



Strategic competitor assessment for robust digital connect: A case study on Calcutta Management Association of India

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Abstract

The trend of having a strong digital presence for every organization has become a need. Earlier even though the organizations or associations that did not require a digital presence and could continue working without it, now cannot survive without it all because of the Pandemic Covid 19. This study focuses on such an organization- Calcutta Management Association (CMA) which now needs a strong digital base for it to stand out among its peers and also for its own existence as well. With proper R&D, to come up with strategies, competitor analysis, etc., helping the organization in establishing a better digital footprint. The workings of the competitors/peers are analyzed and compared it with CMA, derived at feasible solutions for it to achieve, stating all the problems that needs to be addressed. The researcher tried to compare the basics through questionnaire sent to 1100 individuals to the existing members of the association and to its peers, to have understanding and familiarity about the members' expectation and the gap in the activities from other associations. The study carried out from the month of February 2021 to July 2021. Both primary and Secondary research have been involved in the study to reach to decisive state, which would help CMA is rerouting its future course of actions and helps achieve its well-defined objectives.

Keywords: Digital presence, Strategic analysis, Competitor analysis, Need- Gap analysis, Calcutta Management Association.

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1. Introduction

Digital Connectivity for Industry is the crucial element for anyone who intends to fully control the chances of digitalization. Working almost intangibly, it requires the connections you want between all objects, systems, and applications. Digitalization ensures crucial competitive benefit for business, such as increased flexibility and greater quality. But to be capable to offer digital facilities, digital infrastructure comprising of smart objects, as well as network and platform solutions are required. Digital Connectivity for Industry masters all the duties of digitalization and fully apply all the opportunities it offers. Digital Connectivity is vital for executing visionary concepts in industry. When people have a necessity or a problem, they 'google' a solution; in another words, they search online. If a business has a great digital existence, online prospects and customers finds it. If they can't find it, it is the organization's failure. Visibility of an organization depends on a robust digital presence. Which means prospects will be capable of finding an organization more efficiently. The finest way to make an impression is by being informative with useful, original content which will also help in improved ranking on Search Engines. Understanding good SEO practices can help an organization over the years.

A digital existence is how the business have existence on the internet. It is what people find out when they search for the business online and it incorporates:

- Company website
- Online reviews (Google)
- Digital ads (social ads, Google ads etc.)
- Company social media accounts (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- Listings in business directories (Sulekha, Just dial, etc.)
- Company Office or store locations (Google Maps, etc.)
- Media mentions
- Google Panel Listing

No substantive research has been found to be conducted in this direction that make the research gap for the study.

2. Research Objective

The objective of this primary research was to create a digital marketing plan backed by proper R&D for Calcutta Management Association and strategic analysis of competitors/peers and bridging the gap to help establish the association more strongly digitally.

2.1. Problem Statement

- Is Calcutta Management Association working strategically to increase its digital presence?
- There has been very low engagement in the social platforms of Calcutta Management Association which was evident in its low digital connect with itstarget audience.
- With the increasing digital connect of its peers, ranking better in search engines results page (google) than Calcutta Management Association has led to the primary research in its peers functioning to help bridge the gap.

3. Research Methodology

A thorough comprehensive exploratory research has been done to bridge the gap in the activities of Calcutta Management Association from its peers which will help improve the present functioning of Calcutta Management Association. This applied research will help Calcutta Management Association to understand better how its peers' function with such perfection and what do they do for such strong digital presence which ultimately helps in the better digital connect.

The primary research conducted to find out the following questions:

- Who are the audiences that can be targeted apart from the segment which Calcutta Management Association already targets? Can the target audiences expand?
- When and how frequently are contents are being given to the audiences?
- Where the audiences prefer the contents? (Choice of platform)
- What are the types and diversities in contents that its peers prefer?
- Why is the engagement for Calcutta Management Association low than its peers?

Need- Gap Analysis: Bridging the gap in between the current goal and the desired goal. Need gap analysis is a decision-making aid for assessing the attractiveness of new product ideas. Besides determining the general level of acceptance received by new products, it also provides insights into their “suitability for the mass market” so that their chances of success can be evaluated in more detail.

Competitor/Peer Analysis: Competitive analysis in marketing and strategic management is an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of current and potential competitors. This analysis provides both an offensive and defensive strategic context to identify opportunities and threats.

Both these together provided an insight into the audience’s psyche as well as what all actions the peers have successfully undertaken for better engagement and ROI.

The need-gap analysis has been spearheaded and created an email with a specialized form to be sent out to the member network (1100) to collect feedback from the target audience and to understand their characteristics, expectations, and requirements. The will gauge to know audience’s current social media behavior and also give an insight into the general avenues for improvement. Simultaneously, a survey questionnaire was sent to the other associations as well, which included questions that would help to bridge the gap among CMA and other associations.

3.2. Research Questions

Questionnaire for Associations

- Do you think managing digital platforms need dedicated full-time workforce or do you recommend outsourcing the same?
- Is digital footprint audit necessary for planning for proper roadmap?
- Is data driving your decisions for content?
- Which groups are your greater audiences?
- How important (in the scale of 5) do you think is the content in attracting large audience?
- Do you think any particular online content is more acceptable to your audience? If yes, could you share the broad outline of the theme?
- Do you measure reach and engagement in the social media platforms? If yes, how?
- Could you please rank the social media platforms in terms of viability to your Association’s functioning?
- Are you planning to create a new type of content to leverage a popular newsocial network?

Questionnaire for Members

- Which social media would you say you spend the maximum time on?
- What is your average weekly time spent on social media?
- What type of content format do you prefer on your feed?
- What kind of content do you prefer?
- If CMA creates a LinkedIn group for its members to communicate and come together, would you be interested to join?

- Would you prefer to receive a half yearly letter from CMA?

Limitations

- The analysis is based on the responses by the associations which can have biased responses which can have an effect on the analysis of the study.
- A population size of 60+, to which the questionnaires were circulated but only a sample size of 5 could be achieved.
- Time constraint as time limit reduced our chances of covering a greater sample size.
- The research design could only incorporate the details of Calcutta Management Association, primary research could only be done on CMA, but had to depend on secondary data for research on other associations.

Significance of the study

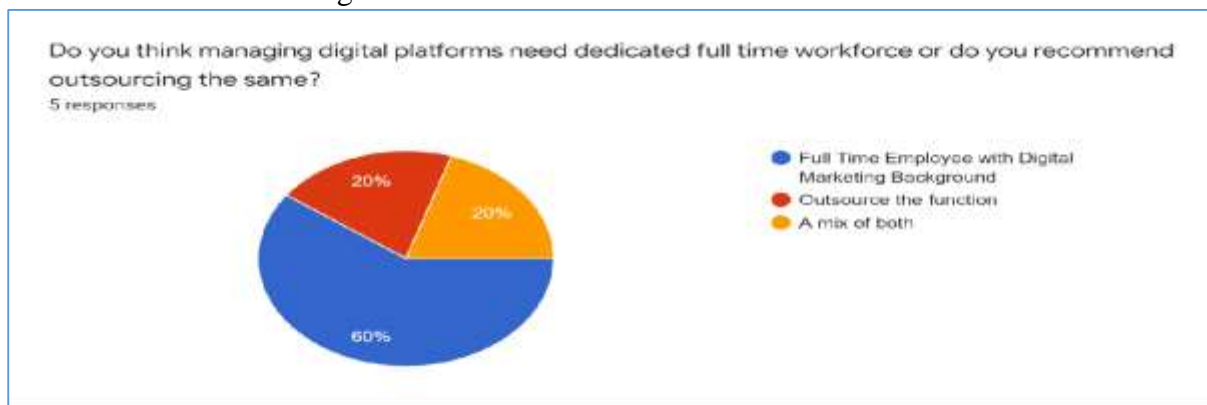
- This study will help CMA to retrospect its decisions based on the comparison of responses and help CMA in achieving its clear well-defined objectives.
- This study will help CMA in organizing its future course of actions and come up with better contents and strategies for a better digital connect.

4. Results

The responses along with the questions are as follows:

4.1. Responses from Associations

1. Do you think managing digital platforms need dedicated full-time workforce or do you recommend outsourcing the same?



Analysis:

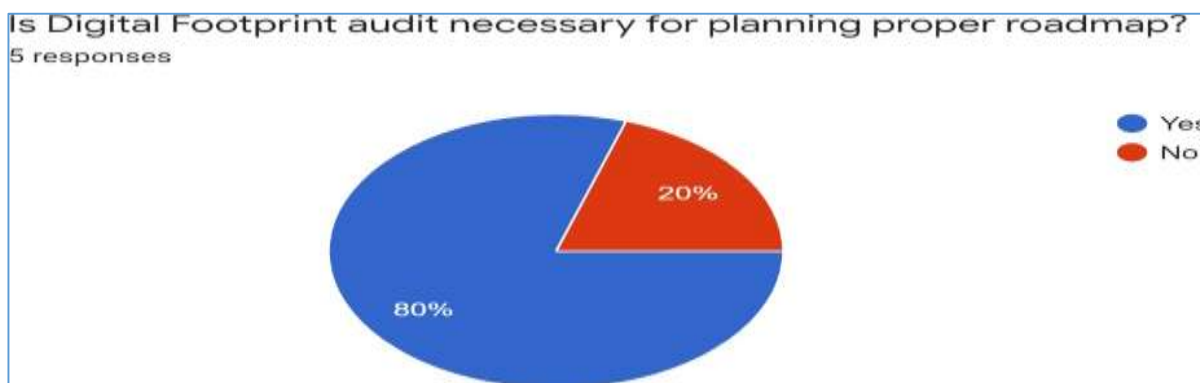
CMA's Response- Outsource the function.

The first question asked was whether the associations would like to outsource or have full time employee with digital marketing background? To this CMA preferred outsourcing while 60% preferred employees with digital marketing background. But, considering CMA's limitation (Limitation of owning a better infrastructure/ technological equipment/ workforce), more interns should be hired for Social Media Marketing who will be handling SEO, Link building, handling landing pages, proper keywords to direct traffic to the website, optimize its position on search engine result page, advertisements over various free classified add sites on regular basis, Facebook page, also work on google ad boost, etc. The page boosting will help us to target the location, age group, etc. Also, the average time spent by other associations over social media platform for better footprint ranges from 20 to 25 hours/ week by other associations, whereas it is not even 10mins/day by CMA (Derived from the responses to the questionnaire).

Considering CMA’s limitation, it is recommended to bring in interns for Social Media Marketing who will be guided by the present workforce of CMA to achieve goals as planned. A plan with a specific goal to be set for a week/month.

Considering the responses from other associations, it can be seen that they already have a better workforce and structure and technology for a better digital connect. Also, CMA’s motive should be to reach to its target audience organically, considering its limitations. Even though being the country’s first regional management association and a prime reason for the establishment of AIMA, it is far behind in comparison to other associations who have come later than CMA.

2. Is digital footprint audit necessary for planning for proper roadmap?

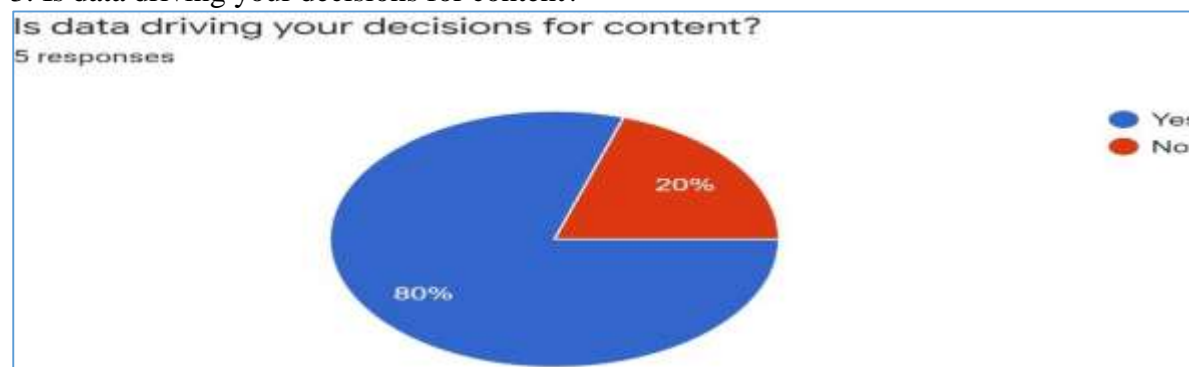


Analysis:

CMA’s Response- No

The next question asked was if digital footprint audit necessary. To this CMA’s responded no, while all the other associations agreed upon measuring reach and engagement. Setting objective first and then measuring the results with the objective is the basic task. The basic objective of measuring the connect with its target audience was lacking. For example, if we set a goal which can be to gain more followers in a week over social media, and if we do not achieve that, we can again go back to the steps, analyze the reasons for the deviation and charter important steps again which would help in achieving its objectives.

3. Is data driving your decisions for content?



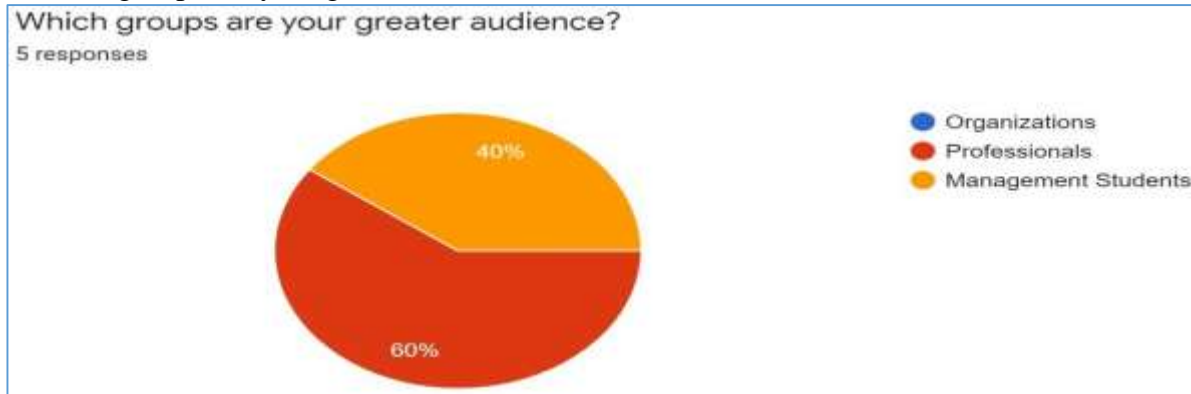
Analysis:

CMA’s Response- No

The next question asked was if the contents were data driven. CMA’s response was no while all other associations are already working on data driven contents. The primary reason as to why CMA’s target audience will follow or search for CMA digitally is for the contents. Unless

it caters to the demand of its target audience, there's no point in creating a particular type of content. Content should be fulfilling demands. As we know "CONTENT IS KING", CMA should focus on the contents which are more appealing to its audience and try bringing in more content on the same line, which other associations are following. For contents, CMA can also consult its members to know their preference of what content they would like to see in the webinars and deliver the demand effectively. It can also organize polls and surveys in its social media platforms to cater to the non-members and try increasing its reach over to other target groups as well.

4. Which groups are your greater audiences?



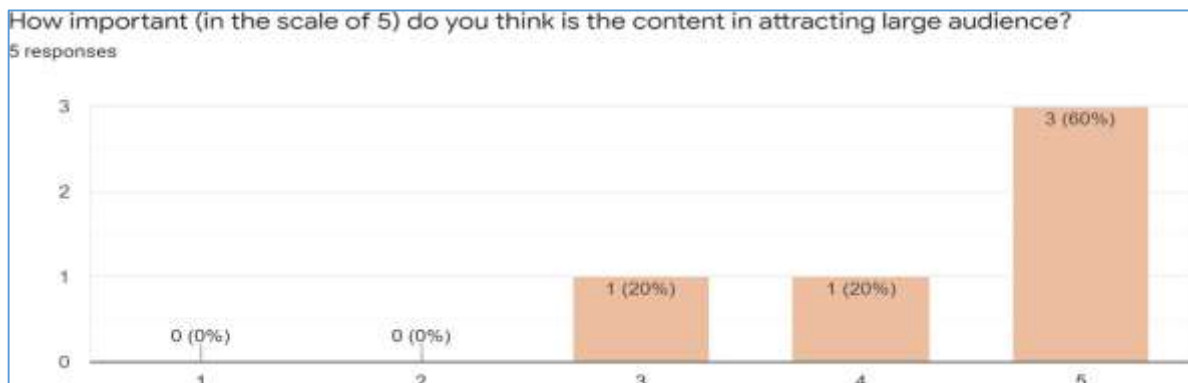
Analysis:

CMA's Response- Management Students

The next question asked was if students or professional preferred their activities. To this 60% of the responses had professionals as their target audience whereas CMA has management students. CMA also should focus on expanding its target audience to professionals, and again keeping in mind the needs of the specific audience group. Also, Facebook is the most preferred platform for all the association and also for CMA, so CMA can leverage the platform for better reach to its target audience. CMA should also target to professionals as their audience by making connections on LinkedIn.

**Note (Even though the viewers are management students in a large scale for CMA, but its members list includes members from the age of baby boomers and not even many members from Gen Y category)

5. How important (in the scale of 5) do you think is the content in attracting large audience?



Analysis:

CMA's Response- 3/5

The next question asked was to rate out of 5 the importance of contents for attracting viewers. To this 80% considered it of prime importance, whereas CMA gave a response of 3 pointers out of 5. Content should be given prime importance in gaining online followers. The content that someone delivers should meet demands, what the audience wants to see or if the content is more relevant to current management trends or news. Also 60% of the association are already working on proper content to attract the gap. Also, the categories of videos of other associations other than CMA are broad and covers all trending topics which has huge reach and engagement over social media platforms.

6. Do you think any particular online content is more acceptable to your audience? If yes, could you share the broad outline of the theme?

Analysis of Responses:

CMA's Response- Skill Based.

**Note (This area requires broad explanation, as it has many drawbacks in itself. This area was dealt by the group "MEMBERS CONNECT" which had the work of bringing prospective interested candidates onboard and came to know about the drawbacks which could have been handled properly to cater to the target audience properly)

The categories of videos which is more appealing to the other associations target audiences are:

- Latest in Management
- Startup Conversations
- Educational Videos
- Women Leadership
- Sports

7. Do you measure reach and engagement in the social media platforms? If yes, how?

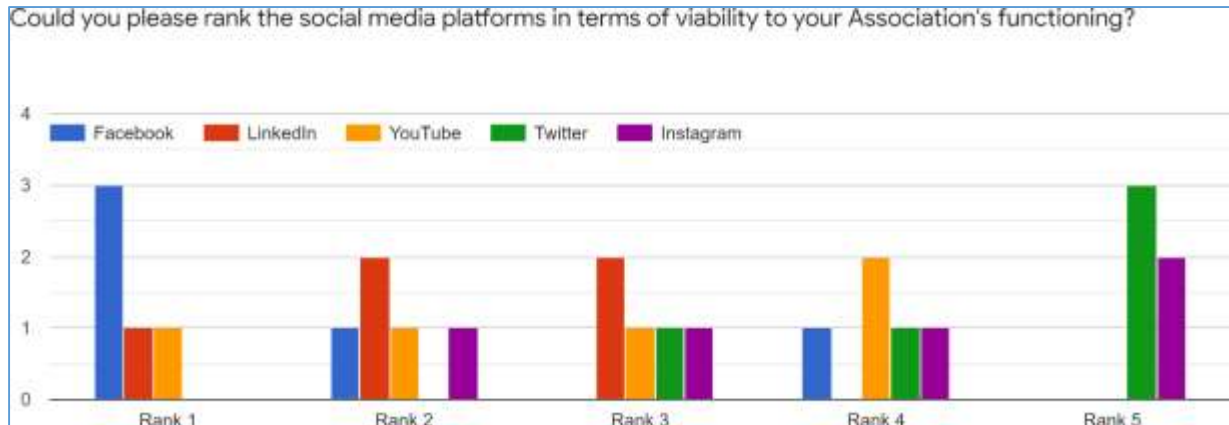
Analysis of Responses:

CMA's Response- No

The response to this question by all other associations have been positive and they have agreed unanimously on measuring the reach and engagement of its contents delivered over social media platforms. To this CMA's response is no, which is an indication in itself, which shows why the digital connect of Calcutta Management Association has become worse over time. The associations have listed some points as to how they measure the reach and engagements are: - Through the connections that they have over social media platforms as well as, as its members. By evaluating the number of visitors/ participants in their webinars.

Participation and Engagement.

8. Could you please rank the social media platforms in terms of viability to your Association's functioning?



Analysis of Responses:

CMA's Response- Rank 1- Facebook.

The platforms chosen for the association's viability are:

- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- YouTube
- Twitter
- Instagram

To this question, most of the association have ranked Facebook in the first position which is a viable medium of communication with their target audience. 3 out of 5 ranked Facebook 1st 1 out of 5 ranked LinkedIn as 1st 1 out of 5 ranked YouTube as 1st

1 out of 5 ranked Facebook 2nd 2 out of 5 ranked LinkedIn 2nd out of 5 ranked YouTube as 2nd 1 out of 5 ranked Instagram as 2nd

out of 5 ranked LinkedIn as 3rd 1 out of 5 ranked YouTube as 3rd 1 out of 5 ranked Twitter as 3rd 1 out of 5 ranked Instagram as 3rd

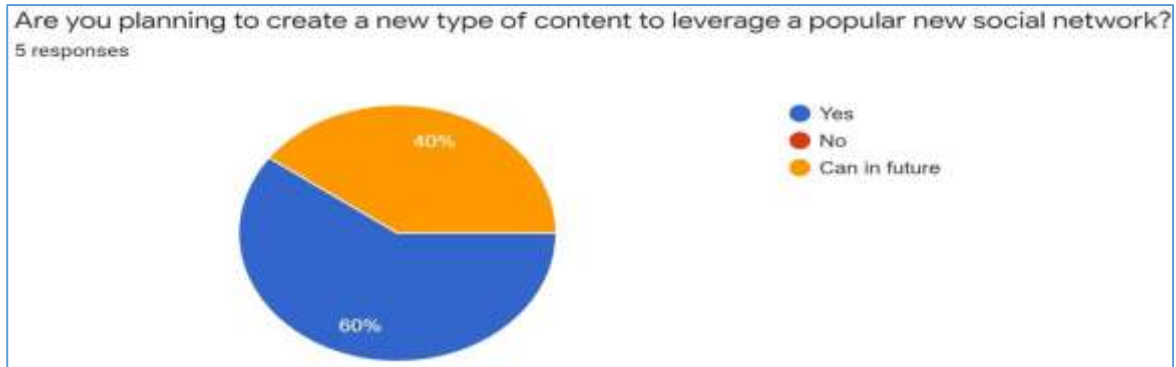
1 out of 5 ranked Facebook as 4th 2 out of 5 ranked YouTube as 4th 1 out of 5 ranked Twitter as 4th

1 out of 5 ranked Instagram as 4th

3 out of 5 ranked Twitter as 5th 2 out of 5 ranked Insta as 5th

From the above analysis we see Facebook is the most preferred platform for all the association's functioning followed by LinkedIn and then YouTube. We see that Twitter and Instagram are the least preferred platforms for the associations functioning. As CMA's most preferred platform is Facebook, so they should target their audience over Facebook more as compared to other platforms and be more active on Facebook for a better reach and engagement that will lead to a better digital connect.

9. Are you planning to create a new type of content to leverage a popular newsocial network?



Analysis of Responses:

CMA's Response- Can in Future.

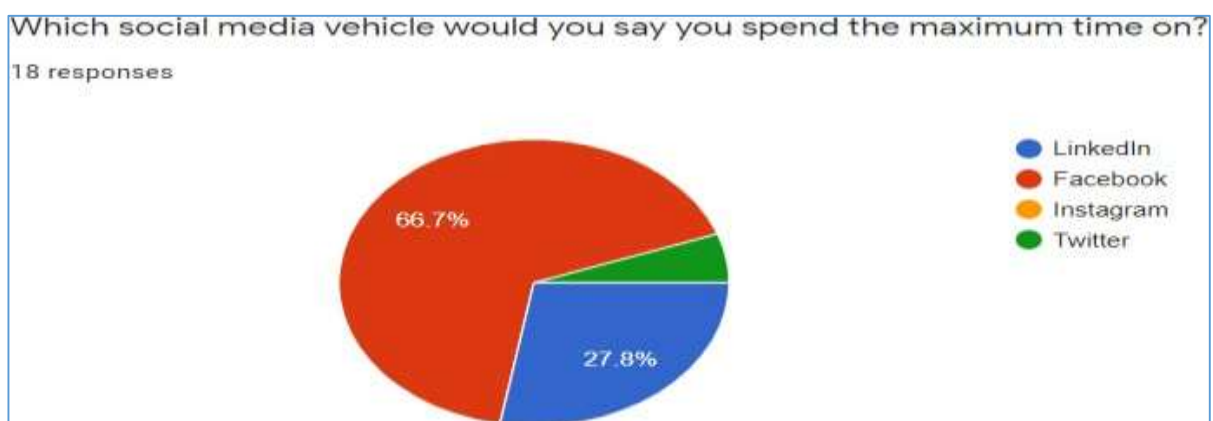
To this question 60% of the organization have agreed to expand their target audience by bringing in new content that would target audiences apart from their already existing target audience. CMA should focus on improving its content rather than moving on to creating a new social network as its audience. CMA should improve its content first for a better digital presence and retaining the target audience.

4.2. Responses from Members

We organized a survey with a specialized form to be sent out to CMA's member network to directly collect feedback from the target audience to understand their characteristics, expectations, and requirements. The form contains questions that will help us gauge our audience's current social media behavior and give us an insight into the general avenues for improvement.

For example: All organization these days are moving to Instagram for increased audience interaction and brand awareness. A lot of our peers too have moved to Instagram. But are OUR audience really there yet? The results we receive are going to help us determine a thorough strategy for our brand.

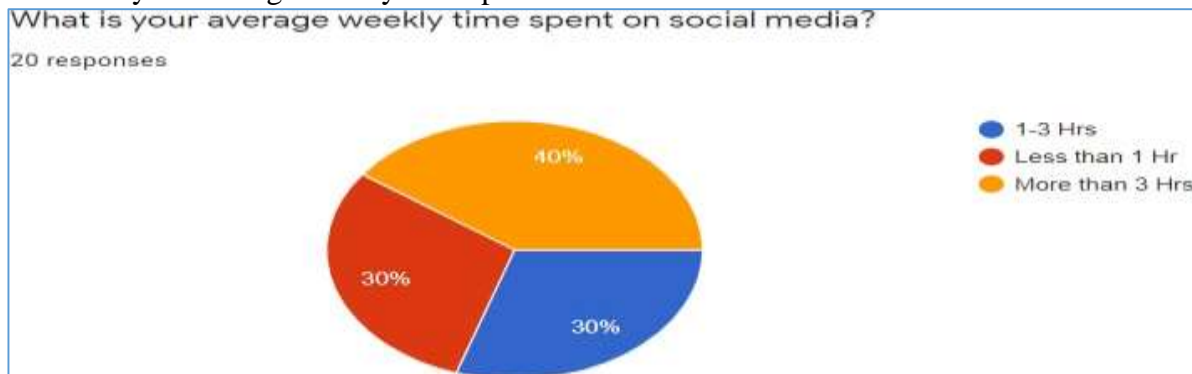
1. Which social media would you say you spend the maximum time on?



According to the response to this question, Facebook is the most preferred platform for all the existing members of Calcutta Management Association and also according to CMA Facebook is the most viable platform for the association's functioning as well. So, it is a right kind of alignment of the interest of the organization with that of the members and CMA can utilize

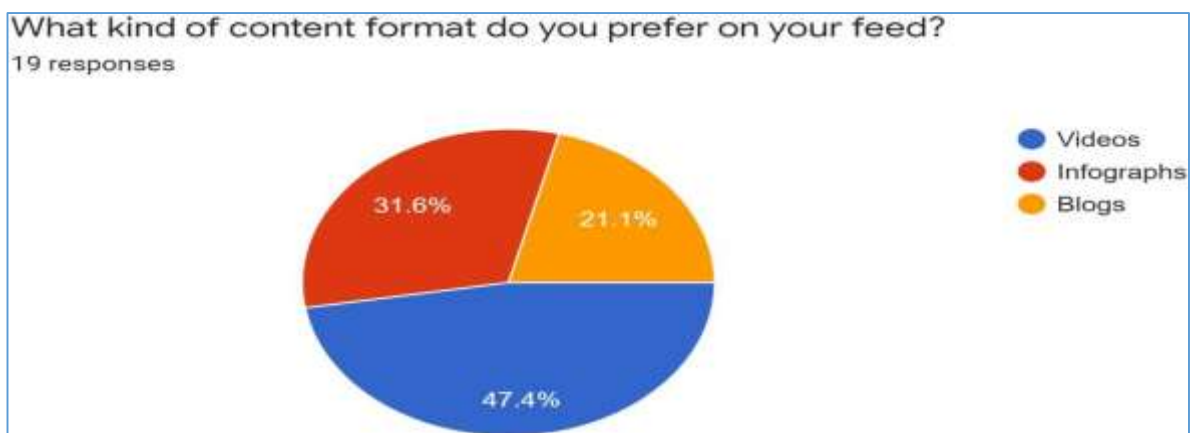
Facebook in establishing a better digital reach to its target audience and that would drive more engagement for CMA.

2. What is your average weekly time spent on social media?



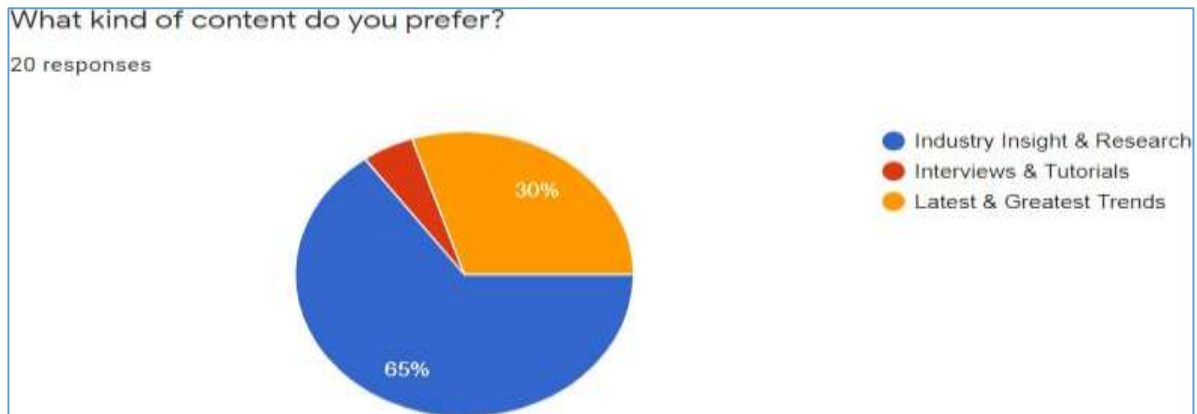
The average weekly time spent by the members in social media is more than 3 hours, which can be utilized by CMA in displaying its contents and get more engagement at the time its members are online and that would drive more reach and engagement and help establish strongly digitally.

3. What type of content format do you prefer on your feed?



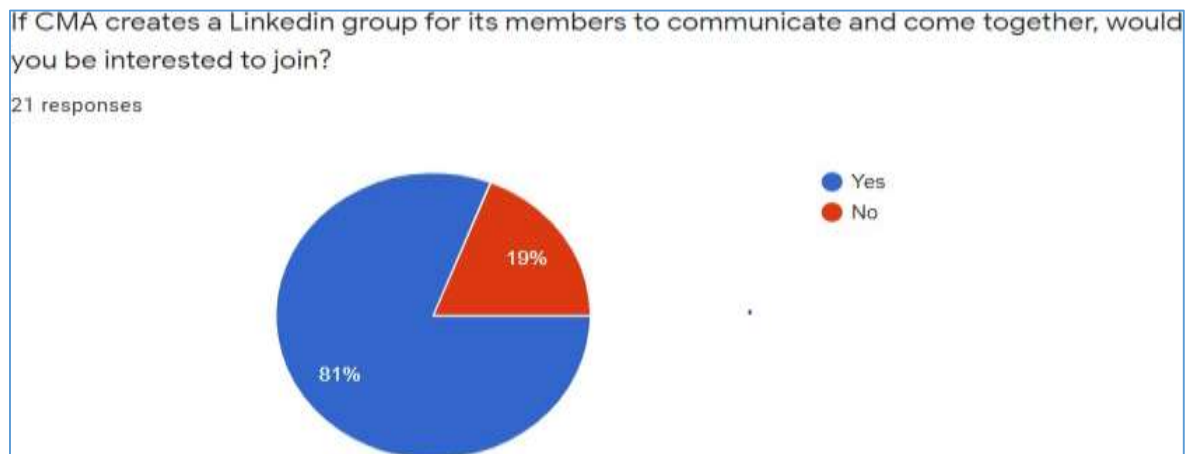
According to the response, the maximum members prefer video contents over its preferred platforms and according to this CMA can organize its technological ability in a way where they could arrange its webinar sessions over Facebook as well apart from the platforms that they wish to host on which is basically YouTube.

4. What kind of content do you prefer?



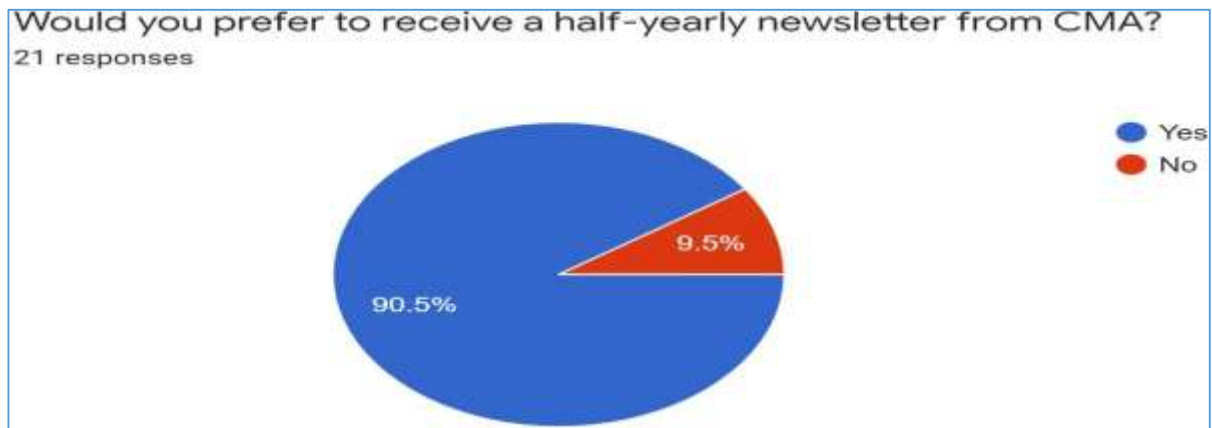
According to this response, the members are more interested in the sessions which has Industry related information or insights. CMA could arrange for such webinar sessions more frequently so it would enable a lot of engagements in the social media platforms from its members. Since Covid it has become easy for organizations and associations to deliver contents or insights to a large group without much hassle.

5. If CMA creates a LinkedIn group for its members to communicate and come together, would you be interested to join?



81% of the sample population of the members are interested in a LinkedIn group for interaction and socializing with other corporate minded likes for better exchange of ideas and thoughts. This would increase CMA’s engagement over social media platforms and also would help to optimize the SEO for CMA which would result in better position in the search engine result page.

6. Would you prefer to receive a half yearly letter from CMA?



90.5% of the sample population have agreed for a half-yearly newsletter from CMA which is a better indication of the interests of the existing members in CMA. They want to be conveyed and wants to be active in the functioning of CMA. But we see that there is no opportunity for much involvement of members in CMA and they seem to be interested enough for inclusion.

4.3. SWOT Analysis

Strength- The 60+ years management institution has been the first regional management association and has huge credibility and also is the prime mover reason for the establishment of its parent body- All India Management Association (AIMA). Its credibility has no questions, when it comes to value creation for its members and providing world class management knowledge. This strength of credibility can be utilized by CMA to position itself as one of the premier management associations just like AIMA and can work significantly in developing its image. Most of the other states has two management associations but CMA is one of its kind in its state.

Weakness- The weaknesses that I identified after the study is that there is very less activities being conducted, very less seminars and webinars, inactivity on a large scale has led to the drawback of CMA and before covid it was not capable enough to build a proper digital presence mainly because of its technological absence and limitations of workforce as well. CMA has no proper source of funding to be able to be capable enough to function on like other associations (one of the major key factors). Absence of its own infrastructures as well avoids CMA in carrying out its activities regularly as wanted.

Opportunities- Now that because of Covid most of the associations and organizations have come up choosing the option of digital, it is a great opportunity for CMA to be not led back because of its limitations and use this opportunity to reach to greater masses, which otherwise would have been almost impossible for CMA given its limitations and only having the option of organic reach both offline and online. This online opportunity can help CMA in its better positioning in its management surroundings with its credibility.

Threats- The threats of other associations providing the same opportunities as CMA can be of a huge threat to CMA. We already have many in West Bengal which are- Calcutta Chamber of Commerce, Indian chamber of Commerce, etc., which are way forward than CMA. The threats of other state associations which can overshadow its existence given its inactivity can pose a great threat to its existence.

4.4. Discussions

- The gap between two consecutive webinars is too much.
- Proper tagline of videos (Meta Tags) is not there which makes it hard for people to find the

related videos which ultimately affects the Search Engine Optimization for the contents. Absence of both proper Meta Tags and Title Tags

- No proper monitoring to analyze the work of its peers. Absence of required workforce.
- No presence of proper dashboard to control all activities from one place. For example- Netvibes. An association like CMA should have access to these applications for properly monitoring the digital reach.
- Even though there are huge members list, but actual people following them over social handles are pretty much less. They can encourage them over mails to like CMA over different social media handles as from the study we come to know that members are very much interested in to be included in the activities.
- No reviews from members on social handles. Reviews from members would help in better position in the search engine result page.
- No such on page and off page SEO activities to facilitate its ranking over SERP (Search Engine Results Page).
- There is a lack in interactive sessions, interactions from audiences which would kindle the interests among the audiences to participate and be attentive.
- With less activity and no proper engagement in social media, members can lose interest in CMA and the scope of attracting new members is very less.
- The members/ organizations that are present now in CMA as a member, have been a member since a very long time (Baby Boomers) and they are not much active in social media handles. So, targeting the youth of management students and expecting their involvement in CMA is highly considered and also encouraging them to be members. This trend is visible, true for others and CMA must think about that. No youth participation can be seen over the social media handles, whereas in the social media platforms of other associations it is very much visible.
- The last finding that is of prime importance is members involvement. CMA does not provide enough opportunity to its members to be involved enough in the activities or give any importance to their preference, the reason which they are either exiting from CMA as a member and new prospective interested candidates did not find it attractive enough to join CMA.

5. Conclusions

Strategy focusing on Facebook (66.7%) on LinkedIn (27.8%) amongst other social vehicles should be adopted. Surprisingly majority of CMA's audience (40%) consumed more than 3 hours on social media per week. They mostly preferred video-format for content and a whopping 65% vouched that they prefer to watch topics related to Industry Insight and Research. Over 90% of the responses were in favor of a bi-annual newsletter, sharing snippets of all past and upcoming events taking place. This along with a LinkedIn group was suggested in order to boost engagement with/amongst members. And finally, also suggested coming up with a customized social media template to monitor weekly analytics and make informed decisions regarding what content is working and what's not, in the future.

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