



DIGITAL MARKETING & STORYTELLING

A FACILITATOR'S MANUAL

For: Eco-preneurs, SMEs, Farmers,
FPOs, and Small Businesses

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Ashish is a digital marketer based in Kolkata. His work at The Locavore brings together three of his deepest passions — food, storytelling, and creating meaningful change through collaborative, purpose-driven communities.

Opening Note

Digital platforms are changing the way small businesses and farmer collectives connect with customers. From selling organic produce and promoting eco-friendly products to building communities around sustainable food, digital marketing and storytelling are unlocking opportunities once available only to large brands.

This module is designed to give small business owners, eco-preneurs, FPOs, and farmers **beginner-friendly, practical skills** to use social media and other digital tools effectively — helping them share their stories, strengthen their brands, and reach the right audiences.

Concept: What is Digital Marketing & Storytelling?

Digital marketing is the use of online tools and platforms to promote your products and services, engage with customers, and build lasting relationships. For small food and farm businesses, this can mean:

- Posting on social media (Instagram, Facebook)
- Sharing updates via messaging apps like WhatsApp Business
- Running simple, low-cost advertisements
- Creating and sharing stories that reflect your values and offerings

Storytelling in this context means presenting your business or product as part of a bigger narrative — not just *what* you sell, but *why* it matters. This might be about:

- The farmer who grew your produce
- The sustainable methods you use
- The positive impact on your community

Good storytelling blends **emotion, visuals, and relatable experiences** to connect with customers on a personal level.

Examples:

- A farmer-owned brand shares a short video of the morning harvest with the caption: *“Freshly picked at sunrise, grown without chemicals, straight to your table.”*
- A dairy cooperative tells the story of switching to traditional methods that improved milk quality and animal welfare: *“Happy cows, healthier milk – straight from our pastures to your home.”*
- A women’s self-help group making millet snacks posts a photo carousel introducing each team member with a fun fact about their favourite recipe, making the business feel personal and trustworthy.

Even with just a mobile phone and free tools like WhatsApp or Instagram, small businesses, FPOs, and eco-preneurs can use **digital marketing + storytelling** to build visibility, create trust, and stand out in a crowded market.

Why it Matters

- 1. Engages Your Audience** – Well-planned posts keep customers interested and connected.
Example: A vegetable grower posts daily Instagram Stories showing which greens are fresh that morning.
- 2. Builds Brand Awareness** – People remember your values and story, not just your products.
Example: A local honey brand shares a reel of the beekeeper's daily routine.
- 3. Drives Sales** – Social media and messaging can turn interest into purchases.
Example: A WhatsApp broadcast about a weekend farmers' market doubled a co-op's usual customers.
- 4. Cost-Effective** – Most platforms are free or far cheaper than traditional ads.
Example: A jam-making business grew its customer base through regular Instagram posts and free Facebook groups instead of paid newspaper ads.
- 5. Builds Trust & Transparency** – Showing your process makes customers more confident in your quality.
Example: A pickle brand posts behind-the-scenes photos of cleaning, cutting, and packing.
- 6. Creates Community Impact** – Storytelling can show how you support livelihoods or the environment.
Example: A millet snack brand shares a video of local women's groups making their products.

Objectives of the Module

By the end of this training, participants will be able to:

1. **Understand** the core concepts of digital marketing and storytelling, and their role in building brand presence, trust, and loyalty for food and agri-based businesses.
2. **Identify** their target audience, customer needs, and the most suitable digital platforms based on available resources, skills, and goals.
3. **Create** simple, engaging content using free tools such as Canva, WhatsApp Business, and Instagram.
4. **Practise** the basics of writing compelling captions, taking appealing product photos with a mobile phone, and producing short, engaging videos.
5. **Plan** and organise posts using a content calendar to maintain a consistent online presence.
6. **Track & Evaluate** content performance with basic analytics, using the insights to improve future posts and strategies.
7. **Develop** a personalised 30-day digital marketing plan tailored to their specific food or farm business.

Note for Facilitators

This module is a starting point. Its impact depends on your ability to:

- Connect concepts to participants' realities
- Encourage sharing of personal experiences
- Support them in applying skills to their own context
- Understand that theory alone cannot replace the trust, motivation, and confidence that a supportive trainer provides

Training Tips for Facilitators

1. Know Your Audience

- Understand participants' backgrounds (farmers, small business owners, eco-preneurs).
- Match your language, pacing, and examples to their experience levels.

2. Connect Through Practical Examples

- Use relatable success stories or live demonstrations.
- Always link concepts back to participants' daily work.

3. Keep it Simple, Visual, and Interactive

- Show, don't just tell — use live social media examples, Canva demos, and WhatsApp Business walk-throughs.
- When possible, work with participants' own products for examples.

4. Encourage Hands-On Practice

- Build time for participants to create at least one post, story, or update during the session.
- Immediate application builds confidence.

5. Facilitate Peer Learning

- Create space for group discussions, sharing tips, and troubleshooting challenges together.

6. Be Inclusive and Patient

- Make sure everyone feels welcome, regardless of digital comfort level.
- Allow extra time for newcomers to smartphones or social media.
- Celebrate small wins to keep morale high.

7. Maintain Post-Training Support

- Suggest a WhatsApp or Telegram group for continued sharing, feedback, and motivation.

8. Bring the Human Touch

- Empathy, encouragement, and listening matter as much as the content itself.
- Remember: you're not just teaching skills — you're building confidence.

Digital Media Glossary 101

(with examples for diverse staple & ingredient sellers)

Content: Anything you share online — text, images, audio, or video.

Example: A photo series of your winter jaggery-making process, or a short video of freshly foraged mahua flowers being dried.

Post: A single piece of content on social media.

Example: An update about the arrival of this year's Kashmiri walnuts or Himachali rajma.

Story: A temporary post that disappears after 24 hours.

Example: A quick clip of you sorting fresh turmeric at the mandi.

Reel: A short, engaging video on Instagram (up to 90 seconds) to reach new people.

Example: 30 seconds showing the roasting of ragi before milling, with a voiceover explaining its health benefits.

Reach: The number of unique people who see your content.

Example: 1,200 people saw your update about the limited batch of cold-pressed groundnut oil.

Engagement: Likes, comments, shares, and saves on your posts.

Example: 85 people commented on your post about wild honey harvesting in the nearby forest.

Content Strategy: A plan for what, when, and why you post.

Example: Sharing seasonal produce every Monday, cooking tips on Wednesdays, and special offers on Saturdays.

Content Pillars: The main themes you regularly use.

Example:

1. **Seasonal Staples** (e.g., new harvest wheat, moong dal)

2. **Local Specials** (e.g., black rice from Manipur, red rice poha)
3. **Kitchen Tips** (e.g., how to store flour during the monsoon)
4. **Behind the Scenes** (e.g., visiting the farmer's field, grinding masalas)

Content Calendar: A schedule for upcoming posts.

Example: Planning to post about amla candy in winter, mahua ladoos in spring, and fresh jaggery after sugarcane harvest.

Hashtags: Keywords with “#” to make your posts discoverable.

Example: #FreshRajma #OrganicMustardOil #MonsoonTurmeric.

Analytics: Data showing post performance.

Example: Your ragi dosa batter video had 2x more views than your millet flour price update.

Handle: Your account name.

Example: @PrakritiFoods or @AnnapurnaGrains.

Boosting: Paying to promote a post.

Example: Spending ₹300 to promote your Diwali dry fruit box to nearby towns.

CTA (Call to Action): A prompt telling people what to do next.

Example: “Pre-order your fresh Alphonso mangoes today — DM us!”

Social Media: Platforms where you connect with customers.

Example: WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook.

Instagram: A photo and video platform.

Example: Sharing a carousel showing the different varieties of millets you sell.

Facebook: A platform for community and business updates.

Example: Posting bulk order rates for restaurants and caterers.

WhatsApp Business: Messaging with business tools like catalogues and quick replies.

Example: Sending your weekly stock list of pulses, spices, and seasonal produce.

SEO (Search Engine Optimisation): Making your business easy to find on Google.

Example: Adding “Buy black wheat flour in Indore” to your profile.

SME (Small and Medium Enterprise): A small to mid-sized business.

Example: A family-run jaggery-making unit supplying to nearby towns.

FPO (Farmer Producer Organisation): Farmers selling under a shared brand.

Example: A group producing and packaging single-origin turmeric.

Algorithm: The automated system decides which posts people see.

Example: Instagram showing your mango video to more people who have liked your fruit posts before.

Engagement Rate: The % of viewers who interact with your post.

Example: 40 likes and 8 comments on a post seen by 400 people = 12% engagement rate.

User-Generated Content (UGC): Customer-made posts about your product.

Example: A customer posting their winter haldi doodh made from your fresh turmeric.

Geotag: Adding a location to a post.

Example: Tagging “Hoshiarpur Farmers Market” in your apple harvest post.

Sessions Overview & Breakdown

This module is delivered as a **3-hour beginner-friendly workshop** covering the basics of **storytelling** and **digital marketing** for food and agri-based businesses. It is highly practical, using simple tools and hands-on activities so participants leave with:

- A clear **brand story** they can share online
- An understanding of **which platforms to use and how**
- At least a few ready-to-post **content ideas** tailored to their business

Session 1: Fundamentals of Storytelling for Food Branding (60 minutes)

Objectives:

- Understand why storytelling matters for food and farm businesses
- Learn the 4 key elements of a compelling food story: **People, Values, Origin, Impact**

Flow:

1. **Icebreaker (10 mins)** – Each participant shares a favourite food memory or product story.
 - *Example prompts:*
 - “What’s one ingredient or recipe that’s special to your family or region?”
 - “Tell us about a moment you felt proud of your product.”
2. **Mini Lecture & Examples (15 mins)** – The facilitator introduces the **4 key elements** of strong stories.
 - Use 2–3 real examples from food brands:
 - Pickle brand using mangoes sourced from known farmers
 - Bakery using only indigenous grains

- Trainer tip: Select one story shared in the icebreaker, break it down with the group to identify its elements.
3. **Discussion (20 mins)** – Participants look at examples of successful food storytelling (local & global).
- Encourage them to follow other brands for inspiration (but not imitation).
 - Spot content gaps they could fill — e.g., if most farm-to-table brands post only product shots, they could add short recipe reels.
4. **Reflection (15 mins)** – Each participant writes down one story idea they can tell about their own business.
- *Examples:* “The journey of our turmeric from farm to jar,” “How we adapt our menu with the seasons,” “Our partnership with a local farmers’ collective.”

Outcome by the end of Session 1:

- Each participant has **one concrete story idea** ready to develop into digital content.

Session 2: Social Media Marketing for Food Businesses (90 minutes)

Objectives:

- Identify the platforms best suited for food branding (**Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp Business**)
- Understand the basics of creating effective posts and choosing the right format for your goal
- Learn how to use hashtags, captions, and visuals for storytelling and sales

Understanding the Strengths of Each Platform (30 mins)

Goal: Help participants choose the most effective platform(s) for their business, based on the kind of content they want to share and the audience they want to reach.

Approach: Use simple, visual slides and real-life examples from food and agri-businesses.

Instagram – Visual Storytelling & Discovery

Instagram is the go-to platform for visually rich content like food, farming, and culture. It's especially effective for building **brand identity** and reaching **urban, younger, or food-conscious customers**.

Why it works for food businesses

- People love to see food and farming visuals — it's naturally engaging.
- Reels and Stories allow you to give customers a behind-the-scenes view.
- Hashtags and geotags help new customers find you.

How to Use It (Step-by-Step)

1. **Set up a professional account** → Switch to a Business Profile so you can see insights.
2. **Plan your feed** → Mix storytelling, educational, and promotional posts.
3. **Use Reels weekly** → Reels are favoured by Instagram's algorithm and reach new customers.
4. **Add geotags & hashtags** → Example: #NagalandChillies
#FarmToTableDelhi.
5. **Engage actively** → Reply to comments, share customer posts on your Stories.

Best Practices

- Post 2–3 times a week.
- Use 5–10 relevant hashtags (not random ones).
- Maintain a consistent look — simple backgrounds, natural light.
- Share Stories daily if possible — even simple updates.

Food-Specific Examples

- **Harvest Reel:** A farmer collective films a 30-second reel of mustard being harvested, with a voiceover: *“From our fields in Rajasthan, straight to your kitchens”*.
- **Recipe Carousel:** A millet brand shares “3 quick breakfasts with foxtail millet” in a swipe-through post.
- **Behind-the-Scenes Story:** A jaggery unit posts a daily Story of the boiling process, with a poll sticker: *“Do you prefer liquid jaggery or solid jaggery blocks?”*

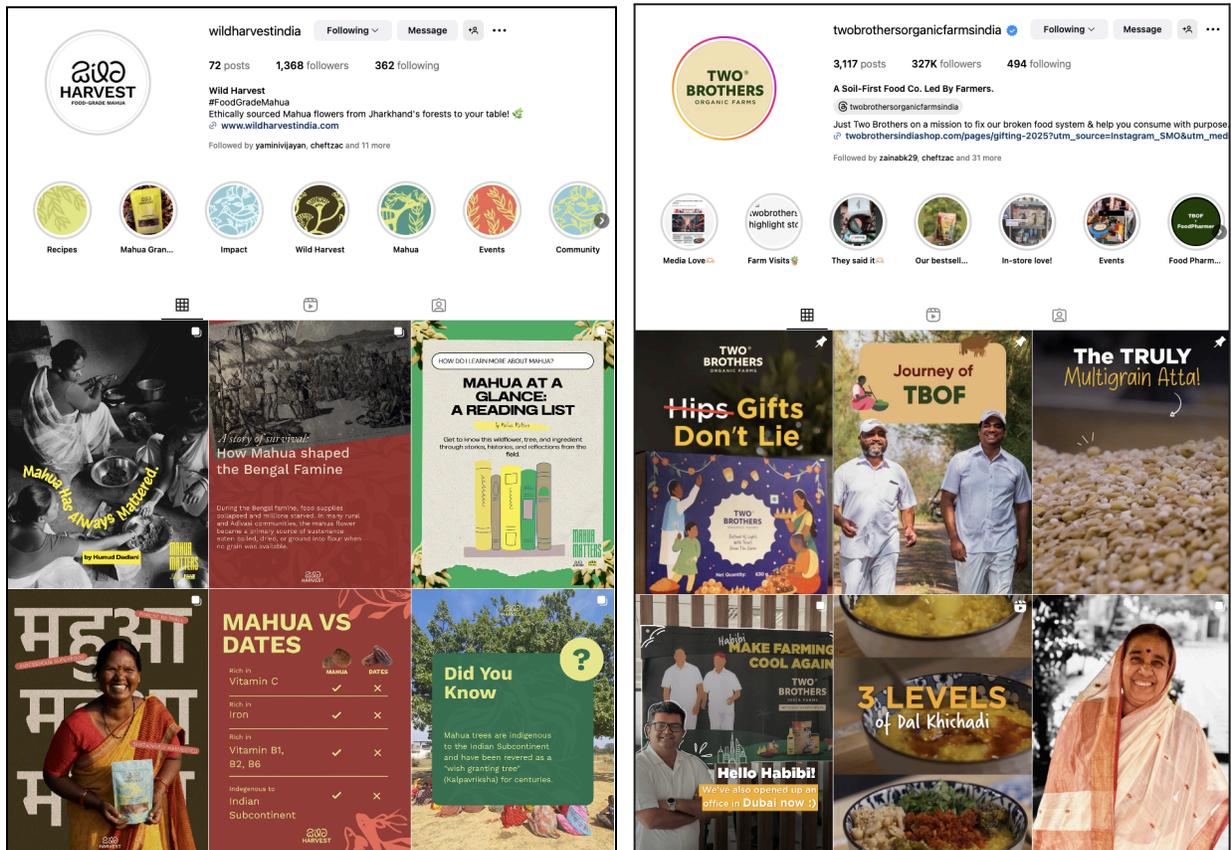
Mistakes to Avoid

- Posting only product images with price. Add story + context.
- Overloading captions with hashtags.
- Ignoring comments and DMs. Customers expect replies.

Two Instagram accounts, with varying content strategy and audience base, to follow closely for inspiration and references:

Wild Harvest India: a small-scale enterprise based in Jharkhand mostly working with Mahua, as well as local communities that grow it and preserve its cultural significance.

Two Brothers Organic Farms: A large-scale company based in Maharashtra selling various food products, as well as working with thousands of farmers across India to promote sustainable agriculture and regenerative organic farming practices.



Facebook – Community Building & Longer Storytelling

Facebook is stronger for **community engagement, events, and long-form storytelling**. It's widely used by older age groups and families, who are often the **decision-makers for household purchases**. And when interlinked with an Instagram account, all posts on Instagram are automatically published on Facebook, which implies one need not create specialised content for Facebook.

Why it works for food businesses

- Farmers' markets, co-ops, and events get more visibility through Facebook Events.
- Allows for longer storytelling with albums, captions, and links.
- Strong local community groups where you can introduce your business.

How to Use It (Step-by-Step)

1. **Create a Facebook Page** (not a personal profile). Add logo, cover photo, contact info.
2. **Post albums & long updates** → Seasonal harvest stories, step-by-step processes.
3. **Create Events** for workshops, farmers' markets, or seasonal launches.
4. **Engage in groups** → Join local food or sustainability groups and post updates there.
5. **Encourage reviews** → Ask happy customers to leave reviews on your Page.

Best Practices

- Post 2–3 times per week.
- Use photo albums for processes (e.g., rice harvesting stages).
- Write longer captions that give depth to your story.
- Share customer testimonials and media mentions.

Food-Specific Examples

- **Event Promotion:** A women’s FPO selling papads creates a Facebook Event: *“Meet us at Bhopal Organic Market, 12 May, Stall #14”*.
- **Process Album:** A honey brand shares 10 photos showing hive care, extraction, and bottling, with a story about bee welfare.
- **Community Group Post:** A millet grower posts in a local “Healthy Eating” group: *“Fresh ragi flour available this week. DM for orders”*.

Mistakes to Avoid

- Copy-pasting short Instagram captions — Facebook audiences prefer more details.
- Using personal profiles instead of business pages (harder to be found).
- Not updating regularly — inactive Pages look untrustworthy.

WhatsApp Business – Direct Sales & Personal Connection

WhatsApp Business is the most **direct and personal tool** for small businesses. Since most customers already use WhatsApp daily, it works very well for **orders, price updates, and building loyal customers.**

Why it works for food businesses

- Direct delivery of updates to customers’ phones (higher chance of being read).
- Features like Catalogues, Quick Replies, and Labels save time.
- Works best for repeat customers (weekly veggie baskets, monthly spice refills).

How to Use It (Step-by-Step)

1. **Download WhatsApp Business** → Separate it from personal WhatsApp.
2. **Set up Business Profile** → Add logo, address, catalogue, order info.
3. **Create Catalogue** → Add products with photos, prices, short descriptions.
4. **Use Broadcast Lists** → Send updates to many customers without spamming groups.

5. **Label Customers** → Example labels: “Retail,” “Wholesale,” “Market Buyers.”

Best Practices

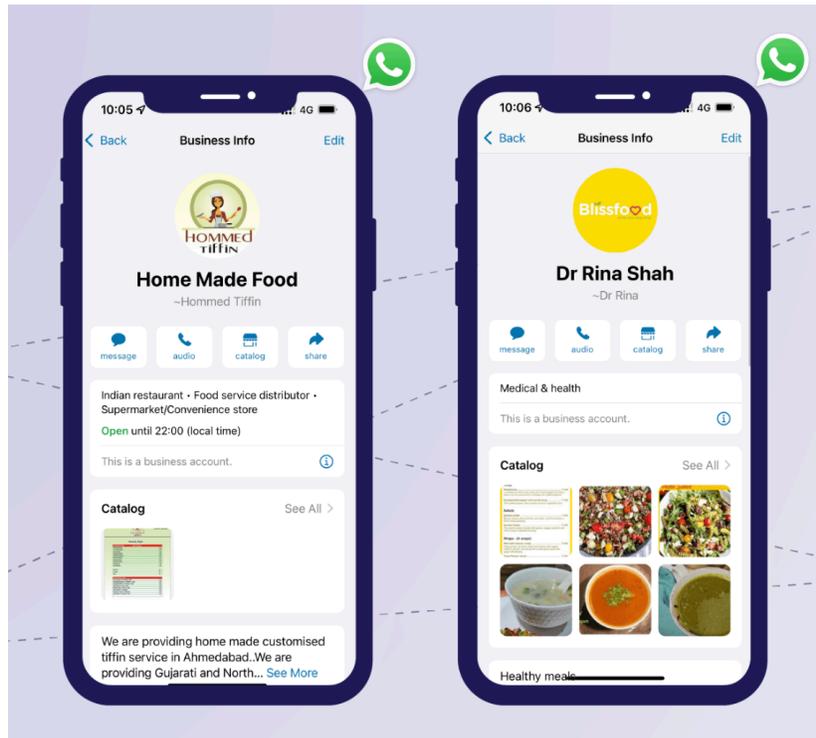
- Send updates only 2–3 times a week.
- Use clear CTAs → “Reply YES to book” or “Order before 6pm for delivery tomorrow.”
- Use short videos and images instead of only text.
- Respond quickly to queries.

Food-Specific Examples

- **Catalogue Update:** A spice seller shares a broadcast with photos and prices of masala blends, labelled under “Winter Special.”
- **Market Reminder:** A vegetable farmer sends: *“We’ll be at Pune Farmers’ Market this Sunday, 8am–1pm, Stall #22. Fresh beans, pumpkin, and okra available.”*
- **Behind-the-Scenes Video:** A dairy FPO shares a 20-second clip of milking cows in the morning with the caption: *“Today’s fresh batch of milk now available”*.

Mistakes to Avoid

- Spamming customers daily — they may block you.
- Not updating catalogue regularly.
- Forgetting to keep WhatsApp replies professional (avoid mixing personal forwards).



Please ensure that you set up your WhatsApp business account with optimum information, including details such as your business name, a description about your business, catalogue with products you offer, their details and price, and a clear direction on how people can order.

B WhatsApp Business

A tool for small businesses to communicate with customers



Content Types and Their Purpose (30 mins)

Goal: Help participants understand that not all posts should be about selling. Different content types serve different purposes — from building trust to educating or entertaining.

Storytelling – Connect with your audience emotionally.

- Share the *origin* of your product, the people behind it, or the values that guide your work.
- *Example:* A millet snack brand introducing each member of their women’s collective with a short personal story.

Educational – Teach something useful.

- Tips on storage, cooking, or using seasonal produce.
- *Example:* A tomato grower explaining how to store tomatoes so they last longer.

Entertaining – Keep your audience engaged and coming back.

- Fun food hacks, seasonal recipes, or cultural food traditions.
- *Example:* A quick reel showing 3 ways to enjoy mango pickle.

Promotional – Highlight a product clearly and make it easy to buy.

- Include price, how to order, and a clear Call to Action (CTA).
- *Example:* “Fresh figs available this weekend – ₹120 for 500g. Order now on WhatsApp!”

Announcements – Share timely news.

- New product launches, upcoming events, or limited offers.
- *Example:* “We’ll be at the Sunday Organic Market – stall no. 12 – with our first batch of winter turmeric.”

Facilitator Tip:

- Show participants 1–2 real examples for each content type (from your own archive or their local context).
- Encourage them to think about a **mix** of content types — too much promotion can turn audiences away, while variety keeps them engaged.

Food-specific examples you can illustrate (by [The Locavore's partner producers](#)):

- [A pickle brand posts a short reel of the pickling process on Instagram to create curiosity.](#)
- [A coffee company posts about a valuable team member, and how climate affects their production and harvesting processes.](#)
- [A spice seller talks about the profile of a particular product, its features, and common myths associated with it.](#)

Group Brainstorm (30 mins)

- Each participant lists 5–7 content ideas they can post in the next month.
- Mix selling, educating, and inspiring content. Example prompts:
 - “What’s a behind-the-scenes moment you can share this week?”
 - “What seasonal tip or recipe can you teach your customers?”
 - “What’s something new you can announce or highlight?”

Outcome by end of Session 2:

- Each participant has a **list of at least 5 post ideas** matched to specific goals and platforms.

Interactive Activity: Building Your Content Pillars & Strategy (45 minutes)

Purpose:

To help participants create a simple, practical content strategy they can begin using immediately for their own food business.

Instead of posting at random, **content pillars** act as guiding themes that:

- Keep posts consistent, relevant, and connected to your brand story
- Help you reach your target audience more thoughtfully
- Reduce the stress of deciding “what to post” each time

Facilitator Introduction

1. **Explain content pillars** – These are broad themes you return to repeatedly in your posts.
 - They are for **internal reference only** — not something you share with your audience.
 - They help you decide why you are posting, for whom, and what you want to achieve.
2. **Relate to small food business examples:**
 - **Product Storytelling:** e.g., The journey of your turmeric from field to jar
 - **Educational Tips:** e.g., How to store millets for freshness
 - **Behind-the-Scenes:** e.g., Team packing orders before the market
 - **Community Impact:** e.g., How your brand supports local farmers

Example Pillars

Pickle-making collective:

- *From Our Kitchen* (recipes and cooking tips)
- *Meet the Makers* (profiles of women in the collective)

- *Local & Seasonal* (highlighting seasonal ingredients)
- *Sustainability in Action* (eco-friendly packaging updates)

Millet snack brand:

- *Know Your Millet* (educational facts)
- *Snack Ideas* (recipes using their products)
- *Festivals & Traditions* (millets in cultural events)
- *In the Community* (photos from local fairs or markets)

Participant Exercise

Part 1 – Identify Your Pillars (10 mins)

- Using the worksheet, participants list **3–5 content pillars** that best reflect their brand’s uniqueness and audience interests.

Part 2 – Generate Post Ideas (10 mins)

- For each pillar, participants brainstorm **1–2 post ideas** in different formats (e.g., reel, carousel, single image, or text post).
- *Facilitator tip:* Encourage variety — not every post should be promotional.

Part 3 – Share & Learn (15 mins)

- Each participant presents their pillars and **one post idea** to the group.
- Peers and facilitators give feedback, spot opportunities, and share inspiration.
- Emphasise that pillars can evolve over time, but having them now creates structure and consistency.

Time Breakdown (45 mins)

- **Facilitator briefing:** 10 mins
- **Worksheet – Pillars:** 10 mins
- **Worksheet – Post ideas:** 10 mins
- **Open group sharing & feedback:** 15 mins

Content Pillar Worksheet Reference:

 Content Pillar Name	 Why it matters to my brand	Social media post ideas  (1-2 per pillar)

Optional Facilitator Add-ons:

- Show a live example of turning a content pillar into multiple post formats.
- Pair participants to review each other’s ideas before group sharing.
- Encourage them to keep the worksheet in a visible place in their workspace so it becomes their “content compass.”

Planning Next Steps with the Group

The end of the workshop is a critical moment to ensure participants feel confident and motivated to apply what they've learned.

1. Create a Support Network

- Encourage participants to form a WhatsApp group (or similar online space) for ongoing peer support.
- The group can be used to:
 - Share successes and progress updates
 - Ask for feedback on posts and ideas
 - Post examples of their work
 - Inspire each other with new content ideas

2. Schedule a Follow-up Check-in

- Agree on a virtual meeting **about one month after the workshop**.
- Keep it informal but focused — each participant should:
 - Share one post they created based on their content pillars
 - Talk about what worked well and what challenges they faced
- The facilitator can also share extra tips, examples, or trends collected since the training to keep learning fresh.

3. Set Personal Goals

- Encourage participants to set **one realistic, measurable goal** for the next month. Examples:
 - Post once a week
 - Try a new content format (e.g., a reel)
 - Share one customer story online
- Emphasise that small, consistent actions create momentum.

Summing Up Key Learnings

To close the session, the facilitator should recap the main takeaways:

- **Digital marketing is accessible and affordable** — you can start with just your phone and free apps.
- **Storytelling makes your business relatable** — share the people, values, and journeys behind your food.
- **Consistency matters more than perfection** — one post per week is better than none at all.
- **Simple tools like Canva and WhatsApp** allow you to create, share, and connect quickly without big budgets.
- **Your audience wants to hear from you** — staying visible keeps your business in their minds.

Gathering Feedback

Feedback improves future workshops and shows participants that their input matters.

- Use a printed sheet or a Google Form with questions such as:
 1. What did you like most about the training?
 2. One skill or insight you learned today?
 3. One thing you will try in the next week?
 4. Any topic you wish we had covered more in depth?
- **In-person:** Allow 5–10 minutes for participants to fill this in before they leave.
- **Online:** Send the feedback form link immediately after the session.

Appendix

Useful external resources available in Hindi for free:

[Full Canva course in Hindi](#)

[Instagram basics in Hindi](#)

[WhatsApp Business in Hindi](#)

A sample of a 5-day Content Strategy Calendar for a local Indian pickle brand:

Day	Topic and Theme	Platform and Format	Post Idea
1	From Farm to Jar (<i>storytelling</i>)	Instagram carousel, WhatsApp broadcast	3–4 images showing the journey of their mango pickle: farmer picking mangoes, washing and cutting, mixing spices, sealing jars.
2	How to Store Pickle for Freshness (<i>educational</i>)	Instagram reel (cross-posted to Facebook)	A 15-second video with quick tips on storing pickle after opening to keep it fresh for longer.
3	Limited Stock Alert (<i>promotional</i>)	Instagram post (cross-posted to Facebook)	Highlight a product that's running out, with price and ordering info.
4	New Flavour Launch (<i>announcement</i>)	Instagram reel (cross-posted to Facebook)	Tease the arrival of a pickle with short clips of ingredients, spice mix, and the final jar.
5	Pickle Pairing Challenge (<i>fun and entertaining</i>)	Instagram stories (cross-posted to Facebook)	Ask followers to vote on their favourite food to pair with mango pickle (like with paratha, khichdi, thepla, etc).