

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING GIG ECONOMY WORKERS: A FACTOR ANALYSIS APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of the gig economy has changed labour participation, especially the ones operated on the digital platform whose main communication and marketing channel is the social media. This study discusses the most important variables affecting the use of social media among gig workers in Amritsar and its environs as it applies to people who work in Indian startups that include Swiggy, Zomato, Ola, and Uber. A quantitative exploratory research design was adopted and 200 active gig workers were interviewed by use of a structured questionnaire. Based on the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), five dimensions of engagement were found, namely Content Relevance and Personalization, Community Building and Peer Support, Trust and Platform Credibility, Rewards and Incentives, and Two-Way Communication and Feedback. All these factors accounted 83 percent of the total variance and the values of Cronbach alpha were higher than 0.78, which is high reliability. The results show that gig workers are the most sensitive to personalized, open, and community-based social media content, and reward-based and interactive communication helps increase engagement. The study would add to the body of rapidly increasing literature on digital marketing in the gig economy because it would present an empirically tested framework, oriented toward the Indian context. It is also a sensible guide to platform makers and marketers as to how to create effective, trust based and participative social media strategies in order to ensure long term worker engagement.

Keywords: gig economy, Digital Marketing, Peer Support

INTRODUCTION

The world has experienced a radical shift of the global labour force fuelled by the blistering development of digital hubs and the form of the gig economy. Gig work, which is flexible, task-oriented, and independent, has transformed the traditional concept of employment and relational labour (Duggan, McDonnell, and Sherman, 2025). The examples of platforms like Uber, Ola, Swiggy, and Upwork show how these platforms have transformed the world through matching millions of freelancers and independent contractors with various industries. As Lankanath (2025) explains, the gig economy is a new frontier in the human resource and the marketing managerial field, where the classical boundaries of organizations are becoming unclear and digital interaction is being chosen as a key routine towards sustainability and retention of workers.

As increasingly more gig workers turn to using social media to locate opportunities, socialize, and develop their professional identities, social media marketing has turned into a very important way to engage and communicate (Rahad, 2025). Social media has turned into an important tool of brands and digital platforms that no longer simply advertise but are used to build relationships and community among dispersed and heterogeneous gig workers. Gonzalez and Parella Rubio (2025) discovered that digital communication platforms act as informational and social platforms through which gig workers advance collective identities,

share their experience and build trust. These relations conflict in terms of employment communication with digital marketing, and it makes engagement strategies in social media one of the key factors of worker loyalty and promotion.

Considering platform capitalism, social media marketing is located not only in its validity as an advertising tool but is also a social infrastructure, through which belonging and participation are possible (Pasetti, Celoria, Iazzolino, and Rakowska, 2026). Since gig workers tend to be precarious, lonely and have no institutional support base, online space has to allow an emotional contact, authenticity, and transparency to maintain engagement (Peterlongo, 2025). As mentioned by Athar, Azmi and Reza (2025), engagement in the gig economy highly relies on the perception of fairness, inclusivity, and recognition, which can be well communicated in terms of the interactive social media. These results emphasize the fact that the involvement in the gig economy is not only motivated economically but also psychologically and socially and is developed through cyber communication.

Recent research also indicates that the social media activity is a multidimensional construct that involves personalization, trust, community, incentives, and two-way communication. According to Den Herder, Westaway, and Arguile (2025), digital communities that are supported by similar experiences are more engaging through the development of social capital, mutual support, and enhanced levels of satisfaction. In the same line the appearance of emotional consumption in online communities (Natasha, 2025) also showed that affective interactions led to individuals to engage better than transactional marketing appeals. These observations demonstrate that social and emotional issues are important in determining how gig workers will respond to digital marketing content.

Although there is an increasing interest in the topic of gig work and even digital marketing, the gap in research still exists regarding the background reasons to encourage social media usage amongst workers of the gig economy. Although the general body of literature on the topic of digital marketing and consumer interactions is comprehensive, there is little literature that concentrates on empirical research on gig workers as a particular group (Lin and Lu, 2025). The majority of the current studies have investigated consumer behaviour or organizational communication without considering the aspect that gig workers can be simultaneously both an audience and producers of digital content (Rahmatika and Rumangkit, 2025). Moreover, there have been few quantitative analyses in order to statistically determine and confirm the latent constructs that conceptualize the social media engagement in this distinct area of labor segment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the most transformative labour phenomena in the 21st century is the gig economy, which has overturned the connections between the concepts of work, technology, and social interactions. The gig economy, because of its flexibility, independence, and tasks, is mainly based on digital platforms that link workers with temporary opportunities (Duggan, McDonnell, and Sherman, 2025). Such transformation has not only transformed the labour relations but also transformed the communication and marketing organizational practices of the organization to the workers. With the growing mobility, autonomy, and digital connectivity of gig workers, social media marketing has turned into an essential avenue of platforms and brands wanting to tap into them (Sharma and Longani, 2025). Social media offers a valuable chance to establish loyalty and trust in companies by the gig workers and at the same time influence their perception of brand credibility and belonging to the community.

The adoption of social media as a communication platform to a strategic marketing platform has made it the centre of engagement practice in the gig economy. Rahad (2025) considers social media interaction among people who work on gig to promote professional growth as well as psychological attachment with such employees and provide them with a recognition they may not necessarily receive in traditional employment system. Social media platforms like Uber, Fiverr and Upwork are not only used to spread knowledge, but they also provide interactive experiences between the workers (to exchange experience, updates, and engage in digital communities). Natasha (2025) characterized this relationship as a type of emotional consumption, in which the interactions of social media between gig workers are motivated by stronger needs in terms of identity confirmation, association, and belonging. In the case of these workers, the only motivation of participation in online communities is no longer associated with transactional motivations but emotional and social gratifications.

Researchers have singled out some dimensions that support the interaction of gig workers in social media marketing. The former is content relevance and personalization, which is the extent of the suitability of content to the particular professional and emotional requirements of employees. As Mansour and Vadell (2024) stressed, high levels of credibility and motivation are associated with personalized and relatable content on social media, provided that it presents the truth about such phenomena as freelancing and platform-based work. Lankanath (2025) also proposed that digital communication that resonates with the occupational issues and ambitions is more effective in getting gig workers to take notice of the marketing information, and they urged the marketing team to use common language on the basis of their lived experiences.

The second important dimension is community building which is also core to the creation of the sense of belonging and support among the digital environments. Den Herder, Westaway and Arguile (2025) discovered that sites that enable the formation of online communities amongst gig workers, allow the development of a sense of unity and solidarity. Equally, Gonzalez and Parella Rubio (2025) discovered that the digital entrepreneurship among independent and immigrant workers will tend to flourish in the social networks set-ups which offer networking, sharing of resources as well as emotional affirmation. These results indicate that community based social media programs have an effect of increasing interaction by turning isolated employees into participants of supportive virtual communities.

Another essential precondition of engagement is the trustfulness and believability of the content on the social media. Since gig workers do not receive the traditional employment security, they tend to have a weak trust towards online platforms. As noted by Della Puppa, Dhar and Montagna (2025), social media campaign communication and authenticity would greatly increase the confidence and commitment of workers. Having a brand or platform seen as credible by workers increases their engagement, sharing of content, and online promotion. This fits the findings of Rahad (2025) who concludes that mutual communication and open messages will lower the levels of skepticism and create more emotional links between platforms and workers.

The other issue that affects engagement is rewards and incentives. The participation rates can be increased significantly with the use of gamified reward systems, referral bonuses, and campaigns of recognition among the mass. According to Sharma and Longani (2025), marketing programs that are built on the concept of rewards among gig workers lead to motivation as engagement is associated with a physical reward. In the same spirit, Rabban and Singh (2025) underscored recognition schemes like being featured on the social media as the top performers on a social, which creates a long-term loyalty and reminds the workers of

being associated with a platform. These implications emphasize the notion that extrinsic motivators used in combination with significant digital interactions can enhance social media engagement.

Lastly, social media engagement allows a two-way communication and feedback loop that is part and parcel of maintaining sustainability. As Rahad (2025) showed, organizations that are responsive to the comments and suggestions stated by gig workers through the social media platforms be sure to foster the feeling of respect, transparency, and inclusion. These participatory paradigms make workers part of the brand conversation and not audiences. Such mutual interaction is consistent with the principles of modern relationship marketing and implies that the interaction has the highest quality when the communication is two-way.

This study has a theoretical basis based on social exchange theory (SET) and Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). According to SET, social relationships are established on the reciprocal basis, which means that, gig workers use social media marketing in those moments, when they see personal or professional returns (Lankanath, 2025). UGT however defines engagement as a goal led action in which people utilize media to meet certain needs like the need to get information, engaging with others and finding identity (Natasha, 2025). Collectively, these theories indicate that these gig workers are interested in social media marketing not only because of the rational (motivated by reward) but also emotional (need to belong and express oneself) reasons.

Although there has been a big development in the theoretical front, there are loopholes in terms of empirical validation of these constructs. Moreover, the tendency of the research has traditionally been determined towards consumers, which disregards the hybrid character of gig workers as sources of content and brand promoters in the online environment (Duggan et al., 2025). This study aims to fill these knowledge gaps through the use of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) as a method of empirically establishing the latent dimensions that affect the use of social media marketing among gig workers.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a quantitative and exploratory research design aimed at establishing the main factors to understand social media marketing engagement among Indian workers in the gig economy. The study was carried out in the Amritsar city and its surrounding districts, where the gig-based jobs have increased significantly because of the swift expansion of the Indian digital service companies, including the Swiggy, Zomato, and Rapido. These platforms depend on social media to a great extent when it comes to their marketing, recruitment, and communication with their partners, so the region is the right context to explore the effects of social media marketing strategies on attracting gig workers.

The sample size of the study involved active gig economy workers who have been linked with at least one of the digital service platforms not less than six months. Employees were comprised of food delivery partners, cab drivers, freelance workers, and on-demand workers who had enrolled in Indian gig platforms. The population was chosen due to the reason that they form a widening part of the digital pool of Indians because they work mostly on their mobile platforms and rely on social media as a way of updating, receiving incentives and interacting with businesses. To achieve the respondents meeting the inclusion criteria (i.e., being currently deployed by an online gig platform, living in Amritsar or close areas (within the distance of 50 km)) and actively using social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, or WhatsApp to conduct a work-related interaction and brand engagement.

A structured questionnaire that was offered online and after the survey period were used to collect data between May and July 2025. The online survey was distributed via WhatsApp groups and Facebook groups of gig workers in Amritsar, and field enumerators helped in getting physical responses around restaurants, cab stands, and delivery facilities. Two hundred and fifty questionnaires were sent whereby 200, valid responses were obtained after filtering to screen out incomplete and poor responses. Overall, the survey that was developed in accordance with the previous research on social media use and gig work (Mansour and Vadell, 2024; Rahad, 2025; Sharma and Longani, 2025), included two parts. The former collected demographic information including age, gender, education, form of gig work, and experience biting into digital platforms. The second one was a measure of five constructs of social media marketing tactics which include content relevance and personalization, community building, and peer support, trust and platform credibility, rewards and incentives and two-way communication and feedback. Every construct (15 in total) consisted of three statements that constituted the 15-item Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Samples were as follows: The social media posts of my platform reflect my work experience and I trust the information provided by the official pages of my platform.

The reliability and validity were determined beforehand. Internal consistency was confirmed based on the value of Cronbach alpha (0.78-0.89) whereas KMO measure (0.82) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($\chi^2 = 624.37$, $p < 0.001$) demonstrated the data were adequate to use with Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). Principal Component Analysis and Rotation Varimax were used to retain the five factors that had an eigenvalue that exceeded 1.0; the fit relates the total variance that was good (72.8) establishing a connection with the theoretical framework.

ANALYSIS

The collected data was analysed using SPSS. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was applied to uncover the dimensions which influence the gig worker's engagements with social media marketing strategies in Amritsar and nearby areas. The analysis was performed using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation.

The adequacy of Sample was confirmed by a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.82 and a significant Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($\chi^2 = 624.37$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that the data were suitable for factor analysis. Items with factor loadings above 0.60 were retained to ensure construct reliability and discriminant validity.

Table 1: Rotated Component Matrix (Factor Loadings)

Study Variables	Factor 1(Content Relevance & Personalization)	Factor 2(Community Building & Peer Support)	Factor 3(Trust & Platform Credibility)	Factor 4(Rewards & Incentives)	Factor 5(Two-Way Communication & Feedback)
Social media ads reflect my work interests and lifestyle.	0.83				
Posts from platforms feel tailored to gig workers.	0.79				
Brand content helps me learn	0.75				

Study Variables	Factor 1(Content Relevance & Personalization)	Factor 2(Community Building & Peer Support)	Factor 3(Trust & Platform Credibility)	Factor 4(Rewards & Incentives)	Factor 5(Two-Way Communication & Feedback)
or improve my gigs.					
I engage more when gig peers are active on the page.		0.82			
Online groups help me feel part of a professional community.		0.77			
I share posts that resonate with other gig workers.		0.72			
I trust brand messages shared on official pages.			0.81		
Transparency in social media campaigns builds trust.			0.78		
I rely on verified pages before engaging.			0.74		
I engage more with posts offering incentives or rewards.				0.85	
Discounts or reward campaigns increase participation.				0.82	
Contests or challenges motivate engagement.				0.78	
I like when platforms					0.80

Study Variables	Factor 1(Content Relevance & Personalization)	Factor 2(Community Building & Peer Support)	Factor 3(Trust & Platform Credibility)	Factor 4(Rewards & Incentives)	Factor 5(Two-Way Communication & Feedback)
respond to my comments.					
Feedback on posts improves my perception of the brand.					0.77
Interactive Q&A sessions enhance engagement.					0.75

The findings revealed five dimensions that explained the social media use amongst gig workers. The loadings of Content Relevance and Personalization (F1) were the highest (0.75-0.83), which implies that the engagement is high with the assumption that the content is relevant to the professional interests and experiences of workers. The Community Building and Peer Support (F2) with the measure of 0.72-0.82 indicated the level of worth that workers have towards online communities that address the need to interact and give accommodating support to each other. Trust and Platform Credibility (F3) (0.74-0.81) emphasized how transparency and confirmed communication of platforms such as Swiggy, Zomato, and Ola assisted in building engagement. Rewards and Incentives (F4) (0.78-0.85) affirmed rewards-based content like recognition and competitions encourage participation. Lastly, Two-Way Communication and Feedback (F5) (0.75-0.80) focused on the idea of interactive and responsive communication to increase trust, and satisfaction. Cronbach alpha values of all the factors were more than 0.78 which ensured reliability was good and none of the constructs were crossover.

Table 2: Total Variance Explained

Factor	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative Variance (%)
F1: Content Relevance & Personalization	4.28	28.5	28.5
F2: Community Building & Peer Support	2.81	18.7	47.2
F3: Trust & Platform Credibility	2.16	14.4	61.6
F4: Rewards & Incentives	1.79	11.9	73.5
F5: Two-Way Communication & Feedback	1.42	9.5	83.0

The five factors that were obtained fit 83.0 percent of the total variance, which is more than the suggested 60 percent of the minimum in human behaviour research (Hair et al., 2020). The content Relevance and Personalization, which consisted of the majority of the research, explained 28.5 percent of variance in its own, which indicates that the willingness of the gig

workers to engage relies mostly on the relevance and informative content of social media based on their daily work. The other three elements: community building, trust, incentives, and feedback explained more than half of the variance, which proves that the engagement is not only transactional but also highly relational and participatory.

Hence, the EFA findings proved that social media usage among gig members is conditioned by five different and connected, though not identical dimensions. The process of engagement is motivated mostly by personalized, community based and credible communication, encouraged by reward systems and interactive feedback. These results indicate that Indian startups such as Swiggy, Zomato, and Ola may use workforce relations to enhance by developing social media tactics that provide an equal emphasis on personal relevance, recognition, and trust-building.

DISCUSSIONS

The results give a clear idea of the role that the marketing strategies used on the social media have on the engagement of gig economy workers in Amritsar and the surrounding areas. Five dimensions were established, as determined using the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), they include Content Relevance and Personalization, Community Building and Peer Support, Trust and Platform Credibility, Rewards and Incentives, and Two-Way Communication and Feedback. The combination of these factors could account to 83 percent of the entire variance in the behaviour of engagement. The findings confirm the theoretical framework that was created on the basis of previous studies (Mansour and Vadell, 2024; Rahad, 2025; Sharma and Longani, 2025) and offer novel knowledge related to the Indian gig labour that is utilized by services such as Swiggy, Zomato, Ola, and Uber.

By the way, the highest factor loading scores were used with the first factor Content Relevance and Personalization (0.75-0.83). It means that gig workers react to the content of social media that matches their professional needs, local culture, and work experience of every day. This finding confirms the perception by Mansour and Vadell (2024) that digital marketing strategies are supposed to be flexible and situational. Among gig workers in India, content stressing on the notion of success, incentives, and relatable experiences seems to have the most direct emotional impact. The second driver is Community Building and Peer Support which highlights the fact that motivation and engagement can be boosted through social interaction in the digital platforms. Participants of online peer groups, i.e. WhatsApp and Facebook communities of delivery or ride-hailing partners, were found to be more satisfied and connected. This observation aligns with the study of Gonzalez and Parella Rubio (2025), who observed that online communities create a sense of belonging and alleviate social isolation that follows independent work. Establishing positive peer communities can hence be an effective activity approach of gig platforms. And, the third factor, Trust and Platform Credibility, supports the latter importance of transparency and consistency of communication again. The high loading (0.74-0.81) related to such items as "Transparency in campaigns builds trust" reveals that gig workers are apprehensive and use confirmed and authentic communication before involving others. This is a similar case as Della Puppa, Dhar, and Montagna (2025) suggested that the correlation between the way workers think about digital platforms and their engagement behaviour is played through the mediating factor of trust. To achieve long-term credibility, a good communication channel should be maintained and the message should be clear. The fourth measure, reactivities and Incentives indicated that reward-based campaign is a potent tool of participation. In high loadings (0.78-0.85), it is possible to note the significant increase in the level of engagement due to digital recognition, gamified rewards, and bonuses. This observation can confirm Sharma and Longani (2025)

who have noted that recognition and financial rewards can be used to retain flexible workers and increase their involvement in digital activities.

Lastly, a vital engagement dimension became Two-Way Communication and Feedback. Employees stated that it was a better experience to receive immediate feedback on the feedback on their comments, discussions, and suggestions they were recognized. These outcomes align with the information stated by Rahad (2025) who mentioned that interactive communication models would promote the development of loyalty and commitment in the long term among gig workers. Successful communication in the social networks can, therefore, turn employees into passive receivers of information to the proactive participants and preachers.

On the whole, the findings suggest that social media use amongst the Indian gig workers is characterized by emotional, social, and pragmatic factors. It is not limited to being exposed to promotional information and it relies on real relationships, peer networks and open interaction. This paper then presents empirical evidence that effective marketing in the gig economy must be multifactorial in the sense that it is implemented in a combination of personalization, community engagement and building of trust.

CONCLUSION

This study adds to the literature regarding digital marketing and involvement in the gig economy by confirming and affirming that there are five significant factors that contribute to the involvement of gig workers towards social media marketing. These aspects are content relevance, community support, trust, incentives and feedback. The combination of the two comprises a holistic system of how gig workers interpret and react to digital platforms, including Swiggy, Zomato or Ola, social media tactics.

The results indicate that less the gig workers are merely responding to the marketing exposure and more of a process that is informed by social connection, authenticity and mutual recognition. To the practitioners, this implies that the platforms ought to create social media campaigns that focus on relevance, transparency, and two-way communication. Engagement can also be enhanced and brand loyalty maintained through recognition programs and online peer groups among gig workers.

Theoretically, the present study extends the existing models of engagement that have been proved true in the Indian gig economy environment since the latter is so diverse with respect to cultural and technological aspects. It was also appropriate to use the Exploratory Factor Analysis because the measurement scales were maneuverer to suit a new population so that the aspect of a specific context could be determined.

There are some limitations to the study. The study also did not extend to other areas: as it was based in Amritsar and neighbouring areas only. In addition, EFA, which determines but does not establish factor structures, was used in the study. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) or Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) could be further used in future studies to determine the validity of the model in other territories or with different forms of gig work, including delivery, ride-hailing, or freelancing. Overall, this study has shown that relevant, credible, community, and dialogue represent the four key aspects toward successful social media marketing in the gig economy. By making marketing communication resonate with the work experiences of the gig workers, online platforms will be able to establish long-term relationships and turn social media into a participative, empowering, and trusting platform.

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