their specific combination (low/high) will enable recognising the type of content strategy implemented. Accordingly, four main types of **Social Media Content Strategy** can be defined.

- “Exclusive” strategy (one highly preponderant key topic and the others of very little relevance).
- “Dominant” strategy (one preponderant key topic, some -two/three- fairly relevant complementary key topics, and the others of very little relevance).
- “Combined” strategy (few -two/three- quite relevant key topics and the others of very little relevance).
- “Balanced” strategy (several -four/five- quite relevant key topics and the others of very little relevance).

The integration of these strategies will generate a matrix that positions the entities and shows the Content Strategy developed on their social profiles (Figure 5). These four strategies may have a particular orientation depending on the specific types of content disseminated (whether they are functional or organisational topics, which may or may not have an ESG approach), which will allow the personalisation and differentiation of the content strategy of each organisation. This will contribute to defining the organisation’s communicative positioning (Capriotti, Losada-Díaz, et al., 2023; Fähnrich et al., 2020), presenting itself with a specific content profile and making a particular combination of its key aspects visible in the digital landscape.

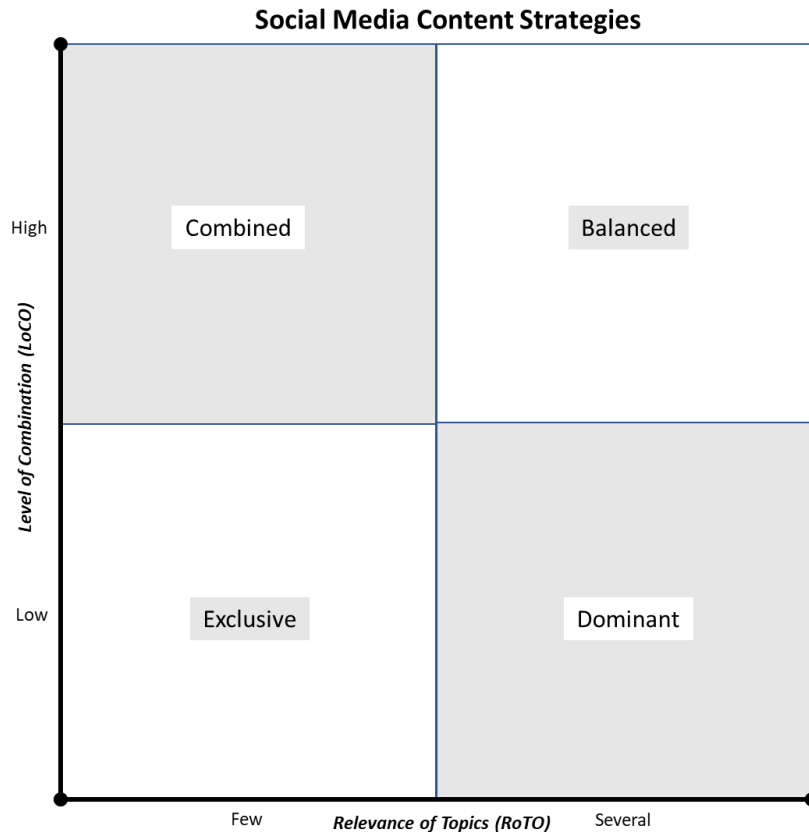


Figure 5. Content Strategies

## 7. From strategies to engagement

Social media communication strategy may foster greater or less engagement (Figure 6). Through digital platforms, organisations can better engage in conversations directly and personally with their publics (Capriotti, Zeler, & Camilleri, 2021; Gonçalves Pereira et al., 2014).

Effective communicative exchange involves continuous interactions between organisations and online users within social media (Anderson et al., 2016; Capriotti, Zeler, & Oliveira, 2021) to generate reactions, promote content sharing or start conversations through comments. Thus, **Engagement** represents this communicational exchange in social media.

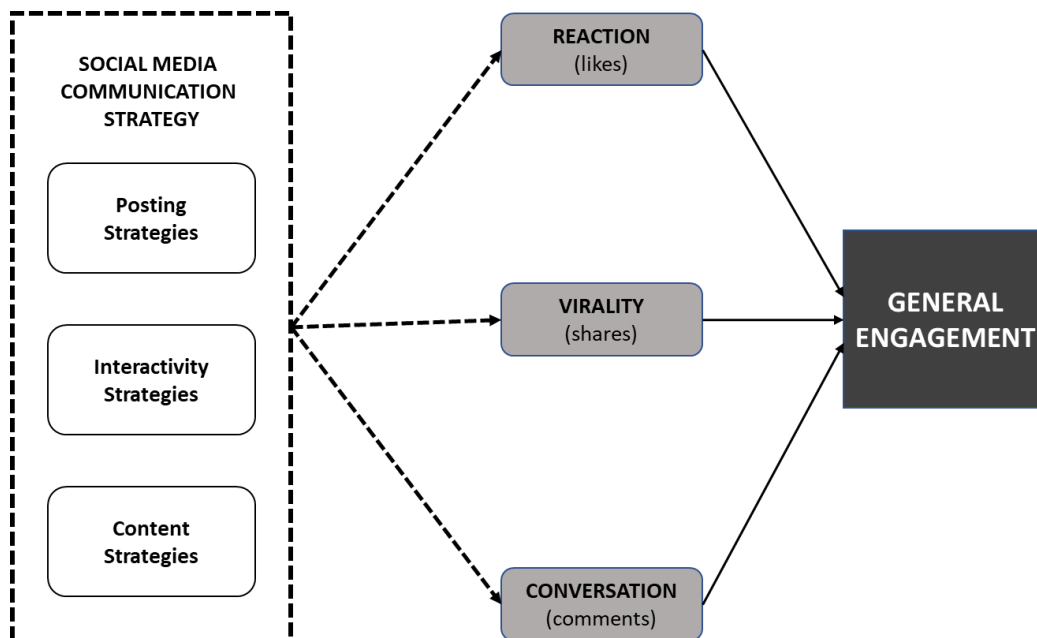


Figure 6. Influence of Social Media Strategy on Engagement.

The engagement between organisations and their publics is based on three forms of interaction: *likes*, *shares* and *comments*. They are commonly referred to as “social media engagement” (Fährnich et al., 2020). Taken together, these three forms of interaction represent an organisation’s **general engagement** in the social networks (Voorveld et al., 2018).

**Likes** suggest that individuals are reacting to the posted content (within social media), albeit in a basic or minimal manner (Abitbol & Lee, 2017; Cho et al., 2014). This also includes some other features such as love, care, wow, sad, celebrate, angry etc. They would clearly denote the online user’s **reaction** to the posted content (Anderson et al., 2016; Macnamara, 2014).

**Shares** enable followers (or third parties in general) to become volunteer spokespersons since they promote the organisation’s content (Abitbol & Lee, 2017; Cho et al., 2014). They show the *virality* achieved on social networks by the digital content (Anderson et al., 2016; Macnamara, 2014).

**Comments** are the most direct and genuine expression of online user interaction on social media (Abitbol & Lee, 2017; Cho et al., 2014). Therefore, *conversation* on social media is usually manifested by way of *comments* (Anderson et al., 2016; Macnamara, 2014).

The *Level of Engagement* establishes the users’ degree of interaction on social media (Abitbol & Lee, 2017; Capriotti, Zeler, & Oliveira, 2021), allowing organisations to evaluate the effects (likes, shares, comments) achieved by the posts disseminated by entities (Cho et al., 2014).

Thus, four standardised indicators (engagement rates) could be identified, that will enable assessing the level of engagement of the organisations’ posts (Capriotti, Zeler, & Oliveira, 2021; Capriotti & Zeler, 2020). They are measured as follows:

- *Reaction Rate* (RR): the total number of *likes* divided by the total number of posts, divided by the number of followers, and multiplied by 1000.
- *Virality Rate* (VR): the total number of *shares* divided by the total number of posts, divided by the number of followers, and multiplied by 1000.
- *Conversation Rate* (CR): the total number of *comments* divided by the total number of posts, divided by the number of followers, and multiplied by 1000.
- *General Engagement Rate* (GER): the sum of the above three rates.

Measuring and evaluating the level of engagement will help to properly manage posts on social media. These indicators enable determining the level of engagement (Table 7) obtained in each social network, to assess the effectiveness of the social media communication strategy developed. It also allows establishing the measurable future objectives for the level of engagement. However, the recommended level of engagement in social media varies across sectors, social networks, over time and even among entities conducting studies. It is therefore advisable to periodically check the reports published by agencies and institutions regarding the recommended level or rate of engagement.

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Very low engagement</i>	<i>Low engagement</i>	<i>Medium engagement</i>	<i>High engagement</i>	<i>Very high engagement</i>
Low results in RR, VR, CR and/or GER			High results in RR, VR, CR and/or GER	

Table 7. Level of Engagement

## 8. Stages of Social Media Communication Strategy

Based on the combination of the **Posting Strategies** and the **Interactivity Strategies** implemented by organisations, there are four major stages of the social media communication management, with blurred boundaries between them (Figure 7):

- Stage 1: “Passive Monologic” (a passive posting focus and monologic-oriented interactivity). Entities wish to have a presence on social media, but with minimal activity and without interaction. The little content generated by the entity is oriented towards providing some key information about the organisation. It is a clearly top-down approach.
- Stage 2: “Active Monologic” (an active posting focus and monologic-oriented interactivity). Organisations wish to achieve an active presence on social media, but still with basic interaction. They mainly create content to disseminate information about their products,

services, and activities, developing their narrative on social media with information of interest to them. It is also a top-down approach.

- Stage 3: “Passive Dialogic” (a passive posting focus and dialogic-oriented interactivity). Entities wish to start interacting with their stakeholders, but with a low level of activity. They create little content of shared interests, although they apply interactive tools and resources to promote dialogue. Interaction is greater than in the previous stages, but is limited by the low activity of the entities. This approach is bottom-up.
- Stage 4: “Active Dialogic” (an active posting focus and dialogic-oriented interactivity). Organisations have a good level of activity on their social networks, trying to foster interaction with their stakeholders. Content is designed based on shared interests to promote a fluid and permanent exchange of information, and the tools and resources applied are dialogic and conversational. The approach is clearly bottom-up.

These four stages can be complemented and enriched with the **Content Strategies** designed (balanced, combined, dominant and exclusive), which will have a particular focus defined by the specific types of content disseminated, to obtain a holistic perspective of the global social media communication strategy.

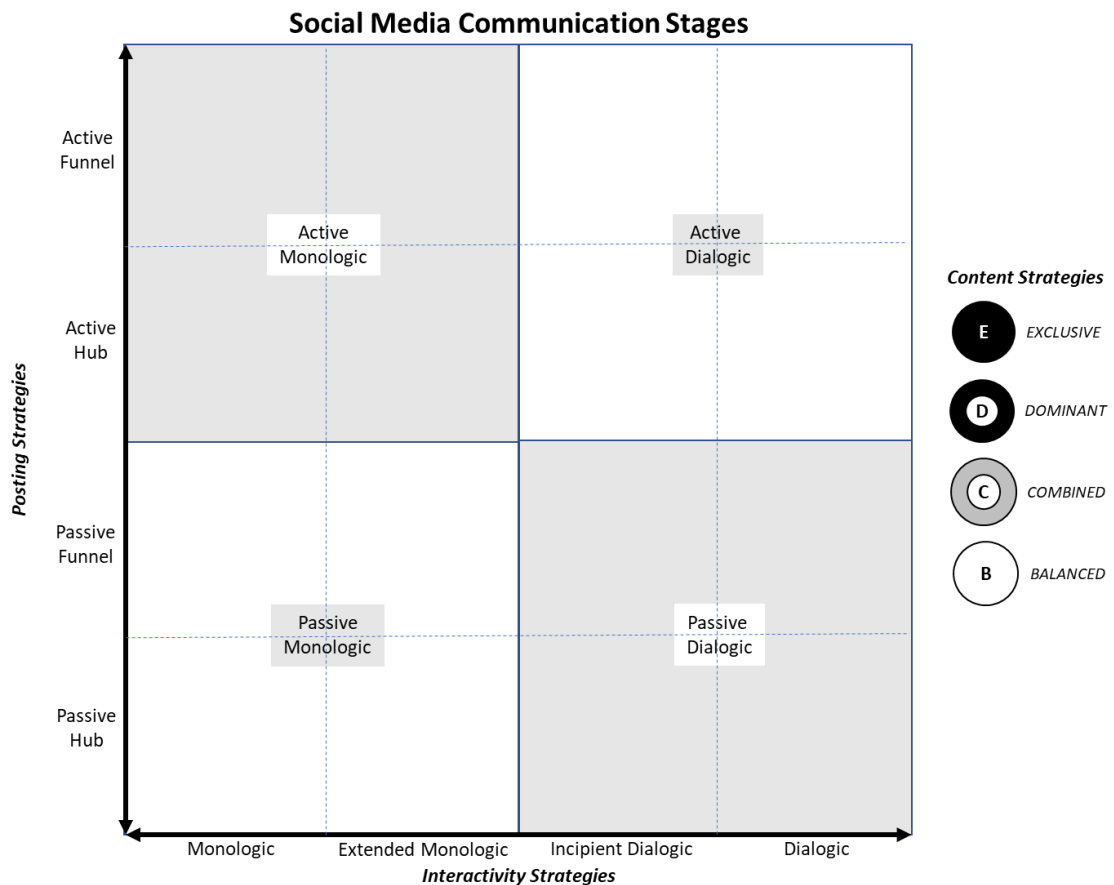


Figure 7. Social Media Communication Stages

## 9. Conclusion

The continuous evolution of the social web is giving rise to ever-changing technological innovations and resources that serve as tools for organisations to develop new digital communication strategies to inform, listen to their stakeholders and promote conversation and interaction with them (Capriotti, Zeler, & Camilleri, 2021; Fähnrich et al., 2020; Theunissen & Wan Noord, 2012).

This work proposes a holistic framework for identifying and assessing the social media communication strategy implemented by organisations. It integrates three main dimensions (posting, interactivity and content) and analyses their influences on level of engagement.

This study offers a method for other researchers to develop their projects in this field of research. Based on the dialogic communication framework for creating connections and relationships between entities and their stakeholders via the internet (Kent & Taylor, 1998, 2002) and internet-based organisational communication strategies (Wirtz & Zimbres, 2018), this research expands the understanding of social media strategic management studies into communication and public relations. The results enrich the research conducted in the field by identifying three key dimensions for strategic communication on social media. This allows other researchers to apply this framework to different entities, sectors and social networks, to test the variables and dimensions, and expand the validity of the model.

Finally, social media facilitate the creation of community, and professionals are aware of their value for the relationship between organisations and their stakeholders. Disposing of a holistic model will enable identifying the dimensions and variables for improvement to achieve effective strategic social media management. This integrative framework can serve as a guide for professionals to manage social networks. Thus, this research could have clear practical and managerial implications, providing public relations and communication practitioners with some key findings that will help them to manage their social media strategic communication.

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