

Strategic Social Media Marketing in Promoting Inclusion and Support for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities

*Dr. Satish R¹, Dr. Selvakumar B², Dr. Yuvaraj D³, Dr. Bharathi Vasu S⁴

¹Professor, Department of Management Studies, St. Joseph's College of Engineering, OMR, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.
E-mail: dr.satishsjit@gmail.com,
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3104-6429>

²Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies, Easwari Engineering College, Ramapuram, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.
E-mail: selvakumar.b@eec.srmmp.edu.in,
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-4459-6470>

³Professor & Head, Department of Management Studies, Anand Institute of Higher Technology, Kazhipattur, Chengalpattu, Tamil Nadu, India.
E-mail: yuvarajd81@gmail.com,
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-6946-373X>

⁴Professor, Department of Management Studies, Anand Institute of Higher Technology, Kazhipattur, Chengalpattu, Tamil Nadu, India. E-mail: vasubharathi82@gmail.com,
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-9222-860X>

Abstract

Despite developments in inclusive practices, individuals with intellectual disabilities are still exposed to stigma, underrepresentation, and lack of inclusion. With the rise in popularity of digital technologies, there have emerged possibilities to combat this problem through social media marketing strategies. Unfortunately, little research has been devoted to the combined impact of such strategies, storytelling, and audience involvement on the effectiveness of inclusion. This paper suggests the use of a mixed-method approach to study the effect of strategic social media marketing on the process of inclusion. Quantitative data were gathered through questionnaires from 450 social media users, encompassing the general public, caregivers, advocacy staff, and 35 individuals with intellectual disabilities. Qualitative data were gathered via semi-structured interviews with 30 distinct informants, including individuals with intellectual disabilities, their relatives, and advocacy professionals. Quantitative analysis included descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis, while qualitative data was subjected to thematic analysis. It is apparent from the results that social media campaigns greatly increase awareness ($M = 4.21$) and diminish stigma ($M = 3.95$) and that personal stories create the most engagement ($M = 4.34$). Simple linear regression indicates that content exposure significantly predicts positive attitude change ($R^2=0.375$, $F(1,448) = 268.40$, $p<.001$, $\beta=0.612$). The qualitative findings further emphasize the significance of authentic representation, platform-specific approaches, and the involvement of people with intellectual disabilities. The research offers strategic insights regarding social media marketing as a means of turning digital communication into a tool of empowerment, inclusion, and social support.

Keywords Strategic Social Media Marketing, Intellectual Disabilities, Digital Inclusion, Social Acceptance, Disability Advocacy, Digital Storytelling, Community Engagement.

Article History:

Received: 02.03.2026;
Revised: 10.04.2026;
Accepted: 18.05.2026;
Published: 30.06.2026

Introduction

Individuals with intellectual disabilities usually face social barriers, lack of representation in the public domain, stigma, and fewer opportunities for participation in society. Despite the efforts made through awareness campaigns and inclusion programs to address these problems, there is still a prevalence of negative attitudes and a lack of communication, which impacts their social acceptance and empowerment. The fast evolution of digital communication has opened new ways to create an environment conducive to disability inclusion through the sharing of experiences and creation of awareness. Effective use of social media marketing is one of the strategies that can be used to create a good communication campaign that would foster positive attitudes and participation among persons with intellectual disabilities.

Social media influencers and digital content creators with intellectual disabilities make considerable contributions toward enhancing visibility and representation online. The presence of people with intellectual disabilities in digital society opens opportunities for challenging stereotypes, fostering acceptance, and creating inclusive stories, as people with intellectual disabilities are allowed to speak for themselves instead of having someone else speaking for them [1]. Moreover, it has been proven that the social marketing communication approach may be used to advance the inclusion of people with disabilities by connecting awareness campaigns to bigger goals of improving employment prospects, fighting discrimination, and fostering community participation [2]. Finally, there are examples of successful large-scale social media campaigns that address the issue of intellectual and developmental disabilities, demonstrating the ability of online platforms to foster civic participation, involvement, and social inclusion through interaction with relevant content [3].

The literature reviewed suggests that strategic management approach, organizational capabilities, and adaptation are key factors contributing to the effectiveness of social interventions and digital transformation efforts [4]. It has been established that social media platforms are a great tool for facilitating communication and social inclusion of people suffering from intellectual disabilities through the elimination of traditional limitations and increasing accessibility [5]. An inclusive approach to social marketing involving authentic representation, diversity, and engagement has a positive effect on public perception and is able to foster equality in marginalized communities [6]. Moreover, a strategic management and digital adaptation approach helps to develop sustainable organizational practices through increasing organizational resilience and facilitating communication strategy [7]. The recent analysis of social media platforms proves that visual storytelling, community engagement, and communication approaches can be used successfully to increase awareness and foster inclusion [8].

Social media marketing from a strategic perspective is not limited to awareness but helps with the empowerment and social development of marginalized sections of society. An inclusive marketing strategy in digital marketing may contribute to better visibility, building relationships within communities, and increasing participation in socioeconomic activities. Inclusive marketing strategies reveal how targeted digital communication can lead to empowerment of marginalized groups through equality and social inclusion [9]. In an educational setting, inclusive strategies using digital communication can contribute towards creating a conducive environment for people with disabilities [10].

The use of social marketing techniques can help develop a systematic framework to design interventions that would enhance positive public attitudes and promote inclusion behavior. Through the integration of audience assessment, persuasion techniques, and community engagement, social media campaigns can be used to shape perceptions and encourage diversity-based behavior. Diversity-related interventions that make use of social marketing techniques highlight the role of strategic communication as a tool to encourage acceptance and address social biases against stigmatized minorities [11]. It is clear that strategic social media marketing is one of the key mechanisms for leveraging digital communication as a force for social change.

While the role of social media has become increasingly prominent in advocating for the rights of people with disabilities, more research should be carried out to determine the effects of strategic digital marketing techniques on the success of inclusion initiatives and behavior change. Current research stresses the significance of the issues such as authenticity, storytelling, accessibility, and engagement; nevertheless, little attention has been paid to incorporating the results of the impact of social media into the experience of the stakeholders. In light of this, the purpose of the present study is Strategic Social Media

Marketing in Promoting Inclusion and Support for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities, where the effects of digital marketing techniques on awareness, stigma reduction, acceptance, empowerment, and sustainable inclusion will be analyzed.

Key Contribution

- The use of strategic social media campaigns helps to educate people on issues related to intellectual disability by engaging in storytelling and inclusivity. This form of communication ensures that there is increased awareness of intellectual disabilities.
- Social networking sites offer the chance for people with intellectual disability to share their stories and participate actively in online communities. This will make the experience more personal and enable people with intellectual disability to be confident and participate socially.
- Effective use of social media for marketing purposes allows the networking of people, families, advocates, and groups. The use of strategic communication and engagement enables resource exchange, collaboration, and equality and inclusivity.

The rest of this research paper is structured as follows. Section II provides a review of literature, reviewing the prior research conducted on social media marketing, digital inclusion, disability advocacy, storytelling tactics, community engagement, and finally, the research gap and the significant contributions of the research proposal. Section III highlights the materials and methods used in this research, covering aspects of the research design, qualitative and quantitative research method, sampling technique, data collection process, data analysis methods, and the ethics used in conducting this research. The results and analysis are provided in Section IV, which covers demographic analysis, descriptive analysis, correlation and regression analysis, qualitative analysis, discussions, and implications of the research. Lastly, Section V provides a conclusion of the research, highlighting the objectives, methods, results, contributions, and limitations of the research.

Literature Survey

The growth of social media applications has changed the manner in which marginalized populations interact and exchange information. Social media marketing is an effective tool used for facilitating inclusiveness through designing a proper strategy of communication that would increase awareness, enhance participation, and promote social networking. Digital communication is an opportunity to spread an inclusive message and interact with a community, thus giving empowerment to those people who have been socially excluded. The use of social media strategies for marginalized populations proves that online communication can be an instrument for empowering marginalized populations [12].

It has been shown that there is great potential in social media marketing techniques in terms of creating visibility, engagement, and community building among various target groups. Effective digital marketing involves the use of content targeted at audiences, communication, and relationship building over the Internet. It shows the importance of strategic planning, content personalization, and engagement in achieving social aims, which can be applied in order to help people with intellectual disabilities to feel included [13]. Furthermore, social media-based communication techniques have been found to be among the important ways of creating health and social awareness, offering information, and engaging individuals [14].

For a social media campaign strategy for social inclusion, it will be determined by relevance, timeliness, and emotional value of the message. Real-time and social media strategies theories provide organizations knowledge on audience reactions, how messages can be improved and how positive engagement outcomes can be achieved. The following examples illustrate the importance of monitoring the engagement of the users and improving the digital strategy of the campaign in order to achieve social outcomes, particularly in the realms of awareness and behavioral change [15]. Likewise, social media campaigns for community development have emphasized the importance of digital storytelling, engagement, and participation [16].

Social inclusion is a process that requires constant interaction between individuals, communities, and supporting organizations. There have emerged new opportunities for reducing social disparities by connecting isolated communities with others and by making support facilities available through digital media. Projects implemented by communities that employ digital media allow one to understand how social media can help achieve greater

participation, cooperation, and equality through creating an inclusive environment for interaction and knowledge sharing [17]. This information may prove useful when addressing the problem of including people with intellectual disabilities.

Social media communities can also help promote participation and enhance user experience through creating an environment that facilitates information sharing and support. It has been proven that social and health-oriented online communities based on interactive communication and user engagement, as well as tailored content, have potential in increasing participation levels and improving relationships between organizations and users [18]. As applied to the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities, the same techniques can be used in promoting awareness initiatives, facilitating access to various materials, and encouraging people with intellectual disabilities and their families to take part in the process. Emotional storytelling can serve as an efficient technique for improving social media participation and shaping audience perceptions. It is evident that stories and messages that are more emotional and talk about actual experiences and feelings can resonate with audiences better than standard informative content. Examples from digital storytelling show that using emotionally resonant content contributes to higher participation rates and interaction with social causes [19].

For individuals with intellectual disability to be socially included, support systems should be actively involved in the process. The support system is essential in ensuring that people with intellectual disabilities are given the opportunity to interact socially through facilitating participation and independence. Social inclusion programs focus on cooperation among people with intellectual disabilities and support service providers in order to reduce the social barriers and increase community involvement [20]. Social inclusion programs have also shown that community integration programs provide the needed support services and awareness to enable people with intellectual disabilities to participate in society [21].

Even though there have been improvements made towards inclusion in the case of people with disabilities, there are still several barriers that prevent individuals with intellectual disabilities from fully participating in society. These barriers include social stigmatization, non-accessibility, difficulties in communicating, and low community awareness that all impact social inclusion. It is important to be aware of these barriers to develop effective social media marketing strategies that will challenge the misconceptions and create an enabling digital environment for people with intellectual disabilities [22]. Long-term research on social inclusion emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive approach towards achieving this goal [23].

In summary, the literature reviewed shows that there is great potential for the use of strategic social media marketing to foster inclusion and provide support for people living with intellectual disabilities. The previous studies have emphasized the need for engagement, storytelling, accessibility of information, and participation in order to develop an effective inclusion campaign. Nevertheless, there is very little evidence on how the integration of social media marketing strategies influences the awareness level of people with intellectual disabilities and their experiences in real life. It means that this research aims to fill this gap in the research area.

Research Gap

Even though past studies have noted the importance of social media platforms in raising awareness and representation, as well as engaging communities in the support of marginalized people, very few scholarly works have been done in the area of strategic social media marketing and the promotion of inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities. Past studies have only concentrated on the areas of digital participation, barriers to digital access, or the experiences of individuals. Very little scholarly work has been conducted in the areas of planning and marketing techniques, storytelling and engagement tactics of audiences, and digital campaigns in promoting social acceptance and support for people with intellectual disabilities. There is very little work that has combined both quantitative measurements of effectiveness as well as experiences of stakeholders to determine the effectiveness of social media-based inclusion strategies. This study attempts to bridge that gap through the use of a mixed-methods approach.

Research Hypothesis

H1: Strategic social media campaigns have a significant positive association with awareness and knowledge about intellectual disabilities.

H2: Inclusive storytelling and representation through social media platforms significantly enhance social acceptance and engagement toward individuals with intellectual disabilities.

H3: Strategic social media marketing and community engagement significantly improve supportive intentions and collaborative participation among families, advocates, and social groups.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do strategic social media campaigns influence awareness and knowledge about intellectual disabilities among social media users?

RQ2: How does inclusive storytelling and representation through social media platforms contribute to social acceptance and engagement toward individuals with intellectual disabilities?

RQ3: How does strategic social media marketing and community engagement support collaborative participation and supportive intentions among families, advocates, and social groups?

Materials and Methods

Research Design

The present research involves a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research techniques in order to evaluate the significance of strategic social media marketing in making people with intellectual disabilities inclusive and providing support to them. It is decided to go for a combination of both types of research in order to meet the requirements of measuring the influence of social media on one hand and to explore individual experiences and perception about disability inclusion on the other hand. The study involves the use of a convergent mixed-method research design in which both quantitative and qualitative data are gathered and analyzed separately to form a holistic understanding.

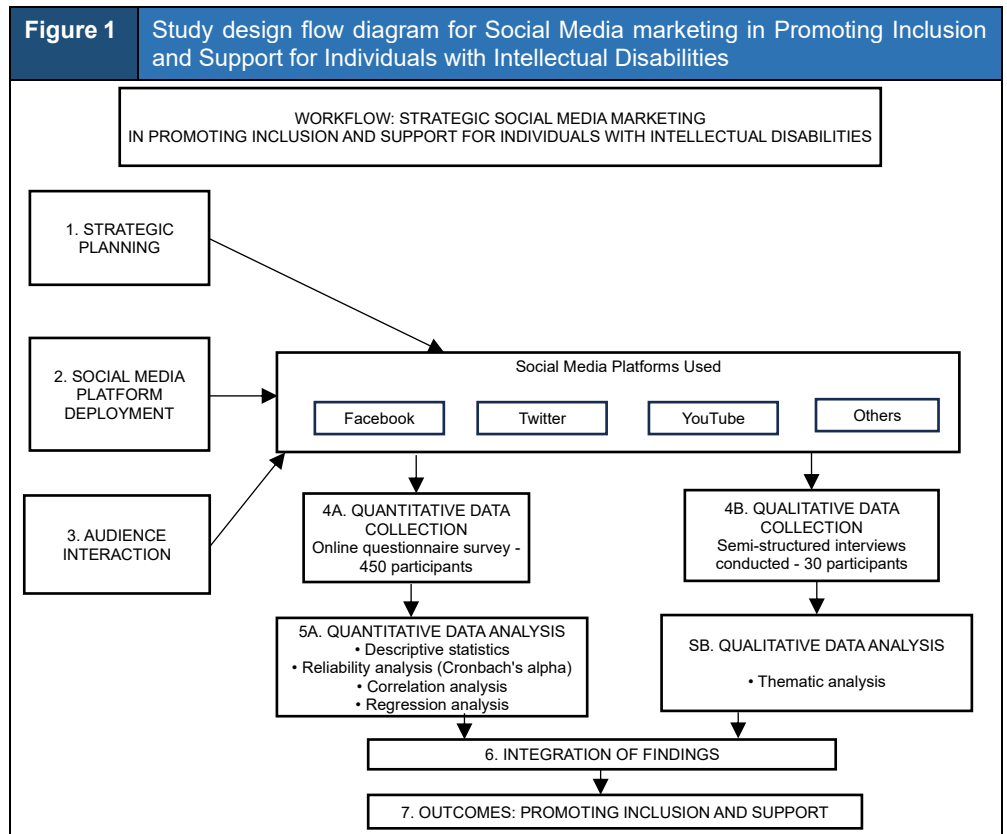


Figure 1 shows the step-by-step approach in executing strategic social media marketing for promoting inclusion and support for people with intellectual disabilities. Strategic planning

involves setting objectives, target groups, and communication strategies by way of awareness campaigns, storytelling, education, inclusive representation, and advocacy strategies. Strategies are then implemented in appropriate social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, X (Twitter), and online communities. Interaction with target groups involves content exposure, user engagement, discussions, feedback, and information exchange, which enables the building of connections and involvement in the community. The research methods applied here involve both quantitative and qualitative research designs. Survey data obtained from 450 participants is analyzed statistically, while interview data gathered from 30 participants is analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis of the findings from both sources provides an opportunity to get an entire understanding of the efficiency of social media marketing. The analysis has revealed that strategic digital communication approaches could be used to increase awareness, decrease stigma, encourage social acceptance, and empower individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Quantitative Research Approach

The quantitative research is concentrated on the effect of strategic social media marketing interventions on the awareness, attitudes, digital engagement, and supporting behavior of people with intellectual disabilities. The survey was developed based on the literature review of social media marketing, disability advocacy, digital inclusion, and social support. The survey was conducted among 450 social media users who are familiar with disability and use Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn. It includes various respondents, such as students, professionals, community members, caregivers, and other social media users. Thus, the opinions will be diverse regarding online disability awareness. Five variables were used in the questionnaire: social media exposure, awareness and knowledge about intellectual disabilities, social acceptance, digital engagement, and supportive behavior intentions. The variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 meant "strongly disagree" and 5 meant "strongly agree". Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha reliability test, correlation analysis, and regression analysis were used to conduct the research.

Qualitative Research Approach

The qualitative component of the research was used to learn more about the experiences and opinions of stakeholders directly involved in the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities. In total, 30 interviewees were selected via purposive sampling. Three major stakeholder groups were interviewed in the qualitative study: 12 family members/caregivers, 10 social media managers/representatives of disability support organizations, and 8 individuals with intellectual disabilities (self-advocates). The purpose of these interviews was to analyze the effectiveness of social media campaigns, the representation of individuals with intellectual disabilities in social media and their social participation online, as well as problems related to accessibility of information. Interviews were analyzed by means of thematic analysis, which involves several steps, such as data familiarization, coding, pattern recognition, and theme formation.

Sampling Strategy

The study employed a two-phased sampling approach. For the first phase, the researcher made use of convenience sampling in carrying out the quantitative research, where 450 social media users were sampled via disability-related social media platforms. Out of this group, 35 were individuals living with intellectual disabilities. For the second phase, the purposive sampling strategy was employed to sample participants for the qualitative part of the study. The second sample consisted of 30 people who had direct experience working or dealing with intellectual disability inclusion. Of the qualitative participants, 12 were caregivers/ family members, 10 were social media managers or representatives of disability organizations, while 8 were self-advocates living with intellectual disabilities.

Data Collection Procedure

Collection of data involved using questionnaires and interviews via the internet. The quantitative questionnaire was electronically sent to 450 respondents via social media sites and communities dealing with disability issues and inclusion. The qualitative interviews involved conducting interviews on 30 selected respondents in order to get information about their experience on the use of social media campaigns and inclusion. The use of both the survey data and the interview data made it possible for the study to analyze the effect and efficiency of strategic social media marketing. Whereas, the accessible design was used for

the completion of the quantitative questionnaire by the participants having intellectual disabilities to allow for ethical and valid involvement. This involved simplification of the language used in the questionnaire through the use of short sentences and the exclusion of difficult terms and abstract ideas. The questionnaire contained clear questions based on the Likert scale with standardized response choices. The participants received extra help where needed, through completion with the help of caregivers or researchers without any biasing their responses. Sufficient time was given to the participants to complete the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data obtained from 450 participants was statistically analyzed to discover the patterns and connections between research variables. Descriptive statistics was used to summarize demographics and patterns of responses, whereas Cronbach's alpha was employed to estimate the reliability of constructs used in measurement. Analysis based on correlation and regression was conducted in order to assess the effect of the social media marketing strategy on awareness, social acceptance and support among the target population. Thematic analysis was conducted for the qualitative data collected from 30 interviews in order to identify the main ideas and experiences related to the problem of digital inclusion. All these pieces of information were integrated in order to provide the holistic understanding of the social media marketing strategy in terms of raising awareness and support.

Ethical Considerations

The entire research process adhered to ethical considerations. All the subjects in the study were made aware of the objectives of the study and their consent was obtained before conducting the research. The privacy of all subjects was ensured, especially those with intellectual disabilities and their families. The subjects were told that participation was voluntary and that could withdraw from the study at any time without suffering any consequences. The study was conducted in a manner that respected the subjects with intellectual disabilities and did not discriminate against them. Special consideration was given to participants with intellectual disabilities by ensuring accessible communication, voluntary participation, and appropriate support during data collection while maintaining participant autonomy and confidentiality

Results and Analysis

The results of this study on Strategic Social Media Marketing in Promoting Inclusion and Support for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities are provided in this chapter through findings from the quantitative survey (n = 450) as well as the qualitative interviews (n = 30). The results have been discussed through two main parts; first is the quantitative analysis followed by the qualitative analysis.

PART A: Quantitative Results and Analysis

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents			
Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n=450)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	189	42.0
	Female	243	54.0
	Prefer not to say	18	4.0
Age Group	18–25	112	24.9
	26–35	145	32.2
	36–45	98	21.8
	46 and above	95	21.1
Relationship to Disability Community	Caregiver/Family Member	158	35.1
	Advocacy Organization Staff	92	20.4
	General Public/Follower	165	36.7
	Individual with Intellectual Disability	35	7.8
Social Media Platform Used Most	Facebook	178	39.6
	Instagram	132	29.3
	TikTok	89	19.8
	Other	51	11.3

Table 1 provides information on the demographic analysis of 450 respondents and helps to learn more about the diversity of respondents who participated in the research on strategic

social media marketing for promoting inclusion and support of people with intellectual disabilities. In terms of gender representation, it can be seen that the largest portion of respondents was female (54.0%, $n=243$), followed by males (42.0%, $n=189$), and a smaller number of respondents did not want to disclose their gender (4.0%, $n=18$). When looking at the age distribution of respondents, it is clear that the largest number of participants was in the 26–35 years old age group (32.2%, $n=145$), then aged 18–25 (24.9%, $n=112$), 36–45 years old (21.8%, $n=98$), and 46 years and above (21.1%, $n=95$). With regards to membership in the community of individuals with disability, the most respondents belonged to the category of the general public/ social media followers (36.7%, $n=165$) and caregivers/family members (35.1%, $n=158$). The rest of the respondents were staff members of the advocacy organizations (20.4%, $n=92$) and people with intellectual disabilities (7.8%, $n=35$). As for the popular social networks used, Facebook was ranked first among them as a leading social network (39.6%, $n=178$), followed by Instagram (29.3%, $n=132$), TikTok (19.8%, $n=89$) and others (11.3%, $n=51$). In all, the demographic data shows that the research has included a diversified sample in terms of their involvement in the disability networks and social media usage. Note that the 35 individuals with intellectual disabilities listed in table 1 represent quantitative survey respondents ($n = 35$, 7.8% of $N = 450$). These respondents are entirely distinct from the 8 self-advocates interviewed in the subsequent qualitative phase ($N = 30$).

Descriptive Statistics on Key Variables

Table 2		Descriptive Statistics on Key Variables		
Statement	Mean (M)	Std. Dev (SD)	Interpretation	
Social Media Exposure	4.21	0.68	Strongly Agree	
Awareness and Knowledge	4.05	0.74	Agree	
Digital Storytelling Engagement	4.34	0.61	Strongly Agree	
Social Acceptance	3.95	0.79	Agree	
Supportive Behaviour Intention	3.42	0.97	Agree	

As can be observed from table 2, all the measurement constructs have gained positive reactions from participants. Digital storytelling engagement was rated the highest among all the variables with a mean value of $M = 4.34$, followed by social media exposure with $M = 4.21$. It means that the use of inclusive content on social media can help raise awareness and engage people. Social acceptance with $M = 3.95$ and supportive behaviour intention with $M = 3.42$ have also gained positive reactions.

Reliability Analysis

Table 3		Reliability Analysis		
Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Reliability Interpretation	
Social Media Exposure	3	0.82	Good Reliability	
Awareness and Knowledge about Intellectual Disabilities	3	0.86	Good Reliability	
Social Acceptance	3	0.84	Good Reliability	
Digital Engagement	3	0.81	Good Reliability	
Supportive Behaviour Intention	3	0.85	Good Reliability	

Table 3 describes the Reliability testing of the survey instrument has been performed on the basis of Cronbach's alpha coefficient in order to measure the consistency of the measurement constructs. Survey questions have been classified under five latent constructs, including social media exposure, intellectual disability awareness and knowledge, social acceptability, digital engagement, and supportive behavior intention. Values of Cronbach's alpha ranging between 0.81 and 0.86 have been received, which is higher than the recommended threshold value of 0.70. Thus, all measurement constructs are reliable for further analysis.

Inferential Statistics

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation was done to test the association between frequency of exposure to inclusive social media content and positive attitude change towards people with intellectual disabilities.

Table 4	Correlation Analysis		
Variables	<i>r – value</i>	<i>p – value</i>	Interpretation
Content exposure frequency × Attitude change	0.612	< .001	Strong positive correlation
Personal storytelling content × Engagement (likes/shares)	0.578	< .001	Strong positive correlation (or Moderate-to-strong positive correlation)
Campaign frequency × Willingness to support/donate	0.443	.002	Moderate positive correlation
Variables	<i>r – value</i>	<i>p – value</i>	Interpretation
Content exposure frequency × Attitude change	0.612	< .001	Strong positive correlation

Table 4 describes the correlation analysis; there exist statistically significant positive correlations between the research variables. The frequency of content exposure exhibits a high positive correlation with attitude change ($r = 0.612$, $p < .001$), implying that frequent content exposure leads to more attitude changes. In turn, personal storytelling content exhibits a high positive correlation with engagement ($r = 0.578$, $p < .001$). This is one more confirmation of its capacity for fostering engagement in an audience. Finally, the frequency of campaigns is found to exhibit a moderate positive correlation with willingness to support/donate ($r = 0.443$, $p = .002$).

Regression Analysis

A simple linear regression was conducted to determine whether content exposure frequency predicts attitude change.

Table 5	Regression Analysis						
Predictor Model	B	SE	β	t	p-value	R ²	F (df1, df2)
(Constant)	1.52	0.14	—	10.86	< .001	—	—
Content Exposure	0.58	0.035	.612	16.38	< .001	.375	$F(1,448) = 268.4$

Table 5 shows the results of simple linear regression analysis carried out to determine whether the content exposure frequency is a significant predictor of attitude change toward people with intellectual disabilities. The regression analysis proved to be statistically significant, $F(1, 448) = 268.40$, $p < .001$, and explained 37.5% of the variance in attitude change ($R^2 = .375$, adjusted $R^2 = .374$). Content exposure frequency proved to be a statistically significant positive predictor ($\beta = 0.612$, $B = 0.58$, $SE = 0.035$, $t = 16.38$, $p < 0.001$). Because this is a simple bivariate regression model with a single predictor, the standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.612$) equals the Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.612$), where $R^2 = r^2 = 0.375$. These findings indicate that content exposure frequency is significantly associated with attitude change and explains a substantial proportion of variance in the observed responses. However, because the analysis is based on cross-sectional survey data, the findings should be interpreted as statistical associations rather than evidence of direct causal effects.

Summary of Quantitative Findings

High levels of agreement are found with regard to the effects of social media campaigns on raising awareness ($M = 4.21$) and reducing stigma ($M = 3.95$). Storytelling personal content is seen as most engaging ($M = 4.34$). There is a statistically significant positive relationship between the level of exposure to inclusion content and changes in attitude ($r = 0.612$, $p < 0.001$) accounting for 37.5% of variance in regression modeling. The level of behavioral response is relatively low ($M = 3.42$).

Qualitative Results and Analysis

In the qualitative part, there were 30 semi-structured interviews conducted among three different groups of participants: caregivers/relatives ($N=12$); social media managers working for advocacy organizations ($N=10$); and people with ID or their advocates ($N=8$).

Thematic Analysis

Theme 1: Authentic Storytelling as a Strategic Driver

Participants repeatedly pointed out that the most successful campaigns were those that employed real stories, rather than generic marketing content, to make the connection. Advocacy organization staff members noted an intentional change from using statistics and clinical language to using personal stories involving actual people and their families.

Theme 2: Platform-Specific Strategic Choices

The participants agreed that the platforms had specific strategic functions in that Facebook was useful in reaching the carers and the elderly with informative material, whereas Instagram and TikTok were more useful in reaching younger people with emotionally appealing content.

Theme 3: Barriers to Effective Inclusion Messaging

Limited budget to create content was among the challenges that a number of the participants noted. Another one was the unpredictability of the algorithms used making it hard for content to go organic. It is also difficult to measure behavioral changes over time.

Theme 4: Empowerment Through Representation

Intellectually challenged people and advocates stressed the need to be included in the campaign as active participants, not mere subjects. The participants felt a greater sense of dignity and validation when there were co-creation and participation in the process of the campaigns.

Illustrative Participant Perspectives

In order to maintain anonymity, participants were coded based on their role (i.e., CG1=Caregiver 1, SM1=Social Media Manager 1, SA1=Self-Advocate 1). Caregivers reported changes in the way their community reacted towards their relatives since particular organizations started using more storytelling posts instead of just informative posts. Social media managers noted that campaigns created in collaboration with people with intellectual disabilities always performed better than organizational campaigns. The self-advocates stressed their preference for speaking on behalf of themselves rather than having others speak about them in campaigns.

Hypothesis Development and Summary

Table 6		Hypothesis Development and Summary	
Hypothesis	Analysis Method	Statistical Result	Decision
H1	Correlation Analysis	Positive relationship observed between social media content exposure and awareness/attitude change ($r = 0.612$, $p < 0.001$). Regression analysis also showed significant prediction ($\beta = 0.612$, $R^2 = 0.375$, $p < 0.001$).	Supported
H2	Correlation Analysis and Descriptive Analysis	Personal storytelling content showed a significant positive association with engagement ($r = 0.578$, $p < 0.001$). Story-based campaigns achieved the highest engagement score ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.61$).	Supported
H3	Correlation Analysis	Campaign frequency demonstrated a significant positive association with willingness to support/donate ($r = 0.443$, $p = 0.002$).	Supported

Table 6 describes the results obtained from the hypothesis testing; it is evident that all the suggested hypotheses were confirmed. The results demonstrate that there is a positive link between strategic social media campaigns and increased awareness as well as attitude change towards intellectual disabilities. Strategic social media and community involvement play a major role in encouraging supportive behaviors. It can be concluded that the strategic

use of social media can have a positive impact on awareness as well as social inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities.

Summary of Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings support and supplement the quantitative findings, showing that Authentic, story-based content is seen as the most strategically effective form. Platform choice is an intentional strategic choice dependent upon the target audience. Resource and organizational constraints prevent the scaling of inclusion-oriented campaigns. The involvement of people with intellectual disabilities adds authenticity and credibility to the content.

Triangulation was possible through the mixed-methods research design by comparing the quantitative and qualitative results. It is evident from the quantitative data that inclusive social media content has a considerable impact on the attitude of the people ($r = 0.612$, $p < 0.001$). Qualitative data reveals why this happens, in that the reason was identified as storytelling and representation being strategic considerations. Both types of data are in agreement that personal narratives and representations are the key strategic considerations, and at the same time, point out the difference between attitude formation and behavioral changes, which the organization should consider in the future.

Discussion

The findings obtained from this study have clearly shown that there is an important place of strategic social media marketing in promoting the inclusion and empowerment of individuals who have intellectual disabilities. In particular, the quantitative results showed that there were strong perceptions of the effectiveness of social media campaigns as powerful means for creating awareness and changing attitudes toward people with disabilities ($M = 4.21$) and for decreasing stigma ($M = 3.95$), whereas personal stories content was found to have the highest level of engagement ($M = 4.34$). Additionally, exposure to inclusive social media content was strongly positively correlated with attitude change ($r = 0.612$, $p < 0.001$). Content exposure significantly predicted attitude change ($\beta = 0.612$, $R^2 = 0.375$, $p < 0.001$). These results suggest that consistent exposure to digital communication is associated with more positive attitudes toward intellectual disability inclusion. However, the cross-sectional nature of the survey does not allow definitive conclusions regarding causality. Other influencing factors, such as prior contact with individuals with intellectual disabilities, personal empathy levels, social background, or previous awareness of disability issues, may also contribute to attitude differences. The results of this study coincide with previous studies stressing that it is vital to have truthful representation, effective storytelling, and interactive communication in order to increase disability awareness. The qualitative results provide additional information about why the statistical results occur. The participants acknowledged that co-creating content in which individuals with intellectual disabilities play an active part in marketing campaigns adds authenticity, respectability, and credibility. Nevertheless, some problems have been detected as well; are related to a lack of resources, accessibility issues, and the discrepancy between greater awareness and actual behavior, such as volunteering, making donations, and participating in community events. Thus, although social media marketing works well in shaping attitudes and decreasing stigma, further campaigns should aim to transform positive attitudes into social actions. In general, the results obtained prove that social media marketing is a strong digital tool for empowering people with intellectual disabilities and making them part of the community. Although regression analysis identified content exposure as a significant predictor of attitude change ($\beta = 0.612$, $R^2 = 0.375$, $p < 0.001$), this relationship should be interpreted cautiously. The model includes a single predictor and does not account for potential confounding variables that may influence attitudes toward disability inclusion

Implications

The results obtained from this study have implications for disability advocacy organizations, policymakers, social marketers, and other interested parties because show how strategic social media marketing can be used as a means to promote inclusivity of individuals with intellectual disabilities. It is evident that awareness campaigns, authentic stories, and inclusive representation can play a great role in influencing attitudes of people and decreasing stigmatization of such individuals. Disability organizations can use various social media websites to formulate their communication strategies and emphasize the strengths of the individual and his/her accomplishments. In addition, this paper discusses the significance of including people with intellectual disabilities in the process of conducting

digital campaigns in order to make them more authentic, empowering, and socially visible. Community organizations and policymakers can use these findings to develop digital inclusion programs that will be aimed at increasing accessibility, participation, and support. At the same time, the uncovered gap between attitude improvement and practical supportive behavior indicates the necessity for designing strategies of translating social media activity into real-life participation via volunteering, activism, resources exchange, and community involvement. Thus, it can be concluded that carefully planned social media marketing strategies may help to build an inclusive digital environment and support social inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities.

Conclusion

This research seeks to examine the contribution of social media marketing to fostering inclusiveness and empowering people with intellectual disabilities by analyzing how communication strategies through digital channels can affect their awareness, social acceptance, empowerment, and inclusive behavior. The uniqueness of this study is based on the fact that it attempts to combine quantitative methods of measuring the influence of social media with qualitative perspectives of individuals with intellectual disabilities, caregivers, advocacy professionals, and educators. A mixed-methods research methodology was used in this study, where 450 people participated in an online survey, and 30 stakeholders were interviewed through semi-structured interviews. The results proved that a strategic social media campaign enhanced awareness ($M = 4.21$), decreased stigma ($M = 3.95$), and promoted positive attitudes, while storytelling was more successful in creating engagement ($M = 4.34$). The results demonstrated a significant association between content exposure and attitude change ($r = 0.612$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that meaningful digital content is related to more positive public attitudes. However, further longitudinal or experimental studies are required to establish causal relationships and examine the influence of additional factors. Additionally, qualitative findings stressed the importance of authenticity, active involvement, and specific communication on social media platforms. To develop a successful digital strategy for the future, it is necessary to focus on creating an artificial intelligence inclusion campaign, improving accessibility, conducting longitudinal studies, and developing multilingual/cross-cultural digital strategies.

Declarations

Funding Statement: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors. The authors conducted this study using their own academic and institutional resources.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this research work.

Ethical Considerations: Ethical guidelines were followed throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. The confidentiality and privacy of participants were maintained, particularly for individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed about their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences.

Data Availability Statement: The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. The data are subject to ethical and privacy restrictions to protect participant confidentiality.

References

1. Bonilla-del-Río, Mónica, Bárbara Castillo-Abdul, Rosa García-Ruiz, and Alejandro Rodríguez-Martín. "Influencers with intellectual disability in digital society: an opportunity to advance in social inclusion." *Media and communication* 10, no. 1 (2022): 222-234. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v10i1.4763>
2. Cruz-Morato, Marco Antonio, Carmen Dueñas-Zambrana, Francisco Rejón-Guardia, and María de las Olas Palma-García. "Engaging for inclusion: social marketing communication and disability employment in hospitality." *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* (2026): 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2026.2661712>

3. Williamson, Heather J., Kim W. Fisher, Devanshi Madhavni, and Lori Talarico. "#ADA25 campaign: using social media to promote participation, social inclusion, and civic engagement of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities." *Inclusion* 7, no. 1 (2019): 24-40. <https://doi.org/10.1352/2326-6988-7.1.24>
4. Bin Ahmad Zubir, K. A., and M. A. I. Bin Kamarudin. "Enhancing IP Commercialization Performance in Social Science Academics and the Role of Entrepreneurial Orientation, University Support, and Self-Efficacy." *Archives for Technical Sciences* 3, no. 34 (2025): 59–71. <https://doi.org/10.70102/afts.2025.1834.059>
5. Caton, Sue, and Melanie Chapman. "The use of social media and people with intellectual disability: A systematic review and thematic analysis." *Journal of intellectual and developmental disability* 41, no. 2 (2016): 125-139. <https://doi.org/10.3109/13668250.2016.1153052>
6. Verbytska, Anna, Iryna Lysenko, Larysa Babachenko, and Nataliia Kraskivska. "Inclusive social marketing: Representation and diversity in brand campaigns." *Marketing and Branding Research* 10, no. 1 (2023): 45-58. <https://doi.org/10.32038/mbr.2023.10.01.04>
7. Arvinth, N. "Strategic management approaches for post-pandemic business resilience and recovery." *Global Tech Management Digest* (2026): 1-8.
8. Lourenço, Francisca Toledo Rocha, Rita Oliveira, and Oksana Tymoshchuk. "Social Media as a Tool for Promoting Inclusion: An Analysis of the Facebook and Instagram Pages of Inclusive Spaces." In *ICT4AWE*, pp. 141-152. 2025. <https://doi.org/10.5220/0013440000003938>
9. Al Hakim, Yusuf Rahman, Dwi Sembe Sigita, and Mochamad Irfan. "Inclusive Marketing Strategy as an Instrument for Empowering Marginalized Groups in Economic and Social Development." *Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society* 4, no. 2 (2025): 61-68.
10. Olimov, S., S. Sharopov, A. Satvaldiyev, S. Bozorov, M. Axmedova, M. Payzibayeva, F. Yormatov, and F. Yusupova. "Inclusive Education: Addressing the Needs of Students with Disabilities in Mainstream Schools." *International Academic Journal of Innovative Research* 13, no. 1 (2026): 73–79. <https://doi.org/10.71086/IAJIR/V13I1/IAJIR1309>
11. Brauer, Markus, Anissa Dumesnil, and Mitchell Robert Campbell. "Using a social marketing approach to develop a pro-diversity intervention." *Journal of Social Marketing* 11, no. 4 (2021): 469-488. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSOCM-09-2020-0174>
12. Akpuokwe, Chidiogo Uzoamaka, Chidinma Favour Chikwe, and Nkechi Emmanuella Eneh. "Innovating business practices: The impact of social media on fostering gender equality and empowering women entrepreneurs." *Magna Scientia Advanced Research and Reviews* 10, no. 2 (2024): 032-043. <https://doi.org/10.30574/msarr.2024.10.2.0042>
13. Mahesh, K. M., and B. Rathnapriya. "Unleashing Growth: The Transformative Power of Social Media Marketing for Kerala's SMEs." *International Academic Journal of Science and Engineering* 12, no. 3 (2025): 405–412. <https://doi.org/10.71086/IAJSE/V12I3/IAJSE1276>
14. Thapliyal, Kavita, Manjul Thapliyal, and Diya Thapliyal. "Social media and health communication: A review of advantages, challenges, and best practices." *Emerging technologies for health literacy and medical practice* (2024): 364-384. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-1214-8.ch017>
15. Rajendren, D. J., T. Thiagarajan, M. A. P. Manimekalai, C. K. Sripavithra, M. Boltaeva, and R. A. Kayande. "Optimizing Brand Communication on Social Media through Real-Time Models." *Journal of Internet Services and Information Security* 16, no. 2 (2026): 213–226. <https://doi.org/10.58346/JISIS.2026.I2.014>

16. Sidauruk, Amelia Meisy, Ikhlas Ramadhan, Triana Putri, Muhammad Rizki Lubis, and Maharani Situmorang. "The Strategies for Promoting Tongging Tourism Village Through Social Media in Support of Sustainable Tourism." *International Journal of Travel, Hospitality and Events* 5, no. 1 (2026): 12-19. <https://doi.org/10.56743/ijothe.v5i1.740>
17. Purba, Jan Horas Veryady, Soei Khim, and Neni Nurisnaini. "The Role of Community Service in Promoting Social Inclusion and Reducing Socio-Economic Inequality." *Jurnal Terobosan Peduli Masyarakat (TIRAKAT)* 3, no. 1 (2026): 457-469. <https://doi.org/10.61100/j.tirakat.v3i1.318>
18. Alzahrani, Mohammed Saeed J., Jessica Wyllie, Jamie Carlson, and Syed Mahmudur Rahman. "Unlocking health participation: enhancing customer experiences in public health social media communities." *Journal Of Service Theory And Practice* 36, no. 7 (2026): 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSTP-07-2024-0238>
19. Losada Díaz, José Carlos, and Javier Almela-Baeza. "Emotional digital storytelling as a driver of social media engagement in higher education: A multi-platform analysis." *Information* 17, no. 1 (2026): 30. <https://doi.org/10.3390/info17010030>
20. McConkey, Roy, and Suzanne Collins. "The role of support staff in promoting the social inclusion of persons with an intellectual disability." *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research* 54, no. 8 (2010): 691-700. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2788.2010.01295.x>
21. Thorn, Shannon H., Amanda Pittman, Rachel E. Myers, and Connie Slaughter. "Increasing community integration and inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities." *Research in Developmental Disabilities* 30, no. 5 (2009): 891-901. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2009.01.001>
22. Abbott, Suzanne, and Roy McConkey. "The barriers to social inclusion as perceived by people with intellectual disabilities." *Journal of intellectual disabilities* 10, no. 3 (2006): 275-287. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1744629506067618>
23. Bigby, Christine. "Social inclusion and people with intellectual disability and challenging behaviour: A systematic review." *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability* 37, no. 4 (2012): 360-374. <https://doi.org/10.3109/13668250.2012.721878>