

The Influence of User-Generated Content (UGC) and Social Tagging on Corporate Reputation in Higher Education Institutions (HEI)

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ABSTRACT

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) face increasing competition in attracting students, and corporate reputation plays a vital role. This study examines the impact of user-generated content (UGC) and social tagging on the corporate reputation of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). Despite the recognized importance of social media, limited understanding exists of the specific effects of UGC and social tagging within this context. Using a state-of-the-art review, the research formulates a framework comprising UGC dimensions—corporate image, UGC quality, and UGC trust—and social tagging dimensions—tag contribution, affective social presence, and cognitive social presence. By synthesizing these factors and their interrelationships, the study aims to provide actionable insights for HEIs to enhance their corporate reputation through strategic social media engagement. The findings will guide institutions in leveraging UGC and social tagging to strengthen their reputation and achieve competitive advantages in the digital era.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's digital environment, higher education institutions (HEIs) depend more on their online presence to control their reputation and engage with stakeholders, including groups, organizations, alumni, and the larger community (Rust et. al, 2021; Gardiana et al., 2022). HEI also has become increasingly competitive in luring new students since the university's image and reputation could be an important factor to consider while attracting them (Arif et al. 2024). In the competitive business field, organizations prioritize improving their reputation to attract talent, particularly in competitive labor markets driven by positive assessment created (Thanh, et al, 2023). In the HEI context, corporate reputation in an academic setting is how all key stakeholders (internal and external) personally and collectively recognize, perceive, act on, and rate higher education institutions during a certain period, especially through social media (Sufyan & Hasrina, 2020; Colicev & Connor, 2020). Since HEI learning is now seen as a corporate entity,

they must regularly and consistently communicate with their stakeholders and customers in order to build and maintain a positive reputation, identity, and image among students (Lerato et al., 2024).

Web 2.0 technologies such as review sites, discussion forums, and social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn, have grown in popularity as venues for content exchange, opinion expression, and online interactions (Luis Barbosa dos Santos, 2021). In Malaysia, according to the 2024 Global Digital Report (n.d.), the most popular social media platforms among individuals aged 16 to 64 are Facebook (21%), Instagram (14%), and X (3.8%). These platforms enable students, faculty, alumni, and community members to create user-generated content (UGC) that reflects their experiences, emotions, and opinions about HEI performance. However, since there are few studies regarding this context, HEI might be affected by user-generated content (UGC) and social tagging, but there is a lack of understanding about how this influence occurs. According to Lerato, et al., (2024), using online reputation management (ORM) could be systematic in monitoring and managing users' perception on the internet and potentially influencing the organization's reputation in a positive direction. In this context, there are not any clear rules or standards on how to use these tools successfully and a lot of study has been done on corporate reputation. Still, not much is known about how social tagging affects social media.

This study aims to address these gaps by conducting a State-of-the-Art Review to examine the influence of UGC and social tagging on the corporate reputation of HEIs. Specifically, it seeks to understand (1) the extent to which UGC, and social tagging enhance reputation, (2) the level of UGC and social tagging in enhancing reputation, and (3) the relationship between these factors and corporate reputation. However, in this paper only focuses on the first objective until the formation of the conceptual framework. The findings will culminate in a proposed conceptual framework highlighting these dynamics and providing a basis for future research and practical applications.

METHODS

Scope of the study

This state-of-the-art review evaluates the impact that user-generated content (UGC) and social tagging have on the corporate reputation of higher education institutions (HEIs). The scope of the study is defined in Table 1 based on the following.

Table 1: Scope of the study

Scope	Descriptions
Focus Area	Investigate the other indicators of user-generated content (UGC) such trust, and quality on social media platforms, as well as social tagging aspects, such as tag contribution, and social presences that influence various aspects of higher education institutions' reputations, such as academic excellence, student satisfaction, and research output.
Time	Research studies that were published between the years 2018 to 2024 to keep the relevance of the reviews and half from 2011 for the bold definitions.
Geographical focus	Emphasis on regions that demonstrate significant levels of social media participation among stakeholders is focused on higher education institutions.

Types of Institutions	Various types of higher education institutions (HEIs) included in the study such as public and private universities, community colleges, and specialised institutions that are actively engaged in social media and reputation.
Social media platforms	Facebook, Instagram, X, Telegram are of particular relevance to this study due to the extensive usage of these platforms for the exchange of content, the expressing of opinions, and the engagement of stakeholders regarding the higher education sector.

The significance of this scope lies in the fact that it brings the focus to determine the research articles that are relevant to the corporate reputation of higher education institutions. The details of the scope were defined as include the time frame, geographical location that covers, types of institutions, and social media platforms that cover. This was done to ensure that all of the articles that were retrieved were more relevant.

2.2 Literature Search

To measure the authorize literature reviews from the trusted sources, the literature search was carried out in order to locate recent and pertinent research on the variables of user-generated content (UGC) and social tagging have on the corporate reputation of higher education institutions (HEIs). This initiative was collected in table 2.

2: Literature search strategy related to UGC, social tagging and corporate reputation variables.

Components	Descriptions
Databases searched	Google Scholar, Emerald Insight, Science Direct, Wiley Online Library, ResearchGate, Open Access, MDPI, Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Center,
Keywords used	“Corporate Reputation”, “Corporate Reputation in HEI”, “Corporate image in HEI”, “Corporate Image”, “User-generated content”, “Social Tagging in corporate reputation”, “Social Tagging”, “Tag contribution in social media HEI”, “Tag contribution”, “Social presence in HEI”, “social presence in corporate reputation”, “Cognitive social presence”, “Affective social presence”.
Search Booleans	“Corporate Image AND User-generated content”, “User-generated content AND Corporate Reputation”, “User-generated content OR social media”, “User-generated content trust OR UGC trust”, “User-generated content quality OR UGC quality”, “Social Tagging AND HEI”, “Social Tagging AND User-generated Content”, Affective AND cognitive social presence”,
Inclusion Criteria	Peer-reviewed articles, Research on HEI, Studies with quantitative and mixed methods, English language.
Exclusion Criteria	Opinion pieces, Paper published in 2011, Studies not relating to HEIs, Studies that involved not in HEI but in other fields.
Initial Results	90
Full text reviewed	73
Final Articles Included	42

Through the modification of the components that make up the literature search method in this investigation, the literature reviews will be more particular, and they will provide the trustworthy sources that are associated with the title.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Corporate Reputation

In higher education institutions (HEI), corporate reputation is a multifaceted concept reflecting stakeholders' opinions and assessments depending on prior behaviours and communication (Nardella et al., 2022; Aledo-Ruiz et al., 2021). Students are seen as primary stakeholders demanding high-quality services, while employees' influence over the opinions of external stakeholders highlights the significance of internal corporate culture and efficient management practices (Martinez-Leon & Cifuentes, 2021). Hence, the HEIs face the dual challenge in managing both internal and external expectations in an increasingly competitive environment (Thanh, T., L., 2023). Corporate reputation is assessed in several areas, including financial performance, management quality, ethics, and organizational culture (Martinez- Leon & Cifuentes, 2021). The 2023 scale of Omar Raja offers a methodical way to evaluate HEI reputation by including social appeal and academic ability as well as Including Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) into reputation evaluations to fits modern standards of HEIs as being socially conscious (Galvez-Sanchez et al., 2024). This multifarious technique improves the accuracy of reputation evaluations but adds difficulty in evaluating and understanding several elements. Thus, HEIs have to modify these models to fit their particular situation and the changing demands of stakeholders so as to guarantee accurate and complete assessments. The summary of a few sources where critical points are indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of critical analysis (corporate reputation)

Sources	Framework	Analysis & Result
Thanh, T., L. (2021)	Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), RBV theory (Barney, 1991) & Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1979)	The study assessed the reliability and validity of constructs related to corporate image (CI), corporate reputation (CR), customer loyalty (CL), and firm performance (FP) using Cronbach's Alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE), all of which met the established thresholds for consistency and validity. Bootstrapping was used to test hypotheses, revealing that CI and CL positively influence each other, and CR positively affects FP. These findings suggest that strong corporate image and reputation enhance a firm's intangible assets, improving its competitiveness and financial performance.
Martinez-Leon, I., M. & Olmedo-Cifuentes, L. (2021).	Usual validation procedures: an exploratory factor analysis (EFA)	The study investigated how teachers' views of corporate reputation affect education organizational results and their relationships. Cronbach's alpha was used to verify the measurement scales' reliability and validity. The results support their assumptions that instructors' opinions of business reputation positively and significantly affect employee happiness, retention, and

		service quality. Positive corporate reputation (CR) makes employees want to stay longer at their schools, minimizing turnover. The study also found a positive and substantial association between staff happiness and retention, showing that higher job satisfaction reduces turnover intentions and increases school retention.
Nardella, et al. (2022)	Conceptual framework to map the diverse landscape of literature and its contributions.	They analyzed the understanding between corporate social irresponsibility (CSI) and corporate reputation (CR) through more than 222 references. Research has studied several CSI behaviours and stakeholder tendencies to criticize and condemn company reputation. However, it largely remains unclear whether such risks to corporate reputation (CR) perform the function of successfully 'detering' CSI as management studies could be enriched.
Lerato, et al. (2024)	No explicit framework was stated. The discussion focuses on the role of social media in creating and maintaining corporate reputation.	The study reveals that social media enables organizations to maintain their corporate reputation (CR) and engage with stakeholders with the highest level of agreement at 82.2% with the statement "It is easy to maintain the corporate reputation of the organization on social media". Social media could be challenging to the organization as it is created for individuals and not for organizations. However, it serves as a tool for maintaining image of the organization, Its benefits in this context include the ability to connect with external stakeholders and engage effectively with target audiences online.

Corporate image

Corporate image is defined as the collective state of mind from a company's communication activities (Aledo-Ruiz et al., 2021) and reflects stakeholders' ideas and attitudes. It forms a whole evaluation of a corporation by including institutional, functional, and commodity images (Weicheng, 2019). While reputation is based on concrete data, corporate image is subjective and more difficult to assess even if connected (Vai et al., 2021). Since CI greatly affects consumer behavior by influencing consumer responses and purchase intentions generally (Jihyun Lee & Yuri Lee, 2018), In the education context, CI helps recent graduates of universities get jobs and impacts the opinions of both internal and external public in the institutional setting (Mazhar et al., 2021). Furthermore, students believe that attending a particular university indicates their level of success in landing a job, their perceived salary range upon graduation, the company's preference for them in the labor market, students' pride, and the merit of their position in the labor market (Arief., et al, 2024). Positive experiences with university services improve satisfaction and help to create a good university image, which is important for determining business reputation (Mazhar et al., 2021). Based on the appearance of an institution, students' first impressions highlight its ability to affect corporate reputation (Omar Raja, 2022; Martinez-Leon & Cifuentes, 2021). An unseen tool that improves value and reputation is a corporate image (Tiep Lee, 2022). Aly Abdou (2023) claims that as success depends on good public opinion, a corporate reputation mostly depends on corporate image. Thus, the following hypothesis is put forth:

H1: corporate image has a significant impact on corporate reputation.

User-generated Content Quality

User-generated content (UGC) quality is defined as dimensions ranging from traceability, credibility, currentness, relevance, and accuracy (Musto & Dahayanake, 2021). Due to the contributors' lack of experience, UGC's legitimacy is sometimes under doubt and it is prone to low-quality data (Musto & Dahayanake, 2021). Content quality is following language, style, and semantic norms (Jihad et al., 2020). By looking for copyright infringement and offering tools for content improvement, sites like YouTube guarantee UGC quality (Jihad et al., 2020). Excellent UGC influences communities favourably and fosters confidence (Musto & Dahayanake, 2021). As users grow more informed, interaction with UGC improves credibility and lowers apparent risk (Jun & Ruoshi, 2018). In UiTM context, higher education institutions (HEIs) can benefit students' impressions and corporate reputation using quality UGC (Jun & Ruoshi, 2018; Musto & Dahayanake, 2021). Thus, hypothesis two is construct below:

H2: User-generated content quality has a significant impact on corporate reputation.

Focussing on content, design, and technological quality, this study adapted scales from Jihad et al. (2020) and Roma & Aloini (2019) to assess UGC quality. These scales guarantee a thorough evaluation of UGC quality and influence on corporate reputation in social media environments.

User-generated Content Trust

Trust is a multi-dimensional term including behavioural, cognitive, and parental facets (Jun & Ruoshi, 2018). Affected by integrity, compassion, and UGC publishing competency, it entails trusting ideas, beliefs, and intentions (Ruoshi & Jun, 2018). Strong internet security helps users to trust websites; in the travel sector, UGC replaces official data (Kitsios et al., 2022). A big issue with UGC is the accuracy and dependability of data uploaded by usually anonymous users (Kitsios et al., 2022). In business, UGC trust is shaped by the quality of engagement, so affecting buying intentions. More precise and complete information produced by higher interaction quality in UGC increases consumer confidence and lowers transaction risk by means of which it is achieved (Ruoshi & Jun, 2018). Increased student participation via UGC about UiTM in HEIs can boost trust and help to improve the institution's reputation.

In HEIs, student reviews help to establish trust in the company; customers find UGC more reliable than content provided by vendors (Ruoshi & Jun, 2018). Reliability, credibility, responsibility, and perceived quality—all of which depend on trust in corporate reputation—are connected to Creating quality UGC builds trust especially for universities like UiTM (Ruoshi & Jun, 2018; Fatmawati & Fauzan, 2021). Hence, the hypothesis is proposed as;

H3: The trust in user-generated content has a significant impact on corporate reputation the corporate reputation

User-generated content

User-generated content (UGC) refers to any content created and published by individuals on digital platforms, such as text, photographs, videos, and reviews like blog comments, online reviews, and social media posts. (Beveridge, 2024). According to Luis Barbosa dos Santos (2021) UGC is extensively utilized in information science, business, management, tourism, and communication. Customers can generate and share content with businesses and other users via social media, which is a valuable source of worldwide consumer feedback (Confète et al., 2019). UGC has the power to affect a company's reputation since user reviews, whether favourable or unfavourable, can shape public opinion (Manaman et al., 2015). Tweets on a business's Twitter account, for instance, may represent what the general public thinks of the business or its offerings. The N-gram technique has demonstrated effectiveness in examining the impact of tweets on

reputation (Confete et al., 2019). Instead, Maia et al. (2023) contend that the original purpose of user-generated content (UGC) is not to influence sales, emphasising the necessity for corporate systems to examine online comments and identify patterns. Nevertheless, constructive UGC can increase credibility and trust, but destructive content can damage a brand's reputation (Luis Barbosa dos Santos, 2021). First-person stories of university experiences have an impact on public opinion of HEIs, and UGC influences how reputation is developed and perceived in this context (Perera et al., 2020; Chugh & Ruhi, 2018). UGC will be used to create study variables that will be tested and measured for their impact on business reputation. Through the sources, the hypothesis is proposed:

H4: *User-generated content has a significant impact on corporate reputation.*

Tag contribution

Graffiti culture gave rise to tagging, which developed into a system similar to library cataloguing (Andersen, 2021). In the middle of the 2000s, collaborative tagging became popular on social networking sites like Delicious and Flickr (Andersen, 2021). Hashtags (#) gained popularity on Twitter and are now commonly used as keywords on Facebook, Instagram, and other platforms (Watson, 2020). However, unauthorized accounts and absurd or unverifiable tweets frequently cast doubt on Twitter's dependability (Dahanayake & Musto, 2021). Hashtags facilitate user-generated content creation in education by tying user discourse and meaning together. They also help to organise online interactions between users (Watson, 2020). Comparably, users of Tumblr add a lot of tags in order to connect with more people and increase discoverability and interactivity (Bourlai, 2018). Individual intents drive the tagging and sharing behaviors in business, impacting actions related to finding, adding, and sharing tags (Allam et al., 2020). Student sharing and tagging practices in HEIs like UiTM enhance the reputation of the university by bringing people together through tagged keywords. According to Andersen (2021), Watson (2020), Bourlai (2018), and Allam et al. (2020), tagging increases the reach of social media platforms, promotes student voice and information exchange, and may even improve reputation. Hence, the hypotheses proposed as;

H5: *Tag contribution has a significant impact on the corporate reputation.*

Affective social presence

According to Chao et al. (2018), social presence includes both awareness and emotional connection is essential for online interaction because it affects engagement and community participation. Affective social presence is a particularly pertinent notion at higher education institutions (HEIs), such as UiTM, where the reputation of the institution can be greatly impacted by emotional connections made through social media interactions (Longa et al., 2021; Vazquez et al., 2023). Positive emotional involvement with online material improves user perceptions and interactions, according to research (Allam et al., 2020). Research indicates that increased emotional connection and interaction boost overall engagement with digital information, which enhances an institution's reputation. According to the data, depending on the type of interactions, students' affective social presence-driven social media interactions can either improve or harm UiTM's reputation. Although there is strong evidence to support the idea of affective social presence, reliable assessment instruments are needed for its practical implementation. To achieve thorough assessment, the study incorporates scales from several sources (Vazquez et al., 2023; Yung-Min, 2023; Chao et al., 2018; Allam et al., 2020). This methodology highlights the significance of accurate and verified instruments in capturing the complex impacts of social media presence on reputation. Thus, the hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H6: *Affective social presence has a significant impact on the corporate reputation.*

Cognitive social presence

Cognitive social presence includes processes such as reflection, discussion, analysis, and synthesis in addition to evaluating and verifying the meaning of digital interactions (Akyol and Garrison, 2011). According to Vazquez et al. (2023), this idea is essential for improving user comprehension and engagement in digital settings. Consumers' cognitive processes influence how they interact with online content, it has an impact on trust and buy intentions in e-commerce (Chao et al., 2018). By encouraging intellectual interaction and conversation through social tagging, cognitive social presence in UiTM can build a strong reputation (Vazquez et al., 2023; Akyol & Garrison, 2011). Students who exhibit a strong cognitive presence on social media platforms can foster meaningful discourse and improve mutual understanding, which benefits UiTM's reputation. Though cognitive social presence can increase engagement, precise measurement is necessary to determine its real-world impact. Yung-Ming (2023) and Vazquez et al. (2023) offer pertinent scales for evaluating cognitive social presence. In HEI situations, these technologies are crucial for figuring out how social tagging-based cognitive interactions affect a reputation. Hence, the hypothesis proposed as:

H7: Cognitive social presence has a significant impact on the corporate reputation

Social Tagging

To enhance search and filtering, social tagging entails adding keywords to text, images, and video content (Al-Thuhli & Al-Badawi, 2020). Social tagging is used by sites like Flickr, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and del.icio.us to improve user experience and content organisation (Al-Thuhli & Al-Badawi, 2020). Specifically, hashtags assist users in narrowing their focus and sifting through pertinent content (Watson, 2020). The corporate reputation UiTM can be greatly impacted by social tagging since social media tags on Twitter and Instagram have the potential to increase the visibility and accessibility of UiTM-related content, hence impacting the institution's perception (Al-Thuhli & Al-Badawi, 2020; Watson, 2020). User-generated content (UGC) and social tagging are closely related as user-generated tags make it easier to identify publicly available content. (Gursoy et al., 2018). This dynamic influences UiTM's corporate reputation by enabling students to actively participate in defining the institution's narrative using hashtags and user-generated content (UGC) (Watson, 2020; Gursoy et al., 2018). Hence, the hypothesis proposed:

H8: Social Tagging has a significant impact on the corporate reputation.

FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

Throughout previewing previous studies, this study suggested a conceptual framework that is mostly based on research already done in similar areas. By the systematic literature review approach, the proposed framework highlighted the indicators presented in Figure 1. Figure 1 shows the proposed framework.

Based on the work of Omar Raja (2023) and Galvez-Sanchez et al. (2024), corporate image is seen as a strong independent variable. In the fashion business, Galvez-Sanchez et al. (2024) showed that corporate image has a big effect on reputation, suggesting that it is one of the most important things that affects reputation. In the same way, Omar Raja (2023) talked about signs under "corporate reputation" that affect student loyalty in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The independent factors used in this study come from different studies to make sure they are reliable and accurate. User-generated content (UGC) is seen as an important part, with trust and quality of UGC being very important. Studies by Roma & Allioni (2021), Jun & Ruoshi (2021), and Jihad et al. (2020) show how important UGC quality is. Other studies by Kumari (2022), Roma & Allioni (2021), and Fatmawati & Fauzan (2021) show how important UGC trust is.

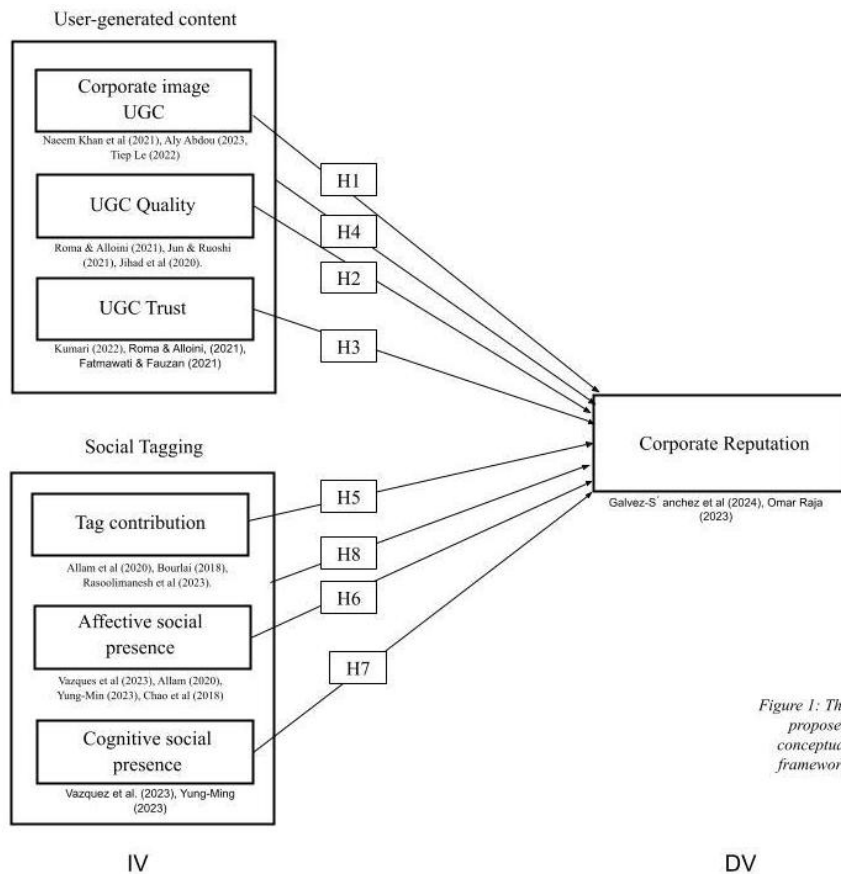


Figure 1: The proposed conceptual framework

Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework

Several previous studies, Allam et al. (2020), Boulay (2018), Rasoulimanesh et al. (2023), Vazquez et al. (2023), and Yung-Ming (2023) found, tag contribution, emotional social presence, and cognitive social presence are also added to the framework. These things are very important to know in order to understand how social media exchanges work and how they affect the reputation of higher education institutions. This thorough framework aims to look into the many ways that UGC, social presence, and corporate reputation are connected. It will give us a solid base for looking into the things that affect corporate reputation in higher education schools. Thus, again here the outline of the hypotheses depicted aligned with the proposed framework.

H1: Corporate image has a significant impact on corporate reputation.

H2: User-generated content quality has a significant impact on corporate reputation.

H3: The trust in user-generated content has a significant impact on corporate reputation the corporate reputation

H4: User-generated content has a significant impact on the corporate reputation.

H5: Tag contribution has a significant impact on corporate reputation.

H6: Affective social presence has a significant impact on the corporate reputation.

H7: Cognitive social presence has a significant impact on the corporate reputation

H8: Social Tagging has a significant impact on the corporate reputation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The proposed framework will be used to identify the influence factors of UGC and Social tagging on the corporate reputation especially focusing on higher education institutions. The validity and reliability of the variables that discussed in the framework will be revealed within the further survey to the audiences in the scope of the research. By encouraging more participation and interaction with their stakeholders, social tagging may greatly improve the business reputation of higher education institutions (Raja, 2023). user-generated tagging encourages engagement and a feeling of connectedness among students, alumni, and other stakeholders (Alshaharani, 2023; Kim et al., 2021). The institution's online presence expands as more individuals interact with and share tagged information, which enhances public perception and brand reputation (Rust et al., 2021; Gardiana et al., 2022).

Based on a previous study, UGC was proven to significantly impact corporate reputation, with positive content boosting trust and credibility (Luis Barbosa dos Santos, 2021), while negative content can harm a brand's image. In Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), UGC facilitates the dissemination of first-person experiences, influencing public perception and HEIs' engagement to gain loyalty and support (Perera, et al., 2020; Chugh & Ruhi, 2018). The same result could be gathered by this study in the context of Malaysia.

In conclusion, the study suggests more empirical evidence need to be revealed on the connection between UGC, social tagging, and corporate image in higher education institutions to help people develop better ways of communicating with the organization or its affiliates. Using user-generated content and social tagging can help institutions build trust in the community, encourage meaningful interactions, and improve connections with students, teachers, alumni, and other important people. Higher education institutions (HEIs) can also make better and more effective reputation management plans if they know how user-generated content (UGC) and social tagging affect their business reputation. Then, they can improve their general image, deal with problems before they happen, and make the most of their strengths by figuring out the key factors and trends that affect how people think about their reputation. HEI also can use user-generated content and social tagging to improve its brand image and will have an edge in the higher education market. Institutions with a good reputation can attract top talent, get more students, raise more money, and set themselves apart from rivals.

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