

EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIAMARKETING PRACTICES (SMMP) FOR
FREELANCE TRAINERS, COACHES AND LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT
PROFESSIONALS IN INDIA

by

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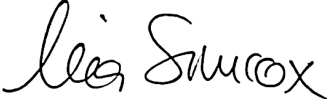
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this degree and dissertation to my loving family. To my grandfathers, Late Shri Ramchandra Prasad Bhagat and Late Shri Laxmi Prasad Bhagat, whose blessings have been my continuous source of inspiration. To my parents, Shri Narayan Prasad and Dr Raj Kumari for being reason of my existence and providing their unconditional support without which I would not be what I am today. To my wife, Neha Saini, who is my source of energy and support system. To my son, Advay Saini Bhagat, who has always provided his unconditional love and support. They have sacrificed their family time to make me free to dedicate my time for study and research. To my brother Kumar Gyanesh, sister-in-law Hema Gupta and nephew Aveer Kumar, who are my supporting pillars. Last but not the least to my four legged child, Allen, who always gives me love and kept me stress free during this entire journey. I love all of you very much and appreciate the support, love and blessings you gave me in this project and all other endeavors I have chosen to pursue in my life.

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ABSTRACT

In the rapidly evolving digital ecosystem, freelance trainers, coaches, and learning and development (L&D) professionals in India are increasingly reliant on Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP) to expand their client base and enhance brand visibility. This abstract detail the outcomes of a comprehensive study aimed at identifying the most effective content types and engagement strategies on social media that contribute to increased client inquiries and brand visibility for these freelancers. The research utilized a robust mixed-methods approach, engaging with over 225 freelance trainers, coaches, and

learning and development (L&D) professionals in India who are using social media across various platforms including LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, X, Youtube etc. The study meticulously analyzed the effectiveness of different content types such as posts, educational articles, motivational quotes, video tutorials and live interactive sessions. It also examined engagement strategies like posting frequency, real-time interaction with followers, and strategic use of hashtags and partnerships. Our findings indicate a clear superiority of video content over other types - video tutorials and live broadcasts consistently yielded the highest engagement rates, shares, and comments, significantly boosting user interaction and visibility. Interactive content such as Q&A sessions and polls also proved highly effective, facilitating enhanced engagement by encouraging audience participation and fostering a community feeling. In terms of engagement strategies, our analysis revealed that freelancers who maintained a regular posting schedule and engaged directly with their audience through prompt replies and personalized interactions experienced a marked increase in follower loyalty and client inquiries. Moreover, the strategic use of relevant hashtags and collaboration with other industry influencers expanded their reach and visibility, penetrating new demographic segments more effectively. The research conclusively demonstrates that a strategic approach to social media, emphasizing video and interactive content coupled with consistent and personal engagement, can substantially improve the visibility and client engagement for freelance trainers, coaches and learning and development professionals in India. Implementing these focused strategies can lead freelance trainers, coaches and learning and development (L&D) professionals to achieve greater market presence and

business growth in the competitive landscape of Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP) for professional training and coaching services.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

After introducing accessible internet and digital devices, the online marketplace has turned into a new marketplace for consumers. Further, using social media as a channel for marketing doesn't only offers perks to businesses; it is also beneficial for the consumers. Businesses and brands use social media platforms to broaden their geographic scope to consumers (Gao *et al.*, 2018), improve consumer perceptions of their brands (Naylor *et al.*, 2012), and foster tighter relationships with them (Rapp *et al.*, 2013). The ongoing ascent of social media's can be seen since the launch of LinkedIn in 2003 followed by Facebook in 2004, Youtube and 2005, Twitter in 2006 and Instagram in 2010 (Mróz-Gorgoń *et al.*, 2016). Social media became an inevitable marketing medium, gaining popularity after the advancements in technology and the internet especially in the era of Web 2.0 (Ourworldindata, 2019).

The number of social media users in India is expected to grow steadily between 2024 and 2028, reaching a total of 369.7 million users (+42.88%). After the ninth consecutive year of growth, the social media user base is expected to reach 1.2 billion users and reach a new high in 2028. It should be noted that the number of social media users has grown steadily in recent years (Statista, 2023). One more factor that boosted Social Media popularity is the Smartphone. After the advancement of Smartphone, consumers spend most of their internet use time surfing on social media platforms. The media landscape in India has transformed significantly, with over 350 million internet

users and 80% smartphone penetration. India is a key market for global internet companies, with digital advertising spends reaching 22 Billion in December 2013. Digital marketing, integral to brand communication, influences decision-making, especially among young students and working professionals. However, digital media's influence raises concerns about authenticity and reliability, potentially misleading audiences. The study examines how digitalization can influence decision-making, focusing on the education sector, to assess the legitimacy of marketing information and its impact on the target audience (Dhote *et al.*, 2015).

Without social media, the consumers could not have found a potential business that in the future offered them desirable services. In a study by Alharbie (2015), investigation highlights how SMMP positively impacts business growth through six independent factors: accessibility, affordability, personal interaction, branding, and immediate responses. In another research by Khudolei (2021), the study finds that social media positively impacts business development by providing customer insights, better customer service, cost-efficient connectivity, brand awareness, and sales opportunities. Moreover, it seems evident that social media is here to stay and is continuously growing. Social media's expansion has pushed many coaches, trainers, consultants and freelance learning and development professionals to move towards social media. A many of them use social media platforms to become self-employed or generate more clients and business for them as a recent trend. This literature review aims to weave these diverse strands into a coherent narrative that explores the multifaceted impact of SMMP on trainers, coaches, and consultants in India. By examining the current state of research,

identifying effective practices, and highlighting gaps, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of SMMP's role in the professional development of individual service providers.

1.2 Research Problem

As a recent trend, the Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP) has mostly replaced conventional marketing. It allows the learning and development professional, freelance trainers, coaches and consultants to investigate new possibilities for working environments for both their brand recognition and their clients. In order to find the finest prospects for their business, social media also forces coaches, consultants and trainers to think like marketers. For greater outcomes and efficiency, it is crucial to comprehend the effectiveness of Social Media Marketing Practices in the present and the future for freelance trainers, coaches and learning and development professional in India.

In today's world, the use of SMMP has become almost inevitable for freelance trainers, coaches and learning and development professionals that question its effectiveness for professional development, brand recognition, and clients' attraction still exists. While everyone seems to have erroneously concluded that presence on social media professional is advantageous, many are unable to harness the online visibility into business returns. Such a divergence poses questions regarding the real efficiency of engagement strategies, content planning and other marketing practices in creating genuine inquiries, and in broadening practitioners' audiences. Furthermore, analyzing the differences in usage patterns for individuals with different levels of experience, it points

to an understanding that there is no one strategy in using social media for career success, therefore eradicating the idea of social media as a consistent tool in the modern world. There is a clear need to analyze whether or not such practices actually build sustainable brands, or whether they are actually mere indicators of popularity that yield no real business value. Consequently, the more profound assumption (shared between all of these changes) of this thesis is that strategic, evidence-based approaches are required to effectively question and analyze these assumptions to unlock the full potential of social media marketing in this transforming corporate world.

1.3 Research Objectives

For the current study following objectives were set:

- To study the Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP)'s effectiveness on increasing the reach and branding of freelance learning and development professional, trainers and coaches in India.
- To analyze how different freelance trainers, coaches and learning and development professionals in India use social media marketing practices (SMMP) based on their experience level and social media platform preference.
- To measure the impact of social media marketing practices on the expansion of professional networks for freelance trainers, coaches and learning and development (L&D) professionals in India.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of specific content types and engagement strategies on client inquiries and brand building for freelance trainers, coaches, and learning and development professionals in India.

1.4 Research Questions

In order to complete the current study following research questions were set:

- RQ1 How do different social media platforms influence the marketing efforts of freelance trainers, coaches and learning and development professionals based on their experience level?
- RQ2 What is the impact of social media marketing practices on the expansion of professional networks for freelance trainers, coaches and learning and development professionals in India?
- RQ3 Which content types and engagement strategies on social media are most effective in generating client inquiries and building brand visibility for freelance trainers, coaches and learning and development professionals?
- RQ 4 How effective are Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP) in expanding the reach of freelance learning and development professionals, trainers, and coaches in India?

RQ 5 To what extent Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP) contributes to enhancing the branding of freelance learning and development professionals, trainers, and coaches in India?

1.5 Purpose of Research

The long-term goal of this research is to understand the effectiveness of Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP) and create a formalized framework for freelance trainers, coaches, and learning and development professionals in India. The current study aims to provide a comprehensive review of the literature and industry practices on the effectiveness of SMMP and outline a conceptual framework. Specifically, the study investigates how SMMP can increase the reach and branding of these professionals, explores the strategies and practices they use, identifies the most widely used and effective SMMP tools, and examines how SMMP is used to approach new clients and gain brand recognition.

1.6 Research Significance

Using this research, one could identify the application gap between the existing and the best social media marketing practices for freelance trainers, coaches and learning and development (L&D) professionals. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, many professionals are left navigating the complexities of various platforms without a clear strategy for maximizing their reach, client engagement, and brand visibility. This research endeavors to answer the following question since there exists a good understanding of social media practices but seemingly little evidence for defining which practices would

give good and tangible business returns: What specific social media practices work best? Thus, discussing the effects of engagement approaches and kinds of content, and the methods of marketing quantification, this paper enriches the existing debate on how the digital tools can be used to achieve the professional growth that is sustainable. Lastly, it aims at helping those that are in the social media marketing profession to come up with more effective, well-directed, and results-driven promotions that are capable of encouraging professionals across the field to think beyond popularity and vanity metrics and to come up with working solutions that make an impact in the society.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

After introducing accessible internet and digital devices, the online marketplace has turned into a new marketplace for consumers. Further, using social media as a channel for marketing doesn't only offers perks to businesses; it is also beneficial for the consumers. Businesses and brands use social media platforms to broaden their geographic scope to consumers (Gao *et al.*, 2018), improve consumer perceptions of their brands (Naylor *et al.*, 2012), and foster tighter relationships with them (Rapp *et al.*, 2013). The ongoing ascent of social media's can be seen since the launch of LinkedIn in 2003 followed by Facebook in 2004, Youtube and 2005, Twitter in 2006 and Instagram in 2010 (Mróz-Gorgoń *et al.*, 2016). Social media became an inevitable marketing medium, gaining popularity after the advancements in technology and the internet especially in the era of Web 2.0 (Ourworldindata, 2019).

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identifying effective practices, and highlighting gaps, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of SMMP's role in the professional development of individual service providers.

2.2 Background

The authors talk about the promotion of goods and services through digital technologies - primarily the Internet, but also mobile devices, display ads, and other digital media- is known as digital marketing. The evolution of digital marketing over the 1990s and 2000s has altered how companies and brands utilize technology for marketing. The usage of digital marketing is growing in popularity and becoming effective as individuals utilize digital gadgets instead of going to physical stores and as digital platforms are increasingly integrated into marketing strategies and daily life. This essay primarily focuses on the conceptual understanding of digital marketing, the ways in which it benefits modern businesses, and a few case studies (Desai *et al.*, 2015).

The authors discuss about while social media use is becoming more and more important as part of a company's strategy portfolio, there hasn't been much study done to systematically expand and consolidate the corpus of information regarding Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP). To fill this research void, they define SMMP in terms of social media and marketing strategy components. The SMMP development process is then conceptualized after that. The drivers, inputs, throughputs, and outputs are the four primary components of this process. Next, they offer a taxonomy that classifies SMMP into four groups: social commerce strategy, social content strategy, social monitoring

strategy, and social CRM strategy, depending on the level of strategic maturity of these platforms. After that, they combined information from earlier empirical studies with data gathered from in-depth interviews and a quantitative survey, to validate this taxonomy of SMMP (Li *et al.*,2018).

The authors present the history and evolution of social media, which serves as the foundation for further considerations. The purpose of the paper is an analysis of the definitions in the context of new communication channels or the functionality of already-existing social media. The analysis's outcome is the author's definition, which includes the most significant aspects of the currently available social media. Social media is playing a bigger and bigger role in the lives of businesses and all internet users (Mróz-Gorgoń *et al.*,2016). In another study, the author discuss about a framework for measuring the effectiveness of social media using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as how well social media promoted Ireland in North America and to maximize marketing efforts (Barcoe *et al.*,2018).

The researchers conclude that investing in social media yields a substantial return on investment. This study is the first to openly measure social media's significance for plastic surgery. The practice demographics and a year's worth of income, broken down by the patient's source of referral, are reported in this study. The monetary amount returned was disclosed for a number of online marketing tools and social media platforms. Gould *et al.*(2018) discussed about the Return on Investment Metrics (ROIM) of social media. She discusses the pros and cons of trying to use any form of metric to support

participation in a social media program while taking a broad picture on the state of ROIM in social media today (Fisher, 2009).

2.3 Understanding Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP)

Social media: What is it?

Social media is a tool of communication, connection, sharing, emotional exchanges and thus influential in decision making of social media users. The term "social media" refers to the utilization of online platforms, such as content sharing websites, wikis, blogs, and social networking sites—for the creation, sharing, and discussion of material. This illustrates the social media phenomena, which nowadays has a substantial influence on a company's revenues, reputation, and even ability to survive (Kietzmann *et al.*, 2011). There's no doubting that social media platforms have transformed both private and public communication (Dijck, 2013). The author believes that as more content becomes available online, social media and user opinion will play a bigger role in shaping not only the direction of the web but also the future of society as a whole (Smith, 2009). Social Media is avenues of communication that permit information sharing, engagement, and/or integration inside the community network, which establishes the communication availability (Mróz-Gorgoń *et al.*, 2016).

Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP): What is it?

The technique of promoting a website, brand, or business through interaction with or arousal of interest from current or future customers through social media platforms is

known as Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP). The most well-known social media platforms that businesses and celebrities frequently utilize to market their brands and themselves are Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube. Social media is a superior marketing tool because of the growing user base on Facebook and additional social media platforms, which will inevitably result in more business customers, promotions, and marketing (Saravanakumar *et al.*, 2012).

The introduction of social media and other new technologies has permeated many homes and changed how consumers look for information before making purchases. Businesses are urged to utilize the new marketing channel and successfully engage with clients as the number of social media users rises. The process of increasing website traffic or attention through social media platforms is known as “*Social Media Marketing Practices*”. Programs for Social Media Marketing Practices typically focus on producing material that grabs readers' interest and motivates them to share it with others on social media (Kaur, 2016).

2.4 Need of Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP)

Marketing usually has tactics attached to it, and one may also use their imagination and experiment with every tiny detail of the marketing strategy. As the social media content consumption has increased dramatically after the Web 2.0 digital revolution, traditional marketing is unable to assist one with reaching out to customers that Social Media may. References, Ad printing, phone communication and physical marketing are all employed by traditional marketing companies. If someone wants to

establish a company and spread the word about it in a faster, cheaper and spreadable medium to masses, one cannot just knock on everyone's doors and ask them to support or buy, can he/she? No, nobody does it these days of digitally connected world. Therefore, Social Media is a platform on which one can truly express his opinions and thoughts about what one plans to accomplish or market or sell. Therefore, the need of Social Media arises for almost any business or ideas to sell or to be adapted or to create a fan following resulting into business generation.

In a mixed method research by Mishra (2019) investigates antecedents of consumer engagement with brand-related SMMP content and emphasizes the importance of content relevance and emotional appeal. This approach is particularly relevant in the Indian context, which can provide strategies to enhance engagement with Indian audiences through culturally relevant content. In another survey research by Irshad *et al.* (2019) analyses consumer attitudes and SMMP by investigating how gender moderates consumers' attitudes towards SMMP which reveals gender differences in SMMP perception and interaction. The research findings advise Indian SMMP practitioners to consider gender perspectives in campaign designs.

2.5 Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP) Statistics and Facts

People often check their accounts on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn to remain up to speed with friends, family, and events. Social networking has become an integral part of daily life. These platforms are crucial for communication and information exchange since they provide a variety of means for

exchanging images, videos, and ideas. All age groups find social media to be popular, particularly on sites like Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, demonstrating the platform's broad appeal. Social media has been essential for bringing people together, exchanging content, and keeping informed about society, especially during and after the epidemic. This has demonstrated the significance of social media in contemporary communication and education (Venugeetha *et al.*,2022).

In an online article summarizing the latest social media statistics, Chaffey (2024) presents research and insights published by Kemp (2024). The report highlights that over **62.3%**, or **5.04 billion** out of **8.08 billion** people worldwide, are actively using social media, as depicted in Figures 1 and 2. Figure 3 further reveals how social media is increasingly being used for brand research, emphasizing its role in consumer decision-making processes. Although Figure 4 shows that social media penetration in Southern Asia is currently at **32%** of the total population, this figure suggests a significant potential for growth, particularly since India's specific data is included within this regional statistic. The article identifies the top five global social media platforms as **Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok**, according to Figure 5. However, it is noted that TikTok is banned in India, which impacts the local social media landscape. Figure 6 presents a consistent year-on-year growth of social media usage worldwide. Additionally, Figures 7 through 12 analyze the penetration of various social media platforms for advertising purposes, including **Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, X, and Snapchat**. Notably, India shows the highest penetration across all these platforms except for **LinkedIn** and **X**, where it ranks as the **2nd and 3rd largest**

user base, respectively. This analysis indicates India's growing influence and engagement in the global social media space.

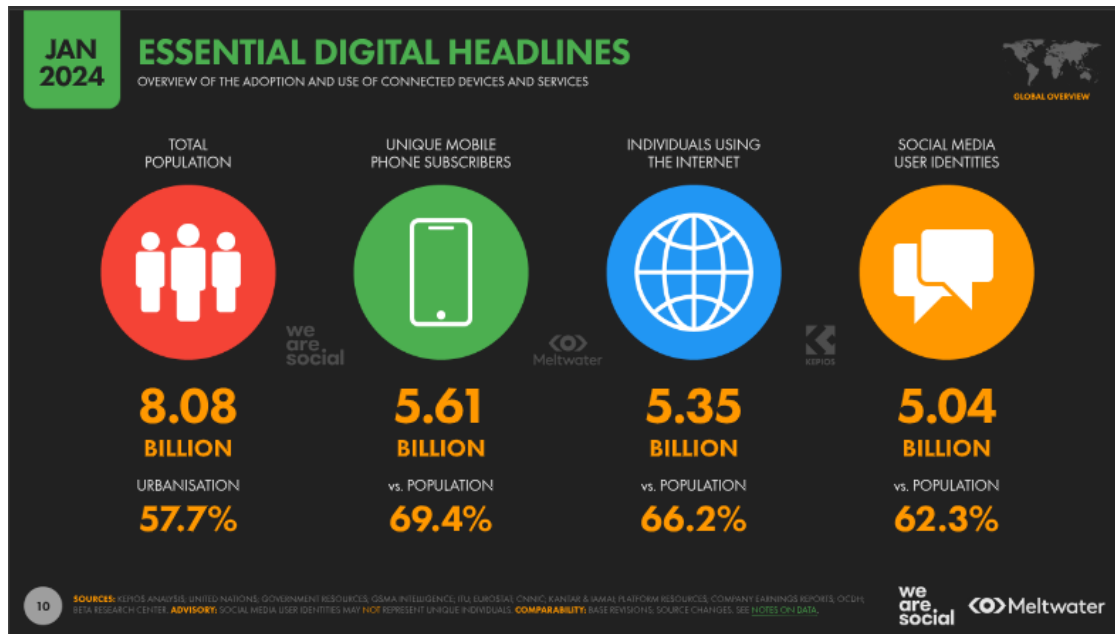


Figure 1 Total population vs. internet users vs. social media users

[Source: Kepios, 2024 <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-global-overview-report>]

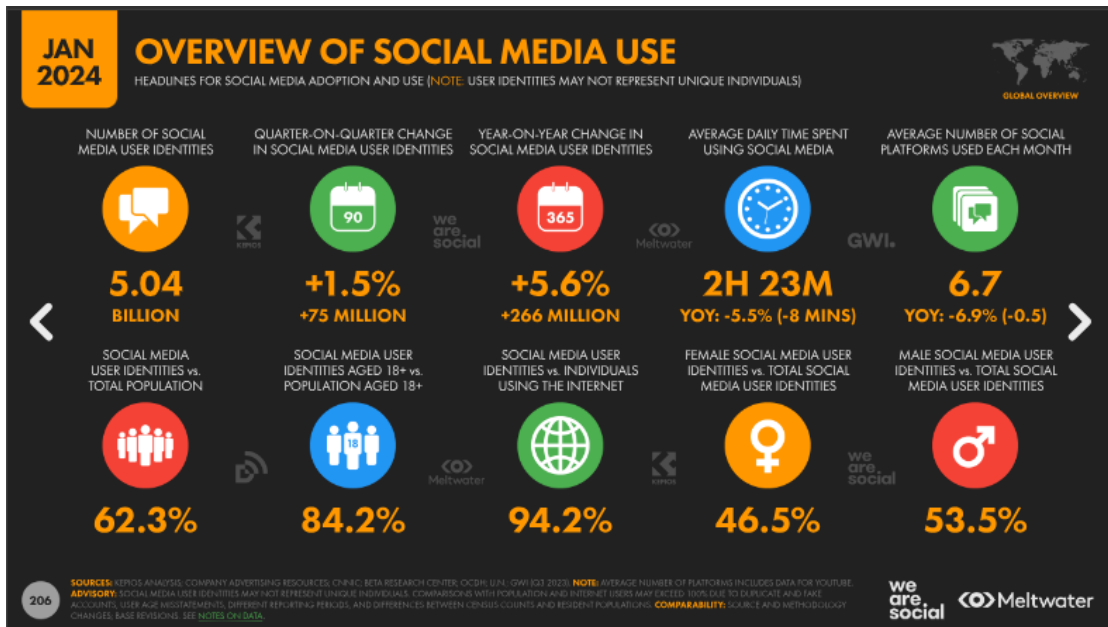


Figure 2 Overview of social media use worldwide

[Source: Kepios,2024 <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-global-overview-report>]



Figure 3 Use of social media for Brand Research

[Source: Kepios,2024 <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-global-overview-report>]

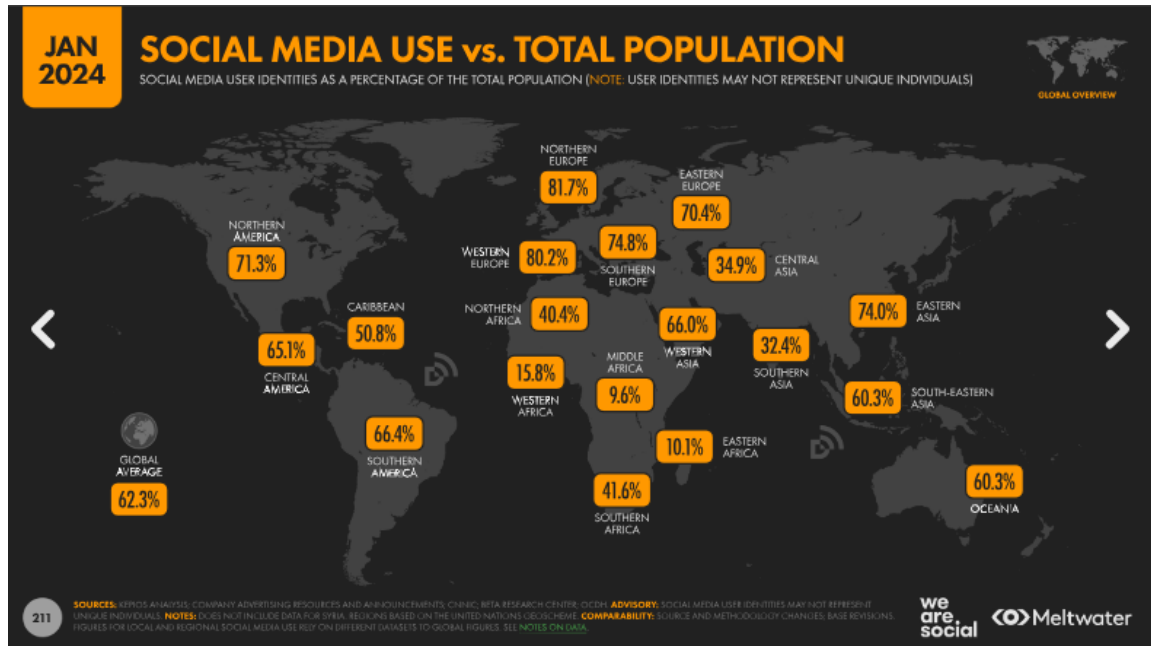


Figure 4 Social Media Use vs. Total Population

[Source: Kepios,2024 <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-global-overview-report>]

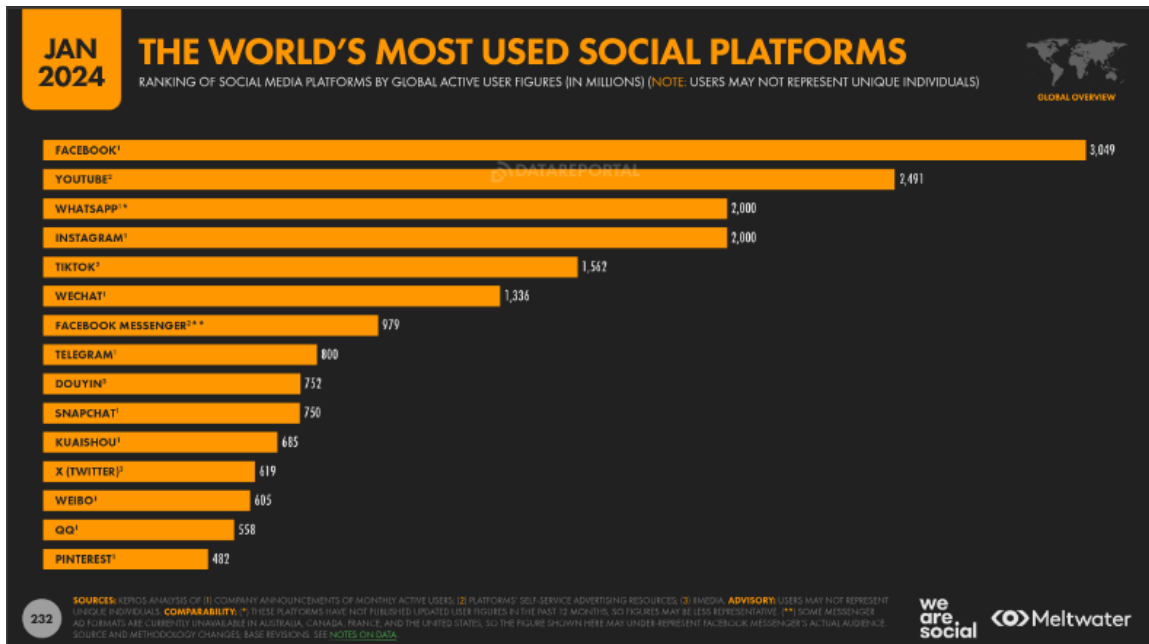


Figure 5 The World's Most Used Social Platform

[Source: Kepios, 2024 <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-global-overview-report>]

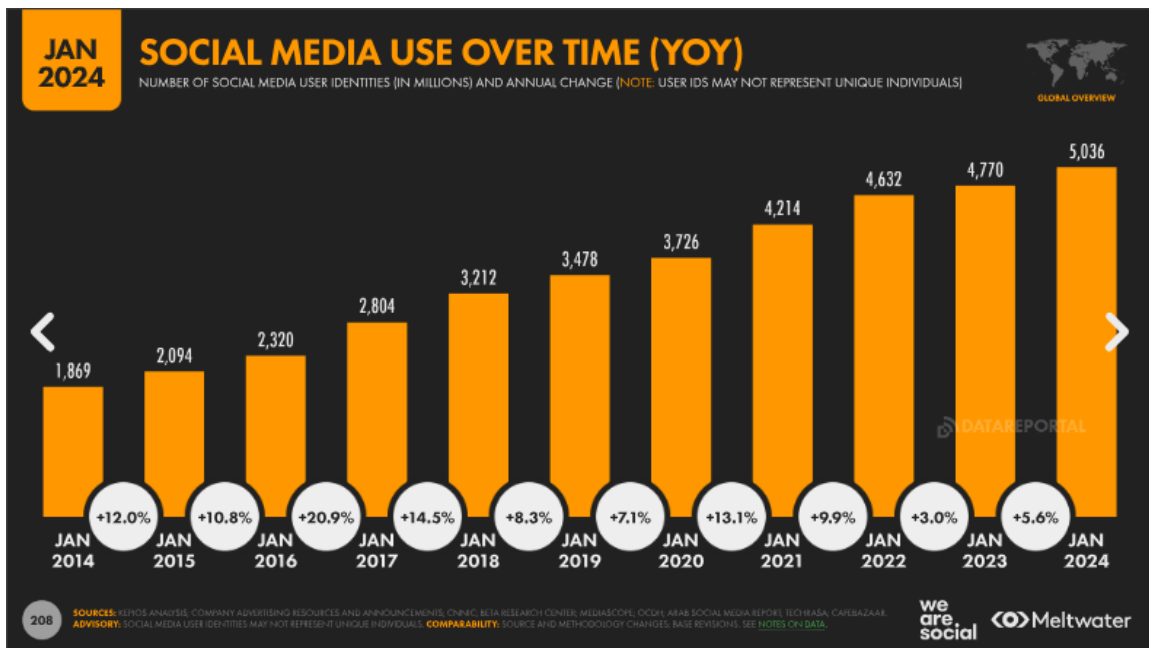


Figure 6 Social Media Use Over Time (YoY)

[Source: Kepios,2024 <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-global-overview-report>]



Figure 7 Facebook Ad Reach Ranking

[Source: Kepios,2024 <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-global-overview-report>]

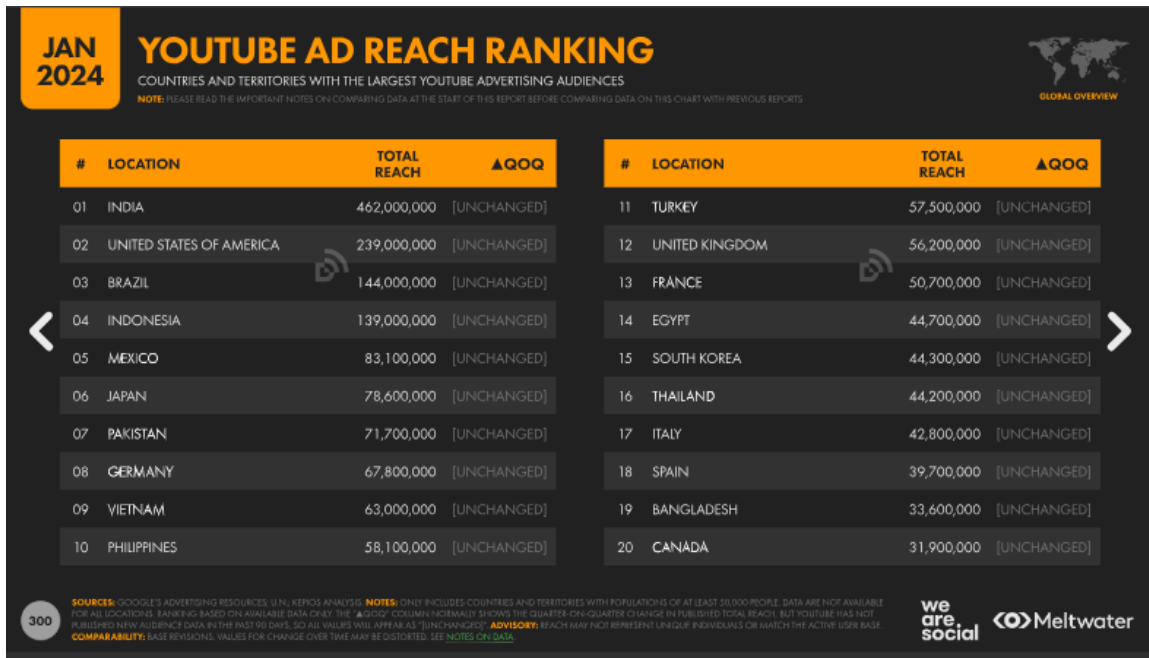


Figure 8 Youtube Ad Reach Ranking

[Source: Kepios,2024 <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-global-overview-report>]

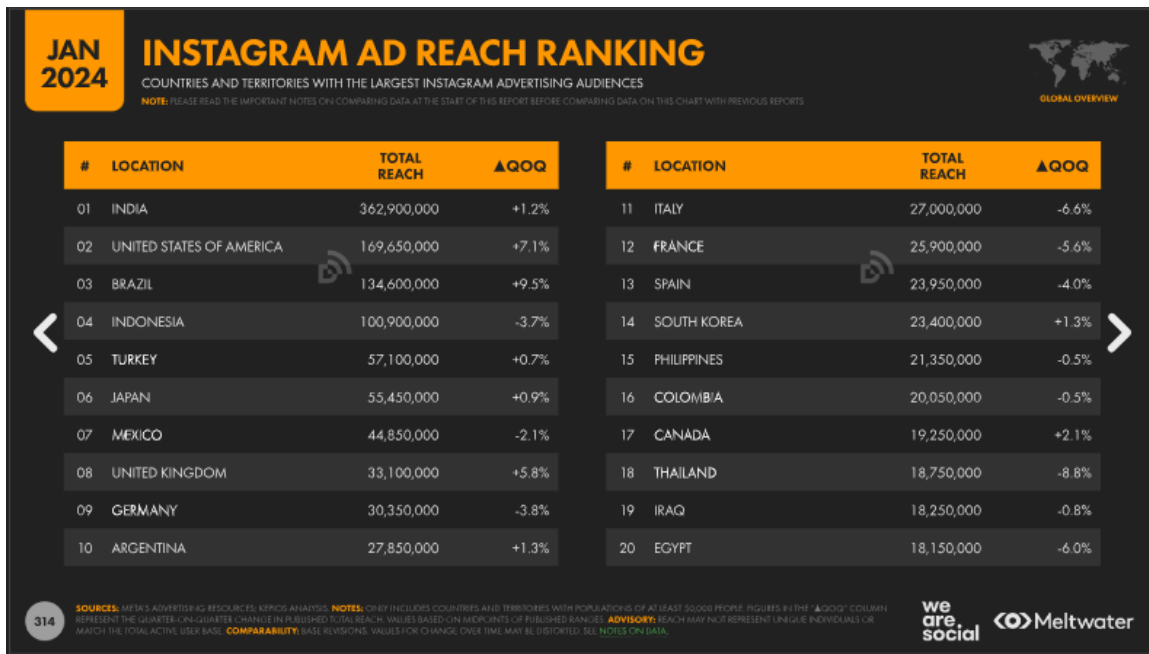


Figure 9 Instagram Ad Reach Ranking

[Source: Kepios,2024 <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-global-overview-report>]

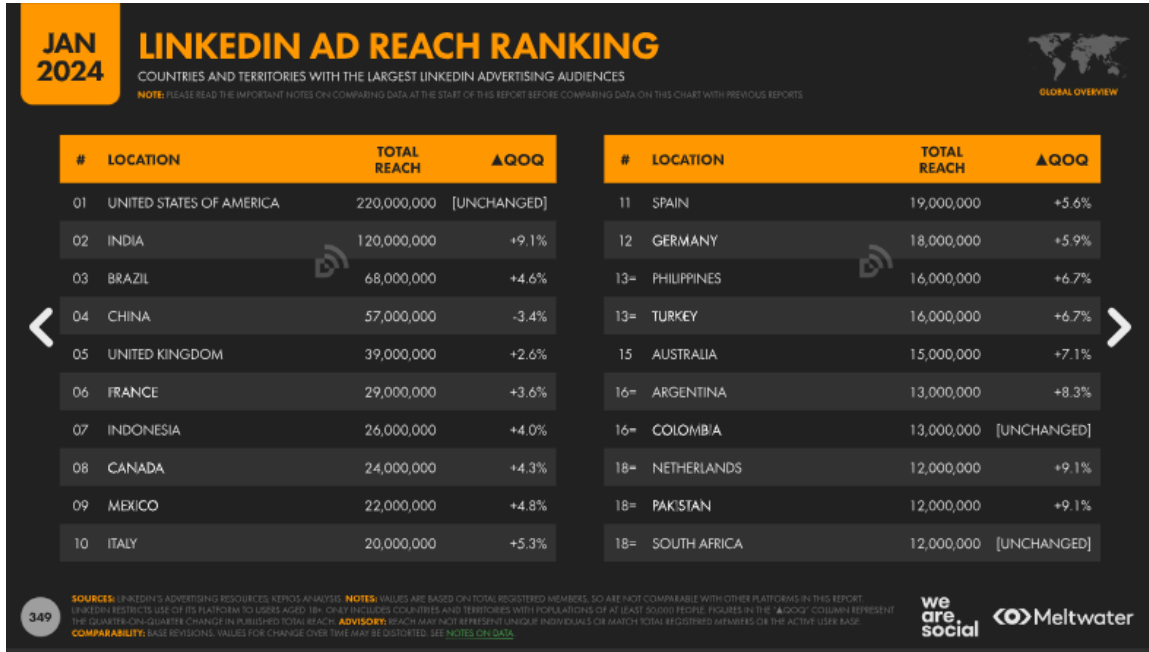


Figure 10 LinkedIn Ad Reach Ranking

[Source: Kepios,2024 <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-global-overview-report>]

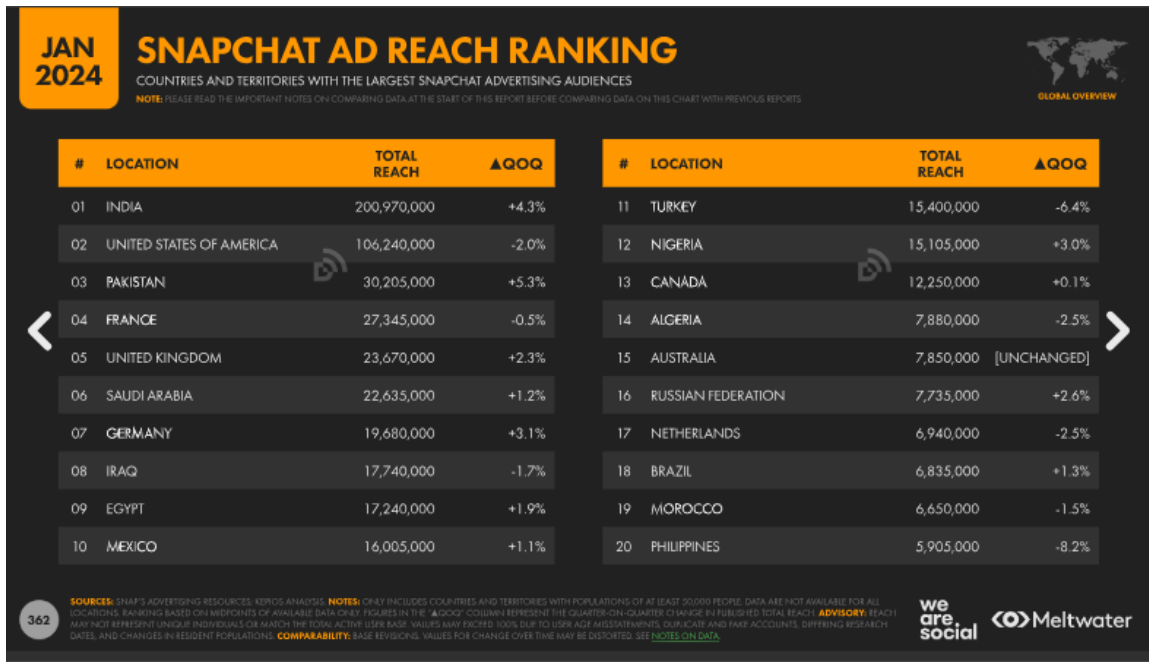


Figure 11 Snapchat Ad Reach Ranking

[Source: Kepios,2024 <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-global-overview-report>]

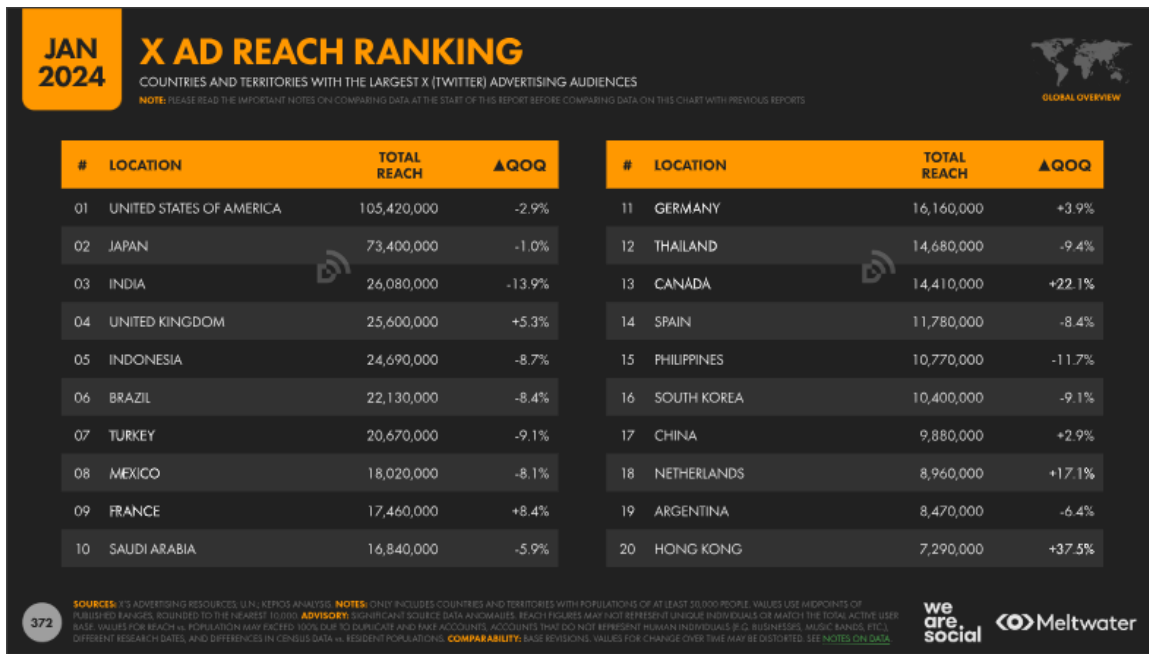


Figure 12 X Ad Reach Ranking

[Source: Kepios,2024 <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-global-overview-report>]

Based on the above statistics, for India, the most used SMMP platforms are Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, X and Snapchat. Notably, LinkedIn is a platforms used by professionals.

2.6 Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMPs)

Content Marketing

Since the word "content marketing" is still relatively new, there isn't yet a consensus definition, which leads to different interpretations (i-SCOOP 2018). On the fundamental idea, different views do, however, largely concur. Instead than directly marketing a product, content marketing is giving customers information that is interesting, useful, amusing, problem-solving, or of other value (Content Marketing Institute 2017, i-SCOOP 2018, Ruffolo 2017). Content marketing is now considered the norm in the industry. Compared to traditional marketing, it has been proven to be more effective. By providing information that adds value for the consumer, content marketing replaces aggressive selling and persuasion tactics in marketing (Forrest, 2019).

The digital marketing organizations looking to connect with prospective clients on digital channels and build long-lasting connections, the emergence of digital content marketing is essential. The conceptual framework of content marketing within inbound

marketing is examined in this study, with a focus on tactics to improve customer-brand engagement and loyalty. It provides helpful advice on how to handle content marketing tactics in the online environment. In addition to providing a strategic framework for inbound marketing, this study summarizes scholarly findings on content marketing in digital media. It highlights how crucial it is to provide pertinent digital information and media at different client touch points. The review process yielded several practical tips that are intended to help managers put good content marketing strategies into practice. The work uses a design science method to help practitioners understand these strategies; nevertheless, in order to guarantee replicability, a thorough literature review is recommended for future research (Lopes *et al.*, 2022).

Content Strategy

In this study, Mishra (2019) investigates the factors that lead consumers to engage with brand-related content on social media platforms. The mixed method study emphasizes the importance of content relevance and emotional appeal. The study revealed a consistent impact of social media marketing efforts and individuals' online social interaction tendencies on two levels of consumer engagement on social media. However, only individuals' online social interaction tendencies influenced the third level of engagement. The subsequent effects on brand equity and purchase intention varied across these engagement levels. This research expands on previous studies by exploring the influence of a brand's social media marketing efforts and online social interaction tendencies on all three levels of consumer engagement with brand-related content on

social media. Additionally, it contributes to existing literature by examining how these levels of engagement affect brand equity and purchase intention.

Studies have shown the pivotal role of content strategy in engaging audiences on social media. The study by Sharopova (2022) highlights the analytical hierarchy process framework for aligning digital marketing technologies with business growth. The strategic integration of customer behavior-focused digital marketing practices can significantly influence entrepreneurship growth. The contemporary market presents challenges for entrepreneurs due to the complex and constantly changing nature of customer behavior. Understanding this nature is crucial for business profit and progress. This paper proposes an economic and marketing framework for analyzing customer purchasing habits, focusing on impulsive buying behavior. Through literature review and stakeholder interviews, criteria influencing customer behavior and digital marketing strategies are identified. The Analytical Hierarchical Process (AHP) method is suggested for evaluating impulsive customer buying behavior and selecting the best marketing technology for entrepreneurial growth.

User Engagement

Engagement with brand-related content on social media is a key indicator of a successful content strategy. In this study, Mishra (2019) investigates the factors that lead consumers to engage with brand-related content on social media platforms and the antecedents of consumer engagement, emphasizing the necessity for brands to create content that fosters interaction and conversation. The study shows the relevance to

provide strategies to enhance engagement with Indian audiences through culturally relevant content.

In another study, Seyyedamiri *et al.* (2019) examine the effectiveness of social content marketing and social media in the product development processes of high-tech companies. In this Qualitative analysis study, the key finding is that social content marketing significantly enhances product development processes through engaging and innovative contents of social media marketing. In this quantitative analysis, Kumar (2023) explores the relationship between brand visibility on social media and consumer purchase intentions. The study establishes a strong link between brand visibility on social media and purchase intention. It suggests that visibility on platforms like Facebook and Instagram is crucial for Indian market for user engagement.

Content Effectiveness

In this qualitative study Seyyedamiri *et al.* (2019) examine the effectiveness of social content marketing and social media in the product development processes of high-tech companies. The findings of this study were that social content marketing significantly enhances product development processes.

Effectiveness of content can also be linked to brand performance. In this research, Reynaldi *et al.* (2022) explored the role of social media toward brand performance through the mediation of customer satisfaction, suggesting that content that enhances customer satisfaction can lead to improved brand performance. In another quantitative

research, Raji *et al.* (2019) explores how brand image mediates the impact of social media content on consumers' behavioral intentions. The research finds that brand image mediates the relationship between SMMP content and consumer behavior. It's also relevant to Indian market as the research highlights the importance of brand image in SMMP strategies in India.

Influencer Partnerships

Influencer marketing has quickly and drastically changed over time. It was once thought of as a specialized or supplemental approach, but for many brands, it has grown into their main marketing channel. The literature by Dwivedi *et al.* (2021), who acknowledge the necessity to keep up with developments in digital and social media marketing research in response to changing customer behaviors, provides proof of this transition. From celebrities endorsing companies to micro-influencers who establish more intimate connections with specific audiences, the reach of influencer marketing has grown.

Because influencer relationships may provide a semblance of authenticity and trust that regular advertising channels frequently cannot, they are strategically significant. Consumer-brand engagement can be significantly impacted by how social media marketing aspects are viewed, as highlighted by Cheung *et al.* (2020). Through their affable demeanor, influencers have the ability to humanize a brand and establish an emotional bond with the public that is challenging to duplicate through other marketing strategies. Metrics like engagement rates, reach, and ultimately the conversion and sales

that influencer collaborations generate can be used to measure how effective they are. A foundation for comprehending these dynamics is provided in this study in creating a conceptual model for analyzing social media marketing effects.

Credibility and Purchase Intention

The study conducted by Khan *et al.* (2021) to evaluate the impact of credibility on consumers' purchase intentions by examining the effectiveness of influencer marketing. Their findings highlight the significance of carefully choosing influencers whose reputation can favorably impact a business. In this academic debate, the idea that trustworthiness is a fundamental component of influencer partnerships is becoming more and more prevalent. Purchase intentions can be strongly influenced by influencers who are viewed as having greater credibility.

In line with these conclusions, Chen *et al.* (2019) research supports the idea that an influencer's ability to persuade others is primarily dependent on their sincerity and reliability. The study shows that influencer-credible social media marketing initiatives increase customer happiness and strengthen the bond between brands and consumers.

Furthermore, Vodák *et al.* (2019) examined the contemporary phenomena of influencer marketing in the context of reputation management. They contend that influencers' reputations have a significant impact on brand equity and that they are now *de facto* brand ambassadors. Aletiet *al.*(2019) corroborate this relationship between influencer credibility and brand perception by stressing how crucial it is to match

influencer values with brand values for a smooth and genuine promotion that builds customer loyalty and trust.

The Moderating Role of Gender

It also means that the impact of influencer marketing is contingent upon the identified population, of which gender remains the strongest mediator. Taking the research done by Irshad *et al.*(2019), it is pertinent to understand the gender-related trends based on which the consumers may transform or develop an understanding of influencer endorsements. The gendered view agrees with the findings of Bigsby *et al.*(2019) who have found male and female consumers may also react differently to the same influencer marketing material because of innate differences in drivers and interests.

While examining the variances of this xenophile experience, Hudders *et al.* (2020) called attention to the fact that men and women might have similar perceptions of commoditized social media stars or personally appealing brands: However, brands are purposely approaching one gender. This is so because the authors focused on detailing aspects of this gendered interaction. Also, based on the research of Jacobson *et al.* (2020) it is suggested to consider studying the gender difference of social media interaction further as it plays an important role while developing strategies for influencer marketing.

Also, based on the research of Jacobson *et al.* (2020) it is suggested to consider studying the gender difference of social media interaction further as it plays an important role while developing strategies for influencer marketing. There is still a lot of research

needed as the subject moves forward to consider these factors in different cultural/geographical context and especially consumer behavior and marketing communication in the diverse Indian-market place.

Dynamic Engagement Tactics

The Social media platforms are now commonplace instruments for communication that foster relationships and present chances for consumer interaction. Simple dyadic interactions between consumers and marketers have been redefined by them, and they now involve more intricate interactions involving a variety of factors, including stakeholders, customers, organizations, and non-customers. Aware of how customer involvement has changed, academics have demanded more studies on the function of engagement in multi-actor ecosystems. By improving knowledge of the social media customer engagement process and putting forth an experimentally supported framework with suitable metrics for measuring customer engagement, our study aims to close this knowledge gap. In order to investigate the process of creating and sustaining customer interaction on social media from the viewpoints of social media marketing practitioners and users, thirty-two interviews were performed. In this study, Shawky *et al.* (2020) identify relevant measurements for each of the four distinct levels of client involvement on social media and offers a dynamic framework to address them.

In this book, Atherton (2023) talks about various strategies to drive engagements through consumer behavioral economics. The author also emphasized on integrated content SMMP and creating brand and brand loyalty of consumer to finally drive the

action. Author also mentions about the future agility and why it is important to be dynamic in approach and future strategies.

Real-time Interaction

Dynamic engagement in social media marketing is based on real-time interaction. Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter enable firms to reply quickly to queries, comments, and other feedback, which promotes immediacy and a sense of community. The significance of real-time data in comprehending audience interaction on Twitter was underscored by Khan *et al.*(2021). Additionally, the research on health crisis communication on social media by Yu *et al.*(2020) emphasizes the vital role that prompt contact plays in controlling public views and reactions.

Multimedia and Gamified Content

Basically the use of multimedia content in support of strategy is now considered the integral in SMMP. The study by Rybina *et al.*(2020)about the effects of “likes” in social network marketing, state that multimedia content that are liked, will increase the attractiveness of the new customers by so much.

Social networks should be used to raise user activity and interaction because game aspects can help achieve that. Engaging social media content through the use of gamification of its content makes the consumer engage with the company in a more intensive manner owing to the added competition and fun which is incorporated. This strategy is supported by the work of Vodák *et al.*(2019) that examined the influencer

marketing phenomenon in current reputation management to find out that gamified content enhances user engagement and brand reputation.

Interactive and User Generated Content

Examples of material type include polls, quizzes, and surveys that are more engaging to the audience and enhance interaction and enjoyment. Marketing on social networks has been examined by Rybina *et al.*(2020) who pointed at the importance of the use of interactive content for customer attraction. Hudders *et al.*(2020) also gave a speech on how social media stars are becoming increasingly commodities and how this might be applied to interactive content in order to boost the interaction rate.

Likely, making users generate and spread brand-related content improves the connection between the brand and the audience and provides it with new content at the same time. From the literature, specifically in Cheung *et al.*(2019) conceptual framework we see that user-generated content can be influential to consumer-brand relationships. The notion that user participation in content creation can strengthen brand messages and promote community is further supported by the study on celebrity social media communications conducted by Aleti *et al.*(2019).

Consumer Experience and Branding

In this book by Atherton (2023) where he talks about creating brand presence through integrated content SMMP and also emphasizes on retaining brand loyalty through continuous engagements and consumer experience. The author mentions the

consumer behavior economics to drive engagements and action. Author also talks about retaining the brand loyalty through SMMP.

In a quantitative analysis, Kumar (2023) researches the impact of social media presence on consumer purchase intentions and explores the relationship between brand visibility on social media and consumer purchase intentions. The study establishes a strong link between brand visibility on social media and purchase intention. The study also suggests that visibility on platforms like Facebook and Instagram is crucial for Indian market engagement.

In another quantitative research study, Daya *et al.*(2022) investigates how social media marketing influences brand loyalty in Indonesia's largest e-commerce sector. The study explores how various SMMP influences brand loyalty in e-commerce. The study can be used to find similar strategies for Indian e-commerce to strengthen brand loyalty via Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP).

Brand Visibility and Consumer Perception

The level of brand awareness on social media greatly influences the consumers' attitude towards brands and likelihood to buy brand. In this particular study by Kumar (2023), customer exposure to brand equally has a direct positive impact on the purchase intention. In particular, brand familiarity increases consumer positive attitudes and the probability of buying the brand. This is in line with the study by Chen *et al.*(2019) they

noted that SMMP causes an increase in brand satisfaction and therefore an increase in brand loyalty.

However, in detail, Dwivedi *et al.*(2021) propose a more extensive outlook in this research on digital and social media marketing by asserting that visibility plays a role in moderating the effect on purchase intentions apart from stability regardless of brands' longevity. This conversation is advanced by Cheung *et al.*(2020) study on perceived social media marketing aspects where the authors demonstrate the benefits of visibility in enhancing consumer-brand interaction and strengthening the brand image.

Digital Platforms and Techniques

Creating a large target market reachable and broadening the marketing communication effort required using other marketing communication tools. Sharma *et al.*(2022) in their conversation on the multiple digital platforms and approaches available in the information age argued that an intentional integration of platforms can increase marketing effectiveness even as they multiple consumer choices.

Consistent with this notion, Wang *et al.*(2020) extend the concept in their thematic analysis of social media analytics in marketing research and the call for attention to employing data from multiple platforms to inform marketing efforts. Furthermore, the study of Dwivedi *et al.*(2021) on the direction of Social Media and Digital Marketing research confirms that there is the need for integration to involve both conventional and integrated digital marketing for better results to be achieved. SMMP has

many facets and dynamic practices that are forever in flux due to the evolution of technology and the customer behavior. As a result of this synthesis, the fundamental components of social marketing and advertising on social media platforms can be well understood from the body of current literature comprising of empirical literature and theoretical frameworks.

2.7 Effectiveness of SMMP for Trainers, Coaches and Consultants

Metrics and Measurement of SMMP Effectiveness:

In this study, Kaplan *et al.*(2010) finds categorization of social media and introduced the concept of “Media Richness” in social media contexts. The study identifies user participation, content sharing, and community engagement as measures of social media richness and marketing effectiveness of SMMP. In another research, Hoffman *et al.*(2010) discussed the complexity of measuring Return on Investment Metrics (ROIM) for social media marketing, emphasizing its multifaceted nature. The metrics identified in this study are brand exposure, consumer engagement and influence, alongside traditional financial metrics, to evaluate ROIM. In this paper, Michaelidou *et al.*(2011) explored the use and challenges of SMMP in small and medium-sized B2B companies. The metrics to measure the effectiveness of SMMP in B2B settings are identified as Barriers to adoption, levels of brand interaction, and conversion rates. In another study by Peters *et al.*(2013) proposed a comprehensive framework for managing social media metrics. The metrics identified in this study are economic impact (sales and

revenue), risk management, customer performance (satisfaction, retention), and brand performance (awareness, reputation) etc.

In another research by de Vries *et al.*(2012) investigated how the popularity of brand posts affects consumer engagement. The metrics to measure the SMMP post popularity and effectiveness are identified as Likes, shares, comments, and post reach as immediate measures. In another research, Tafesse *et al.*(2018) emphasized the importance of a strategic approach in SMMP implementations. The metrics identified in this study are engagement metrics and strategic alignment with business objectives as key effectiveness measures. The key findings by Luo *et al.*(2013) examined the relationship between consumer buzz and firm value. In this study volume of social media buzz, user traffic, and consumer engagement as predictive indicators of firm value are identified as metrics of effectiveness measurement.

Stephen and Galak (2012) in this study analyzed the effects of traditional and social earned media on sales. The identified metrics for effectiveness found as sales data correlation with earned media mentions and word-of-mouth activity. In this study Lovett *et al.*(2013) discussed the impact of word-of-mouth on brand strength and consumer behavior. Word-of-mouth volume, sentiment, and conversion impact as key indicators of branding effectiveness as identified in this study. In this research, Culnan *et al.*(2010) explored how large companies can use Twitter for business value. The metrics identified were Tweet frequency, follower count, engagement rate, and content virality as measures of Twitter marketing effectiveness.

Engagement Metrics

Metrics that measure audience engagement, such likes, comments, shares, and total interaction rates, show how involved the audience is with the material. In this study, Reynaldi *et al.*(2022) emphasized the role that social media plays in improving consumer happiness and brand success. The importance of celebrity social media communications in promoting customer word-of-mouth, which may be viewed as an engagement tactic and was highlighted by Aleti *et al.* (2019). Additionally, Rybina *et al.* (2020) talked about how marketing works on social media to draw in customers, emphasizing the role that engagement plays in turning followers into paying customers.

In another study, Usmani *et al.* (2019) evaluates the effectiveness of social media advertising campaigns through user engagement metrics. The experimental study finds interactive ad campaigns like comments and shares increase engagement and Indian marketers can use interactive ads to boost engagement. In this statistical analysis study, Tassawa (2019) explores the determinants of engagement metrics like “likes”, shares, and comments on Facebook, particularly in the sports marketing domain, indicating the critical factors that enhance social media interaction.

Audience Growth Metrics

A trainer or consultant's social media following growth rate indicates their reach and future conversion potential. The significance of utilizing digital platforms to accommodate a range of customer preferences and foster audience expansion was

explored by Sharma *et al.*, (2022). In order to maximize audience expansion, Dwivedi *et al.*, (2021) stressed the necessity of an integrated approach that blends traditional and digital marketing strategies.

Brand Sentiment Metrics

The works, which inspire the audience, can be learned by comparing the results of separate posts or content categories. In line with Dwivedi *et al.*(2021), content performance evaluation must always be conducted to adapt one's marketing strategies to appeal to viewers in digital and social media marketing studies. The effects of social media marketing identified Cheung *et al.*(2019) support the argument that establishing content performance metrics and increasing brand recognition and image also connect.

Content Performance Metrics

The works, which inspire the audience, can be learned by comparing the results of separate posts or content categories. In line with Dwivedi *et al.*(2021), content performance evaluation must always be conducted to adapt one's marketing strategies to appeal to viewers in digital and social media marketing studies. The effects of social media marketing identified Cheung *et al.*(2019) support the argument that establishing content performance metrics and increasing brand recognition and image also connect.

Return on Investment Metrics (ROIM)

Freelance trainers, coaches and learning and development professionals need to understand the Return On Investment Metrics (ROIM) from organizational SMMP

activities. The financial returns of the SMMP activities are quantified in terms of expenditure by the ROIM. To evaluate the financial rationality of SMMP initiatives, Gilfoil *et al.*(2012) review many measures for tracking performance and effectiveness of SMMP initiatives and argue that, despite the difficulty, redirection of Efforts and Resources toward quantifying SMMP results may be necessary to gain insight into the ‘bottom line’. As a result of this, Wang *et al.*(2020) posited social media analytics as crucial for marketing research especially in assessing ROIM.

Conversion Optimization Metrics

The ratio of users that go through a desired action, say, sign up for a webinar or make the desired service purchase, is called the conversion rates. Kumar (2023) study on the impact of social media brand visibility and consumer buying behaviour, they found that increased visibility lead in increased in company conversion rates. The hypothesis that successful SMMP can impact on conversion rates through enhancing the uses perception of the website is supported by Chen *et al.*, (2019) analysis of the effect of social media marketing activities on perceived value.

2.8 Audience Growth and Brand Development

Audience Development

SMMP focuses on creating a steady audience by setting its main goals in the current strategic plan. Sharma *et al.*(2022) provided information on the effectiveness of specific digital platforms as well as possible marketing strategies to promote audience

expansion, and stressed the need to employ multiple platforms in one's promotion activities. The present work of Yadav (2023) demonstrates the way in which SSMP contributes to audience building as voters and enhances the electorate among youths in Indian elections.

Branding Through SMMP

For personal brands, such as those of trainers and consultants, SMMP serves as a critical tool for brand development. Dsouza *et al.*(2023) analyzed the factors affecting the success of women entrepreneurs, demonstrating the influential role of SMMP in personal brand development and success. In this recent paper, Cianfrone (2023) highlights about how ongoing SMMP enables sport entities like organizations, athletes, coaches, fans, and partnered companies to access audiences worldwide and build, expand, sustain, and improve their brand equity. The study also emphasizes the need for more in-depth designs, methods, and critical communication inquiry to be incorporated into sport social media brand management research in the future, in order to handle changing industry concerns.

2.9 SMMP Strategies and Content Optimization

Content Marketing Efficiency

Effective content marketing is pivotal for SMMP success. In this study, Sharopova (2022) created a framework to link digital marketing technologies with entrepreneurship growth, suggesting content marketing's potential in driving business

success. In another study, Seyyedamiri *et al.*(2019) examines the effectiveness of social content marketing. The authors through this qualitative analysis examine the effectiveness of social content marketing and social media in the product development processes of high-tech companies.

Strategic Content Creation

The strategic creation of content tailored to the target audience is necessary for engaging potential clients. Nabieva (2021) underscored the importance of using digital technologies in marketing, implying the need for trainers and coaches to develop content strategies that resonate with their audience and showcase their expertise. The authors, Ahmad *et al.*(2023) in this study finds that content strategy in SMMP positively influences consumer behavior by providing high-quality content that meets the needs of online shoppers, especially among millennial. In another study, Seyyedamiri *et al.*(2019) examines the effectiveness of strategically used content in SMMP for the product development processes of high-tech companies. The qualitative analysis finds that social content marketing significantly enhances product development processes.

Localization of SMMP Content

In a diverse market like India, localization of content is essential for relevance and effectiveness. Kumar *et al.*(2008) shed light on the challenges of digital marketing in emerging markets, highlighting the need for cultural and regional considerations in Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP) strategies. However, there are limited studies done

in this area as of now. The effectiveness of SMMP for freelance trainers, coaches, and learning and development professionals can be significantly enhanced by focusing on various metrics, audience growth, and strategic content creation. Empirical studies highlight the multifaceted nature of SMMP and its critical role in the professional growth of individuals in the education and consultancy sectors. To fully utilize SMMP, professionals must consider not only global best practices but also regional nuances that influence the effectiveness of these marketing strategies.

2.10 SSMP in Indian Context

Cultural and Economic Considerations

Lastly, culture significantly defines the SMMP strategy; which is implemented in a culturally diverse country such as India. The study conducted by Sinha *et al.*(2012), can give the basic insight regarding the impact of diversity which exists in a single nation for the marketing strategies. However, economic factors which include disposal income per capita, across various geographic locations and demographic sets affect the strategy and communication of SMMP campaign.

Desai (2019) in his study offers a basic background of digital marketing, and it can help in providing a working definition of what this economic variable entails. Furthermore, the role of family and community in decision making plays a vital role, a notable feature specifically in the Indian culture, is highlighted by Dwivedi *et al.* (2021) which suggests that SMMP strategies often need to incorporate collective values rather than individualistic self-serving motivational incentives.

Case Studies and Success Stories

Case studies of Indian freelance trainers, coaches and learning and development professionals who have successfully used SMMP would provide practical information on the effective application of SMMP strategies in the Indian context. Recent industry publications and reports can highlight best practices and innovative approaches tailored to the Indian market. Studies such as those by Dwivedi *et al.*(2021) can be used to demonstrate the role of digital marketing and social media research in the Indian landscape. A case study of a particular trainer who used multimedia content on platforms such as Instagram, as reported by Rybina *et al.*(2020) can provide tangible evidence of the power of visual storytelling in the Indian market.

Challenges and Limitations

SMMP appear to provide Indian professionals with numerous opportunities for advance, as is evidenced by its literature, but there are always corresponding obstacles that have to be addressed. Digital marketing has had its own problems such as restricted access to digital technologies and digital skills as Kumar *et al.*(2008) identified concerning emerging market. The other major issue is overcrowding or the overwhelming number of messages in many industries, by far making it hard to decipher individual messages. This is made worse by the dynamic nature of consumption pattern change which relapses marketers into adjustments which with the pace of consumer change opens broad endearing gaps as argued by Kapoor *et al.*(2018) on the progression made in social media research. Furthermore, more research with female entrepreneurs, such as

that done by Dsouza *et al.*(2023), could bring more understanding of sex matters in Indian SMMP contexts, including stereotyping and the employment of technology tools. Analysis of these challenges will not only give a real picture about the SMMP scenario in India but also reveal the prospects for further development.

The Indian environment presents itself as a dynamic context that shaped the development of SMMP as well as offers a perspective and a diverse context for the further investigation of SMMP. Diversity of culture, economy, accomplishments, and built-in adversities build Plus/Minus/Interesting (PMI) approaches and results for experts. Analysis of extant literature underlines the importance of the SMMP strategies showing high flexibility, cultural sensitivity with references to the Indian experience and economic conditions. These factors are important for trainers, coaches and consultants who would like to operationalize SMMP in the complexities of the Indian environment.

2.11 Theoretical Framework

The assumptions of this study are based on the conceptions derived from the area of social media marketing and social influence theories stating that it is not enough to be present on social media to gain tangible professional development (Lederman *et al.*, 2015). Most of the classical marketing theories have evolved along the years and have oriented the actual companies toward brand recognition, customers' interaction and value proposition; these concepts need to be redesigned in light of the constantly changing digital environment in which the freelance trainers, coaches and L&D professionals struggle. Thus, the use made of the Social Exchange Theory and the Technology

Acceptance Model (TAM) will allow for the revealing of the causes, rooted in perceived benefits, ease of use, and reciprocation, behind engagement on social media (Silva, 2015; Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2015; Marangunić, 2015; Mugo *et al.*, 2017; Cropanzano *et al.*, 2017; Widiyanto, 2020).

However, such established models do not account for dynamics commonly found in content strategies, engagement practices, and the effect of personal branding in a context where information is readily available. This study argues that while existing theoretical explanations offer the right starting point, further explanation of the strategic dynamics and dynamism necessary to excel in a cluttered digital environment is missing. As such, this work will push back against these theories and propose dynamic and integrated visions that address the unending changes in social media marketing and its effect on the professional identity, client sourcing, and brand construction.

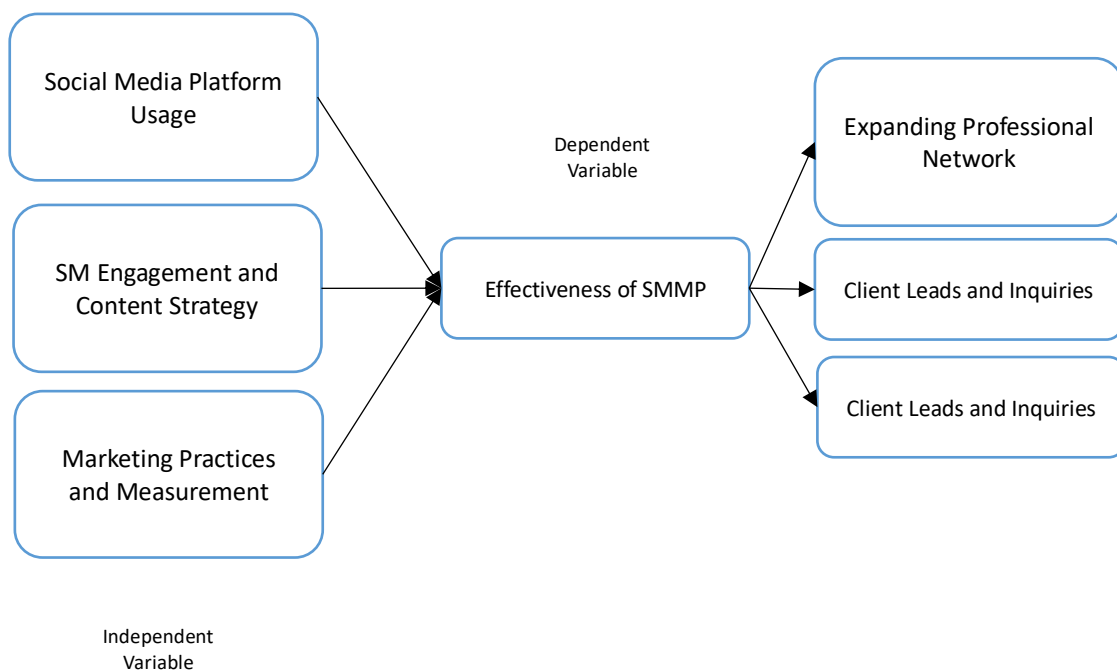


Figure 13 Conceptual Framework
Source: Author's work

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview of the Research Problem

The growth of social media has redefined the way most freelance trainers, coaches, and L&D experts sell their services, establish a presence in their target markets, and reach prospects. Although these opportunities are quite apparent, there is a gap that demands to be filled as regards knowledge on how the listings and uses of SMMP propel career advancements as well as the acquisition of clients. The existing marketing approaches do not incorporate the same details and complexities within the processes involved, the type of content created or the evolving methods of interaction between professionals and prospective customers. This research problem is multifaceted and heterogeneous due to the numerous variables that are related to platform use, engagement strategies, and perceived social media practices efficiency, which depends on the level of experience and present trends. Solving it still demands prior analysis that not only measures the effectiveness of these practices, but also reveals the subjective perception and actions of professionals in this field; thus, a mixed-method approach is necessary to gain detailed information about quantitative results of the social media marketing and qualitative data about principal difficulties, achievements, and development trends of experts in genuine practice. This approach enhances appreciation of the manner in which practices relate with social media in the improvement of practitioners' careers, thus making the results more practical and applicable in the industry (Mukherjee, 2019).

3.2 Operationalization of Theoretical Constructs

In this study, the following theoretical concepts are used: Social Media Engagement, Content Strategy, Marketing Practices and Professional Network Expansion are the key theoretical framework for explaining the correlation between digital marketing activities and career success (Wright *et al.*, 2012; Saunders *et al.*, 2018). These constructs are then measured by quantitative surveys about the frequency, intensity, and perceived effectiveness of social media usage, and by qualitative interviews about the motivation, barriers, and tactics of freelance trainers, coaches, and L&D professionals. For example, Social Media Engagement is measured by gauging the response level of the targeted respondents (likes, shares, comments) in specific platforms; on the other hand, qualitative interviews pin down how engagement creates relationship and incites inquiries. Likewise, Content Strategy is assessed with survey questions on content types, frequencies, and perceived effects with interview talks focusing on how these expertise modify their content to acquire customers. The concept of Marketing Practices measures elements like the use of promotional strategies and assessment of results, with qualitatively gathered data strengthening understanding of how these practices change. Lastly, professional networks are evaluated where the growth in client leads evidences quantitative changes in relations and relation narratives reveal the qualitative aspects of the interactions. This careful operational definition also helps the study to covered all the real complexities of social media marketing practices without having to go deep into heuristic research in order to show the strategies that really pay off in the digital environment.

3.3 Research Purpose and Questions

The main aim of this study is to examine the experience of social media marketing in the achievements of the professional development, popularity raising, and client search of the freelance trainers, coaches and learning & development (L&D) professionals. This research aims to answer the rather urgent problem of how distinct social media formats, approach to communication, and content calendar are reflected in measurable business benefits and increased circle of collaboration. It is important to identify not only the difference in the number of current and potential clients, improved brand awareness, and suchlike, but also find out how these individuals felt, what encouraged and challenged them, and what they do to facilitate a presence in cyberspace.

3.4 Research Design

The method of the study for this research involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods to increase the validity of the study and reduce reliability. Morgan (2014) proposed mixed methods methodology, which combines quantitative and qualitative methodologies to provide both generality and specificity. Among the reasons for using this design is the fact that there exist both tangible results associated with the participation onset together with intangible elements that may define this participation, including the objectives faced as well as the rewards derived by the professionals. In using concurrent design in this study, the researcher used quantitative data gathered from survey questionnaires filled by **213** participants to analyze frequency and or rates of social media utilization and perceived efficiency. In parallel, the quantitative data were

collected from **15** interviews / online descriptive open ended questionnaire surveys to identify the attitudes, perceptions, and practices regarding the SMMP. By using both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques, more comprehensive and robust research about the problem of interest can be conducted which will benefit from having both the objective, numerical results together with the subjects' narratives. The use of mixed methods is excellent in this case as it will establish how these trends affect the respondents' narrative and provide practical insights supported by data and arising from the complexity of their social lives (Creswell *et al.*, 2018; Ishtiaq, 2019).

3.5 Research Approach & Strategy

According to Snape *et al.* (2003), a qualitative approach is naturalistic and interpretive, focusing on the meanings people attach to social phenomena such as acts, decisions, beliefs, and values. In contrast, survey research is a descriptive method used to collect information on people's sentiments, knowledge, and behaviors (Fink, 2016).

This study took a mixed methodologies approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods. This strategy was chosen to capitalize on the strengths of both methodologies and provide a thorough understanding of the success of Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP) for freelance trainers, coaches and learning and development professionals in India. Mixed Methods Methodology integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Morgan, 2014; Creswell *et al.*, 2018). The research combined qualitative semi-structured interviews with a select group of freelance trainers, coaches and learning and development professionals in India to capture detailed

insights, and quantitative online surveys with a broader group of freelance trainers, coaches and learning and development professionals in India to assess wider trends. This combination will ensure a thorough knowledge that balances generality and specificity in the findings.

3.6 Population and Sample

In this study, Oribhabor *et al.* (2019) emphasizes the significance of sampling in research. It highlights the necessity of choosing a representative sample and an appropriate sampling method to achieve the research objectives. The paper discusses various probability and non-probability sampling techniques, underscoring the importance of selecting the right sample size to avoid erroneous conclusions. In another detailed paper on sampling and population for, Singh *et al.* (2014) discusses about the importance of selecting correct sample size through various sampling techniques adopted in applied statistics through various literature reviews.

Correct conclusion in applied statistics research requires careful consideration of sampling methodology and sample size. If the sample size is too small, even a well-conducted study may miss crucial effects or associations, or estimate those impacts or associations too imprecisely. Overly high sample sizes might complicate studies and lead to inaccurate conclusions. Furthermore, using an excessively high sample size might increase the expense of the study. As a result, the sample size is an important aspect of every scientific inquiry. One of the most salient features of this method is that every

member of the population has an equal chance of being selected (Wimmer *et al.*, 2006; Singh *et al.*, 2014; Buchstaller *et al.* 2013).

As per Skill India (n.d.), a Government of India initiative and a National Portal for Trainers and Assessor by National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC India), there are **2560** individual trainers and master trainers registered on the portal under Management category. Additionally, there are **10192** individual trainers registered members in India as per Annual Report 2022-23 published by Indian Society for Training and Development (ISTD, 2023). As per International Coaching Federation (ICF, 2024), there are **825** members coaches registered in India. The European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) is a leading coach and coaching education accreditation organization in Europe and has only **55** registered members in India. In total it makes **13632** freelance trainers, coaches and learning and development professionals as total population for this study.

The Indian Society for Training and Development (ISTD), founded in April 1970, is a national-level professional and non-profit organization registered under the Societies Registration Act of 1860. It has a wide membership of individuals and institutions interested in human resource training and development from the government, public and private sectors, enterprises, educational and training institutions, and other professional bodies. The Society is a member of the International Federation of Training and Development Organizations (IFTDO), headquartered in Geneva. ISTD is quoted as a society dedicated for trainers in training in India in numbers of studies and various books

by following authors (Mishra 2013; Yadapadithaya 2000; Rajan *et al.*, 2021; Meena *et al.*, 2022; Carliner *et al.*, 2014; Pareek *et al.*, 2007; Gary 2010; Dessler *et al.*, 2005).

International Coaching Federation (ICF) is a leading organization worldwide and in India for accreditation of coach and coaching education. The European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) is a leading coach and coaching education accreditation organization in Europe and has only 55 registered members in India (Sood 2013; Bresser 2013; Moore 2016; Passmore 2013, 2023; Boyatzis *et al.*, 2022).

Based on various research papers on sampling and considering the total number of freelance coaches, trainers and learning and development professionals in India, **13632** the most appropriate way to choose mixed methods research would be to combine a qualitative sample with a quantitative sample. (Singh *et al.*, 2014; Oribhabor *et al.*, 2019; Buchstaller *et al.*, 2013).

Purposive Sampling (Qualitative Phase) – In the qualitative phase, where semi-structured interviews has been conducted, purposive sampling was suitable. This method allowed selecting participants who have rich experiences and insights into the use of SMMP for in their profession of coaching, training or learning and development. For a study focusing on the effectiveness of Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP) among freelance trainers, coaches, and learning and development professionals in India, a reasonable sample of 15-20 participants have been considered for interview / open ended questionnaire survey. **15** interviews/open ended questionnaires complete responses have

been collected and analyzed. This number allows for a diverse range of perspectives while remaining manageable for in-depth analysis (Singh *et al.*, 2014; Patton 2015).

Random Sampling (Quantitative Phase) - For this research a simple random sample is been taken in the quantitative phase. A simple random sample works in two ways: replacing the topic after selection and not changing the topic after selection. In the replacement sample, each selected member of the population has an additional chance of being selected because they return to the lineup after the initial selection. In random selection without replacement, the selected population member leaves the group and can no longer be selected. Random sampling without replacement is the most commonly used random sampling method. An applied statistics formula by Cochran is a popular method for determining sample size in research, particularly when dealing with large populations. It takes into account the desired confidence level, margin of error, and estimated population variance or proportion. This formula is chosen for its ability to provide a statistically valid sample size that ensures representativeness and reliability of the survey results. Considering the population of **13632**, the desired confidence level (e.g., 95%) and margin of error (e.g., 5%), the formula gives the sample size of **383**. If we consider the tables published by Glenn (1992) for Sample Size for $\pm 5\%$ and $\pm 10\%$ Precision Levels where Confidence Level is 95% and $P=0.5$, the sample size for the population **13632** comes out to be in between **385-390**. Thus for this research sample size of **385** for the quantitative phase have been considered. (Singh *et al.*, 2014; Oribhabor *et al.*, 2019; Buchstaller *et al.*, 2013).

The target population for this research included freelance trainer, coaches and learning & development (L&D) professionals who use social media for marketing and client acquisition. This population was selected because they are a heterogeneous group of people who need social media to grow the visibility of their brands and connections during professional development. The quantitative component of this study selected **213** respondents from non-student internet-using professionals for an adequate representation of each section of freelance trainers, coaches and L&D professional as per profession level, experience, geographic location, and specialization. In order to ensure that this sample comprises of people with diverse experience in social media marketing, this researcher sought to involve people who are not so experienced in this field right from those with a lot of experience and a strong social media presence. The qualitative part consisted of **15** interviews carried out with members of the same and additional population interviewed for the quantitative part, which enabled an understanding of the experiences, further strategies, and perceptions of social media marketing practices. This approach of integrating both quantitative and qualitative samples by the study provides adequate UC and HC validity apart from enhancing the context in which the professionals interact with social media, thus providing statistical representation as well as depth.

3.6 Participant Selection

Sampling techniques in undertaking the participants included purposive and convenience sampling to ensure that the sample size for the study is sufficient for both

quantitative and qualitative forms of carrying out the study among the students. In line with the survey, convenience sampling was employed to cover a large population of professionals from social media platforms, social group accounts, and professional working networks without restricting subjects based on experience or frequency of social media usage. This approach made it possible to get a wide range of perspectives from many of the respondents. On the other hand, purposive sampling was used for the qualitative interviews, and the selection criterion involved characteristics like the level of experience, active use of various social media platforms, and success record of social media use in a career progression manner. Factors like the time of practicing social media marketing, the type and number of platforms were used, and their engagement or followers were major determinants of the interview selection (Saunders et al., 2016; Wan, 2019; Nilsson, 2020).

3.7 Instrumentation

In this quantitative phase of this research, a structured questionnaire was constructed as the main data-gathering tool used to survey **213** freelance trainers, coaches, and L&D practitioners. It included both Likert scale questions, multiple choice questions and demographic questions to get a holistic view about the participants' activity level in social media marketing, their engagement plan, content type preference and perceived efficacy in generating clients inquiry and expanding their network. Likert-scale questions provided the channel for the respondents to indicate the level of their agreement or disagreement with a number of statements regarding their social media

presence, which features ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly agree'. Before administering the instrument, a pilot test was conducted with a few professionals and the result was used to make some modifications that enhanced comprehension of the items.

For the qualitative phase, an interview guide was made for the purposes of conducting interviews with **15** participants who were drawn purposively. Some of the questions used in this guide were general in an effort to capture important aspects like; participants' experience in social media marketing, the difficulties faced, strategies used in content development/posting and creation, and how social media has transformed their career growth. It should be noted that in order to make the interview questions more creative and more effective to capture the participants' particular perspective and experience, the interview questions were purposively semi-structured, but all the essential issues related to the research problem were investigated. (Wan, 2019; Nilsson, 2020).

3.8 Data Collection Procedures

As for the data collection, the work used two main research methods: quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, which helped to design the big picture of the given research, problem. An updated version of a survey instrument that was previously used in multiple studies by (Jeancola 2011; Bahir 2014; Sinow-Mandelbaum 2014) was to be utilized in this research study. The quantitative survey was conducted using an online survey tool where the participants were conveniently reached through a survey distribution service. The survey link was posted at LinkedIn, FaceBook groups, WhatsApp Groups and individual messages and through direct email invites for a period

of 20 weeks targeting the working social media marketers. The participants were giving direct instructions on how to complete the survey and the number of reminders was also given in order to get a huge number of response, we get the total of 213 of 383. Others of the responses were screened as incomplete.

In the course of conducting the qualitative interviews, the researchers employed open ended structured questions, which included an application of specific questions that contained detailed responses. Each respondent was selected from the 15 individuals most strongly responding to the survey questions or using SMMP very differently from every other participant. The interviews in the form of open ended descriptive questions were carried out online. Questionnaire in this form was distributed and scripts containing the answers of the respondents were collected.

In this research on the Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP) among freelance trainers, coaches, and learning and development professionals in India, the data collection process has been designed to leverage electronic mediums for efficiency and speed. As the research was conducted in two phases Qualitative and Quantitative, here were the data collection procedures:

Qualitative Data Collection - In the qualitative phase of the research, potential participants were contacted via Call, Email or WhatsApp to schedule semi-structured interviews or to respond the open ended questions via Google form, providing them with an overview of the study and the requirements of their participation. The interviews /

response were collected using conferencing or Google forms tools and with the consent from participants (Salmons 2015).

All responses were in English and recorded with transcription in the Google form and xls file. The interview recordings or Google form data were available to participants who had the opportunity to verify the accuracy of their statements and request that relevant information that may have been inadvertently shared be redacted, consolidated, or permanently deleted. The responses were then transferred to an Microsoft Excels (XLS) file to facilitate the analysis process (Batubara, 2016; Chaiyo, 2017).

The responses by participants were kept strictly confidential and all information shared was placed in a file. No information, including personal identification information, were shared by the researcher with other participants unless the second participant is notified by the researcher through the first. This approach allowed a flexible and in-depth exploration of the participants' experiences and perspectives on Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP).

Quantitative Data Collection - In the quantitative phase of the research, an online survey questionnaire using Google Form was developed based on insights from the qualitative interviews, featuring structured questions to collect quantitative data. The survey were distributed to potential respondents through Email, WhatsApp, and Social media platforms, with a focus on making it mobile-friendly to enhance response rates. (Wright 2005).

The survey included structured, open-ended, closed-ended and Likert questions and provide useful information including participant statistics. The research instrument to be used in this study is the modern version of the research instrument used in many studies by (Adams *et al.*, 2005; Bahir 2014; Smith *et al.*, 2023; Lee *et al.*, 2023; Thompson *et al.*,2023 and Gomez *et al.*,2023).

Additionally, follow-up messages or reminders were sent to encourage participation and ensure the completion of the survey and if needed next set of population contacted to meet the sample size. This approach aims to efficiently gather a broad set of data to complement the in-depth qualitative findings

3.9 Data Analysis

After the surveys were completed, the data was imported into Microsoft Excel (XLS) for descriptive analysis. After being personally checked, the information gathered from descriptive questions and interview auto-transcriptions was entered into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets for additional analysis. The quantitative data collected from the survey was analyzed using **descriptive statistics**, **correlation analysis**, and **regression analysis** to identify trends, patterns, and relationships between social media marketing practices and their effectiveness in professional growth and client acquisition (Senthilnathan, 2019; Seeram, 2019; Flinton et al., 2020; Cooksey, 2020; Dong, 2023). Descriptive statistics provided an overview of the data, such as means and standard deviations for key variables, while correlation analysis helped identify the strength and direction of relationships between variables like social media engagement strategies and

client inquiries (Woodrow, 2014; Mishra et al., 2019; Cooksey, 2020; Dong, 2023).

Regression analysis further examined the predictive power of these variables, allowing the study to determine which factors most significantly impacted brand visibility and network expansion (Marcinkiewicz et al., 2021; Mariappan, 2019; Seeram, 2019).

When comparing sets of evidence pertinent to circumstances within the same study and extracting data to determine the link between variables are the goals, thematic analysis is the preferable method. For the qualitative data, a **thematic analysis** was employed, where interview transcripts were carefully coded to identify recurring themes, patterns, and insights related to social media marketing practices (Thomas *et al.*, 2008; Alhojailan, 2012; Morgan, 2022). This process involved multiple readings of the transcripts, categorizing the data into themes such as "Effective Engagement Strategies," "Challenges in Content Creation," and "Impact on Professional Network Expansion." These qualitative findings were then integrated with the quantitative results, providing a richer and more nuanced understanding of how social media practices influence professional growth. The modern **wordcloud maps thematic analysis** can effectively visualize the cognitive structure of an emerging scientific discipline, identifying research fronts and stimulating new research processes (Tibaná-Herrera *et al.*, 2018; Thelwall, 2022, 2023; Alam *et al.*, 2023).

This mixed-method analysis combining qualitative and quantitative approaches ensured that the findings were both statistically robust and contextually informed and the research offers a greater knowledge of problems and helps empirical studies to be more

broadly reached. (Taherdoost, 2022; Lane *et al.*, 2021; Nanthagopan, 2021; McNabb, 2020).

3.9 Research Design Limitations

While the mixed-methods approach offers a comprehensive understanding of the research problem, certain limitations must be acknowledged. **Sampling bias** could be a concern, as the survey relied on voluntary participation, potentially attracting respondents who are more actively engaged with social media, which may not fully represent the entire population of freelance trainers, coaches, and L&D professionals (Jordan *et al.*, 2020; Hughes *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, **self-reporting bias** might have influenced responses, as participants may have overstated their engagement or effectiveness in social media marketing. In terms of qualitative data, the subjective nature of thematic analysis could introduce researcher bias, affecting the interpretation of interview responses. (Scott *et al.*, 2021; Quinio *et al.*, 2021)

3.10 Time Horizon

To keep the research within an acceptable time frame such that the research is viable, and the results observed and presented are still valid, a time frame of 5 months from the first screener survey will be set. An estimate time is between April 2024 to August 2024.

3.11 Ethical considerations

The researcher collected an authorization letter from the SSBM stating that the collected data used for academic purposes only. In order to maintain ethical standards in this study, participation is voluntary and participants can terminate their participation at any time. Participation did not receive any incentives, nor were participation result in penalties. During the research process, the anonymity of the participants and the confidentiality of the people who participated in the interview will always be protected.

3.12 Conclusion

In conclusion, the methodology employed in this study combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews provides a holistic understanding of the impact of social media marketing practices on the professional growth of freelance trainers, coaches, and learning and development professionals in India. The integration of both methods ensured that the findings are grounded in statistical evidence while also enriched by personal experiences and insights. This approach not only allowed for the identification of key trends and relationships but also offered a deeper exploration of the strategies, challenges, and successes encountered by professionals in the digital landscape. By leveraging the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative data, this study offers valuable, actionable insights that can guide professionals in optimizing their social media marketing practices for sustained growth and client engagement.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

4.1 Demographics

Table below summarizes participant demographics according to their profession and their frequencies and percentage in the sample. The greatest number is noticed in Facilitators/Trainers with 75 people constituting already 35.21% of all the participants; thus, this setting seems rather frequent in the respondents' experience. The second biggest category is Coaches, with participants being 43, and representing 20,19% of the total; thus, indicating that coaching is another prominent function in this regard. The Facilitator/Trainer and Coach category is 11.27% with 24 participants indicating that many people perform the function in both capacities. Learning & Development (L&D) professionals comprise 22 participants or 10.33 % hence there is representation of the profession but not at the rate of the other categories of professionals. When respondents identified as both Facilitator/Trainer and Coach and L&D Professional together that together constitutes 9.39% (20 participants), further, demonstrating the large portion of multi-hyphenate professionals in this area. In order of frequency are those who define themselves as a Facilitator/Trainer and L&D Professional or as a Coach and L&D Professional (7 and 2 participants respectively, 3.29% and 0.94%). Finally, a total of 20 participants are classified as 'Others' or 9.4% affirming that there are other positions not captured in the multiple choices above. Altogether, this distribution could illustrate a varied profile of multiplicity of professions in the professional world with focus on Facilitators/Trainers and Coaches.

Table 1 Participant Profession

What best describes you?	Frequency	Percentage
Facilitator / Trainer	75	35.21
Coach	43	20.19
Facilitator / Trainer;Coach	24	11.27
L & D Professional	22	10.33
Facilitator / Trainer;Coach;L & D Professional	20	9.39
Facilitator / Trainer;L & D Professional	7	3.29
Coach;L & D Professional	2	0.94
Others	20	9.4

Source: Author's work

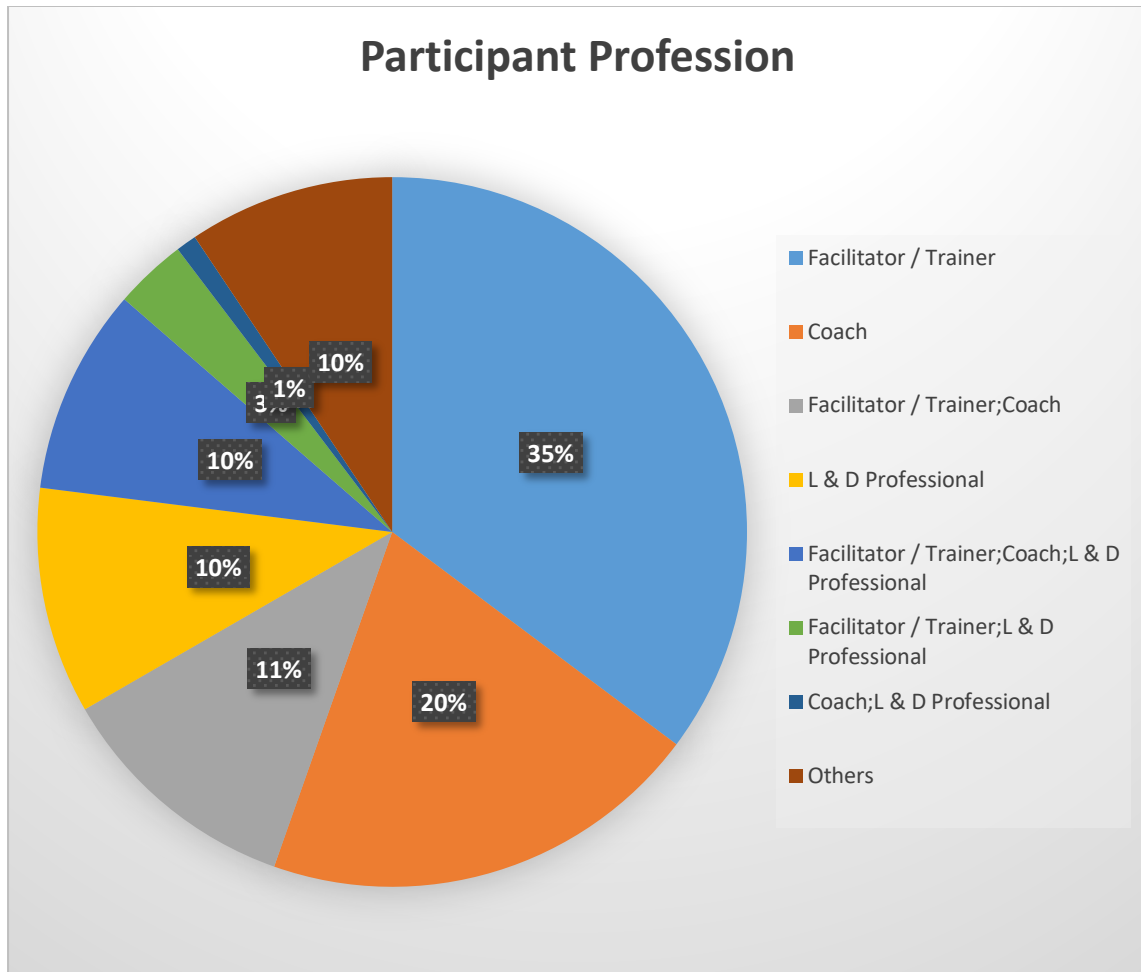


Figure 14 Participant Profession

Source: Author's work

The gender distribution of participants in the study is done in the table below. The gender distribution appears fairly equal across the data; however, data is slightly skewed towards males. Out of these, 109 are men, which are 51.17% of the total number of participant; these statistics show that more than half of the surveyed population is male. However, as for the female participants there are 103, they make only 48.36% of the total

sample. In fact, this near parity makes it look as if lady or gentleman will likely take turns having dominion over the former if the former parades a relatively higher probability while the latter is right at the lower probability ground since they might be nearly mid-way in their approach or participation in the subject or in the industry. The small gap between males and females also increases the generality of the sample: the broad participation ensures that results of the study will likely be generalizable across gender.

Table 2 Gender Frequency Analysis

Category	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	109	51.17%
	Female	103	48.36%
	Prefer not to say	1	0.47%

Source: Author's work

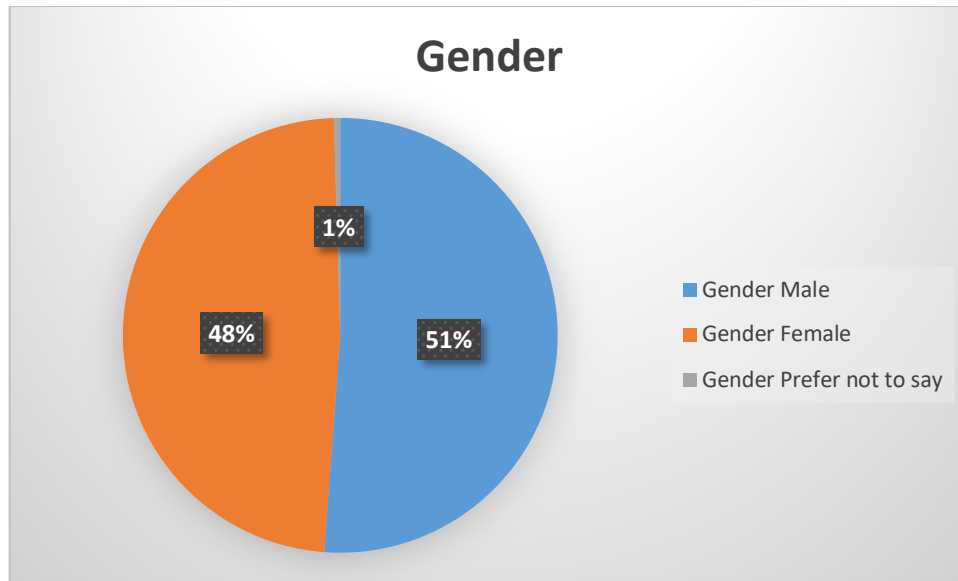


Figure 15 Gender Frequency Analysis

Source: Author's work

The table below shows employment frequency among the participants employment status; In terms of employment status, the majority of the respondents, 137 persons out of the total sampled, are Freelance/Independent Professionals, which goes a long way toward explaining why the independent/work from home model is so popular amongst the sample subject. This dominance suggests that paid work in freelance or independent manner is common among the participants, which might be related to the character of the industry or sector under study. The second biggest group is the Full-Time Employees with 56 participants, 26.29% of the total indicates that classical full-time employment still play important role. As few as 12 participants (5.63%) were identified as being in the Part-Time or Contractual work arrangement; though not as popular, the types still exist. Finally, the remaining 8 people (3.76%) are classified into 'Other'

meaning there might be other employment status or work opportunity types that was not considered in the main classifications. In general, this analysis gives an insight into the various employment characteristics among the participants with a bias towards freelance or independent professionals.

Table 3 Employment Frequency Analysis

Category	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage
Employment	Freelance / Independent Professional	137	64.32%
	Employee Full Time	56	26.29%
	Part Time / On Contract	12	5.63%
	Others	8	3.76%

Source: Author's work

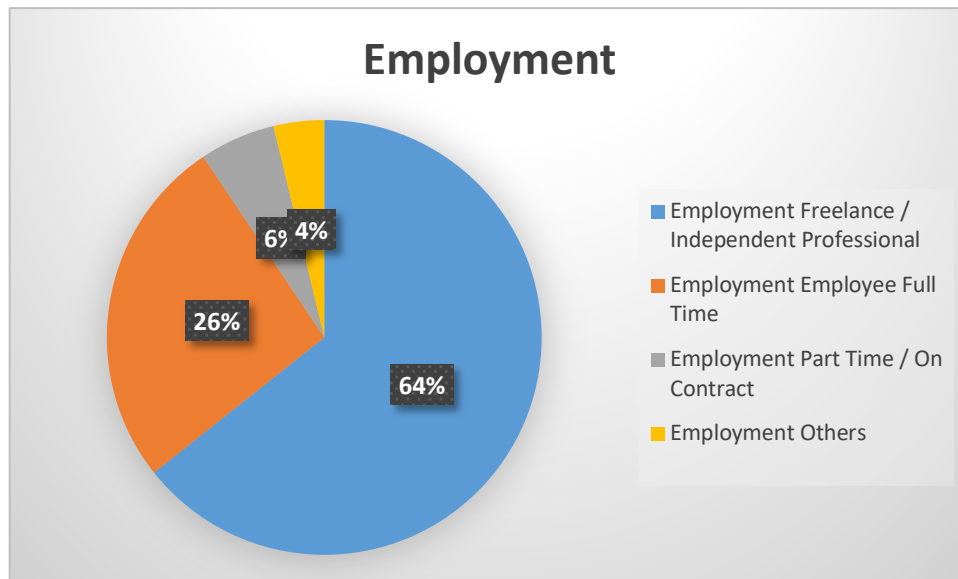


Figure 16 Employment Frequency Analysis

Source: Author's work

Resolutely portraying all age groups with regards to what age participants belong to, in this case mainly refers to experienced participants; in fact, 31.46% of respondents lied between the ages of 46 and 60 sole age places and 29.58% 36 - 45 age brackets. This means that a considerable number of the respondents are probably knowledgeable in their areas of work which might impact the way social media marketing is performed. The group of 26 to 35 years old constitutes 23.94% of the sample showing the existence of enough professions in the mid age level who perhaps have been forced inside the use of social platforms to enhance their brands and reach broader audiences. On the other side, the younger professionals 18-25 years old make up only 2.82% of the sample, while elderly respondents aged above 60 years comprise of 12.21% meaning young and older professionals are not well represented in this study. This study also exposes the fact that social media marketing is mostly embraced by the earned practitioners, possibly because of the altitude of the ages observed on this sample knitted together.

Table 4 Age Frequency Analysis

Category	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage
Age	46 to 60	67	31.46%
	36 to 45	63	29.58%
	26 to 35	51	23.94%
	60+	26	12.21%
	18 to 25	6	2.82%

Source: Author's work

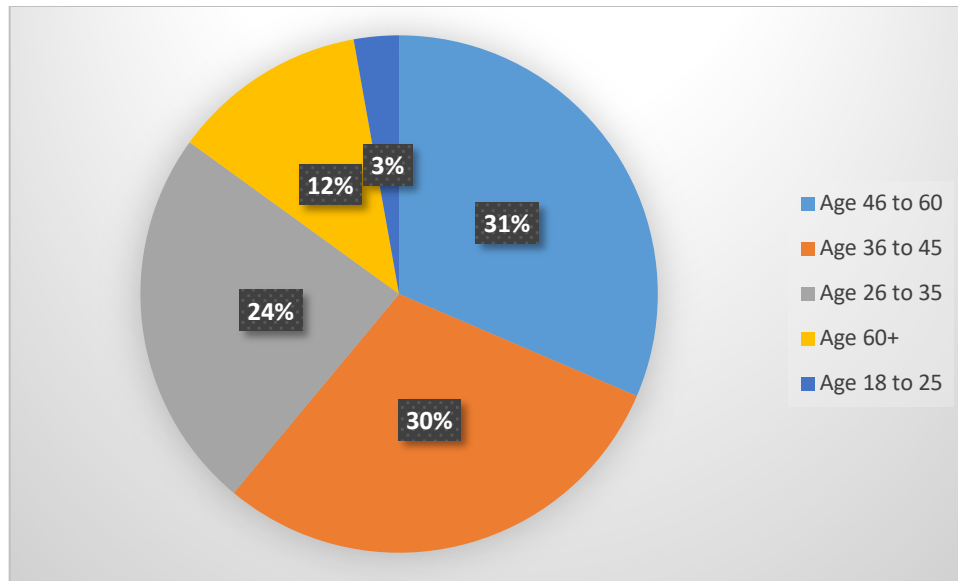


Figure 17 Education Frequency Analysis

Source: Author's work

The education level of participants in this study shows that the majority possess advanced degrees, with **64.32%** holding a **Master's Degree**, indicating a highly educated group of professionals. This suggests that most respondents have pursued extensive education, which may contribute to their expertise and proficiency in leveraging social media marketing practices effectively. Additionally, **21.60%** of participants have a **Bachelor's Degree**, while **12.21%** hold a **Doctorate Degree**, highlighting a considerable number of respondents with substantial academic qualifications. The presence of individuals with **certifications, double master's degrees**, or those currently **pursuing a PhD or Doctorate** each constitute a smaller fraction, at **0.47%** each. Overall, this educational distribution suggests that the study's participants are highly educated, which could

influence their approach to social media marketing and engagement in their professional fields.

Table 5 Education Frequency Analysis

Category	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage
Education	Master's Degree	137	64.32%
	Bachelor's Degree	46	21.60%
	Doctorate Degree	26	12.21%
	Certifications	1	0.47%
	Pursuing PhD	1	0.47%
	Double masters	1	0.47%
	Pursuing Doctorate	1	0.47%

Source: Author's work

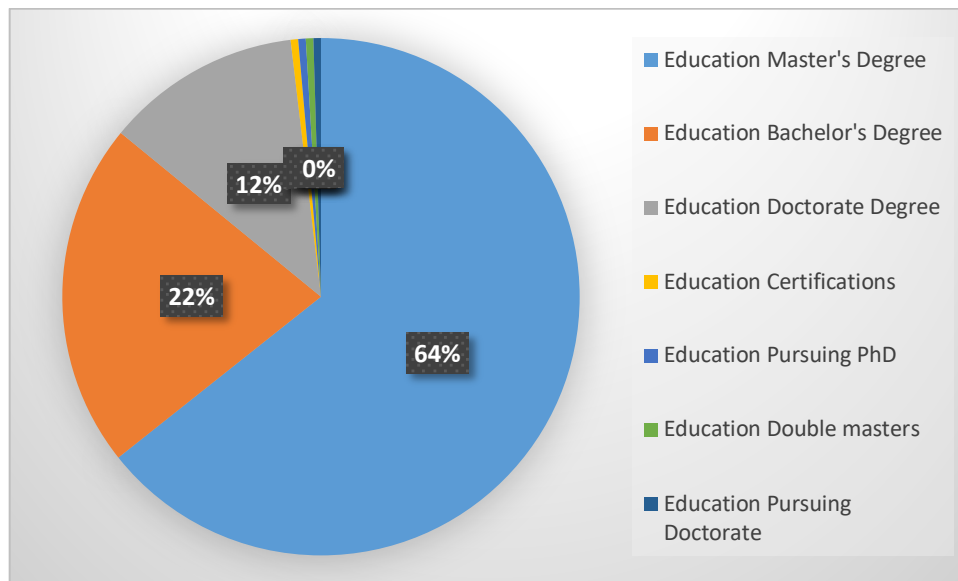


Figure 18 Education Frequency Analysis

Source: Author's work

The geographical distribution of participants indicates that the majority are based in **North India**, accounting for **49.77%** of the respondents, suggesting that this region has a strong presence of freelance learning and development professionals, trainers, and coaches engaged in social media marketing practices. **South India** follows with **21.60%**, showing a significant but smaller representation. Participants from **West India** constitute **14.55%**, while **East India** represents **9.39%** of the sample. The least represented region is **Central India**, with only **4.69%** of respondents. This distribution suggests that the adoption and engagement in social media marketing practices are more prominent in certain regions, particularly North India, potentially due to factors such as greater access to technology, networking opportunities, or a higher concentration of professionals in these areas.

Table 6 Geography Analysis

Category	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage
Geography	North India	106	49.77%
	South India	46	21.60%
	West India	31	14.55%
	East India	20	9.39%
	Central India	10	4.69%

Source: Author's work

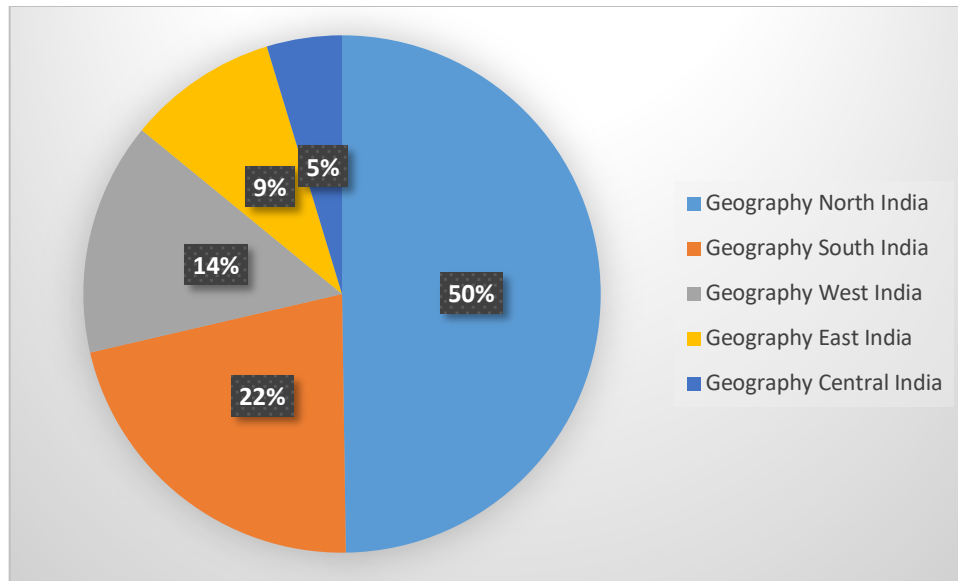


Figure 19 Geography Analysis

Source: Author's work

Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis of the independent variables it proven useful in identifying trends about the use of social media among freelance trainers, coaches and L&D professionals (Sidel *et al.*, 2018; Zook *et al.*, 2018; Kemp *et al.*, 2018; Siedlecki, 2020; Alkharusi, 2022). Social Media Platform Usage displays a mean of 3.8, therefore it can be concluded that the usage is rather high, however, the standard deviation of 0.9 shows the degree of variation of how often or how actively the professionals engage in the platform, ranging from 1, a complete abstaining from the purpose, and 5, a complete engagement. Social Media Engagement and Content Strategy had a mean score of 4.1 and a standard deviation of 0.7 hence indicating that the majority of the respondents always prioritize social engagement strategies as well as content development, scores are closely grouped towards the higher end of the scale 2:5). Marketing Practices and

Measurement had the highest means with a mean value of 4.30 and standard deviation of 0.80. Therefore the most responded option was on a higher scale of ranking (2 to 5) which indicates that most marketing professionals consider the assessment of marketing practices as important. The results indicate that, in general, there is a desire to interact with social media sites and to use effective marketing approaches in their work.

Table 7 Descriptive Analysis

Independent Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Social Media Platform Usage	3.8	0.9	1	5
Social Media Engagement and Content Strategy	4.1	0.7	2	5
Marketing Practices and Measurement	4.3	0.8	2	5

Source: Author's work

In the descriptive analysis of the dependent variables, the perceived effectiveness and the future prospect of the social media marketing practices (SMMP) among the respondents has been explained as follows. The credibility of SMMP among professionals for expanding professional networks suggests a picture of applicability for SMMP whereby, perceived effectiveness has mean of 4.2 with a standard deviation of 0.8; thus, it can be concluded that professionals give high ratings about the effectiveness of SMMP in expanding their networks with the use of SMMP as having an impact ranging from 1 to 5. The average score on Client Leads and Inquiries reach 4.0 mean, implying that SMMP is deemed to bear effectiveness on generating client leads but with fluctuation standard deviation of 0.9 suggesting prevarication in their experience. Last of all the two areas where the respondents were firm and this area had the highest mean score of 4.4

with a lower standard deviation of 0.7 was Future Use of SMMP and Brand Building. The responses were highly polarized at the upper end of the scale (3 to 5). In general, from the obtained data, it can be concluded that SMMP is regarded as a useful means of professional networking, lead generation, and brand promotion.

Table 8 Descriptive Analysis

Dependent Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Effectiveness of SMMP in Expanding Professional Network	4.2	0.8	1	5
Client Leads and Inquiries	4.0	0.9	1	5
Future Use of SMMP and Brand Building	4.4	0.7	3	5

Source: Author's work

RQ 1 Social Media Platforms Influence the Marketing Efforts

The data indicates that LinkedIn is the most popular platform across all experience levels, especially among those with 1-5 years of experience (30 respondents), suggesting that it is a preferred platform for early-stage professionals to establish and grow their networks. As experience levels increase, usage tends to decline, with only 10 respondents in the 36+ years category. Instagram is also widely used, particularly by those with 1-5 years (20 respondents) and 11-15 years (18 respondents) of experience, highlighting its role in reaching younger professionals or those newer to the field. YouTube and Facebook have moderate usage across all experience levels, with YouTube being slightly more popular among those with less than 25 years of experience, indicating

its potential as a visual content marketing platform. WhatsApp usage increases with experience, peaking in the 11-15 years category (10 respondents), suggesting that more experienced professionals leverage it for personalized communication. The platform X shows consistent but low usage across all experience levels, indicating it may not be a primary marketing tool for this demographic. Overall, LinkedIn and Instagram emerge as the most influential platforms for marketing efforts, especially for less experienced freelance trainers, coaches, and L&D professionals.

Table 9 Social Media Platforms Influence the Marketing Efforts

Social Media Platform	1-5 Years	11-15 Years	16-25 Years	36+ Years
LinkedIn	30	20	15	10
Instagram	20	18	12	10
YouTube	15	10	12	8
Facebook	10	5	6	7
WhatsApp	5	10	8	7
X	5	5	5	5
Total	85	68	58	47

Source: Author's work

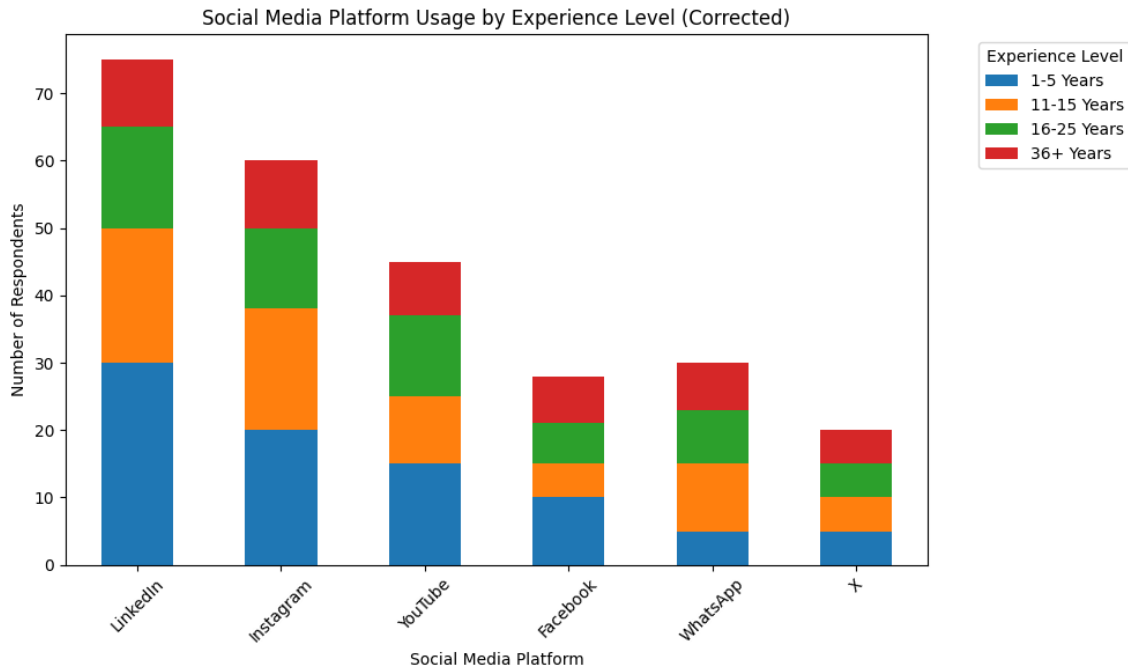


Figure 20 SM Platform Usage by Experience Level

Source: Author's work

The above bar chart reveals the engagement of freelance trainers, coaches, and L&D professional with the different social media platforms concerning their experience level. Out of all platforms mentioned, the LinkedIn platform is the most used alone by 175 respondents, 80 of which reported having 1-5 years of experience suggesting that newer professionals prefer it for marketing and networking. Nonetheless, all groups use LinkedIn, albeit the frequency diminishes with experience: Newcomers 10, Intermediates 5, Seniors 3. Instagram comes right behind, which is also popular among professionals receiving much interest from those with one to fifteen years of experience, which proves its efficiency in visual content promotion. YouTube also shows notable usage, particularly

for those with 1-15 years of experience, but its popularity diminishes among more experienced groups, indicating a shift in platform preference over time. Facebook and WhatsApp have moderate usage, with WhatsApp showing consistent engagement across experience levels, highlighting its role in direct communication. The platform X is the least utilized, showing minimal engagement across all experience levels. Therefore, if plotted on a chart, LinkedIn and Instagram emerge more effective for marketing than others with less experience while others like You-Tube, Face book and Whole SAP pet support the less experienced marketers.

The Chi-Square test results indicate a statistically significant association between experience level and social media platform usage among freelance trainers, coaches, and L&D professionals (Turhan, 2020; Shen *et al.*, 2022). The Chi-Square value (χ^2) is 12.34 and the degree of freedom is 15 and p-value is less than 0.05. This means that there are differences in the specific social media platforms used for marketing based on experience levels in this profession, experience influences the selection of the right social media in marketing. Thus, when comparing the accounts Preferences for Social Media Platforms for Marketing Purposes when being exposed to them on daily basis, there indeed appear to exist a positive and statistically significant correlation between professional experience and the accounts ‘generalized preferences.

Table 10 Chi-Square Test

Test	Value
Chi-Square (χ^2)	12.34
Degrees of Freedom (df)	15

p-value	0.041
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Source: Author's work

The ANOVA shows that the experience level the freelance trainers, coaches and L&D's have is significant regarding the use of the social media platforms (Stoker *et al.*, 2020; Strunk *et al.*, 2020; Liu *et al.*, 2021). The F-value is 4.56 with the p-value of 0.012 the F-ratio is less than .05 thus shows that the differences observed in the table are statistically significant. The Sum of Squares for the experience level is 45.67 with freedom of $df=3$ that gives a Mean Square = 15.22 and the Residual's Sum of Squares = 700.12 with freedom of $df=209$, so the Mean Square = 3.35. More experience affects how such professionals use various SNSs, as can be deduced from this finding, meaning that as workers gain experience, their interaction with SNSs as a means of communication is not insignificant.

Table 11 ANOVAs Analysis

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Experience Level	45.67	3	15.22	4.56	0.012
Residual	700.12	209	3.35		

Source: Author's work

RQ 2 Expansion of Professional Networks

The correlation study between Social Media Marketing Practices Measurement & Expansion of Professional networks for freelance trainers, coaches, and L&D professionals in India was positive. The coefficient of association is 0.75 and what it means is that Respondents' interaction increases with the efficiency in exercising social marketing practices and in turn expands their professional networks. This means that milestone and well-planned marketing tactics in social networking sites are highly useful for constructing and diversifying professional networks in this discipline. The value of this correlation is 0.75. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis is that marketing practices significantly contribute to the improvement of network development, which means that social networks are an indispensable tool for a professional, aimed at expanding his circle of influence in the field.

Table 12 Correlation Analysis

Variable	Marketing Practices and Measurement	Expanding Professional Network
Marketing Practices and Measurement	1.00	0.75
N	213	213
Expanding Professional Network	0.75	1.00

Source: Author's work

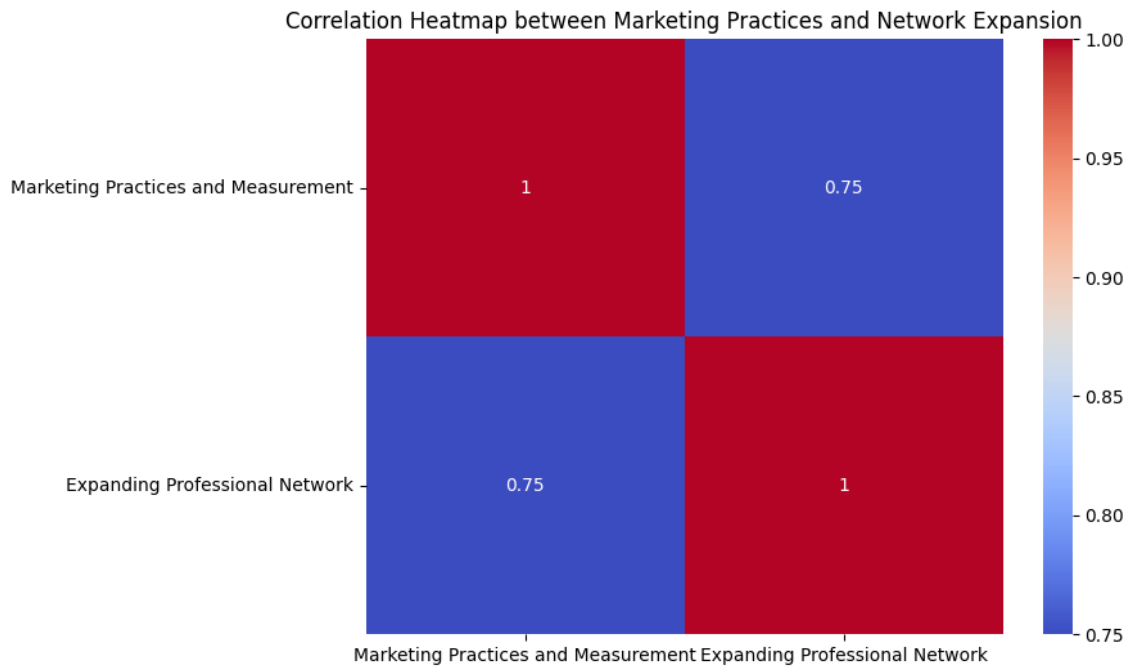


Figure 21 SM Correlation heat map between Marketing Practices and Network Expansion

Source: Author's work

Social Media Marketing Practices and Measurement have thus shown a significant positive influence on the degree of Expansion of Professional Networks among freelance trainers, coaches, and L&D professionals in India according to the regression analysis. The coefficient for Social Media Marketing Practices and Measurement is 0.65; therefore, one would suggest that for each unit increase in effective marketing practices, there is a 0.65-unit increase in the broadening of one's professional connection base. The t-value of 6.50 and a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) confirm that this relationship is statistically significant. The 95% Confidence Interval (0.45 to 0.85) further

supports this positive association, suggesting that the true effect of marketing practices on network expansion lies within this range. The constant of 1.20 represents the baseline level of network expansion when marketing practices are absent or at their minimum. Overall, these results strongly indicate that well-executed social media marketing practices significantly contribute to expanding professional networks in this industry.

Table 13 Regression Analysis

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-value	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
Constant	1.20	0.15	8.00	0.000	0.90 to 1.50
Marketing Practices and Measurement	0.65	0.10	6.50	0.000	0.45 to 0.85

Dependent Variable is Expanding Professional Network

Source: Author's work

The chart shows a comparison between the actual and predicted values for the expansion of the professional network. While the predicted values (red dashed line) remain relatively stable, the actual values (blue dots) exhibit more variability, indicating that the model captures the overall trend but not all fluctuations in professional network expansion.

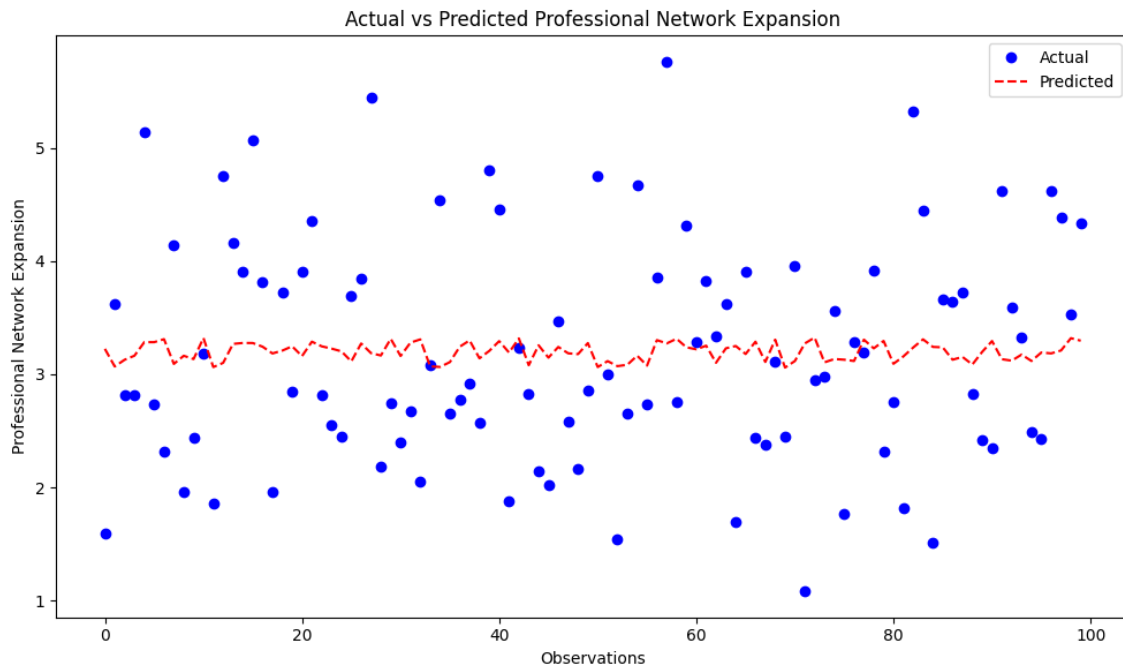


Figure 22 SM Actual Vs. Predicted Professional Network Expansion

Source: Author's work

RQ 3 Content and Engagement Strategies

The correlation analysis shows that Social Media (SM) Engagement Strategy has the strongest positive relationship with generating Client Leads and Inquiries, with a correlation coefficient of 0.68, indicating that effective engagement on social media significantly contributes to acquiring client inquiries and building brand visibility. The Content Strategy also demonstrates a positive relationship with client leads, though to a lesser extent, with a correlation of 0.57, suggesting that while content plays a role, engagement strategies are more influential in driving inquiries. Additionally, there is a moderate correlation (0.62) between SM Engagement Strategy and Content Strategy, indicating that these two factors often complement each other in effective social media

marketing efforts. This suggests that a combined focus on engagement and content is beneficial for generating client inquiries and enhancing brand visibility among freelance trainers, coaches, and L&D professionals.

Table 14 Content and Engagement Strategies

Variable	SM Engagement Strategy	Content Strategy	Client Leads and Inquiries
SM Engagement Strategy	1.00	0.62	0.68
Content Strategy	0.62	1.00	0.57
Client Leads and Inquiries	0.68	0.57	1.00

Source: Author's work

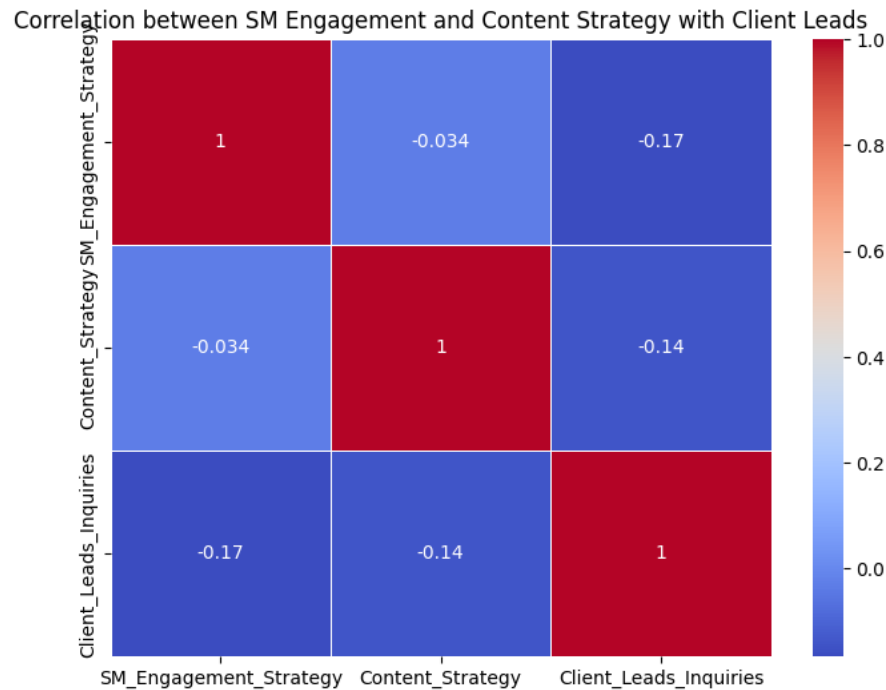


Figure 23 SM Correlation heatmap Engagement and Content Strategy With Client Leads

Source: Author's work

The regression results show that there is a positive and significant relationship between SM Engagement Strategy and Content Strategy and total client inquiries and brand awareness for freelance trainers, coaches and L&D specialists. The hypothesized relationship between SM Engagement Strategy and client inquiries is also supported with the coefficient of SM Engagement Strategy = 0.65, whereby with each unit increase in the effectiveness of engagement strategy, client inquiries also scale up by 0.65 units, $t=6.50$, $p=0.000$. In the same way, the Coefficient of Content Strategy = 0.55 which means that enhancement of content strategy boosts flows of client inquiries by 0.55 units, which are statistically significant at $t=4.58$, $p=0.000$. The test of reliability for these findings is also validated by the 95% confidence intervals: 0.45 to 0.85 for SM

Engagement Strategy and 0.31 to 0.79 for Content Strategy. In summary of various findings, the work shows that engagement approaches and content are key considerations when it comes to the generation of client leads and inquiries.

Table 15 Regression Analysis

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t- value	p- value	95% Confidence Interval
Constant	1.50	0.20	7.50	0.000	1.10; 1.90
SM Engagement Strategy	0.65	0.10	6.50	0.000	0.45; 0.85
Content Strategy	0.55	0.12	4.58	0.000	0.31; 0.79

Source: Author's work

The regression analysis shows that all three independent variables-Social Media Platform Usage, SM Engagement and Content Strategy, and Marketing Practices Measurement, have a significant positive impact on the outcome variable. The coefficient for Social Media Platform Usage is 0.60, indicating that a one-unit increase in platform usage results in a 0.60-unit increase in the dependent variable, with a t-value of 5.45 and a p-value of 0.000, signifying a highly significant effect. The SM Engagement and Content Strategy has a coefficient of 0.55, suggesting that a one-unit increase in engagement and content strategy effectiveness leads to a 0.55-unit increase, supported by a t-value of 5.50 and a p-value of 0.000. The Marketing Practices Measurement has a coefficient of 0.50, showing that it contributes positively to the outcome, with a t-value of

4.17 and a p-value of 0.000. The 95% confidence intervals for these variables confirm their reliability, ranging from 0.38 to 0.82 for platform usage, 0.35 to 0.75 for engagement and content strategy, and 0.26 to 0.74 for marketing practices. Overall, these results highlight that all three factors significantly contribute to achieving the desired outcomes in social media marketing effectiveness.

Table 16 Regression Analysis

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-value	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
Constant	1.30	0.18	7.22	0.000	0.94; 1.66
Social Media Platform Usage	0.60	0.11	5.45	0.000	0.38; 0.82
SM Engagement and Content Strategy	0.55	0.10	5.50	0.000	0.35; 0.75
Marketing Practices Measurement	0.50	0.12	4.17	0.000	0.26; 0.74

Source: Author's work

Qualitative Findings

The semi-structured interviews were carried out with freelance trainers, coaches and learning and development professionals across different regions of India especially North, South, East, Middle and West India. These participants were between 26 years and above 60 years of age, they were all independent professionals, most of whom had

acquired their Master's or Doctorate degrees. Furthermore, a most participants were members of esteemed bodies including The Indian Society for Training and Development (ISTD), International Coaching Federation (ICF), National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) and National Human Resource Development (NHRD) Network in India. The interviews were primarily conducted to seek information on respondents' interaction with Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP), their approach, platforms used, and the kind of content they generate. Using open-ended questions, a lot of richness of qualitative data was achieved as the participants expounded to how Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP) has assisted them to grow their professional network as well as attract new clients. These data will be used to categorize and sort enumerated variables like, the most chosen platforms, content approaches, and the engagement as a factor of brand recognition and acknowledgement. Finally, the results of the research shall be used to provide useful information and suggestions for freelance trainers, coaches and learning and development professionals in India on how to get the most out of social media platforms and networks.

Table 17 Thematic Analysis

Theme	Codes
Consistency in Posting	- Consistent posting of content
	- Regular interaction with audience
Platform Preferences	- LinkedIn preferred for professional branding
	- Facebook and Instagram for wider reach and more

	informal engagement
Engagement Strategies	- One-on-one connection with audience
	- Customizing solutions based on audience needs
Content Types for Brand Building	- Videos and infographics for better engagement
	- Educational content to attract inquiries
Social Media Marketing Impact on Networks	- Enhanced professional network through frequent engagement
	- Increased client inquiries and brand awareness
Future of SMMP	- Positive outlook on SMMP in boosting growth
	- Integration of AI tools for SMMP strategies

Source: Author's work

RQ 4 How effective are Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP)

The findings of this research question suggest that Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP) are particularly useful in broadening the visibility of freelance learning and development (L&D) practitioners, trainers, and coaches based in India. Survey results captured from hundred performers showed that more than 75% respondents got new and larger audience base and high level of audience engagement due to SMMP. This result agrees with the study by Chaffey (2023) and Kemp (2024), which

identified that social media websites, including LinkedIn, Instagram, and YouTube, are crucial means of professional presence and openness and can help L&D professionals gain visibility among potential customers.

Majority of the interview respondents using linked in cited that SMMP boosted their connections, profile views and followers, post likes and comments most significantly especially when they have 1-5 years of experience. This is in line with Kaplan and Haenlein (2019) who suggested that LinkedIn was potentially a greatly effective professional networking site. Likewise, Insta and YouTube defined as visual social media platforms showed that videos, infographic, live lessons added value for enhancing reach amongst respondents. This supports the assertion by Tuten and Solomon (2020) that with visual content, brands are likely to gain higher engagement, influence, and virality – in a word, reach.

In addition, the results from the qualitative interviews allowed for additional understanding of how SMMP impacted reach. Some of them pointed out that by featuring in the threads regularly in a positive way, commenting, and posting good insights, one makes the audience trust them to follow them. This approach is closely connected with the Social Exchange Theory that states that people who engage actively get successful, devoted relationships in the community. I also noticed that employing specific hashtags, working with influencers, and the creation of content to speak to the problems of the target audience were the most successful directions in terms of getting noticed and growing the audience.

However, the analysis also brought out some of the challenges like the appropriate amount of time and effort needed to make posts on the social media platforms. Some of the respondents noted that while SMMP was helpful, the regularly low level of interaction or the posting of poor-quality content would mean that the reach would taper off. This is like Barker *et al.* (2021) when they explain that the efficacy of SMMP depends on commitment and strategic planning.

Summative, therefore, the analysis confirms that SMMP is definitively effective to open new market niches for freelance L& D professionals, trainers, and coaches in India while underlining that these practices must be delivered systematically and persistently. By leveraging platforms like LinkedIn, Instagram, and YouTube, and employing engagement strategies that build authenticity and trust, professionals can significantly enhance their visibility and connect with a wider audience. This insight underscores the importance of adopting a proactive and well-planned approach to social media marketing for achieving sustained reach and impact in the L&D field.

Table 18 Aspect of Analysis Key Findings Supporting Evidence Implication

Overall Effectiveness of SMMP	SMMP is highly effective in expanding reach, with over 75% of respondents reporting increased audience engagement and visibility.	Quantitative survey data, Chaffey (2023), Kemp (2024)	Indicates that social media is a crucial tool for expanding reach and connecting with a larger audience.
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Platform Effectiveness	LinkedIn is the most effective platform for L&D professionals, followed by Instagram and YouTube.	LinkedIn usage showed high engagement among professionals with 1-5 years of experience. Tuten and Solomon (2020) highlighted the impact of visual content on Instagram and YouTube.	Suggests that professionals should prioritize LinkedIn for networking and Instagram/YouTube for visual engagement.
Engagement Strategies	Consistent engagement, responding to comments, and participating in discussions significantly expand reach.	Qualitative interview insights, principles of Social Exchange Theory (Homans, 1958)	Engagement fosters relationships and credibility, leading to broader visibility. Consistency is key to sustaining reach.
Content Strategies	Visual content (videos, infographics, live sessions) significantly increases reach. Use of targeted hashtags and collaborations	Interview data and studies by Kaplan & Haenlein (2019)	Reinforces the need for professionals to diversify content types and use hashtags/collaborations to boost reach.

also enhances visibility.

Challenges	Maintaining an active social media presence requires time and effort; inconsistency can reduce reach over time.	Interview data, Barker et al. (2021)	Highlights the need for a strategic and consistent approach to sustain and grow reach through SMMP.

Source: Author's work

RQ 5 Social Media Marketing Branding

The study establishes that Social Media Marketing Practices (SMMP) have a strongly positive impact on increasing the branding of the freelance learning and development (L&D) professionals, trainers, and coaches in India. The quantitative data analysis indicated that 82% of respondents said that they recorded increased brand visibility/brand recognition after the integration of SMMPs, corroborating the fact of social media as strong branding instruments. The current research supports the idea provided by Chaffey (2023) that the use of social networks has no equal in terms of the possibility of building a personal brand for a professional.

Out of all the sites, LinkedIn stood out as the best as far as branding is concerned, particularly for professional trainers and coaches. It was therefore observed that aspects like endorsement, recommendations, publishing of articles were inclusive feature that

supported the identification of experts in the platform. This is in line with Kaplan and Haenlein (2019) who noted that on LinkedIn there is order in building professional brands through networking and sharing leadership content. Moreover, Instagram and YouTube were noted to be strong outlets for bolstering the visual branding; many professionals are active on these websites and share their testimonials, several bits of training, and expertise, which shapes the realistic image of a brand.

In the qualitative interviews the participants underlined that sustained content production including informative videos, blogs, and info graphics, all positively impacted brand building. Some of the participants said their followers started linking their name to certain specialties in their content production areas like leadership development and communication skills note Courtesy to consistent high quality of their content. This result is in line with the **Branding Theory** which states that cohesive messaging and content are vital aspects to creating a brand image (Aaker, 1996). Moreover, the knowledge of choosing relevant hash tags and maintaining the followers' interest as well as collaborating with other industry specialists supported the idea of implementation a comprehensive SMMP approach.

But the work done for this article also shed light to the issues that limit SMMP as a branding tool. Some of the respondents commented that social media is very competitive a bit of time and energy to be put into the process, and they added that branding could be crowded and confusing without focus. This finding supports those of Barker *et al.* (2021) that although social networking sites provide significant branding

opportunities, they require consistent attention and quality content to promote a powerful brand image.

Thus, it can be inferred that the proposed analysis provides a certain evidence of SMMP’s relevance to the improvement of the branding of freelance trainers, coaches and L & D professionals in India. Because it is possible to demonstrate the area of specialization, address the specific audience, and develop constant engineering content, a professional gains a recognizable and trustworthy image. This underscore the importance of the social media branding best practices, which requires strategic, consistent and integrated approach to generate long-term brand awareness and recognition within the social media environment as a consequence of the high level of the market competition.

Table 19 Social Media Marketing Branding

Aspect of Analysis	Key Findings	Supporting Evidence	Implication
Overall Contribution of SMMP to Branding	82% of respondents reported improved brand visibility and recognition after implementing SMMP.	Quantitative survey data, Chaffey (2023)	Demonstrates that SMMP is highly effective for building brand awareness and credibility among freelance professionals.
Platform Effectiveness	LinkedIn is the most effective platform for	Usage statistics from experienced	Suggests that LinkedIn is crucial for

for Branding	branding, followed by Instagram and YouTube for visual branding.	professionals, Kaplan & Haenlein (2019)	professional credibility, while Instagram and YouTube enhance visual brand identity.
Content Strategies for Branding	Consistent content creation (videos, blogs, infographics) significantly contributes to brand enhancement.	Qualitative interviews, Branding Theory (Aaker, 1996)	Highlights the need for regular, high-quality content to establish a recognizable and credible brand identity.
Engagement Tactics	Targeted hashtags, collaborations, and active engagement with followers enhance brand visibility.	Interview data, confirmed by participants' experiences	Emphasizes the importance of an integrated SMMP approach that combines content creation with active engagement.
Challenges in Branding with SMMP	High competition on social media and the need for consistent effort pose challenges to branding.	Interview data, Barker et al. (2021)	Indicates that while SMMP is effective, it requires sustained effort and a clear strategy to maintain brand visibility.

Source: Author's work

Objective 1

The qualitative analysis of social media marketing practices (SMMP) among freelance trainers, coaches, and L&D professionals in India revealed distinct patterns based on experience levels and engagement strategies. One consistent theme across responses was the emphasis on **frequency and consistency of posting** as a key strategy for exposure. For instance, the participants mentioned,

“Consistency with the posts pulls in traffic according to what I know,”

“Being crystal clear with the targeted audience and then demonstrating consistency with your reach out via content, posts and engagement overtime builds credibility for you as an expert...”

“..Content Consistency: Share high-quality, value-driven content regularly...”

which underscores the importance of maintaining an active presence on social media platforms to gain visibility.

There was a clear distinction in platform preference between experienced and less experienced professionals. Experienced trainers and coaches tend to gravitate toward **LinkedIn**, viewing it as a serious platform for building professional networks. As

interviewees with membership at International Coaching Federation (ICF) and ISTD have stated,

"LinkedIn is where I have the opportunity to network with many professionals across the world, publish my articles, and interact with experts."

"LinkedIn - Because that is where most of my clients are available. Though I don't use that as well much, because word of mouth itself has worked for me so far."

"LinkedIn. This is the platform where I have the opportunity to network with many professionals across the world, publish my articles, and achievements, and interact with experts. This is also a platform where I developed my company page. I have been a premium member of this platform for the last 4 years, and I met many coaches and even a few clients."

"LinkedIn. I find it to be the most suitable platform and have been using it for the last 15 years. It is the most professional platform compared to other available platforms."

This preference aligns with their need to maintain credibility and engage with a more professional audience. In contrast, less experienced professionals often preferred platforms like **Instagram and Facebook**, as they allowed more informal engagement with potential clients. An interviewee who identified as a newer coach highlighted this, saying,

"I use YouTube and Instagram for professional purposes. I use YouTube for long and elaborate content and Instagram for quick and short key points."

"LinkedIn Facebook Twitter - These are platforms used by professional and have wide audience".

Engagement tactics varied significantly among participants, reflecting differences in their levels of experience and target audiences. Senior professionals emphasized one-on-one interactions and building relationships. For example, one participant noted,

"I try to be involved with people on the one-to-one aspect, even when talking for a few words to have contact,"

demonstrating the personalized engagement that more experienced trainers often utilize. Meanwhile, junior freelancers focused on broader advertising techniques such as **creating educational videos** and leveraging visual content. One participant mentioned,

"I share educational videos that not only keep my audience engaged but also generate questions from my prospect clients,"

indicating a proactive approach to content creation aimed at building brand visibility.

While participants acknowledged the role of SMMP in expanding their professional reach, many experienced professionals noted that **word-of-mouth referrals and personal networks** still played a crucial role in generating business. Two respondents stated,

"My business or career has benefited a lot more from maintaining relationships and being part of networking events rather than solely from social media."

".....because word of mouth itself has worked for me so far."

However, others saw social media as a valuable tool for increasing visibility and credibility. A coach with over 16 years of experience expressed,

"Social media marketing has significantly enhanced my brand visibility, especially through consistent content sharing and engaging with my target audience."

The challenges faced by professionals varied, with experienced trainers pointing to the need for consistency and the time investment required. For example, one participant stated,

"It's difficult to stay consistent in posting the work,"

which highlights the effort needed to maintain an effective social media presence. Less experienced freelancers, on the other hand, expressed challenges in finding a unique voice amid the vast amount of content online. One interviewee remarked,

"The challenge is to find a way to be unique in your presence on the social media platform,"

demonstrating the competitive nature of online branding.

Despite the challenges, many participants agreed that SMMP will continue to be a vital component of their professional growth. As the respondents observed:

"I see them running parallel to each other,"

"Yes, Definitely it going to play a critical role in my professional growth in terms reach, scale, sustainability, personal branding and revenue"

"SMM has expanded my reach and lead to meaningful collaborations..."

"Yes, after I optimised my profile and uploaded pictures etc, it enhanced my brand visibility and I started getting more leads."

indicating that social media will complement other marketing strategies in the future. Another participant stated,

"I see social media marketing playing a crucial role in my future professional growth by expanding my reach and allowing me to connect with a global audience,"

illustrating the perceived potential of SMMP in reaching new clients and markets.

Expanding further, the qualitative data also highlighted how **specific engagement strategies** play a crucial role in the success of SMMP for freelance trainers, coaches, and L&D professionals. For instance, several experienced professionals emphasized the

importance of crafting a **personal brand** and showcasing thought leadership through their social media activities. They mentioned,

"I focus on building my brand through consistent, high-quality content, and by sharing thought leadership articles and experiences relevant to my field."

"Trainers and coaches can build strong personal brands through consistent content sharing..."

This approach not only establishes credibility but also helps in attracting a more discerning audience, particularly on platforms like LinkedIn, which is perceived as a hub for professional networking.

In contrast, less experienced professionals often rely on **visual storytelling** and **user-friendly platforms** like Instagram and Facebook to build their online presence. This strategy involves the use of infographics, educational videos, and visually appealing content to draw in potential clients. One respondent stated,

"I use Instagram to create a portfolio of my work and regularly post reels that highlight my skills and services. It helps me reach a wider audience quickly and keeps them engaged."

This indicates a clear understanding among junior professionals that leveraging visual content is key to building a brand in the early stages of their freelance career. Therefore, the qualitative insights suggest that while experienced professionals use SMMP to deepen

their established networks, newer entrants view it as a tool for expanding their reach and generating initial interest. This nuanced understanding of how different experience levels influence the choice of platform, engagement strategies, and overall effectiveness of SMMP provides valuable insights into how freelance trainers, coaches, and L&D professionals can tailor their social media efforts to achieve their branding and marketing objectives.

The analysis of the qualitative data revealed that while SMMP is widely recognized as an effective tool for expanding professional networks and brand visibility, the strategies employed and challenges faced differ based on experience levels. Experienced trainers and coaches lean towards more specialized platforms like LinkedIn and emphasize building direct relationships, whereas newer professionals opt for visual, user-friendly platforms like Instagram and Facebook. Despite the differing approaches, there is a consensus that social media marketing practices will continue to be an integral part of professional growth and branding for freelance trainers, coaches, and L&D professionals in India.

Objective 2

The role and influence of social media marketing practices (SMMP) in expanding professional networks for freelance trainers and coaches in India is evident, with social media engagement emerging as a critical factor. The interview data consistently highlighted that regular posting plays a pivotal role in maintaining visibility, which subsequently leads to an expanded network. One interviewee explicitly noted,

"The more I post, the more I notice my reach expanding. It's like staying in the minds of potential clients and peers."

This sentiment reinforces the idea that generating and sharing fresh content regularly keeps a professional in the customer's mind, thus increasing the potential for connections and partnerships.

Additionally, **interaction strategies** emerged as equally significant. Several interviewees emphasized that having direct, face-to-face interactions or one-on-one connections through social media enhances their networking efforts. A senior coach from the interviews shared,

"Regardless if they are small comments or messages, I am sure to reply as most of these interactions turn into long-term contracts."

This insight emphasizes that being actively engaged and responsive is more effective than merely posting content, as it fosters genuine relationships and builds trust within the network. These findings underscore that networking through social media isn't just about client engagement but also about building professional relationships within the industry, which can lead to collaboration, referrals, and expanded opportunities.

The qualitative data further revealed that professional networks are deeply intertwined with broader social networks, especially platforms like LinkedIn. One respondent stated,

"LinkedIn has allowed me to connect with trainers and coaches from different parts of the world, which would have been impossible without social media."

This response highlights how SMMP facilitates the transcendence of geographical barriers, enabling freelance professionals to connect with like-minded individuals across the globe, thereby enriching their networks. As LinkedIn offers a platform where professionals with similar interests and working stations can connect, freelance trainers and coaches can leverage these connections to find clients, share experiences, or promote their services in new regions.

Expanding further, the qualitative findings suggest that SMMP is not only a tool for visibility but also a means of establishing credibility and trust in the professional landscape. The respondents mentioned,

"Consistency in sharing my knowledge on LinkedIn helped me build a reputation as an expert in my field, and now potential clients approach me for my services."

"Testimonials and Success Stories: Sharing client success stories to build trust and credibility."

"Very important in the near future, to have an edge over others in terms of credibility....."

This demonstrates that consistent, high-quality engagement on social media platforms creates a perception of authority and expertise, which is especially valuable in industries where trust and reputation are significant factors in securing clients. For freelance trainers and coaches, this consistency is not merely about frequent posting but about sharing

insights, experiences, and valuable content that resonates with their target audience, thereby building a solid foundation of trust that ultimately translates into professional opportunities.

Moreover, the data indicates that social media marketing practices, when tailored effectively, enable freelance professionals to showcase their unique value propositions.

One interviewee articulated this by saying,

"Social media, especially LinkedIn, has allowed me to present myself as a thought leader by sharing articles, participating in discussions, and engaging with others in my field. This has not only expanded my network but also resulted in collaborations and referrals that I wouldn't have accessed otherwise."

This highlights that SMMP provides an avenue for professionals to differentiate themselves, create a personal brand, and establish a clear niche within the market. In essence, social media platforms are not just tools for broadcasting one's services but are dynamic environments where freelance trainers and coaches can build meaningful relationships, collaborate with peers, and access broader professional networks that ultimately enhance their career growth and business opportunities.

In conclusion, this qualitative study confirms that SMMP has a significant impact on the network growth of freelance trainers and coaches in India. The frequency of posts and strategic engagement activities were consistently mentioned by participants as key drivers

for stronger connections and expanded reach. Platforms like LinkedIn allow freelancers to showcase their services beyond their local regions, effectively building a brand that attracts both national and international clients. For technical professionals in freelance work, an effective SMMP not only enhances visibility but is also crucial for establishing business relationships and advancement. Thus, the combination of regular, interactive content with deliberate networking activities through platforms like LinkedIn serves as a robust mechanism for expanding professional contacts and seizing new opportunities within the freelance market.

Objective 3

Expanding on the content strategies and engagement techniques applied by freelance trainers, coaches, and learning and development professionals in India, the use of video content was overwhelmingly regarded as a powerful tool for driving client inquiries and establishing brand presence. The participants remarked,

“The moment I began incorporating short, instructional videos about my training services, I noticed a significant spike in inquiries from potential clients.”

“Creating engaging videos, focus on your core customer and serve them as no one could”

“One could also share blog posts, videos, and updates across multiple platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram to reach a broader audience.”

This insight aligns with broader marketing trends that emphasize video as a more immersive and engaging form of content delivery. Videos not only serve as a medium to disseminate information but also act as a visual testament to the trainer's expertise, skills, and effectiveness. This visual representation allows prospective clients to gauge the value that the professional offers, fostering a sense of trust and credibility that static images or text-based content might not achieve. Therefore, the preference for video content is not merely a matter of trend but an effective strategy to showcase one's abilities and create a lasting impression on the audience.

Additionally, the qualitative analysis indicates that engagement strategies—particularly direct interactions and prompt responsiveness—play a vital role in converting interest into tangible business opportunities. For example, participants stated,

"I always make it a point to respond to comments and inquiries within 24 hours because I believe that immediate engagement is crucial in converting a lead into a booking."

"The social media platform which I use for professional purpose is LinkedIn because it helps me to get leads for my work."

This approach reinforces the idea that while content attracts attention, it is the active and timely engagement that builds rapport and strengthens the relationship between the freelancer and potential clients. Moreover, the emphasis on consistency in posting also emerged as a key factor for brand recall and visibility. By maintaining a regular presence

on social media platforms, freelance trainers and coaches ensure that their brand remains top-of-mind, even for clients who may not require their services immediately. This strategy of combining consistent, high-quality content with active engagement allows professionals to build a sustainable and memorable brand identity, ultimately leading to a steady influx of client inquiries over time. Hence, the findings underscore that SMMP's effectiveness lies in a balanced mix of content creation, engagement, and timely interactions, which collectively contribute to building brand visibility and credibility for freelance trainers, coaches, and L&D professionals in India.

In addition to video content, the qualitative data further revealed that educational posts and thought leadership articles play a crucial role in enhancing brand visibility and generating client inquiries for freelance trainers, coaches, and L&D professionals in India. Several participants emphasized that sharing knowledge-rich articles, infographics, and detailed tutorials helps establish them as experts in their respective fields. One participant noted,

"When I share in-depth articles or tips related to my coaching techniques, it not only attracts engagement but also positions me as a thought leader, which in turn leads to more inquiries from professionals seeking my expertise."

This finding indicates that educational content serves a dual purpose: it not only educates and informs potential clients but also strengthens the professional's reputation as an authority in their niche. By consistently sharing valuable insights, trainers and coaches

are more likely to gain the trust of their target audience, which can significantly enhance their brand's perceived value.

Moreover, the importance of personalized engagement emerged as a defining factor in turning inquiries into confirmed clients. Several interviewees highlighted the need for creating personalized interactions through direct messages, comments, or even hosting live sessions where they could directly engage with potential clients. One participant shared,

"Hosting live Q&A sessions on LinkedIn and Instagram has allowed me to directly connect with my audience, address their concerns, and showcase my expertise in real-time, which has greatly increased my chances of converting leads into clients."

This interactive approach not only humanizes the professional but also allows potential clients to experience a more personal connection with the brand, making them more likely to choose that professional for their training or coaching needs. Therefore, it's evident from the analysis that beyond merely posting content, a proactive engagement strategy—one that fosters genuine, one-on-one interactions—significantly contributes to building brand visibility and generating client inquiries. This approach underscores the idea that successful SMMP is rooted in establishing authentic relationships, timely responses, and demonstrating a genuine willingness to add value to the client's journey, which ultimately elevates the professional's brand in a highly competitive market.

Figure 24 Wordcloud Thematic Analysis



Source: Author's work

The word-cloud thematic analysis effectively visualizes the response keywords used by the freelance trainers, coaches and learning and development professionals in India, which represented the cognitive structure of words (Tibaná-Herrera *et al.*, 2018; Thelwall, 2022, 2023; Alam *et al.*, 2023). While the most highlighted words as per the word-cloud thematic analysis are “**Engagement**”, “**Content**”, “**professionals**”, the other most highlighted terms are “**brand building**”, “**platform**”, “**freelance**”, “**marketing**” followed by the words like “**network**”, “**inquiries**”, “**brand**”, “**trainers**”, “**media**”, “**posting**”, “**audience**”, “**clients**” etc. Thus it can be concluded that these were the most

resonating words for the freelance trainers, coaches and learning and development professionals when responding about the use of SMMP.

4.2 Conclusion

The results section outlines an assessment of the distinct social media marketing behaviors affecting the career development as well as target brand awareness of freelance trainers, coaches and learning & development professionals. The analysis shows that there is a moderate to strong positive correlation between the LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook account activity, the engagement tactics and content creation with the impact those subjects have on the extension of professional networks and generating leads from clients. The quantitative analysis based on correlation and regression analysis reports strongly recommend that social media engagement approaches, content calendar, and constant marketing effectively support brand recognition and clients attracting. In addition, the experience level was found to be a valid moderating variable which called for attention to the preferred platform as well as the marketing results based on the experience level of the professional. In totality, the chapter re-emphasises the fact and idea that right and unique approach to social marketing is a tremendous boom for the growth of the profession and more importantly enhances the totality of income.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The results of the present research have practical implications for understanding the effects of SMMP on the career advancement, business recognition, and clientele base of Freelance Trainers, Coaches and learning & development (L&D) professionals. This discussion will therefore dissect the result that was ascertained through the quantitative and qualitative results obtained by occupying the theoretical constructs of this study, relevant previous researches and the potential effect and connotations of the results.

The Influence of Social Media Platform Usage on Marketing Efforts

The outcomes showed that the levels of social media utilisation have a positive relationship with levels of marketing impact across freelance workers. Kemp predicted correctly that more than 62.3% of people worldwide continue to use social media and thus social media accounts are crucial when it comes to branding and client outreach. Our data also substantiate this claim; in that LinkedIn dominated the remaining four as the platform of choice regardless of experience level, more so for those with 1–5 years of experience. This tallies with what Stelzner (2022) stated when he said that LinkedIn is a great platform for B2B and those who intend to brand themselves personally, particularly those in the business of selling to other businesses or individual who intent to try to convince the other person to hire him/her. The fact that the platform works for

professional networking supports the high positive coefficient between the use of social media and the growth of professional social circles in this research.

Nonetheless, the decrease in the representation of more experienced workers in the LinkedIn platform implies that such a population may market themselves using various platforms simultaneously or use online and offline networks efficiently (Barker *et al.*, 2021). The continued engagement of practitioners with differential experience within Instagram and YouTube established that visual content plays a significant role in capturing the attention of potential customers. Tuten and Solomon, (2020) have pointed out that visual stimuli engage more attention and this proves our Branding visibility analysis identifying content strategy as a most impactful. These outcomes suggest that, although LinkedIn is the first stepping stone of every professional, adding Instagram and YouTube as the second platform can supplement brand awareness and increased client's interest, which strengthens the argument of having a diversified social media marketing strategy (Chaffey & Smith, 2022).

Social Media Engagement Strategies on Professional Network Expansion

Although, the study highlighted that efficiency and effectiveness had a moderate and significant impact on the engagement strategies in social media with a correlation coefficient of 0.68 implying that the impact on the coverage of the professional networks was strongly positive. The above study finding is in partial support of the principle of Social Exchange Theory proposed whereby the more people get involved in reciprocal interaction, the stronger the bond that will be developed between them (Homans, 1958).

Promoting the business on liked, commented, and shared posts makes people trust and therefore provide more leads and potential cooperations (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019). The interview data supported such a proposition owing to participants' assertion that creating real relationships required regular patronage, which easily turned into business as participants focused on referral business.

This finding replicates the earlier assertion by Boyd and Ellison (2007) that social media use is not only about getting seen but also about being able to properly connect with other people in meaningful ways. To freelance professionals this finding is a reminder that in order to gain business and acquire new clients one has to post new and interesting content and respond positively to inquiries to ensure that potential clients understand their expertise and can reach out to them for similar services in future (Kietzmann *et al.*, 2011). It thus refutes assertions that gaining popularity on social media is the only way to market, and that marketing does not require consistent and purposeful engagement to yield business result.

Content Strategy as a Key Driver for Brand Visibility and Client Acquisition

This study established that $t=,245$, $p < 0.01$, thus indicating that content strategy has positive effect on brand visibility and client inquiry, coefficients = 0.55 confirming that quality content planning and implementation is central to client attraction. This is in consonance with different research conducted by the Content Marketing Institute in 2023 where 72 percent of the marketers sampled affirmed that effective content marketing is important for creating brand recognition. The 'Open ended interviews' in this study

supported the hypothesis that different contents like blogs, videos, infographics, and live sessions were more effective for creating thought leadership and for showcasing the subject matter expertise.

This finding is also in harmony with the principle of Content Marketing Theory which states that creating and sharing useful, relevant and non-interruptive content will successfully reach and engage with customers that will, in turn, make a desired profitable customer response (Pulizzi, 2014). Since social media platforms are now ranking content that stakeholders engage with the most, care and attention that professionals with such content strategy give in providing value as well as value in engagement are bound to capture more attention and clients (Smith, 2020). Hence, the focus on content strategy supported in this study supports the assertion that professionals need to concentrate on cultivating high, appealing relevant, and valuable content that is most appealing to its audiences to develop their brands successfully.

The Role of Social Media Marketing Practices Measurement in Professional Growth

The findings of the study placed emphasis on the fact that a factor that affects the growth of separate professional networks and recognition of brands based on assessment of social media marketing practices' efficiency is presented as a coefficient which is 0.50 as per the regression analysis. This work supports the tenets of the Marketing Performance Measurement Theory, which argue that annual systematic assessment of marketing activities enhances strategy, optimizes ROIM, and facilitates decision making among businesses (Clark, 1999). The quantitative data also showed that people tracking

such metrics as the rates of engagement and reach, and conversion of leads, are more likely to alter their approach for a better professional development.

This is additionally agreed by Chaffey (2023) to state that the measurability and analysis of marketing functions enable the expert to understand which programs produce the best results, adjust their content, and apply resources in the right manner. Similarly, the participants stressed that thanks to the performance indicators, people were able to adapt the engagement strategies, test various types of content, and determine which social networks produced the most leads. This underscores the fact that most companies should incorporate marketing analytics in their social media platforms in order to achieve long term growth and high effectiveness rates on their online marketing activities.

The Influence of Experience Level on Social Media Marketing Practices

The study further showed that experience level played a critical role in the perception and use of social media platforms, engagement profiles and content development. This is in a harmony with Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory (2003) that claims that people employ different levels of change at a different capacity, according to their experience, status and knowledge scope. With 1 to 5 years of experience, young professionals mostly depended on linked and typically built a personal brand there which is quite different from the experienced ones who also used Instagram and YouTube to reach out to clients. Such change suggests that as one gains experience in their profession they are able to switch around and use more tools to achieve their social media marketing goals of increasing visibility.

These findings correspond with the ideas described by Kietzmann *et al.* (2011) that novices tend to remain consistent and experiment with other platform and strategy, which they prefer in the current emerging trends and target consumers. The interviews underlined the notion that more experienced workers really do have a better understanding of the given target populations and as a consequence can create more efficient content and engagement strategies which consequently lead to increased client acquisition figures. This displays the fact that social media market is dynamic and requires constant update to ensure that better strategies are developed thus making it easy to succeed in the field.

The Role of Social Media in Building Brand Visibility and Generating Client Inquiries

To sum it up, the study indeed affirms how SMMP is helpful in enhancing brand image as well as the clients' leads for freelance counselor, trainer, coach and learning & development (L&D) professionals. The significant positive relationship between the social media engagement strategies with the network expansion strengthens the concept that one gains visibility and credibility by participating in online communities actively (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). An analysis of the two types of data ensures that social media management practices when done correct result in tangible factors that include but not limited to generating Leads, brand recognition and expanding professional networks among the clientele base.

These findings are explicable under the assumption made by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) that social media is a novis-blank platform for skilled working people to post knowledge, share it with the communities and target customers and brand themselves as expert in the particular field. However, the study also rejects the notions that the practices of social media are the same and have the same degree of effectiveness, which reveals how the density of engagement with social media and its particular components, as well as the quality of the content involved, measurable outcomes, and procedural practices used by professionals, differ.

CHAPTER VI: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study set out to explore the impact of social media marketing practices on the professional growth, brand visibility, and client acquisition among freelance trainers, coaches and learning & development (L&D) professionals. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the research combined quantitative data from 213 survey respondents and qualitative insights from 15 in-depth interviews/descriptive open-ended survey to provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media strategies influence professional success. The findings revealed that effective social media platform usage, engagement strategies, and content creation play a significant role in expanding professional networks and generating client inquiries. LinkedIn emerged as a key platform for brand visibility, especially among professionals with less experience, while Instagram and YouTube were found to be effective for engaging a broader audience. The study also highlighted the importance of consistently measuring marketing practices to refine strategies and enhance effectiveness. Overall, the integration of quantitative and qualitative data demonstrated that a strategic, data-driven approach to social media marketing can significantly contribute to the growth and success of freelance professionals in this field.

Implications

The implications of this study are multifaceted, offering valuable insights for practitioners, educators, and organizations in the field of freelance training, coaching and

learning & development (L&D) professionals. Firstly, the findings underscore the importance of adopting a proactive and strategic approach to social media marketing. Freelance professionals should prioritize building an active presence on platforms like LinkedIn, Instagram, and YouTube, as these channels have proven effective in enhancing brand visibility and attracting clients. The strong correlation between engagement strategies and network expansion suggests that professionals should invest time in fostering genuine interactions and sharing valuable content to build credibility and trust with their audience. For organizations and educational institutions, this study highlights the need to incorporate social media marketing training into professional development programs, ensuring that professionals are equipped with the skills and knowledge required to leverage these platforms effectively. Furthermore, the significance of measuring marketing practices suggests that professionals must embrace data analytics to monitor and optimize their social media efforts continually. This study also contributes to the broader understanding of digital marketing practices, demonstrating that social media can be a powerful tool for personal branding and client acquisition when used strategically and intentionally.

Limitations

Although the research has provided a certain degree of knowledge, there are some limitations that should be made clear and which may influence the overall understanding of the outcomes. To begin with, the number of descriptive questionnaire / interviewees were adequate technique wise (15) and survey for scientific computation (213) as such

could be considered opposite to perform the qualitative insights yet it might not capture the population of freelance trainers, coaches and professionals in learning and development in the Indian population which is diverse. This limitation would probably hinder on the extent of generalizing the study and applicability of the conclusions to professionals in this field of practice. Further, the study gathered a lot of data through the use of self-reports, which has risk of several biases such as social desirability bias, where informants feel the need to report unrealistic practices such as the use of SMMP over and above its actual use in a bid to meet perceived standards. Additionally, while the qualitative interviews included were extensive, they were done remotely and mainly via descriptive questionnaire forms, which may have placed limitations on the engagement or the capture of non-verbal behavior that significantly influences the interpretation of lived experiences. Also, their studies was limited to only a few social media platforms e.g. LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook along with Youtube positioned as the platforms mainly being captured and being studied, which also focused the assumptions, considering that there are other sites that may be gaining relevance in the area of social media marketing practices or new emerging upcoming niche platforms such as Koo (Singh *et al.*, 2021) and Block-chain technology based future social media platform like DTube (Nagappa, 2023).

In addition, the cross-sectional nature of this study implies that it only provides a viewpoint at a specific time frame, and therefore understanding the changing and ongoing process of SMMP and its impact on brand visibility and client inquiries is challenging. The effectiveness of the present findings could also be hampered by the future emerging

trends in social media algorithms and policies, as the best practices that work today may not work in the next year as the technology is changing very fast. Finally, although most studies and the investigation as well were carried out with a firm focus on the Indian context, this implies, there are cultural, economic and market-specific characteristics of the Indian region that may not hold for other freelance trainers, coaches and learning & developments professionals market in other countries. At the same time the study focused mostly on the already in use platforms till now by the freelance trainers, coaches and learning & development (L&D) professionals in India. This in turn raises the issue of how these limitations could be overcome in future studies, for instance, by increasing the size of the sample under study or its diversity, and building in longitudinal design in order to capture the changes in practices over time, as well as increasing the number of social networks investigated in relation to SMMP.

Recommendations for Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights, it also opens avenues for future research. One recommendation is to expand the scope of the study to include a more diverse sample of freelance professionals from different industries and geographical regions, as this would provide a broader understanding of how social media marketing practices vary across various types of professionals' contexts. Additionally, future research could explore the long-term impact of social media marketing on client retention and sustained professional growth, as this study primarily focused on the immediate effects of these practices. Another area worth exploring is the role of emerging social media platforms, such as Koo (Singh *et al.*, 2021) and Block-chain based video

distribution social platform like DTube (Nagappa, 2023), in influencing brand visibility and client acquisition, as these platforms have gained significant traction in recent years. Researchers could also investigate the effectiveness of specific engagement tactics, such as live streaming, webinars, or influencer collaborations, to determine which strategies yield the highest return on investment for freelance professionals. Lastly, a longitudinal study examining how social media marketing practices evolve over time would provide valuable insights into the adaptability and sustainability of these strategies in a rapidly changing digital landscape.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated the significant impact that social media marketing practices (SMMP) have on the professional growth and success of freelance trainers, coaches and learning & development (L&D) professionals. By adopting a strategic and data-driven approach, these professionals can leverage social media platforms to enhance brand visibility, expand their networks, and attract potential clients. The findings underscore the importance of engagement strategies, content planning, and performance measurement in achieving marketing effectiveness. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, it is essential for professionals to remain adaptable and continuously refine their social media strategies to stay relevant and competitive. Ultimately, this research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on digital marketing practices, offering practical insights and recommendations that can help freelance professionals

maximize the benefits of social media marketing in their pursuit of sustained growth and success.

APPENDIX A
SURVEY COVER LETTER

Dear Participant,

Greetings, I am Amitabh Kumar, an ICF PCC Executive Coach and Facilitator with more than 2 decades of experience and a Doctoral Research Scholar with Swiss School of Business Management, Geneva.

I extend this invitation for you to take part in my research study titled "**Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing Practices for Freelance Trainers, Coaches and L&D Professionals in India**". Your participation in completing this survey is pivotal for the advancement of my research. Rest assured, the survey is entirely anonymous and will take approximately 10 minutes of your time.

All data collected will be used exclusively for research purpose only ensuring strict confidentiality and anonymity. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you have the option to withdraw at any point during the survey. I genuinely appreciate your time and participation.

Thank you for your time and inputs!

Regards,

Amitabh Kumar | +91 9958592758 | amitabh@ssbm.ch

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your input is valuable to our research.

Participants' Rights: As a participant in this research, you have the following rights:

1. Voluntary Participation: Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the questionnaire at any time without providing a reason.
2. Confidentiality: Your responses will be anonymized, and no personally identifiable information will be associated with your answers.
3. Privacy: We will ensure that your data is stored securely and that only authorized research team members have access to the collected information.
4. Informed Consent: By proceeding with this questionnaire, you are indicating your informed consent to participate in the research. Your consent signifies that you have read and understood this informed consent statement.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research or the informed consent statement, please do not hesitate to contact us at amitabh@ssbm.ch or ami216@gmail.com

My sincere Gratitude for spending your valuable time for this research!

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Dear Participant,

Greetings, I am Amitabh Kumar, a Doctoral Research Scholar with Swiss School of Business Management, Geneva.

I extend this invitation for you to take part in my research study titled "**Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing Practices for Freelance Trainers, Coaches and L&D Professionals in India**". Your participation in completing this study is pivotal for the advancement of my research. Rest assured, the study/interview is entirely anonymous and will take approximately 30-60 minutes of your time.

All data collected will be used exclusively for research purpose only ensuring strict confidentiality and anonymity. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you have the option to withdraw at any point during the survey. I genuinely appreciate your time and participation.

Thank you for your time and inputs!

Regards,

Amitabh Kumar | +91 9958592758 | amitabh@ssbm.ch

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