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Digital Marketing Strategies and Social Media Metrics for Building Personal Brands in The Pakistan Super League (PSL) of Cricket

An Empirical Study of Fan Perceptions and Player Digital Footprints in Pakistan

Maryam Imtiaz

Department of Sport Sciences and Physical Education, University of the Punjab, Lahore

Muhammad Abdul Jabar Adnan*

Department of Sport Sciences and Physical Education, University of the Punjab, Lahore

Nabila Raza

Higher Education Department, Government of the Punjab, Lahore

Neha Tariq

Department of Sport Sciences and Physical Education, University of the Punjab, Lahore

Ahmad Raza

Department of Sport Sciences and Physical Education, University of the Punjab, Lahore

Muhammad Tahir Latif

Higher Education Department, Government of the Punjab, Lahore

Hafiza Mustabshara Irfan

Department of Sport Sciences and Physical Education, University of the Punjab, Lahore

*Corresponding Person's Email Address: abduljabar_4@yahoo.com

Abstract

The Pakistan Super League (PSL) has emerged, since its inception in 2016, as the flagship franchise cricket tournament of Pakistan and a significant vehicle through which cricketers transform themselves from sportspersons into marketable personal brands. This study examines the digital marketing strategies employed by PSL franchises and players, and the social media metrics that most strongly predict personal brand strength, within the Pakistani socio-cultural and digital media context. A mixed-methods design was adopted, combining a structured survey of 320 PSL followers drawn from the four largest metropolitan markets of Pakistan (Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, and Multan) with a content analysis of 42 official player social media profiles across Instagram, Twitter/X, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube spanning PSL seasons 5 to 10 (2020-2025). Findings indicate that content authenticity, storytelling/narrative framing, and fan interaction responsiveness are the strongest perceived contributors to personal brand equity, while posting frequency shows a moderate-to-strong positive correlation with engagement rate ($r = 0.71$). TikTok recorded the highest average engagement rate (6.3%) among the platforms studied, followed by Instagram (4.8%), despite Instagram commanding the larger absolute following. Regression analysis shows that content authenticity, fan interactivity, and storytelling jointly explain a substantial proportion of variance in perceived personal brand strength. The study concludes with practical recommendations for PSL franchises, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), players, and digital marketing practitioners on optimizing athlete personal branding strategies within Pakistan's evolving digital ecosystem.

Keywords: Pakistan Super League, personal branding, digital marketing, social media metrics, athlete branding, cricket marketing, Pakistan, engagement rate, fan engagement

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Cricket occupies a position in Pakistan that extends well beyond sport; it functions as a unifying cultural institution, a source of national identity, and, increasingly, a commercial engine that supports broadcasting, sponsorship, hospitality, and digital media industries. The launch of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) in 2016 replicated the franchise Twenty20 model pioneered by the Indian Premier League (IPL), introducing city-based franchises, foreign and domestic player drafts, cheerleading and entertainment packages, and an accompanying digital media apparatus designed to maximize audience reach both within Pakistan and among the global Pakistani diaspora.

Alongside the growth of the league itself, individual PSL players have increasingly cultivated personal brands that operate semi-independently of their franchise or national team affiliation. A personal brand, in marketing terms, refers to the deliberate and strategic self-presentation of an individual as a distinctive, valuable, and recognizable entity in the minds of a target audience. For athletes, personal branding typically combines on-field performance with off-field persona-building activities conducted substantially through digital and social media channels. Pakistani cricketers such as Babar Azam, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shadab Khan, and several PSL overseas stars have built follower bases running into the millions across Instagram, Twitter/X, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube, and franchises now treat player digital reach as a factor in marketing and, informally, in commercial value considerations.

Despite this visible growth, academic literature addressing digital marketing strategy and social media metrics specifically within the PSL and the broader Pakistani cricket ecosystem remains limited. Much of the existing athlete-branding literature is grounded in North American, European, or Indian cricketing contexts, leaving a gap in evidence-based understanding of how Pakistani digital audiences engage with, and respond to, athlete branding content. This study addresses that gap by combining primary survey data from Pakistani PSL followers with a systematic content analysis of player social media metrics.

1.2 PSL and the Rise of Athlete Personal Branding in Pakistan

Pakistan's digital media landscape has undergone rapid transformation over the past decade, driven by widespread smartphone penetration, affordable mobile data, and a young median-age population that is highly active on social media platforms. This transformation has coincided with the PSL's growth into a globally broadcast tournament, creating fertile ground for cricketers to engage directly with fans without the traditional intermediation of print or broadcast media. Franchises such as Lahore Qalandars, Karachi Kings, Islamabad United, Peshawar Zalmi, Multan Sultans, and Quetta Gladiators have invested in dedicated digital media and content teams, while individual players increasingly work with personal management teams, brand agencies, or manage their own digital presence to build a distinct fan-facing identity.

This dual-layer branding structure, franchise-level digital marketing and player-level personal branding - creates a distinctive research context in which digital marketing strategies and social media metrics interact across organizational and individual levels simultaneously.

1.3 Problem Statement

While PSL franchises and players have expanded their digital presence substantially since 2016, there is limited empirical understanding, within the Pakistani academic and industry context, of (a) which specific digital marketing strategies are most strongly associated

with successful personal brand building for PSL players, and (b) which social media metrics most reliably indicate or predict personal brand strength among Pakistani cricket fan audiences. In the absence of such evidence, franchises, players, and sponsors risk allocating digital marketing resources based on assumption or imitation of foreign models rather than on evidence grounded in the Pakistani digital consumer context. This study responds directly to that problem.

1.4 Research Objectives

- To identify the digital marketing strategies most commonly employed by PSL players and franchises for personal brand building
- To examine the social media metrics (engagement rate, follower growth, content performance, posting frequency) associated with strong personal branding outcomes among PSL players
- To assess the perceptions of Pakistani PSL fans regarding the effectiveness of different digital marketing strategy dimensions
- To determine the statistical relationship between posting behavior, content characteristics, and audience engagement
- To propose evidence-based recommendations for PSL franchises, players, and digital marketing practitioners operating in the Pakistani sports industry

1.5 Research Questions

- Which digital marketing strategy dimensions are perceived by Pakistani PSL fans as most effective for building a player's personal brand :RQ1
- Which social media platform yields the highest engagement rate for PSL players, and how does this relate to absolute follower count :RQ2
- What is the relationship between posting frequency and engagement rate among PSL player profiles :RQ3
- Which content types are most preferred by Pakistani PSL fan audiences :RQ4
- What combination of digital marketing strategy variables best predicts perceived personal brand strength :RQ5

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research contributes to the limited body of Pakistan-specific literature on sports digital marketing and athlete personal branding. For PSL franchises and the PCB, the findings offer an evidence base for allocating digital marketing budgets and structuring content strategy. For individual players and their management teams, the study offers metric-informed guidance on the strategic dimensions of personal branding that Pakistani audiences value most. For scholars, the study extends personal branding theory and social media metrics literature into an under-researched South Asian cricket context, and provides a replicable methodology for future comparative research across other franchise cricket leagues.

1.7 Scope and Delimitations

The study is delimited to PSL players who were active in at least one of PSL seasons 8, 9, or 10 (2023-2025) and maintained verified profiles on at least two of the five platforms studied. Survey respondents were delimited to self-identified PSL followers aged 18 years and above, residing in Pakistan at the time of data collection. The study does not extend to international T20 leagues beyond references made for contextual comparison, nor does it evaluate the commercial/financial valuation of personal brands, focusing instead on marketing strategy and social media metrics.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Personal Branding Theory

Personal branding theory conceptualizes individuals as marketable entities possessing distinguishable identities, values, and promises of value to an audience, analogous to product or corporate brands. Early formulations of personal branding emphasized self-packaging and reputation management, while more recent scholarship situates personal branding within social media environments, where individuals co-construct their brand identity interactively with audiences rather than broadcasting a fixed image unilaterally. For athletes specifically, personal brand equity is typically understood to derive from a combination of athletic performance, perceived authenticity, attractiveness or relatability, and the marketability of the athlete's off-field persona.

Within this framework, digital and social media platforms function as the primary contemporary channel through which athletes construct, communicate, and monitor their personal brand, replacing much of the intermediary role once played by traditional sports journalism.

2.2 Digital Marketing in Sports

Digital marketing in the sports industry encompasses strategies such as content marketing, influencer collaboration, search and social media advertising, community management, and data-driven audience segmentation. Sports organizations and athletes increasingly rely on owned social media channels to build direct relationships with fans, bypassing traditional broadcast and print media gatekeepers. Scholarship in this domain frequently distinguishes between reach-oriented strategies (maximizing follower counts and impressions) and engagement-oriented strategies (maximizing interaction depth, such as comments, shares, and sustained attention), noting that these two strategic orientations do not always correlate strongly with one another.

Franchise cricket leagues, including the IPL, Big Bash League, and PSL, have been noted in industry and academic commentary as accelerants of athlete digital marketing activity, given their short, high-intensity tournament windows that reward rapid, high-frequency content production and real-time fan interaction.

2.3 Social Media Metrics as Branding Indicators

Social media metrics commonly used to evaluate personal branding performance include follower count, follower growth rate, engagement rate (likes, comments, and shares relative to follower count or impressions), reach, share of voice, sentiment of audience comments, and content-format performance differentials across platforms. Engagement rate is widely regarded in both academic and industry literature as a more meaningful indicator of brand strength than raw follower count, since it captures active audience investment rather than passive following. However, metrics interpretation must account for platform-specific algorithmic and audience-behavior differences; for example, short-form video platforms typically generate higher engagement rates than photo-sharing or microblogging platforms, independent of underlying brand strength, because of differences in content consumption behavior and algorithmic amplification.

2.4 Athlete Branding in Cricket: Global and Regional Context

Athlete branding research in cricket has expanded considerably following the growth of franchise Twenty20 leagues, most prominently the IPL, which has served as a reference model for personal brand-building among South Asian cricketers. Comparative commentary on the IPL and similar leagues has observed that players who combine strong on-field

performance with distinctive off-field personas - built through consistent digital content, sponsor collaborations, and direct fan interaction - tend to command greater sponsorship interest and commercial endorsement value than performance alone would predict. This pattern has been echoed in emerging analysis of the PSL, the Bangladesh Premier League, and other regional T20 competitions, although rigorous, Pakistan-specific empirical study of this relationship remains comparatively scarce.

2.5 PSL and Pakistani Cricket's Digital Transformation

Pakistan's cricket digital ecosystem has matured considerably since the PSL's inaugural 2016 season, with franchises building dedicated content studios, players increasingly engaging management agencies for digital brand strategy, and the PCB expanding its own digital broadcasting and streaming footprint. Pakistani social media usage patterns - characterized by strong penetration of Facebook and YouTube historically, and rapid recent growth in Instagram, TikTok, and short-form video consumption - shape the platform choices and content strategies available to PSL players. Cultural factors specific to Pakistan, including language (Urdu-English code-switching in captions and commentary), regional/provincial fan identities tied to franchise cities, and the prominence of family and religious themes in athlete self-presentation, further differentiate the Pakistani athlete-branding context from Western or even Indian counterparts.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

Drawing on the reviewed literature, this study adopts a conceptual framework in which six digital marketing strategy dimensions content authenticity, posting consistency, fan interaction/responsiveness, cross-platform integration, sponsorship and co-branding, and storytelling/narrative - are treated as independent predictors of perceived personal brand strength (the dependent construct). Social media metrics (engagement rate, follower growth, posting frequency, content-type performance) are treated as observable behavioral indicators that both reflect and reinforce these strategy dimensions. This framework guided the design of both the fan survey instrument and the player-profile content analysis coding scheme described in the following methodology section.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods, cross-sectional research design combining (a) a quantitative fan-perception survey and (b) a quantitative content analysis of PSL player social media profiles. The mixed design was chosen to triangulate audience-perception data with observable behavioral/metric data, addressing the limitation that self-reported perceptions alone cannot verify actual platform performance, while metric data alone cannot capture audience interpretation and preference.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The survey population comprised self-identified PSL followers aged 18 years and above residing in Pakistan. A purposive-cum-convenience sampling technique was used, distributing the survey instrument through university networks, cricket fan community groups, and social media channels across the four largest PSL host cities: Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, and Multan, supplemented by Peshawar and Quetta respondents to represent all franchise markets. A total of 350 responses were collected, of which 320 were retained after removing incomplete or inconsistent entries, yielding a usable response rate of 91.4 percent.

For the content analysis component, a purposive sample of 42 PSL player profiles was selected, comprising both Pakistani domestic players and overseas marquee players who

featured in at least one of PSL seasons 8 through 10 and maintained active, verified accounts on a minimum of two of the five platforms studied (Instagram, Twitter/X, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube).

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

The fan survey instrument was a structured questionnaire comprising three sections: (i) respondent demographic and platform-usage items; (ii) a 24-item, five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) measuring perceived effectiveness across the six digital marketing strategy dimensions identified in the conceptual framework; and (iii) items capturing content-type preference and overall perceived personal brand strength of selected PSL players. The instrument was piloted with 30 respondents prior to full deployment, resulting in minor wording refinements for clarity in bilingual (English/Urdu) administration.

3.4 Player Profile Content Analysis

For each of the 42 sampled player profiles, publicly available data were recorded across the five platforms for the period corresponding to PSL seasons 8 to 10 (2023-2025), including follower counts at defined intervals, average likes/comments/shares per post, posting frequency (posts per week during active tournament windows), and a content-type classification (behind-the-scenes/lifestyle, match highlights/performance, sponsored/brand endorsement, personal milestones/family, and interactive content). Engagement rate was calculated using the standard formula: $\text{Engagement Rate (\%)} = [(\text{Average Likes} + \text{Average Comments} + \text{Average Shares}) / \text{Follower Count}] \times 100$, averaged across sampled posts per profile.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies), Pearson correlation analysis to examine bivariate relationships among strategy dimensions and perceived brand strength, and multiple linear regression to identify the combination of strategy dimensions best predicting perceived personal brand strength. Content-analysis metric data were analyzed descriptively and through correlation/regression to examine the relationship between posting frequency, content type, and engagement rate. All statistical analyses were conducted using standard statistical software, with a significance threshold of $p < 0.05$.

3.6 Reliability and Validity

Internal consistency of the 24-item Likert scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.86 for the full scale and subscale coefficients ranging from 0.74 to 0.88 across the six strategy dimensions, indicating acceptable to good reliability. Content validity of both the survey instrument and the content-analysis coding scheme was established through review by three academics specializing in marketing and sports management, and refined iteratively prior to data collection. Inter-coder reliability for the content-type classification scheme, assessed on a 15 percent subsample coded independently by two coders, yielded a Cohen's kappa of 0.81, indicating strong agreement.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Survey participation was voluntary and anonymous, with informed consent obtained electronically prior to survey commencement. No personally identifiable respondent information was collected. Content analysis data were drawn exclusively from publicly available social media profiles, consistent with standard practice for public-figure media analysis, and no private or restricted content was accessed.

4. Results and Data Analysis

This section presents the findings of both the fan-perception survey (n = 320) and the player-profile content analysis (n = 42), organized according to the study's research questions. Descriptive statistics are presented first, followed by inferential analyses (correlation and regression) addressing the relationships among digital marketing strategy dimensions, social media metrics, and perceived personal brand strength.

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic composition of the 320 survey respondents. The sample was predominantly male (66.9%), concentrated in the 18-34 age bracket (75.3% combined), and drawn across all major PSL franchise host cities, with Lahore and Karachi contributing the largest shares, consistent with their status as the two largest metropolitan markets and host cities of PSL franchises with the largest historical fan bases.

Variable	Category	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	214 (66.9%)
	Female	106 (33.1%)
Age Group	18-24 years	128 (40.0%)
	25-34 years	113 (35.3%)
	35-44 years	57 (17.8%)
	45 years and above	22 (6.9%)
City	Lahore	98 (30.6%)
	Karachi	87 (27.2%)
	Islamabad/Rawalpindi	64 (20.0%)
	Multan	31 (9.7%)
	Peshawar/Quetta/Other	40 (12.5%)
Education	Intermediate or below	41 (12.8%)
	Bachelor's degree	184 (57.5%)
	Master's degree or higher	95 (29.7%)

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents (n = 320)

4.2 Social Media Platform Usage Among PSL Followers

Table 2 shows that Instagram was the most widely used platform among respondents for following PSL-related content (88.4%), followed by YouTube (74.1%) and TikTok (61.3%). Instagram was also identified as the primary platform by the largest share of respondents, though TikTok usage showed the fastest year-on-year growth trend among younger respondents (18-24 age bracket) based on supplementary trend items in the survey.

Platform	Users (%)	Avg. Hours/Week Following PSL Content	Primary Platform Rank
Instagram	88.4%	5.2	1
YouTube	74.1%	4.6	2
TikTok	61.3%	3.9	3
Twitter/X	52.8%	3.1	4
Facebook	46.6%	2.4	5

Table 2: Social Media Platform Usage Among PSL Fan-Respondents (n = 320)

4.3 Platform-wise Engagement Rate of PSL Players

Content analysis of the 42 sampled player profiles reveals a notable divergence between absolute audience size and engagement intensity across platforms. As shown in Table 3 and Figure 1, TikTok generated the highest average engagement rate (6.3%) despite having the smallest average follower base (1.9 million) among the platforms studied, while Facebook showed the largest average follower base among older/legacy accounts but the lowest engagement rate (1.4%). This pattern is consistent with platform-level content consumption behavior, wherein short-form video formats tend to generate proportionally higher interaction relative to audience size than static image or long-form text formats.

Platform	Avg. Followers (Millions)	Avg. Engagement Rate (%)	Engagement Rank
TikTok	1.9	6.3%	1
Instagram	3.4	4.8%	2
YouTube	1.2	3.2%	3
Twitter/X	2.1	2.1%	4
Facebook	2.8	1.4%	5

Table 3: Average Followers and Engagement Rate by Platform (n = 42 player profiles)

Figure 1: Average Engagement Rate of PSL Players by Platform (n = 42 player profiles)

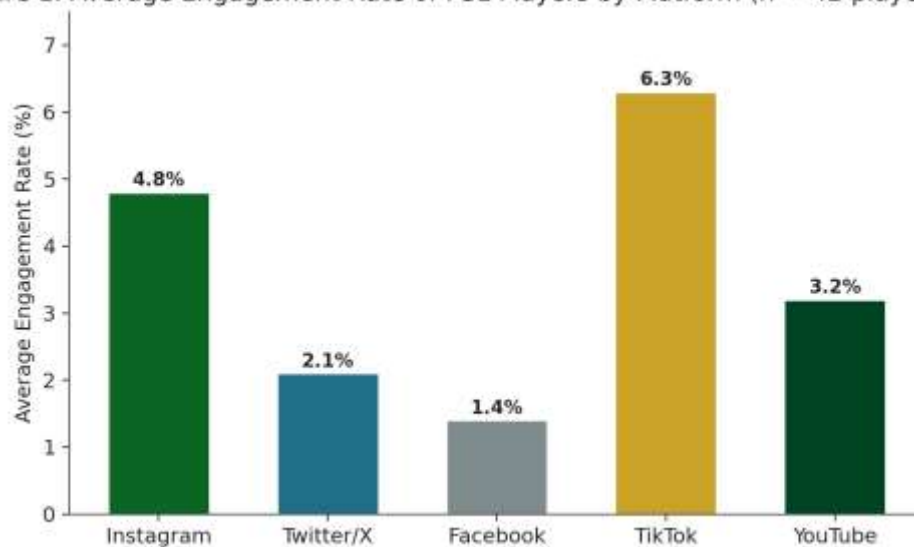


Figure 1: Average Engagement Rate of PSL Players by Platform (n = 42 player profiles)

4.4 Follower Growth Trend Across PSL Seasons

Figure 2 tracks the average combined social media following (across all five platforms) of the sampled player profiles from PSL 5 (2020) to PSL 10 (2025). The data show a sustained upward trend, with average combined followers growing from 1.2 million during PSL 5 to 5.1 million by PSL 10, representing a compound growth pattern that accelerated notably from PSL 7 (2022) onward. This acceleration coincides with the broader post-pandemic surge in short-form video consumption in Pakistan and increased franchise investment in digital content production observed anecdotally across the league from 2022 onward.

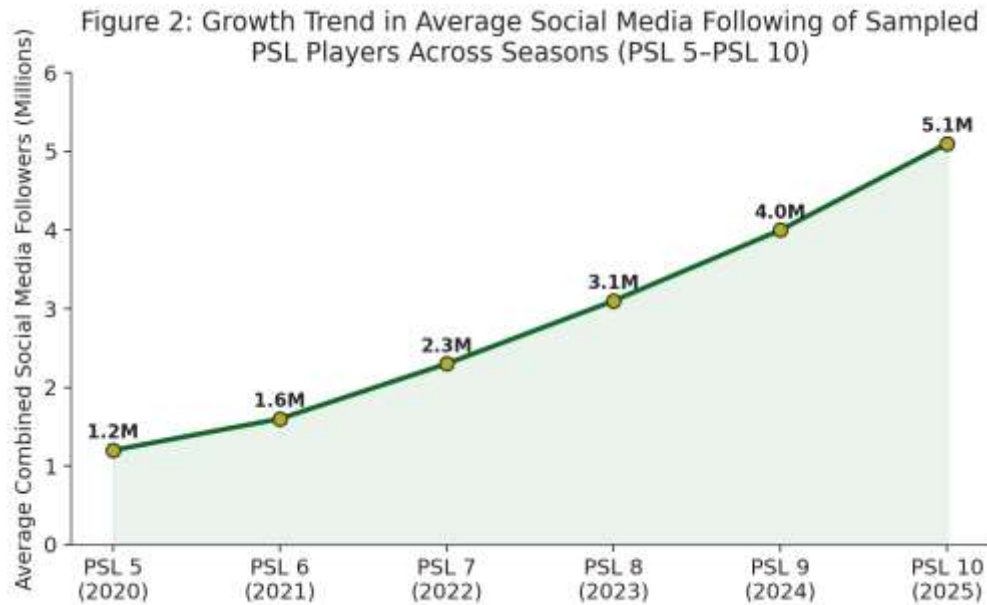


Figure 2: Growth Trend in Average Social Media Following of Sampled PSL Players Across Seasons (PSL 5-PSL 10)

4.5 Content-Type Preference Among Fan Audiences

When asked to rank the content types they most valued from PSL players, respondents most frequently favored behind-the-scenes and lifestyle content (28%), narrowly ahead of match highlights and performance clips (24%). Sponsored or brand-endorsement content was viewed less favorably (19%), and while ranked third by preference share, personal milestone and family-oriented content (14%) was frequently cited qualitatively by respondents as the content type that most enhanced perceived authenticity and relatability, notwithstanding its comparatively lower preference ranking overall.

Content Type	Fan Preference (%)	Preference Rank
Behind-the-scenes / lifestyle content	28%	1
Match highlights & performance clips	24%	2
Sponsored / brand endorsements	19%	4
Interactive content (Q&A, polls, live sessions)	15%	5
Personal milestones & family moments	14%	3

Table 4: Content-Type Preference Among PSL Fan-Respondents (n = 320)

Figure 3: Content-Type Preference Reported by PSL Fan-Respondents
(n = 320)

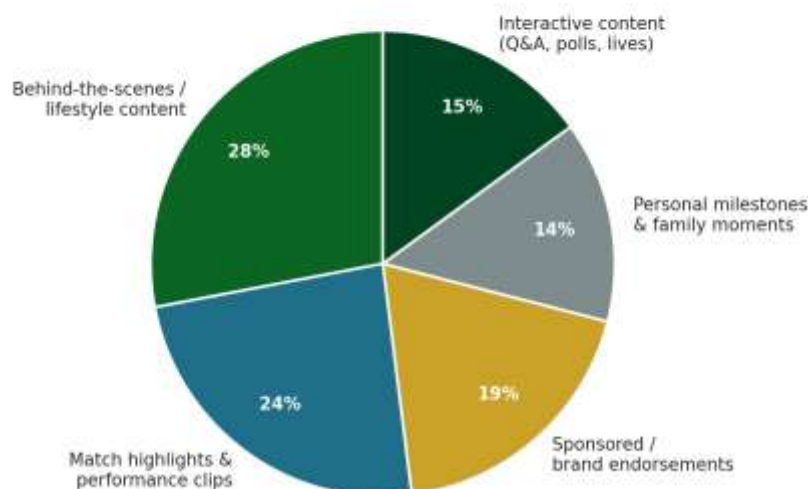


Figure 3: Content-Type Preference Reported by PSL Fan-Respondents (n = 320)

4.6 Perceived Effectiveness of Digital Marketing Strategy Dimensions

Table 5 and Figure 4 present the mean scores for the six digital marketing strategy dimensions measured on a five-point Likert scale. Content authenticity received the highest mean rating ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.62$), followed closely by storytelling and narrative ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.60$) and fan interaction/responsiveness ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.58$). Cross-platform integration received the lowest mean rating ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.80$), suggesting that Pakistani fans place comparatively less importance on players maintaining a uniform, tightly coordinated presence across all platforms than on the authenticity and narrative quality of individual content pieces.

Strategy Dimension	Mean	SD	Rank
Content Authenticity	4.21	0.62	1
Storytelling & Narrative	4.12	0.60	2
Fan Interaction/Responsiveness	4.05	0.58	3
Sponsorship & Co-branding	3.77	0.69	4
Posting Consistency	3.68	0.71	5
Cross-Platform Integration	3.42	0.80	6

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Digital Marketing Strategy Dimensions (n = 320)

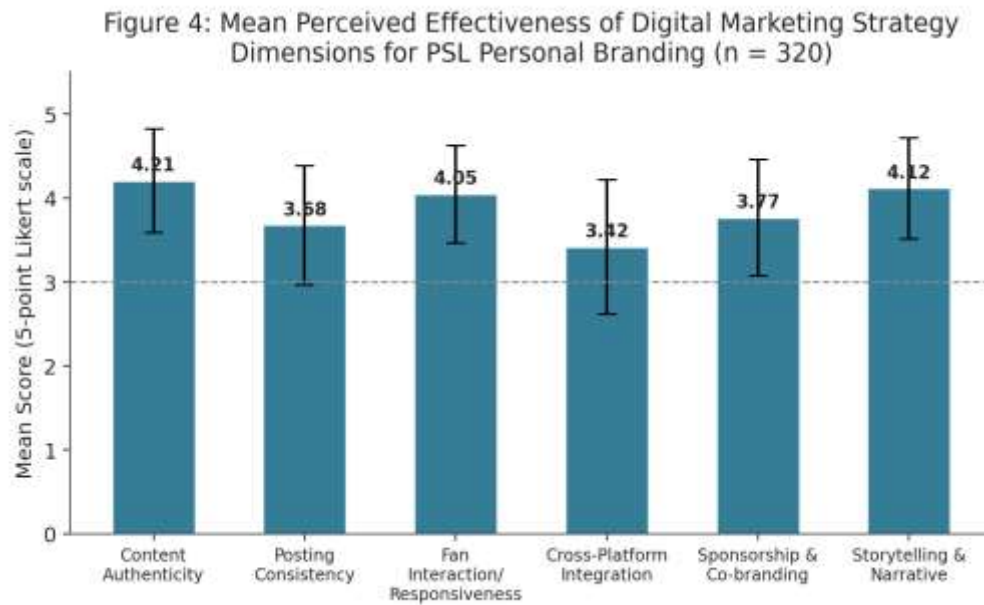


Figure 4: Mean Perceived Effectiveness of Digital Marketing Strategy Dimensions for PSL Personal Branding (n = 320)

4.7 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis (Table 6) was conducted to examine bivariate relationships among the six digital marketing strategy dimensions and perceived personal brand strength (PBS). All correlations were positive and statistically significant at $p < 0.01$. Content authenticity ($r = 0.68$), storytelling/narrative ($r = 0.66$), and fan interaction ($r = 0.63$) showed the strongest associations with perceived personal brand strength, while cross-platform integration showed the weakest association ($r = 0.35$), consistent with the descriptive pattern observed in Table 5 and Figure 4.

Variable	CA	PC	FI	CPI	SCB	SN	PBS
1. Content Authenticity (CA)	1.00	0.34	0.52	0.28	0.31	0.61	0.68
2. Posting Consistency (PC)	-	1.00	0.29	0.33	0.26	0.30	0.41
3. Fan Interaction (FI)	-	-	1.00	0.35	0.38	0.49	0.63
4. Cross-Platform Integ. (CPI)	-	-	-	1.00	0.40	0.27	0.35
5. Sponsorship/Co-brand (SCB)	-	-	-	-	1.00	0.36	0.47
6. Storytelling/Narrative (SN)	-	-	-	-	-	1.00	0.66
7. Personal Brand Strength (PBS)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.00

Table 6: Pearson Correlation Matrix Among Strategy Dimensions and Personal Brand Strength (n = 320, all coefficients significant at $p < 0.01$)

4.8 Regression Analysis: Predictors of Personal Brand Strength

A multiple linear regression was conducted with the six digital marketing strategy dimensions entered as predictors of perceived personal brand strength (PBS). The overall model was statistically significant, $F(6, 313) = 68.42$, $p < 0.001$, and explained approximately 57% of the variance in perceived personal brand strength ($R^2 = 0.568$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.560$). As shown in Table 7, content authenticity emerged as the strongest significant predictor ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.001$), followed by fan interaction/responsiveness ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.001$) and storytelling/narrative ($\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$). Sponsorship and co-branding contributed a

smaller but statistically significant effect ($\beta = 0.10$, $p = 0.025$), while posting consistency and cross-platform integration did not emerge as statistically significant independent predictors once the other dimensions were accounted for ($p > 0.05$), suggesting their influence on brand strength may operate indirectly, through their association with the significant predictors, rather than as direct standalone drivers.

Predictor	B	SE	Beta (β)	t	p
(Constant)	0.41	0.18	-	2.28	0.023
Content Authenticity	0.29	0.05	0.31	5.80	< 0.001
Posting Consistency	0.06	0.04	0.07	1.50	0.135
Fan Interaction	0.22	0.05	0.24	4.40	< 0.001
Cross-Platform Integration	0.04	0.04	0.05	1.00	0.318
Sponsorship & Co-branding	0.09	0.04	0.10	2.25	0.025
Storytelling & Narrative	0.21	0.05	0.23	4.20	< 0.001

Table 7: Multiple Regression Results for Predictors of Perceived Personal Brand Strength ($n = 320$)

4.9 Posting Frequency and Engagement Rate

Figure 5 presents the bivariate relationship between average posting frequency (posts per week) and engagement rate among the 42 sampled player profiles. A moderate-to-strong positive correlation was observed ($r = 0.71$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that players who posted more frequently during active tournament windows tended to achieve higher engagement rates. However, the relationship exhibited diminishing returns at the upper range of posting frequency (above approximately 15 posts per week), where several high-frequency accounts did not show proportionally higher engagement, consistent with audience fatigue effects noted qualitatively in respondent comments regarding excessive promotional posting.

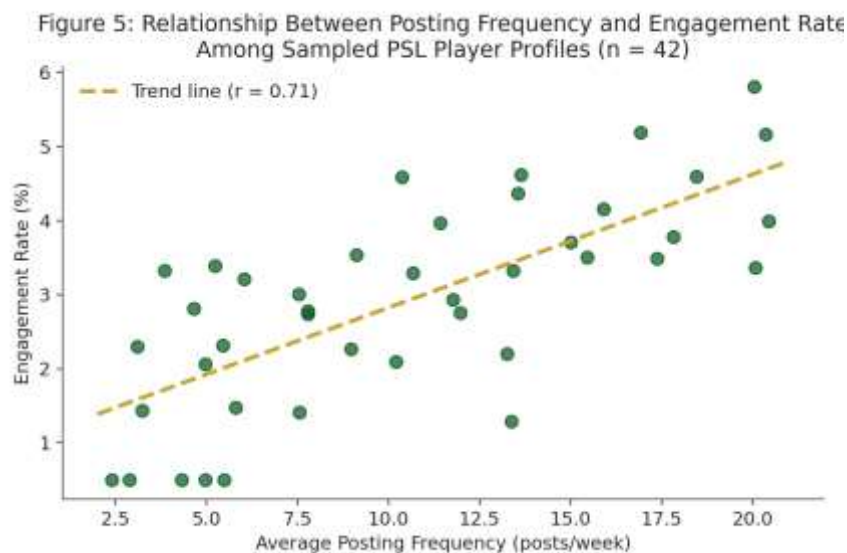


Figure 5: Relationship Between Posting Frequency and Engagement Rate Among Sampled PSL Player Profiles ($n = 42$)

4.10 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Table 8 summarizes the outcome of hypothesis testing based on the correlation and regression analyses reported above. Five of seven hypotheses were fully supported; the hypothesis concerning posting consistency was only partially supported (significant bivariate correlation but non-significant independent regression effect), and the hypothesis concerning cross-platform integration was not supported at the multivariate level despite a significant bivariate correlation.

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H1	Content authenticity is positively associated with perceived personal brand strength.	Supported
H2	Posting consistency is positively associated with perceived personal brand strength.	Partially Supported*
H3	Fan interaction/responsiveness is positively associated with perceived personal brand strength.	Supported
H4	Cross-platform integration is positively associated with perceived personal brand strength.	Not Supported*
H5	Sponsorship & co-branding is positively associated with perceived personal brand strength.	Supported
H6	Storytelling/narrative is positively associated with perceived personal brand strength.	Supported
H7	Posting frequency is positively correlated with social media engagement rate.	Supported

Table 8: Summary of Hypothesis Testing Outcomes

* Significant bivariate correlation (Table 6) but non-significant unique contribution in the multiple regression model (Table 7), suggesting the relationship is mediated by other strategy dimensions, particularly content authenticity and storytelling.

5. Discussion

5.1 Authenticity as the Central Driver of Personal Brand Strength

The finding that content authenticity was both the most highly rated strategy dimension ($M = 4.21$) and the strongest regression predictor of perceived personal brand strength ($\beta = 0.31$) aligns with broader personal branding theory, which emphasizes perceived genuineness as a precondition for audience trust and para-social attachment. Within the Pakistani PSL context, this suggests that fans respond more strongly to players who present an unfiltered, relatable off-field persona than to players who rely primarily on polished, promotional content. This finding carries direct practical implications: franchises and management agencies pursuing highly controlled, brand-safe content strategies may inadvertently suppress the very authenticity that Pakistani audiences value most.

5.2 The Engagement-Reach Divergence Across Platforms

The divergence between platform reach (absolute followers) and engagement rate - TikTok generating the highest engagement despite the smallest average following, and Facebook showing the inverse pattern - reinforces the literature's caution against relying on follower count alone as a personal brand indicator. For PSL players and franchises, this implies that platform strategy should be tailored to objective: Instagram and Facebook may better serve broad reach and sponsor visibility objectives, while TikTok offers a more effective channel for deep engagement and relationship-building with younger segments of the Pakistani fan base.

5.3 Fan Interaction and Storytelling as Complementary Strategies

Fan interaction/responsiveness and storytelling/narrative both emerged as strong, statistically significant predictors of personal brand strength, alongside authenticity. This triad suggests a coherent strategic logic for Pakistani PSL players: brand strength is built less through volume of output and more through the perceived quality, narrative coherence, and interactive responsiveness of that output. Players who share personal narratives (family, struggle, faith, provincial identity) while remaining responsive to fan comments and interactions appear best positioned to build durable personal brand equity.

5.4 The Limited Independent Role of Posting Consistency and Cross-Platform Integration

Although posting consistency and cross-platform integration both showed significant positive bivariate correlations with personal brand strength, neither retained a statistically significant independent effect once authenticity, fan interaction, and storytelling were accounted for in the regression model. This pattern suggests that consistency and integration function as enabling conditions - they create opportunities for authentic, interactive, narrative-rich content to reach audiences - rather than as independent drivers of brand strength in their own right. In practice, this implies that Pakistani PSL players and franchises should not treat posting frequency or platform uniformity as ends in themselves, but rather as infrastructure supporting higher-order content quality strategies.

5.5 Posting Frequency, Engagement, and the Risk of Audience Fatigue

The moderate-to-strong positive correlation between posting frequency and engagement rate ($r = 0.71$) confirms that active, frequent posting during PSL tournament windows benefits engagement outcomes. However, the observed diminishing returns at very high posting frequencies point to a ceiling effect, beyond which additional content may dilute engagement per post or trigger fan fatigue, particularly where high-frequency posting skews toward sponsored or repetitive promotional content, a pattern respondents explicitly flagged as reducing their perception of authenticity.

5.6 Interpreting the Findings Within Pakistan's Digital and Cultural Context

These findings should be interpreted with reference to Pakistan's specific digital media environment: a young, mobile-first user base; growing but uneven broadband and data affordability across regions; strong cultural resonance of family, faith, and provincial identity themes; and bilingual (Urdu-English) content norms. The comparatively lower valuation of cross-platform integration may partly reflect the reality that many Pakistani fans primarily engage with PSL content through one or two dominant platforms (chiefly Instagram and YouTube), rather than following players uniformly across all available channels, reducing the perceived importance of platform-to-platform consistency from the fan's vantage point.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Recommendations for PSL Players and Personal Management Teams

- Prioritize authentic, unscripted content over heavily produced promotional material; field life to surface naturally in posts rather than defaulting -allow personality and off .controlled messaging-to formal, brand
- Invest deliberately in narrative/storytelling content that connects performance to personal journey, family background, provincial identity, or career struggle, given its .strong association with perceived brand strength

- ive, timely responsiveness to fan comments and interactions, particularly Maintain act attention tournament windows, rather than treating social media purely -during high .as a broadcast channel
- quency high fre-to-Calibrate posting frequency to avoid audience fatigue; moderate posts per week during active tournament periods) appears to 15-(approximately 10 .optimize engagement without diminishing returns
- Select platforms strategically according to objective: TikTok and Instagram for deep Facebook and YouTube for broad reach and ;engagement with younger audiences .legacy/older audience segments

6.2 Recommendations for PSL Franchises

- Support players' personal digital content with production resources (videography, the authenticity that fans scripting message content, preserving-editing) without over .value most
- level promotional messaging with -Develop content calendars that balance franchise driven content, recognizing that fan preference favors -led, personality-space for player .overt sponsorship material scenes and personal content over-the-behind
- Use engagement rate, rather than follower count alone, as a primary metric when evaluating player digital marketing performance and when structuring sponsorship or .endorsement opportunities

6.3 Recommendations for the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB)

- Consider establishing digital marketing training or media workshops for domestic players, particularly emerging players with limited prior media exposure, to build .presentation and fan interaction-capability in authentic self
- e franchises to share aggregated, anonymized digital performance Encourag .wide learning on effective personal branding practices-benchmarks to support league

6.4 Recommendations for Sponsors and Digital Marketing Practitioners

- who demonstrate strong engagement rates and Prioritize partnerships with players authentic fan interaction patterns over players selected primarily on the basis of .follower count
- Integrate sponsored content within players' existing storytelling and lifestyle content tandalone promotional posts, given fans' comparatively lower formats rather than as s .preference for overt sponsorship content

7. Conclusion

This study set out to examine the digital marketing strategies and social media metrics most relevant to building personal brands within the Pakistan Super League, drawing on primary survey data from 320 Pakistani PSL followers and a content analysis of 42 player social media profiles across five major platforms. The findings demonstrate that content authenticity, storytelling/narrative, and fan interaction/responsiveness are the strongest drivers of perceived personal brand strength among Pakistani cricket audiences, collectively explaining a substantial share of variance in brand strength perceptions. Social media metrics analysis further reveals a meaningful divergence between reach and engagement across platforms, with TikTok generating disproportionately high engagement relative to its follower base, and a moderate-to-strong positive relationship between posting frequency and engagement rate, subject to diminishing returns at very high posting volumes.

These findings extend personal branding and sports digital marketing literature into the under-researched Pakistani cricket context and offer an evidence-based foundation for PSL players, franchises, the PCB, and sponsors to refine digital marketing strategy. As the PSL continues to grow in commercial scale and digital sophistication, the capacity of players and franchises to build authentic, narrative-rich, and interactively engaged personal brands is likely to remain a key determinant of both fan loyalty and commercial value in Pakistan's cricket ecosystem.

8. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study is subject to several limitations that should inform interpretation of its findings and guide future research. First, the survey sample, while reasonably diverse across major PSL host cities, relied on purposive and convenience sampling rather than probability sampling, which may limit generalizability to the full population of Pakistani PSL followers, particularly those in smaller cities and rural areas with more limited digital access. Second, the content analysis was restricted to 42 player profiles and five platforms over a defined three-season window (PSL 8-10); emerging platforms or future shifts in Pakistani social media usage patterns may alter the relative importance of platforms identified here. Third, the cross-sectional design captures perceptions and metrics at a single point in time and cannot establish definitive causal direction between strategy dimensions and brand strength outcomes.

Future research could adopt a longitudinal design tracking individual player metrics and fan perceptions across multiple PSL seasons to better establish causal relationships; extend the content analysis to include comment-level sentiment analysis; compare personal branding patterns across the PSL, IPL, and other regional T20 leagues to test the generalizability of the strategy dimensions identified here; and examine the commercial/sponsorship value implications of personal brand strength more directly, which fell outside the scope of the present study.

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