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Measuring organic social media distribution as a sustainable entrepreneurship practice: A protocol for lead generation research in professional services

Yevhen Velychko

Zarsus Business School, US
evgeniizarsusedu@gmail.com

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Abstract: *Purpose*. This paper develops a measurement protocol for evaluating organic social media distribution as a resource-efficient alternative to paid advertising in professional service entrepreneurship. Focusing on business coaching, we operationalize how cross-platform short-form video strategies can be measured through sustainability lenses: economic viability, resource efficiency, and labor conditions. *Methodology*. We synthesize 25+ empirical studies spanning influencer credibility, platform dynamics, and sustainable entrepreneurship. From this synthesis, we construct a field-ready protocol operationalizing four intervention domains: (1) cross-platform posting without paid amplification, (2) standardized identity cues, (3) psychological friction management, and (4) technical production standards. The protocol specifies variable definitions, data collection procedures, fidelity coding rules, and statistical analysis plans. *Theoretical contribution*. The protocol integrates influencer marketing theory, platform studies, and entrepreneurship research into a unified framework in which content creation functions simultaneously as a distribution mechanism, a trust-building intervention, and a sustainable business practice. By treating organic distribution as economic sustainability question, we extend sustainable entrepreneurship scholarship into the digital creator economy. *Practical implications*. For entrepreneurs, the protocol translates credibility constructs into measurable behaviors and testable outcomes. For researchers, it provides standardized procedures enabling rigorous field studies examining whether organic strategies generate economically viable lead flows under resource constraints. For educators, it demonstrates how content creation can

Corresponding author: *Yevhen Velychko*
E-mail: *evgeniizarsusedu@gmail.com*

be taught as core entrepreneurial competency aligned with sustainable business principles.

Keywords: sustainable entrepreneurship, social media measurement, organic distribution, professional services, lead generation, TikTok, Instagram Reels, measurement protocol, business coaching

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth; **SDG 9:** Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

1. Introduction

Short-form video platforms have fundamentally restructured how entrepreneurs access audiences and generate business opportunities. Unlike traditional social media architectures built around follower networks, platforms such as TikTok and Instagram Reels employ algorithmic recommendation systems that can expose unknown creators to substantial audiences when early engagement signals demonstrate content resonance (Kaye et al., 2021; Zeng & Kaye, 2022). For professional service providers - including business coaches, consultants, therapists, and advisors - this distribution logic presents a compelling strategic question: Can organic content strategies generate economically viable client leads without recurring advertising expenditures?

This question carries theoretical and practical significance across multiple research domains. Within influencer marketing scholarship, the dominant focus has examined consumer goods marketing, brand attitudes, and purchase intentions (De Veirman et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019), leaving professional services contexts underexplored. Professional services differ fundamentally from product marketing because trust formation precedes transaction, expertise is intangible, and conversion pathways move from attention to inquiry to relationship rather than from awareness to purchase (Bozer & Jones, 2018). Coaching effectiveness research has documented robust outcomes for structured coaching interventions on goal attainment and well-being (Grant et al., 2009; Theeboom et al., 2014), yet this literature treats client acquisition mechanisms as exogenous to coaching science, creating a knowledge gap about how coaches build commercially viable practices.

From a sustainable entrepreneurship perspective, the choice between paid advertising and organic content creation represents more than a tactical marketing decision - it reflects fundamentally different resource allocation strategies with distinct sustainability implications. Paid advertising creates recurring customer acquisition costs that scale proportionally with business growth, disproportionately burdening solo practitioners and small firms operating under capital constraints (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011). Organic distribution strategies convert creator labor into potentially durable audience assets, potentially leading to declining marginal acquisition costs over time as audience relationships compound. This dynamic aligns with sustainable entrepreneurship's emphasis on resource efficiency, long-term viability, and business models that remain economically viable at smaller scales (Muñoz & Cohen, 2018; Hall et al., 2010).

The sustainability dimensions extend beyond economics into labor conditions and social equity. Platform labor scholarship has documented how "organic" creator strategies can intensify unpaid labor, expose individuals to algorithmic precarity, and shift business risks onto creators while platforms extract value through data aggregation and advertising monetization (Duffy & Pooley, 2019; Gandini, 2021). These tensions raise critical boundary questions: Under what conditions does organic distribution function as a sustainable entrepreneurial practice rather than a mechanism of self-exploitation? What measurement frameworks can assess both performance outcomes (lead generation, conversion efficiency) and sustainability conditions (labor intensity, psychological costs, platform dependency risks)?

This paper addresses these questions by developing a comprehensive measurement protocol for studying TikTok-led organic distribution strategies in professional service contexts. We focus on business coaching because it exemplifies the theoretical challenges of trust-dependent service marketing while representing a growing segment of the entrepreneurial economy where marketing capability directly determines commercial viability. The protocol operationalizes four evidence-based intervention components derived from our literature synthesis: cross-platform content distribution without paid amplification, standardized profile identity cues, psychological friction management for visibility barriers, and technical production fidelity markers. Critically, we present this as a measurement protocol and research design template, not as an empirical study with

findings. No data are reported; instead, we provide the methodological architecture required for rigorous field validation.

The protocol addresses three research questions that structure empirical investigation:

RQ1: How can cross-platform organic distribution be measured systematically in professional service contexts using platform-native analytics, standardized efficiency metrics, and business outcome indicators?

RQ2: Which behavioral fidelity markers - including profile design consistency, posting discipline, technical production quality, and psychological friction management - demonstrate predictive validity for lead-generation outcomes in resource-constrained entrepreneurial settings?

RQ3: How should researchers compare TikTok-initiated workflows with alternative platform strategies (Instagram-led, LinkedIn-focused) given fundamental differences in algorithmic recommendation architectures, audience demographics, and metric definitions?

By synthesizing fragmented empirical literatures into a unified measurement framework, this protocol serves multiple scholarly communities. For influencer marketing researchers, it extends theory into professional services where parasocial trust mechanisms operate differently than in consumer product contexts. For platform studies scholars, it provides operational definitions for comparing algorithmic distribution systems across platforms with heterogeneous measurement standards. For sustainable entrepreneurship researchers, it demonstrates how digital platform capabilities can be evaluated using sustainability frameworks that simultaneously examine economic viability, resource efficiency, and labor conditions. For entrepreneurship educators and practitioners, it translates abstract concepts - credibility, authenticity, algorithmic favor - into concrete, teachable, measurable behaviors.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 reviews empirical evidence across influencer credibility, platform affordances, sustainable entrepreneurship, and coaching effectiveness, identifying theoretical mechanisms and measurement approaches that inform protocol design. Section 3 presents the complete measurement protocol, including population specifications, intervention operationalizations, variable definitions and coding rules, data collection procedures, and prespecified analytical strategies. Section 4 discusses theoretical implications, sustainability dimensions, methodological considerations, and future research directions. Section 5 concludes with practical applications for researchers, educators, and entrepreneurs.

Crucially, this paper presents a research protocol, not empirical findings. No data collection has been conducted for this publication. The contribution is methodological: we provide the conceptual framework, operational definitions, and procedural specifications required for future field studies to test whether organic social media strategies can function as sustainable entrepreneurship practices in professional service contexts. We aim to enable rigorous, replicable research that informs evidence-based entrepreneurship education and supports economically viable business development for resource-constrained service professionals.

2. Literature review

2.1. Influencer credibility and trust formation mechanisms

Influencer marketing research has matured from descriptive accounts of online opinion leadership into granular analyses of credibility construction, authenticity negotiation, and platform-mediated persuasion. The foundational concept of influencer capital - audience-perceived influence that exceeds what follower counts alone predict - emerged from public relations scholarship emphasizing that credibility operates through qualitative relational dynamics rather than quantitative metrics (Freberg et al., 2011). Subsequent experimental work demonstrated that while high follower counts can enhance perceived popularity and likability through social proof mechanisms, these effects are context-dependent and can reverse when endorsed offerings appear inconsistent with an influencer's established identity or when commercial motives become too salient (De Veirman et al., 2017).

For professional services, these contingencies assume heightened importance. Unlike consumer products, where attributes are visible and verifiable pre-purchase, services such as coaching or consulting are experience goods that require trust commitments before quality can be evaluated (Bozer & Jones, 2018). Credibility in service contexts emerges through perceived expertise (competence signals), perceived similarity (audience identification), and relational authenticity (consistent self-disclosure) (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Qualitative research on Instagram influencer credibility reveals that audiences assess authenticity by evaluating whether self-presentation appears genuine, whether disclosures are appropriately bounded, and whether commercial activities align with previously established identity claims (Audrezet et al., 2020).

Parasocial relationships - one-sided emotional bonds between audiences and media personalities - have demonstrated particular relevance for understanding how social media presence translates into behavioral outcomes. Recent meta-analytic evidence confirms that parasocial relationships formed through social media significantly predict purchase intentions and brand attitudes, with effects mediated by perceived authenticity and identification (Hoffner & Bond, 2022). In professional service contexts, parasocial trust likely functions as a prerequisite for inquiry behaviors and discovery call bookings, making these relationship dynamics central to lead generation rather than peripheral brand-building concerns (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

Empirical evidence from 2024-2025 research indicates that parasocial relationship strength correlates with social media usage intensity, particularly among younger users and those experiencing lower income levels (Jin & Le, 2025). Among individuals with strong parasocial relationships with Instagram influencers, females, younger people, and those with lower incomes demonstrated significantly higher daily social media usage time, with lower-income individuals more likely to invest time rather than money in supporting influencer relationships through engagement behaviors such as commenting, sharing, and live stream attendance (Jin & Le, 2025). These findings suggest that organic content strategies may be especially relevant for entrepreneurs targeting demographics with high platform engagement but limited immediate purchasing power, as parasocial relationship development can serve as a pathway toward eventual service inquiry despite financial constraints.

Authenticity remains theoretically complex and practically challenging. Micro-celebrity theory frames self-branding as strategic identity labor requiring continuous negotiation between genuine self-expression and audience expectations, with authenticity functioning as an ongoing performance rather than a stable attribute (Khamis et al., 2017). This perspective aligns with visibility labor scholarship, which documents the psychological and emotional costs creators incur through sustained audience attention management, including exposure to criticism, performance pressure, and platform algorithmic volatility (Abidin, 2016). For measurement protocols, these findings suggest that credibility and authenticity cannot be treated as fixed variables; rather, they must be assessed as dynamic processes shaped by posting consistency, commercial transparency, and audience interaction patterns over time.

2.2. Platform affordances and algorithmic distribution architectures

Short-form video platforms operate through fundamentally different distribution logics than traditional follower-based social networks. Where earlier social media architectures prioritized content from existing connections, contemporary recommendation systems - particularly TikTok's "For You Page" - employ machine learning models that can expose creators to substantial audiences independent of follower base size when early engagement signals indicate content resonance (Kaye et al., 2021). This architectural shift has profound implications for entrepreneurial content strategies because it theoretically lowers barriers to audience access for new creators while simultaneously intensifying competition for algorithmic favor.

Platform governance research demonstrates that distribution is not merely technically determined but actively governed through visibility moderation - strategic interventions by platforms to shape what content circulates, to whom, and under what conditions (Zeng & Kaye, 2022). TikTok's governance approach emphasizes content safety, brand suitability, and user retention over follower relationships, creating distribution opportunities for creators without established audiences but also exposing all creators to sudden visibility fluctuations driven by policy changes invisible to users.

Comparative platform analysis reveals meaningful differences in organic reach potential. Data from July 2025 indicate that TikTok provides substantially better organic reach for new creators with under 5,000 followers than Instagram, with engagement rates of 4.20% per view for small TikTok accounts versus 0.50% for comparable Instagram accounts (Napolify, 2025). TikTok's enhanced AI recommendation system, introduced in 2025 and including the Search Center feature, improved content discoverability for new creators by 34%, with the algorithm analyzing user intent signals more sophisticatedly to connect creators with highly targeted audiences, even without established follower bases (Napolify, 2025). Growth speed metrics demonstrate that TikTok accounts can gain 10,000 followers within their first month of consistent posting, compared to Instagram's typical 3-6 month timeline for similar growth, due to TikTok's algorithm aggressively testing content with diverse audiences (Napolify, 2025).

However, both platforms face persistent challenges from bot traffic and artificial engagement, which complicate performance measurement. TikTok generates 15-20% fake engagement for small creators, while Instagram maintains 8-12% bot traffic, significantly impacting performance metrics and potentially misleading creators about their actual reach (Napolify, 2025). Bot views typically lack

accompanying likes, comments, or shares, resulting in skewed engagement ratios that can trigger spam detection algorithms and reduce genuine content reach. For professional service providers, these dynamics create strategic questions about platform prioritization, cross-posting efficiency, and the sustainability of organic strategies under evolving algorithmic conditions.

Research on algorithmic imaginaries reveals that creators develop folk theories about platform algorithms that shape their content strategies, even when these theories may not accurately reflect the algorithms' actual operations (Schellewald, 2022). These subjective understandings matter for field research because creators respond to perceived algorithmic requirements rather than to verified technical specifications. A measurement protocol must therefore account for both objective platform metrics (views, watch time, engagement rates) and subjective creator interpretations that influence posting decisions, content formatting choices, and psychological responses to performance fluctuations.

2.3. Sustainable entrepreneurship and resource-efficient business models

Sustainable entrepreneurship scholarship conceptualizes sustainability through three integrated dimensions: economic viability (long-term profitability without resource depletion), environmental responsibility (minimizing negative ecological impacts), and social equity (creating value that benefits broader communities rather than extracting value disproportionately) (Hall et al., 2010). The foundational framing by Shepherd and Patzelt (2011) emphasizes that sustainable entrepreneurship addresses "what is to be sustained" (natural and social capital, economic livelihoods) and "what is to be developed" (people, communities, economies) through entrepreneurial action. This dual focus distinguishes sustainable entrepreneurship from narrower corporate social responsibility approaches by treating sustainability as intrinsic to business model design rather than as an add-on ethical consideration.

Muñoz and Cohen (2018) provide a comprehensive review documenting the growth of sustainable entrepreneurship research while identifying persistent measurement challenges. Many studies rely on self-reported sustainability orientations or binary classifications of ventures as "sustainable" or "conventional," limiting quantitative assessment of sustainability outcomes. For professional service entrepreneurs, resource efficiency manifests primarily through labor-to-revenue ratios and customer acquisition cost dynamics rather than through material or energy inputs typical of product businesses.

Applying sustainable entrepreneurship frameworks to organic social media strategies requires examining whether content creation converts labor into durable assets that reduce marginal acquisition costs over time. Traditional advertising models create recurring costs scaling proportionally with business growth - a customer acquired through paid advertising today provides no cost advantage for acquiring the next customer. Organic audience building theoretically creates compounding returns: as audience size and engagement grow, each new post reaches more potential clients without a proportional increase in costs. This dynamic aligns with sustainable business principles that emphasize scalability through capability development rather than through increased resource consumption.

However, sustainability analysis must also consider labor conditions and psychological sustainability. Industry benchmarks from 2024-2026 indicate customer acquisition costs ranging from $410 for staffing and HR professional services to $628 for medical device services, with B2B companies averaging $536 per customer acquired across sectors (FirstPageSage, 2024; Usermaven, 2026). For business coaching and consulting services specifically, CAC benchmarks range from $410 to $656, depending on service complexity and client lifetime value (Userpilot, 2026). If organic content strategies reduce CAC below these thresholds but require intensive daily content production, causing creator burnout, the approach may be economically sustainable but not labor-sustainable. Field research must therefore measure both business outcomes (leads generated, conversion rates, revenue per client) and labor inputs (time invested, psychological strain, posting consistency) to assess holistic sustainability.

2.4. Platform labor, precarity, and creator economy critiques

Critical platform labor scholarship offers essential counterpoints to celebratory narratives about creator entrepreneurship. Duffy and Pooley (2019) argue that the ideology of "idols of promotion" - the belief that intensive self-branding will inevitably lead to success - obscures structural precarity and normalizes unpaid aspirational labor. Their analysis reveals how creator economies extract value from aspirants who invest substantial time and emotional energy into content production while platforms capture the majority of economic value through advertising

monetization and data aggregation. This dynamic shifts business risk onto individuals while concentrating profits with platform corporations.

Gandini (2021) further problematizes "digital labor" as a category, arguing that the term can function as an empty signifier masking fundamentally different labor arrangements - from truly entrepreneurial creators building viable businesses to exploited workers performing repetitive content moderation tasks. For organic social media strategies in professional services, this critique raises important boundary questions: at what threshold does content creation constitute genuine entrepreneurial capability-building rather than precarious platform-dependent labor? When do creators possess sufficient bargaining power to capture value from their audience relationships, and when are they primarily enriching platforms?

These concerns connect directly to sustainability assessment. A measurement protocol evaluating organic strategies must consider platform dependency risks - the vulnerability creators face when algorithm changes, policy shifts, or platform decline can eliminate audience access overnight. The potential TikTok ban debated in 2024-2025 exemplified this precarity: creators who built entire businesses around TikTok audiences faced existential threats from regulatory decisions beyond their control. Cross-platform strategies partially mitigate this risk by diversifying audience touchpoints, but truly sustainable entrepreneurship likely requires eventual migration from platform-dependent reach to owned channels such as email lists, websites, or direct client relationships.

2.5. Short-form video engagement and consumption patterns

Empirical research on short-form video consumption reveals distinctive engagement patterns with implications for content strategy. Studies of TikTok and Instagram Reels demonstrate that video retention curves - the percentage of viewers remaining at each second of playback - strongly predict algorithmic distribution, with content maintaining 50% viewer retention beyond the first three seconds significantly more likely to receive recommendation exposure (Shahbaznezhad et al., 2021). This finding suggests that technical production quality, particularly audio clarity and visual hook strength in the opening moments, functions as a measurable intervention variable rather than merely an aesthetic preference.

Recent research examining how TikTok and Instagram Reels influence attitudes and opinions finds that short-form video can facilitate opinion change through narrative identification, particularly when content combines personal storytelling with informational substance (Molem et al., 2024). The study documented that users engage with short-form video content through relatable, informative, and impactful narratives, though they demonstrate limited information verification behaviors, relying on perceived creator authenticity rather than external fact-checking (Molem et al., 2024). For professional service providers, this implies that content formats that emphasize competence demonstration through narrative (case studies, client journey stories, problem-solution frameworks) may be more effective at building trust than abstract expertise claims.

Platform-specific engagement research on TikTok demonstrates that humor and hedonic experience significantly enhance influencer marketing effectiveness, with humorous content generating higher perceived authenticity and stronger behavioral intentions than informational content alone (Barta et al., 2023). The study found that humor on TikTok increases followers' hedonic experience, which, in turn, enhances perceived influencer authenticity and trustworthiness and, ultimately, purchase intentions, with originality serving as a critical moderator (Barta et al., 2023). This finding creates a strategic tension for professional service providers who must balance entertainment value with credibility signaling: appearing too informal risks undermining perceptions of expertise, while appearing too formal may reduce algorithmic distribution and audience engagement.

2.6. Coaching effectiveness and professional service marketing

Coaching research has established robust evidence that structured coaching interventions improve goal attainment, resilience, and workplace well-being. Grant et al.'s (2009) randomized controlled trial demonstrated that executive coaching significantly enhanced goal attainment and increased resilience and workplace well-being relative to control conditions, with meta-analytic evidence from Theeboom et al. (2014) confirming moderate positive effects across diverse coaching contexts. More recent meta-analytic work by Nicolau et al. (2023) continues to document coaching effectiveness, revealing that coaching has larger impacts on behavioral outcomes than on attitudes, and demonstrating effectiveness even for relatively stable person characteristics such as self-efficacy, resilience, and psychological capital.

However, a persistent gap exists between research on coaching effectiveness and research on coaching business viability. Bozer and Jones (2018) systematically reviewed factors determining workplace coaching effectiveness, identifying coach-coachee relationship quality, coaching skills, and organizational support as critical moderators, yet most studies treat client acquisition as exogenous. For independent business coaches operating outside organizational structures, marketing capability directly determines whether coaching expertise can be deployed: a coach without clients cannot deliver effective interventions, regardless of technical competence.

This gap motivates treating content creation and organic distribution as core entrepreneurial competencies for service professionals rather than as peripheral marketing activities. If systematic content strategies can generate qualified leads consistently, then content capability becomes analogous to technical coaching competence - a learnable, measurable skill set rather than an innate talent or mystical "personal brand." This framing aligns with entrepreneurship education principles, emphasizing that entrepreneurial success depends on acquirable capabilities rather than on fixed personality traits.

2.7. Profile design, identity cues, and first impression effects

While often treated as minor details in practitioner advice, empirical evidence suggests that profile design elements function as consequential attention and credibility cues. Bakhshi et al.'s (2014) analysis of Instagram engagement patterns demonstrated that photos featuring faces receive significantly higher engagement than those without, suggesting that facial visibility serves as a measurable attention-directing mechanism rather than merely an aesthetic preference. For cross-platform identity consistency, this finding supports treating portrait avatar standardization as an evidence-informed intervention that may affect profile visit-to-follow conversion rates.

Profile image selection, however, presents psychological complexities. White et al. (2017) documented systematic biases whereby individuals select profile photos that feel personally accurate but may not optimally communicate desired impressions to others - people overweight photo "authenticity" (how much it resembles their self-concept) relative to strategic impression management. Their experiments revealed that when participants selected profile photos for themselves, they chose images that matched their internal self-perception but were rated by others as less likable and competent than alternative photos selected by strangers viewing the same candidate images (White et al., 2017). This suggests that leaving profile selection to intuition may yield suboptimal results, supporting protocols that provide objective criteria for profile image selection (e.g., a clear frontal portrait, professional context cues, consistent lighting, and a consistent background).

Textual elements in profiles also matter for credibility inference. Research on emoji use in professional communication contexts finds that emoji use can reduce perceived credibility and trustworthiness under certain message conditions, particularly when audiences interpret emojis as manipulative informality or as an effort to obscure substantive content deficits (Koch et al., 2023). The study demonstrated that using many emojis in humorous contexts decreased perceptions of credibility, though the effects were moderated by message type and audience expectations (Koch et al., 2023). While emoji effects are context-dependent and may differ across age demographics, these findings support operationalizing bio simplicity and emoji restraint as testable fidelity markers in cross-platform identity construction.

2.8. Synthesis and protocol design implications

This literature synthesis reveals several theoretical mechanisms linking content behavior to business outcomes through platform distribution and credibility formation:

Trust formation pathway: Consistent content exposure → parasocial relationship development → perceived credibility → inquiry behavior → discovery calls → client conversion

Algorithmic amplification pathway: Technical quality (retention, engagement) → platform recommendation → audience reach → conversion opportunities

Identity consistency pathway: Standardized profile cues → reduced cognitive friction → recognition across platforms → relationship strengthening

Sustainability mechanism: Cumulative audience asset → declining marginal acquisition costs → economic viability at smaller scales

However, the synthesis also identifies critical uncertainties and boundary conditions:

- Platform volatility: Algorithm changes can eliminate reach, creating precarity
- Labor sustainability: Time investment and psychological costs may undermine viability

- Context dependence: Effects likely vary by service type, audience demographics, and competitive dynamics
- Measurement complexity: Platform-specific metrics complicate cross-platform comparisons

These insights inform the measurement protocol presented in Section 3, which operationalizes theoretical constructs into testable variables, specifies data-collection procedures to address measurement challenges, and provides analytical approaches that acknowledge both the opportunities and limitations of organic distribution strategies for sustainable professional service entrepreneurship.

3. Measurement protocol and research design

3.1. Ethical statement and transparency declaration

This manuscript presents a measurement protocol for future empirical research. No primary data collection has been conducted. No participants have been recruited. No empirical findings are reported. The contribution is methodological: we provide operational definitions, data collection procedures, and analytical specifications that researchers can adapt for field studies examining organic social media strategies as sustainable entrepreneurship practices.

Future researchers implementing this protocol must obtain appropriate ethical approval from an institutional review board (IRB) or equivalent ethics committee before recruiting participants or collecting data. Key ethical considerations include:

- Informed consent: Participants must understand time commitments, data access requirements (platform analytics exports), and how their information will be used
- Data protection: Platform analytics contain personally identifiable information requiring GDPR-compliant storage and anonymization procedures
- Right to withdraw: Participants must be able to exit the study without penalty
- Conflict of interest disclosure: Researchers with commercial interests in content creation training must declare potential biases
- Transparency about limitations: Pre-post designs without randomization cannot support causal claims; researchers must communicate this constraint clearly

3.2. Research design framework

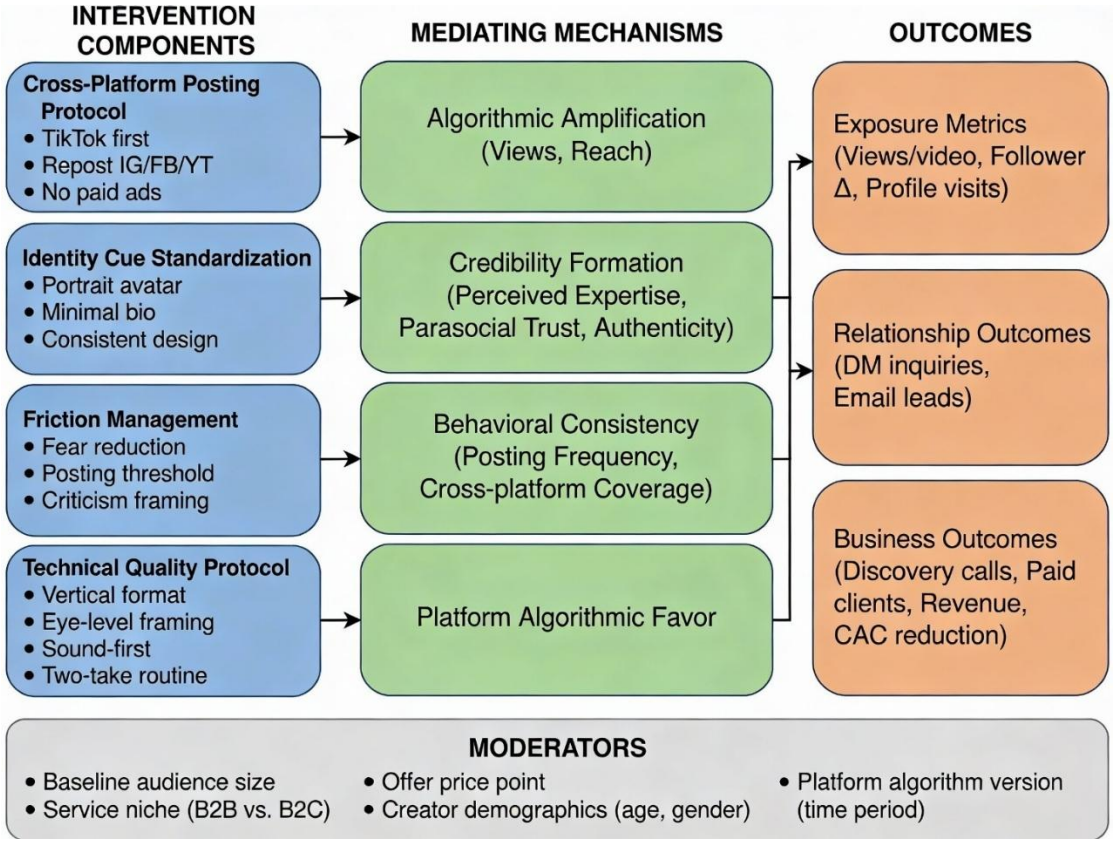
We propose a mixed-methods observational field study combining quantitative platform analytics, self-report behavioral measures, and optional qualitative interviews. The design is structured as a prospective, longitudinal, observational study with a pre-intervention baseline assessment and post-intervention outcome measurement.

Design classification: Pre-post observational study with adherence-stratified subgroup analysis (quasi-experimental design without randomization).

Rationale for design choice: While randomized controlled trials provide the strongest causal inference, they are often infeasible in the entrepreneurship field research, where participants self-select into interventions (e.g., purchasing training programs). The proposed design balances internal validity concerns with ecological validity and practical feasibility, acknowledging that findings will represent associations rather than definitive causal effects.

Conceptual model (Figure 1):

Figure 1: Conceptual model linking intervention components to business outcomes through mediating mechanisms and platform dynamics



3.3. Population and sampling

Target population: Adult business coaches and service professionals (consultants, advisors, therapists) operating solo practices or micro-businesses (≤5 employees) who are actively seeking to develop sustainable client acquisition capabilities through organic social media strategies.

Inclusion criteria:

1. Age ≥18 years
2. Self-identified business coach, consultant, or service professional
3. Currently posting or willing to post short-form video content
4. Active accounts on ≥2 platforms (TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, or YouTube)
5. English-language content creation (for initial validation; future studies should examine other languages)
6. Willing to export and share platform analytics data
7. Able to provide informed consent

Exclusion criteria:

1. Full-time employees of organizations (not independent practitioners)
2. Product-based businesses (to maintain a professional services focus)
3. Currently running paid advertising campaigns during study period (confounds organic measurement)
4. Participation in other concurrent social media training programs

Sampling strategy: Stratified purposive sampling with stratification by:

- Baseline follower size: <500, 500-2,000, 2,000-10,000, >10,000 (quartiles)
- Platform experience: Novice (<3 months posting), Intermediate (3-12 months), Experienced (>12 months)
- Service niche: Life coaching, business coaching, health/wellness coaching, consulting (for subgroup analysis)

Sample size determination:

Statistical power analysis for detecting meaningful effects in pre-post paired comparisons.

Primary outcome: Change in monthly qualified leads (defined as inbound inquiries from potential clients expressing interest and apparent ability to pay)

Assumptions and rationale:

Baseline mean: $\mu_0 = 6$ qualified leads/month

Rationale: This estimate is based on professional services industry benchmarks, indicating that business coaches and consultants using mixed marketing approaches (referrals, networking, limited digital presence) typically generate 4-8 qualified inquiries per month (FullEnrich, 2024). Research indicates that 61% of coaches rely primarily on referrals as their main lead source, with only 35% using online marketing systematically (FullEnrich, 2024). For coaches with minimal systematic content strategies, 6 qualified leads per month represents a conservative baseline reflecting sporadic organic reach combined with referral activity. This baseline is intentionally set below industry averages for established practitioners (8-12 leads/month) to reflect the target population of emerging coaches building initial client-acquisition capabilities.

Minimum detectable effect: $\delta = 4$ leads/month increase (67% relative increase)

Rationale: A 4-lead monthly increase represents a practically meaningful improvement for resource-constrained solo practitioners. Moving from 6 to 10 qualified leads per month (a 67% relative increase) translates to approximately 2-3 additional paying clients per quarter, given typical conversion rates of 25-30% for coaching discovery calls (FullEnrich, 2024). At average coaching engagement values of $2,000-$5,000, this represents a $4,000-$15,000 quarterly revenue increase - sufficient to justify the 8-12 hours weekly time investment required by the protocol. Effect sizes smaller than $\delta = 4$ would indicate marginal improvements insufficient to support organic strategies as primary mechanisms for client acquisition.

Standard deviation of change: $\sigma = 8$ (conservative estimate)

Rationale: High variability is anticipated due to heterogeneous factors affecting lead generation outcomes: baseline audience size (range: 0-10,000+ followers), service niche competitiveness (saturated vs. underserved markets), creator consistency (some maintain 3+ posts/week, others post sporadically), and platform algorithm exposure variability (viral posts create outliers). A standard deviation equal to the mean (coefficient of variation = 1.33) reflects realistic entrepreneurial field research where outcomes are highly variable. This conservative estimate ensures adequate power to detect effects even when substantial noise is present in the data. Sensitivity analyses will test robustness to alternative σ values ($\sigma = 6$ and 10).

Significance level: $\alpha = 0.05$ (two-tailed)

Rationale: Conventional alpha level for social science research, balancing Type I error protection with practical statistical power.

Desired power: $1 - \beta = 0.80$

Rationale: Standard power threshold providing 80% probability of detecting true effects when they exist, balancing statistical rigor with feasibility constraints.

Power calculation for paired t-test:

$$n = \frac{(Z_{1-\alpha/2} + Z_{1-\beta})^2 \cdot \sigma^2}{\delta^2}$$

Where:

- $Z_{1-\alpha/2} = 1.96$ (critical value for $\alpha = 0.05$, two-tailed)
- $Z_{1-\beta} = 0.84$ (critical value for 80% power)
- $\sigma = 8$ (standard deviation of change scores)
- $\delta = 4$ (minimum detectable difference)

$$n = \frac{(1.96 + 0.84)^2 \cdot 64}{16} = \frac{7.84 \cdot 64}{16} = \frac{501.76}{16} \approx 31.4$$

Minimum required sample size: n = 32 participants (for primary outcome with 80% power)

Recommended target sample size: n = 200-300 to enable:

- Subgroup analyses by adherence level, platform strategy, and service niche
- Attrition buffer: Assuming 30-40% dropout typical in longitudinal field studies, recruiting 200 yields ~130 completers
- Sensitivity analyses: Adequate power for secondary outcomes and exploratory moderator testing
- Multi-platform comparisons: Sufficient cell sizes for TikTok-led (n≈100) vs. Instagram-led (n≈100) strategy comparison

3.4. Intervention protocol operationalization

The protocol evaluates a four-component behavioral intervention package rather than testing individual components in isolation. This reflects the practical reality of implementation, where entrepreneurs adopt integrated strategies rather than isolated tactics.

Component 1: Cross-Platform Posting Protocol

Operational definition:

- Primary posting platform: TikTok (video created and posted first)
- Cross-posting requirement: Same video republished to Instagram Reels and Facebook Reels within 24 hours of the TikTok post
- Optional platform: YouTube Shorts (tracked as binary: used vs. not used)
- Paid amplification: Zero advertising expenditure during study period (verified through self-report and platform advertising dashboard screenshots)
- Posting frequency target: Minimum 3 videos/week across all platforms combined (verified through platform analytics)

Rationale: TikTok-first posting leverages the platform's recommendation algorithm, documented to provide superior organic reach for small creators, while cross-posting maximizes audience touchpoints without proportional effort increases (Napolify, 2025).

Fidelity measurement: Binary compliance per week (met minimum 3 posts: yes/no), plus continuous posting frequency metric.

Component 2: Identity Cue Standardization

Operational definition: Participants establish consistent visual and textual identity elements across all active platforms:

Profile photograph requirements (all platforms):

- Identical image file across TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook
- Clear frontal portrait (face occupies ≥40% of frame)
- Professional context (neutral background, appropriate lighting)
- Solo image (no groups, pets, or objects obscuring face)

Bio text requirements (all platforms):

- ≤100 characters total length
- Explicit service statement (e.g., "Business coach helping entrepreneurs build sustainable practices")
- Maximum 1 functional symbol (e.g., "→" for link indication)
- Zero decorative emojis
- One clear call-to-action link (same destination across platforms)

Rationale: Based on evidence that facial visibility increases engagement (Bakhshi et al., 2014) and emoji use can reduce professional credibility (Koch et al., 2023).

Fidelity coding procedure (Table 1):

Table 1: Profile design fidelity coding protocol

Element	Criteria	Coding	Verification Method
Avatar consistency	Identical image file on TikTok, Instagram, Facebook	0 = Different images 1 = Same image ≥2 platforms 2 = Same image on all platforms	Screenshot comparison by independent raters
Face visibility	Face occupies ≥40% of the frame, clear frontal view	0 = No face visible 1 = Face <40% or profile view 2 = Face ≥40%, frontal	Image analysis by 2 coders
Bio length	Character count across platforms	0 = >150 characters 1 = 100-150 characters 2 = ≤100 characters	Automated character count
Emoji restraint	Decorative emoji count in bio text	0 = ≥3 emojis 1 = 1-2 emojis 2 = 0 decorative emojis (functional symbols permitted)	Manual count by 2 coders
CTA clarity	Single link present, identical across platforms	0 = No link or different links 1 = Link present, inconsistent 2 = Same link all platforms	URL comparison
Composite fidelity score	Sum of individual elements	Range: 0-10 High fidelity: ≥8	-

Inter-rater reliability requirement: Cohen's kappa $\kappa \geq 0.70$ for categorical elements.

Cohen's kappa calculation:

$$\kappa = \frac{P_o - P_e}{1 - P_e}$$

Where:

- P_o = Observed proportional agreement between raters
- P_e = Expected agreement by chance

Interpretation guidelines:

- κ < 0.40: Poor agreement
- κ = 0.40-0.59: Fair agreement
- κ = 0.60-0.79: Good agreement
- κ ≥ 0.80: Excellent agreement

Target: κ ≥ 0.70 (good agreement threshold for research purposes)

Component 3: Psychological Friction Management

Operational challenge: Visibility barriers (fear of criticism, perfectionism, social anxiety) can suppress posting behavior even when technical skills are present [Abidin, 2016; Khamis et al., 2017].

Intervention elements:

1. "Minimum viable post" framing: Emphasize posting consistency over production perfection
2. Two-take routine: Record two versions, post one immediately, archive one (reduces rumination, normalizes imperfection)
3. Criticism reframing: Teach cognitive restructuring, treating negative comments as "algorithmic noise" rather than personal evaluation

Measurement approach (Table 2):

Table 2: Psychological friction measures

Construct	Measurement Instrument	Timing	Scoring
Fear of negative evaluation	Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale - Version II (BFNE-II, 12 items)[a]	Pre, Post (Week 8)	Range: 12-60 Higher = greater fear
Posting self-efficacy	Custom 5-item scale *"I feel confident I can post 3+ videos weekly even when busy"*	Pre, Post, Weekly check-ins	1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)
Perceived criticism exposure	*"In the past week, how many negative comments or reactions did you receive?"*	Weekly self-report	Count (0-100+)
Criticism impact	*"Negative feedback made me consider stopping posting"*	Weekly (5-point Likert)	1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely)
Two-take adherence	*"Of videos posted this week, for how many did you record 2+ takes?"*	Weekly self-report	Proportion (0-100%)

Notes: [a] BFNE-II (Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale - Version II): The BFNE-II is a validated 12-item instrument assessing fear of negative evaluation in social situations, originally developed by Leary (1983) and revised by Carleton et al. (2006, 2007) to address psychometric issues with reverse-worded items. The BFNE-II demonstrates excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's α = 0.92-0.94), strong test-retest reliability (r = 0.94), and robust convergent validity with other social anxiety measures (Carleton et al., 2007; Baldanzini et al., 2025). Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all characteristic of me; 5 = Extremely characteristic of me), with total scores ranging from 12 to 60. Higher scores indicate greater fear of negative evaluation. Sample items include: *"I worry about what other people will think of me even when I know it doesn't make any difference"* and *"I am frequently afraid of other people noticing my shortcomings."* The scale has been validated across diverse populations, including clinical and community samples, with confirmatory factor analysis supporting a unitary construct (Carleton et al., 2007). Permission for research use can be obtained from the scale's authors or through open-access scholarly repositories.

Analysis approach: Test whether friction measures mediate the relationship between protocol adherence and posting consistency using structural equation modeling or Hayes PROCESS macro [mediation analysis].

Component 4: Technical Production Fidelity

Operational specifications:

Video format standards:

- Aspect ratio: 9:16 (vertical) required for all platforms
- Resolution: Minimum 1080x1920 pixels
- Frame rate: 24-30 fps (platform native)
- Duration: 15-90 seconds (optimized for platform algorithms)

Capture protocol:

- Camera position: Eye-level or slightly above (avoid low-angle "selfie" perspective)
- Audio priority: Clear voice audio (external microphone recommended but not required)
- Lighting: Soft frontal lighting (natural window light or ring light)
- Background: Uncluttered, professional context

Two-take routine:

- Record a minimum of 2 full versions of each video concept
- Post the version that *feels* better (not necessarily "perfect")
- Archive alternative take (reduces pre-posting anxiety)

Platform safety compliance:

- No direct phone numbers or email addresses in on-screen text (many platforms suppress these)

- Use platform-native link tools (TikTok bio link, Instagram link sticker)
- Avoid flagged keywords that trigger content suppression

Fidelity measurement: Random video audit (20% of participant videos per month) coded by independent reviewers on a 0-2 scale for each element (similar to Table 1 structure).

3.5. Variable definitions and measurement procedures

3.5.1. Platform analytics variables (primary data source)

Challenge: Each platform defines metrics differently, complicating cross-platform comparisons. We propose a dual measurement strategy:

1. Platform-native metrics: Record as defined by each platform
2. Standardized efficiency metrics: Calculate comparable indicators

Table 3: Platform-native metrics extraction protocol

Platform	Metric	Platform Definition	Export Method	Frequency
TikTok	Views	Video plays ≥1 second	Creator analytics → Video tab → CSV export	Weekly
	Watch time	Total seconds viewed	Creator analytics → Traffic source	Weekly
	Avg watch %	Percentage of video viewed	Calculated: (watch time/duration) / views	Weekly
	Profile visits	Unique profile page views	Creator analytics → Overview	Weekly
	Followers	Net follower count	Creator analytics → Followers tab	Weekly
	Engagement	Likes + comments + shares	Video-level data → Sum	Per video
Instagram Reels	Plays	Video initiations (any duration)	Instagram Insights → Reels → Export	Weekly
	Reach	Unique accounts reached	Instagram Insights → Content	Weekly
	Saves	Bookmark actions	Per-video insights	Per video
	Shares	Story shares + DM shares	Per-video insights	Per video
	Profile visits	Profile page views	Instagram Insights → Overview	Weekly
	Followers	Net follower count	Instagram Insights → Audience	Weekly
Facebook Reels	3-sec views	Plays ≥3 seconds	Facebook Insights → Reels	Weekly
	1-min views	Plays ≥60 seconds	Facebook Insights → Reels	Weekly
	Reach	Unique accounts reached	Facebook Insights → Overview	Weekly
	Engagement	All interactions	Per-video metrics	Per video
YouTube Shorts	Views	Video impressions + clicks	YouTube Studio → Analytics	Weekly
	Watch time	Total minutes watched	YouTube Studio → Engagement	Weekly
	Subscribers	Net subscriber change	YouTube Studio → Overview	Weekly

Standardized efficiency metrics (calculated from platform-native data):

$$\text{Engagement Rate} = \frac{\text{Likes} + \text{Comments} + \text{Shares}}{\text{Views}} \times 100\%$$

$$\text{View-through Rate} = \frac{\text{Average Watch Percentage}}{100} \times 100\%$$

$$\text{Follower Growth Rate} = \frac{\text{Followers}_{\text{end}} - \text{Followers}_{\text{start}}}{\text{Followers}_{\text{start}}} \times 100\%$$

$$\text{Lead Yield per 1,000 Views} = \frac{\text{Qualified Leads}}{\text{Total Views}} \times 1{,}000$$

$$\text{Cost per Lead (Organic)} = \frac{\text{Hours Invested} \times \text{Hourly Wage Equivalent}}{\text{Qualified Leads Generated}}$$

3.5.2. Lead generation outcomes (primary business metrics)

Table 4: Lead generation measurement protocol

Outcome Variable	Operational Definition	Data Source	Measurement Frequency
Inbound inquiries	DM, email, or form submissions from potential clients mentioning social media discovery	Self-report + CRM logs	Weekly count
Qualified leads	Inquiries meeting criteria: 1. Expresses interest in services 2. Asks about pricing/process 3. Provides contact information	Participant classification (verified by researcher review of sample)	Weekly count
Discovery calls booked	Scheduled consultation/strategy calls with potential clients attributed to social media touchpoints	Calendar integration or self-report	Monthly count
Paid clients acquired	Signed contracts with payment received, client reports social media as a discovery channel	Self-report + payment records	Monthly count
Revenue (organic)	Total revenue from clients acquired through organic social media (excluding referrals, paid ads, other channels)	Self-report (validated against payment processor data where permitted)	Monthly sum
Customer acquisition cost (CAC)[a]	$\text{CAC} = \frac{\text{Labor hours} \times \$50/hr}{\text{Clients acquired}}$	Calculated from time logs + conversion data	Monthly average

Notes: [a] The $50/hr opportunity cost estimate represents the median hourly consulting rate for business coaches and service professionals, based on 2024-2026 industry benchmarks ($40-$75/hr). This conservative valuation accounts for the time coaches could otherwise spend on billable client work, alternative marketing activities, or service delivery. Researchers may adjust this rate by region or use participant-reported hourly rates for personalized CAC calculations. The metric enables comparison of organic strategy labor investment against paid advertising alternatives by converting time into monetary equivalents.

Attribution tracking protocol:

1. First touchpoint question: "How did you first learn about me/my services?"
2. Multi-touch coding: If the client mentions multiple channels, record all but prioritize the *first* mention
3. Platform specificity: Record which platform (TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube)
4. Content specificity: Ask "Do you remember which video or post?" to assess content effectiveness

Validation subsample: For 10% of participants, researchers directly review CRM systems and email folders to validate self-reported lead counts (inter-method reliability check).

3.5.3. Credibility and relational measures

Purpose: Test the mediational hypothesis that content exposure → credibility perception → leads behavior.

Audience perception survey (sent to subset of followers, n=50-100 per participant):

Credibility scale (adapted from Lou & Yuan, 2019):

1. *"[Creator name] is knowledgeable about [service area]."* (1-7 Likert)
2. *"I trust [Creator name]'s professional expertise."* (1-7 Likert)
3. *"[Creator name] seems like a credible source of information."* (1-7 Likert)

Parasocial trust scale (adapted from Sokolova & Kefi, 2020):

1. *"I feel like I know [Creator name] personally."* (1-7 Likert)
2. *"I would be comfortable reaching out to [Creator name] with questions."* (1-7 Likert)
3. *"[Creator name] feels authentic and genuine."* (1-7 Likert)

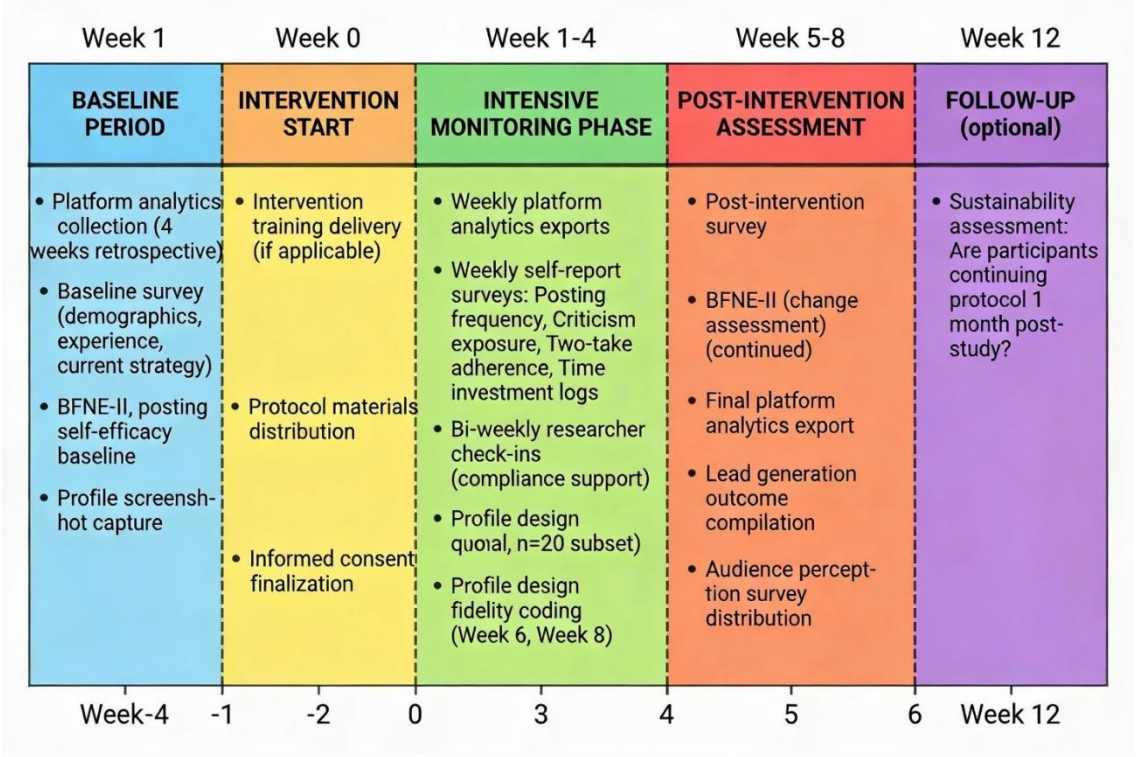
Scoring: Composite scores (mean of items), higher = stronger credibility/trust.

Administration timing: Post-intervention (Week 8) to assess established audience perceptions.

Sampling strategy: Recruit followers via the creator's content ("Participate in research survey, $10 gift card") to obtain an unbiased sample rather than only engaged followers.

3.6. Data collection timeline

Figure 2: Study timeline and measurement schedule



Total participant burden:

- Baseline: 60 minutes (surveys + analytics setup)
- Weekly during study: 20-30 minutes (surveys + analytics export)
- Post-intervention: 45 minutes (surveys + debrief)
- Total: ~4 hours over 9 weeks (reasonable burden for entrepreneurship field research)

3.7. Statistical analysis plan (pre-specified)

3.7.1. Primary analyses

Hypothesis 1: Participants will demonstrate significant increases in posting frequency from baseline to post-intervention.

Analysis: Paired t-test (if normally distributed) or Wilcoxon signed-rank test (if non-normal)

$$t = \frac{\bar{d}}{s_d/\sqrt{n}}$$

Where:

- $\bar{d}$ = mean difference (post - pre)
- s_d = standard deviation of differences
- n = sample size

Effect size: Cohen's d for paired samples

$$d = \frac{\bar{d}}{s_d}$$

Interpretation:

- Small effect: d = 0.2
- Medium effect: d = 0.5
- Large effect: d = 0.8

Hypothesis 2: Participants will demonstrate significant increases in monthly qualified leads from baseline to post-intervention.

Analysis: Identical to H1 (paired t-test or Wilcoxon)

Hypothesis 3: High-fidelity adopters (profile design score ≥8, posting frequency ≥3/week) will show greater lead increases than low-fidelity adopters.

Analysis: Independent samples t-test comparing change scores between groups

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_{\text{high}} - \bar{X}_{\text{low}}}{\sqrt{\frac{s^2_{\text{high}}}{n_{\text{high}}} + \frac{s^2_{\text{low}}}{n_{\text{low}}}}}$$

Hypothesis 4: The TikTok-led strategy will show greater lead yield per 1,000 views compared to the Instagram-led strategy.

Analysis: Independent samples t-test on efficiency metric (leads per 1,000 views)

3.7.2. Secondary and exploratory analyses

Mediation analysis: Test whether credibility mediates the posting frequency → lead outcomes relationship

Method: Hayes PROCESS Model 4 (simple mediation) or structural equation modeling (SEM)

$$\text{Indirect effect} = a \times b$$

Where:

- a = path from IV (posting frequency) to mediator (credibility)
- b = path from mediator to DV (leads)

Bootstrapped confidence intervals: 5,000 resamples, 95% CI

Moderation analysis: Test whether baseline audience size moderates intervention effects

Method: Regression with interaction term

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \beta_2 M + \beta_3 (X \times M) + \epsilon$$

Where:

- Y = lead outcome
- X = intervention adherence
- M = baseline follower count (log-transformed)
- $X \times M$ = interaction term

Time series analysis: Examine within-person trajectories using multilevel modeling

$$Y_{ti} = \beta_{0i} + \beta_{1i}\text{Time}_{ti} + \epsilon_{ti}$$

Where:

- Y_{ti} = outcome for person i at time t
- β_{0i} = person-specific intercept
- β_{1i} = person-specific slope (growth rate)

3.7.3. Missing data handling

Anticipated missingness:

- Platform analytics: 5-10% (technical export failures)
- Weekly surveys: 20-30% (fatigue, competing demands)
- Audience surveys: 60-70% (low follower response rates)

Strategy:

1. Primary analysis: Complete-case analysis (listwise deletion) with sensitivity analysis
2. Sensitivity analysis: Multiple imputation by chained equations (MICE)
   - 50 imputed datasets
   - Pool results using Rubin's rules
   - Compare to complete-case results
3. Attrition analysis: Compare baseline characteristics of completers vs. non-completers
4. Intent-to-treat principle: For randomized comparisons (if applicable), analyze all enrolled participants in assigned groups

3.7.4. Multiple comparison corrections

Challenge: Testing multiple outcomes (views, followers, leads, calls, clients) inflates the Type I error rate.

Approach: Benjamini-Hochberg false discovery rate (FDR) correction

$$\text{Adjusted } p\text{-value} = p \times \frac{m}{k}$$

Where:

- p = original p-value
- m = total number of tests
- k = rank of p-value when ordered smallest to largest

Application: Applied to secondary outcomes; primary outcome (qualified leads) not adjusted.

3.8. Qualitative component (optional enrichment)

Purpose: Understand mechanisms, barriers, and sustainability perceptions beyond quantitative metrics.

Method: Semi-structured interviews with purposive subsample (n=20-30)

Sampling: Maximum variation sampling across:

- High vs. low fidelity
- High vs. low lead outcomes
- TikTok-led vs. Instagram-led strategies

Interview guide topics:

1. Implementation challenges: "What was hardest about maintaining the posting protocol?"
2. Sustainability perceptions: "Do you see this as a strategy you can sustain long-term? Why or why not?"
3. Platform experiences: "How did different platforms feel in terms of audience response and effort required?"
4. Labor conditions: "How has content creation affected your work-life balance and well-being?"
5. Unexpected outcomes: "What surprised you most about this process?"

Analysis: Thematic coding using grounded theory approach, with inter-coder reliability ($\kappa \geq 0.70$) on 20% of transcripts.

Integration: Qualitative findings are used to interpret quantitative patterns and generate hypotheses for future research.

4. Discussion

4.1. Theoretical implications: Integrating disconnected research streams

This measurement protocol advances theory by demonstrating how three previously fragmented research domains - influencer marketing, platform studies, and sustainable entrepreneurship - can be integrated into a unified framework for studying professional service entrepreneurship in digital platform economies. Each literature has developed sophisticated understandings within its boundaries, yet their intersection remains underexplored, creating gaps that limit both theoretical development and practical application.

From influencer marketing to professional services credibility. Influencer marketing scholarship has rigorously documented mechanisms of credibility formation, authenticity negotiation, and parasocial relationship development, primarily in consumer goods contexts (De Veirman et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Our protocol extends these theoretical insights into professional services where trust formation operates under different constraints. Unlike product purchases, where trial reduces uncertainty, service engagement requires upfront trust commitments before quality can be evaluated. This shifts the theoretical focus from persuasion (convincing someone to buy) to credentialing (establishing expertise legitimacy) and relational initiation (reducing barriers to first contact). The protocol operationalizes this distinction by measuring lead behaviors (inquiries, discovery call bookings) as primary outcomes rather than traditional purchase intentions, reflecting the multi-stage trust-building process characteristic of high-involvement service decisions.

From platform affordances to cross-platform comparison. Platform studies have documented how algorithmic architectures shape content circulation and creator opportunities (Kaye et al., 2021; Zeng & Kaye, 2022), yet most research examines single platforms in isolation. Our protocol's cross-platform design addresses a persistent methodological challenge: platforms measure engagement differently (TikTok's "views," Instagram's "plays," Facebook's "3-second views"), making direct comparisons problematic. By proposing dual measurement - platform-native metrics plus standardized efficiency indicators (Table 3) - we provide methodological infrastructure for rigorous platform comparison studies. This approach acknowledges platform heterogeneity while enabling researchers to test whether TikTok's documented advantages for small creator organic reach translate into superior business outcomes for service professionals, or whether Instagram's established professional networking context provides compensating advantages despite weaker algorithmic amplification.

From sustainable entrepreneurship to digital labor conditions. Sustainable entrepreneurship research has primarily examined environmental sustainability and resource efficiency in product-based ventures (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011; Muñoz & Cohen, 2018), leaving service-based digital

entrepreneurship undertheorized. Our protocol operationalizes economic sustainability by measuring whether organic content strategies generate declining marginal costs over time as audience assets compound. However, we extend beyond purely economic metrics to incorporate labor sustainability dimensions informed by platform labor critiques (Duffy & Pooley, 2019; Gandini, 2021). By measuring time investment, psychological strain (fear of negative evaluation), and burnout indicators alongside business outcomes, the protocol enables an assessment of whether organic strategies represent genuinely sustainable entrepreneurship practices or shift exploitation from external advertising costs to internalized creator labor extraction.

Theoretical contribution synthesis. The integration produces a novel theoretical proposition: *Organic content creation functions as a sustainable entrepreneurship practice when it converts skill-based labor into durable audience assets that generate economic value while maintaining creator well-being, operating within ethical relational boundaries, and remaining viable under platform volatility*. This proposition makes testable predictions:

1. Skill-based prediction: Creators with higher protocol fidelity (measurable skills) should outperform those relying on intuition, even controlling for baseline charisma or audience size
2. Durability prediction: Lead generation efficiency should improve over time as audience relationships compound (diminishing CAC trajectory)
3. Sustainability boundary prediction: Beyond threshold time investment (hypothesis: >15 hours/week), psychological costs should exceed business benefits, indicating unsustainable practice
4. Platform dependency prediction: Creators diversified across multiple platforms should demonstrate more stable lead flows than single-platform specialists when algorithm changes occur

Future research testing these predictions will determine whether organic social media strategies merit classification as sustainable entrepreneurship practices or whether they represent precarious platform-dependent labor dressed in entrepreneurial language.

4.2. Sustainability dimensions: Economic, labor, and platform dependency

4.2.1. Economic sustainability: The customer acquisition cost question

Professional services face a fundamental economic challenge: high customer acquisition costs (CAC) relative to transaction values. Benchmark data indicate CAC ranges from $410 for business consulting (FirstPageSage, 2024) to $656 for professional services broadly (Userpilot, 2026), while average coaching engagement values range from $2,000 to $10,000. This creates acceptable unit economics (customer lifetime value / CAC > 3:1) but constrains growth for solo practitioners with limited marketing budgets. A coach spending $5,000 monthly on advertising to acquire 10 clients generates positive ROI but exhausts working capital and limits reinvestment capacity.

Organic content strategies present a theoretically different economic model. Initial time investment is high (estimated at 8-12 hours per week for protocol compliance), but marginal costs decline as the audience grows. A creator with 5,000 engaged followers posting 3 videos weekly may generate lead volume equivalent to $2,000 in advertising spend, at near-zero marginal cost once the audience is established. The sustainability question becomes: *What is the crossover point at which cumulative labor investment in audience building yields a lower total CAC than equivalent paid advertising?*

Our protocol enables empirical testing of this economic sustainability claim through longitudinal CAC tracking:

$$\text{Organic CAC}_t = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{t} (\text{Hours}_i \times \text{Wage Equivalent})}{\sum_{i=1}^{t} \text{Clients Acquired}_i}$$

If organic CAC declines over time (i.e., a negative slope), the strategy demonstrates economic sustainability. If CAC remains flat or increases (audience growth stagnates while time investment continues), the strategy is economically unsustainable. Comparative benchmark: organic CAC should fall below paid advertising CAC ($410-$656) within 12-18 months to justify the strategy economically.

Critical moderator: Baseline audience size likely affects crossover timing. Creators starting with zero followers face longer payback periods than those with existing audiences, raising equity concerns about who can afford to invest in organic strategies (addressed in section 4.2.3).

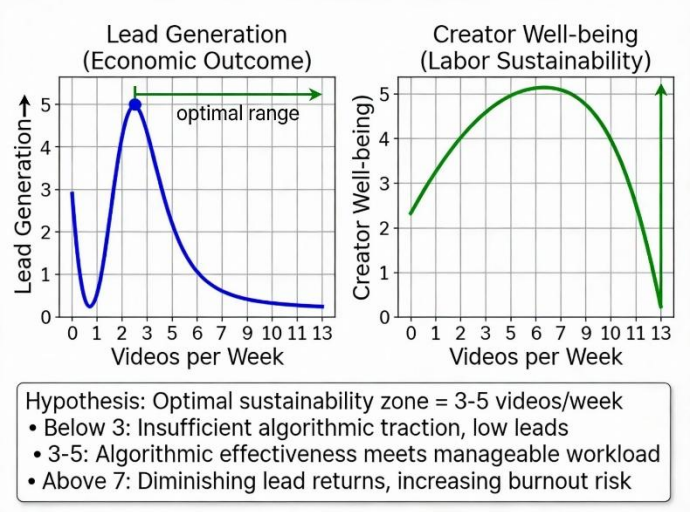
4.2.2. Labor sustainability: Psychological costs and burnout risks

Economic viability means little if creators burn out. Visibility labor research documents psychological costs, including performance anxiety, exposure to criticism, and erosion of boundaries between personal and professional identity (Abidin, 2016; Khamis et al., 2017). Our protocol directly measures these dimensions (Table 2: fear of negative evaluation, posting self-efficacy, criticism impact) to assess labor sustainability alongside economic outcomes.

Theoretical tension: Platform algorithms reward consistency and volume, potentially incentivizing unsustainable posting schedules. If the protocol drives participants toward 5-7 videos per week to maintain algorithmic favor, but this frequency causes psychological distress or reduces service delivery quality, the strategy fails sustainability criteria, even if economically viable. This creates an important research question: *What is the optimal posting frequency that balances algorithmic effectiveness with creator well-being?*

We hypothesize an inverted-U relationship:

Figure 3: Hypothesized relationships between posting frequency and sustainability outcomes.



The protocol's weekly time logs and well-being measures enable empirical testing of this hypothesis. If confirmed, it provides evidence-based guidance for sustainable posting frequencies rather than the "post daily" advice common in practitioner discourse.

Gender and demographic considerations. Platform labor research reveals that visibility labor burdens fall disproportionately on women creators who face higher rates of harassment and more rigid authenticity expectations (Duffy & Pooley, 2019). Our protocol should examine whether psychological costs differ by creator demographics, potentially revealing that organic strategies are sustainable for some populations but exploitative for others facing heightened platform risks.

4.2.3. Platform dependency and strategic vulnerability

A critical sustainability dimension is platform dependency risk - vulnerability to algorithm changes, policy shifts, or platform decline, eliminating audience access. The near-ban of TikTok in the United States during 2024-2025 exemplified this precarity: creators who built entire businesses around TikTok audiences faced existential threats from regulatory decisions beyond their control.

Cross-platform mitigation strategy. Our protocol's cross-posting requirement (TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook) partially addresses this risk by diversifying audience touchpoints. However, true platform independence requires eventual migration to *owned channels* - email lists, websites, SMS contacts, where creators control access regardless of platform policy. The protocol should track this transition:

$$\text{Owned Channel Ratio} = \frac{\text{Email Subscribers + Website Traffic}}{\text{Total Social Media Followers}}$$

Sustainability threshold hypothesis: Organic strategies become genuinely sustainable when the owned channel ratio exceeds 20-30%, providing sufficient owned audience to rebuild if platform access is lost.

Equity and accessibility concerns. Platform dependency risks are not evenly distributed. Established creators with large audiences possess bargaining power and platform attention;

emerging creators are algorithmically expendable. Similarly, organic strategies require time investments that may be feasible for practitioners with existing income sources but prohibitive for those needing immediate revenue. This raises important questions about whether organic content strategies democratize entrepreneurship (by eliminating capital barriers) or reproduce inequalities (by advantaging those who can afford extended investment periods).

Future research should examine whether organic strategies reduce or reinforce entrepreneurial inequality by comparing:

- Baseline resources required: Time availability, technical skills, existing networks
- Success rates by demographics: Gender, race, age, geographic location
- Intersectional vulnerabilities: Whether marginalized creators face compounded platform risks (harassment + algorithm bias + resource constraints)

If organic strategies prove accessible primarily to privileged populations with safety nets, they may not advance inclusive entrepreneurship goals central to sustainable development frameworks.

4.3. Methodological considerations and design limitations

4.3.1. Internal validity threats

Pre-post design without randomization. The most significant limitation is the inability to make causal claims from pre-post observational designs. Observed improvements in posting frequency or lead generation could result from:

1. Regression to the mean: Participants with poor baseline performance naturally improve regardless of intervention
2. Maturation effects: Skill development over time, independent of specific protocol elements
3. Historical confounds: External events (platform algorithm changes, economic shifts, seasonal trends) affecting all participants
4. Selection bias: Self-selected participants may be more motivated, skilled, or resource-endowed than the typical population
5. Hawthorne effects: Improvement driven by research participation awareness rather than protocol efficacy

Mitigation strategies (imperfect but necessary):

- Comparison group recruitment: Seek matched comparison participants not adopting the protocol (quasi-experimental design)
- Baseline covariate adjustment: Control for initial audience size, experience, niche, and motivation in statistical models
- Time series analysis: Multiple baseline measurements to establish pre-intervention trends, enabling better counterfactual inference
- Platform algorithm documentation: Track and report known algorithm changes during the study period to contextualize results
- Replication across cohorts: Conduct a study in multiple time periods to assess whether effects persist or reflect cohort-specific conditions

Realistic assessment: Without randomization, findings will support or refute protocol feasibility and provide effect size estimates for future RCTs, but cannot definitively prove causation. This limitation must be transparently reported.

4.3.2. Measurement validity challenges

Self-report bias. Lead generation outcomes and time investment rely heavily on self-report, introducing social desirability bias (overreporting success) and recall error. Participants may unconsciously inflate lead counts or underreport hours to appear compliant or successful.

Mitigation:

- Objective verification subsample: For 10-20% of participants, directly review CRM systems, email folders, and calendar bookings
- Multi-method triangulation: Compare self-reported leads against platform DM counts (accessible through data exports)
- External validation: Survey a subset of reported clients to confirm attribution (did they discover the creator through social media?)
- Financial cross-checks: Revenue reports provide a ceiling on plausible client counts (claimed 10 clients at $2,000 each, but revenue is $5,000 suggests measurement error)

Platform metric reliability. Platform-reported analytics may be inflated, inconsistent across updates, or manipulated by bots. TikTok and Instagram have acknowledged issues with bot inflation (Napolify, 2025), and engagement metrics may not reflect genuine human attention.

Mitigation:

- Bot detection protocols: Flag suspicious patterns (sudden follower spikes, engagement from accounts with no profile content)
- Human verification subsample: Manually review follower samples to estimate human vs. bot ratios
- Conservative estimation: Use lower-bound metrics (e.g., 3-second Facebook views rather than impressions) for primary analyses
- Sensitivity analyses: Re-run analyses with bot-adjusted metrics (e.g., reduce followers by 15% typical bot estimate)

Credibility measurement. Assessing audience perceptions of credibility and parasocial trust requires surveying followers, who may have low response rates (anticipated 10-20%) and non-random response patterns (engaged followers overrepresented).

Mitigation:

- Incentivization: Offer compensation ($10 gift cards) to boost response rates to 30-40%
- Multiple recruitment waves: Send 3-4 survey invitations across 2 weeks to capture initially non-responsive followers
- Response bias modeling: Weight responses by follower engagement levels to estimate population parameters
- Qualitative triangulation: Analyze unsolicited comments on videos as unobtrusive credibility indicators

4.3.3. External validity and generalizability limits

Population restrictions. The protocol focuses on business coaches in English-language markets, limiting generalizability across:

1. Service types: Findings may not apply to therapists (ethical constraints on social media marketing), financial advisors (regulatory restrictions), or B2B consultants (LinkedIn may be the primary platform)
2. Cultural contexts: Platform usage patterns, content preferences, and credibility signals vary across cultures; U.S.-centric design may not transfer to Asian, European, or Latin American markets
3. Language communities: Algorithm behavior may differ for non-English content; platform recommendation systems are trained primarily on English data
4. Experience levels: Protocol designed for emerging coaches; established practitioners with existing audiences face different dynamics

Boundary condition testing needed:

- Service type moderation: Explicitly test whether effects differ for coaching vs. consulting vs. therapy
- Cross-cultural replication: Conduct parallel studies in non-Western contexts with culturally adapted protocols
- Language effects: Compare outcomes for English, Spanish, Mandarin, and Arabic content creators
- Experience stratification: Analyze novice (0-2 years) vs. experienced (5+ years) practitioners separately

Temporal instability. Platform algorithms evolve rapidly; findings from 2026 studies may not apply in 2028 after multiple algorithm updates. TikTok's shift toward search-based discovery in 2024 exemplifies how platform strategy changes can invalidate prior research.

Mitigation:

- Algorithm version documentation: Record exact study timing and known algorithm states (e.g., "Instagram Reels recommendation algorithm version 3.2, deployed June 2026")
- Rapid publication: Minimize lag between data collection and publication to maximize temporal relevance
- Longitudinal tracking: Conduct protocol validation studies every 18-24 months to assess whether effects persist
- Theory over tactics: Emphasize theoretical mechanisms (credibility formation, parasocial trust) that may remain stable even as tactical implementations (optimal video length, hashtag strategies) change

4.3.4. Statistical power and multiple testing

Subgroup analysis risks. The protocol proposes multiple subgroup comparisons (high vs. low fidelity, TikTok-led vs. Instagram-led, service niches, demographics), each of which consumes statistical power and increases the Type I error rate.

Mitigation:

- Pre-specification: Designate primary comparisons (high vs. low fidelity) tested at $\alpha = 0.05$, with secondary comparisons at Bonferroni-adjusted $\alpha = 0.01$
- Effect size focus: Report and interpret effect sizes (Cohen's d, R^2) regardless of statistical significance, emphasizing practical over statistical significance
- Replication requirement: Treat exploratory subgroup findings as hypothesis-generating, requiring independent replication before acceptance
- Registry pre-registration: Pre-register analysis plan on Open Science Framework before data collection to prevent post-hoc hypothesis testing

Measurement frequency tradeoffs. Weekly assessments over 8 weeks generate 64 data points per participant (8 weeks × 8 variables), enabling sophisticated time-series models but also increasing participant burden and the risk of missing data.

Optimization:

- Variable prioritization: Core variables (posting frequency, leads) measured weekly; secondary variables (credibility, psychological measures) measured bi-weekly or monthly
- Adaptive timing: Allow participants to complete surveys within 3-day windows rather than exact weekly deadlines (reduces burden-driven attrition)
- Incentive scheduling: Provide completion bonuses for participants submitting ≥80% of weekly reports

4.4. Practical implications for multiple stakeholder groups

4.4.1. For researchers: Advancing evidence-based entrepreneurship scholarship

This protocol contributes methodological infrastructure enabling rigorous field research on questions previously studied primarily through case studies or cross-sectional surveys. By providing standardized variable definitions, validated measurement instruments, and prespecified analytical approaches, we lower barriers to other researchers conducting replication and extension studies. This cumulative approach is essential for building robust evidence about which entrepreneurial practices work, under what conditions, and for whom.

Specific research applications:

1. Platform comparison studies: Use standardized efficiency metrics (Table 3) to rigorously compare TikTok, Instagram, LinkedIn, and emerging platforms
2. Intervention optimization: Test individual protocol components in factorial designs to identify active ingredients (e.g., does profile standardization matter independent of posting frequency?)
3. Longitudinal trajectories: Extend observation window to 12-24 months to assess whether organic strategies generate truly sustainable businesses or plateau after initial growth
4. Mechanism testing: Implement mediation designs to test whether credibility and parasocial trust causally link content exposure to lead generation
5. Boundary condition exploration: Systematically vary service types, cultural contexts, and creator demographics to map where effects hold vs. fail

Open science practices: We encourage researchers adopting this protocol to:

- Pre-register studies on OSF or AsPredicted before data collection
- Share de-identified data and analysis code upon publication
- Report all outcomes measured, not only statistically significant findings (reduce publication bias)
- Conduct and publish replication attempts, including null findings
- Coordinate multi-site studies using common protocols for mega-analytic power

4.4.2. Pedagogical integration in entrepreneurship education

The protocol can be integrated into entrepreneurship curricula as a semester-long applied project where students implement the strategy while documenting outcomes. A 12-week course

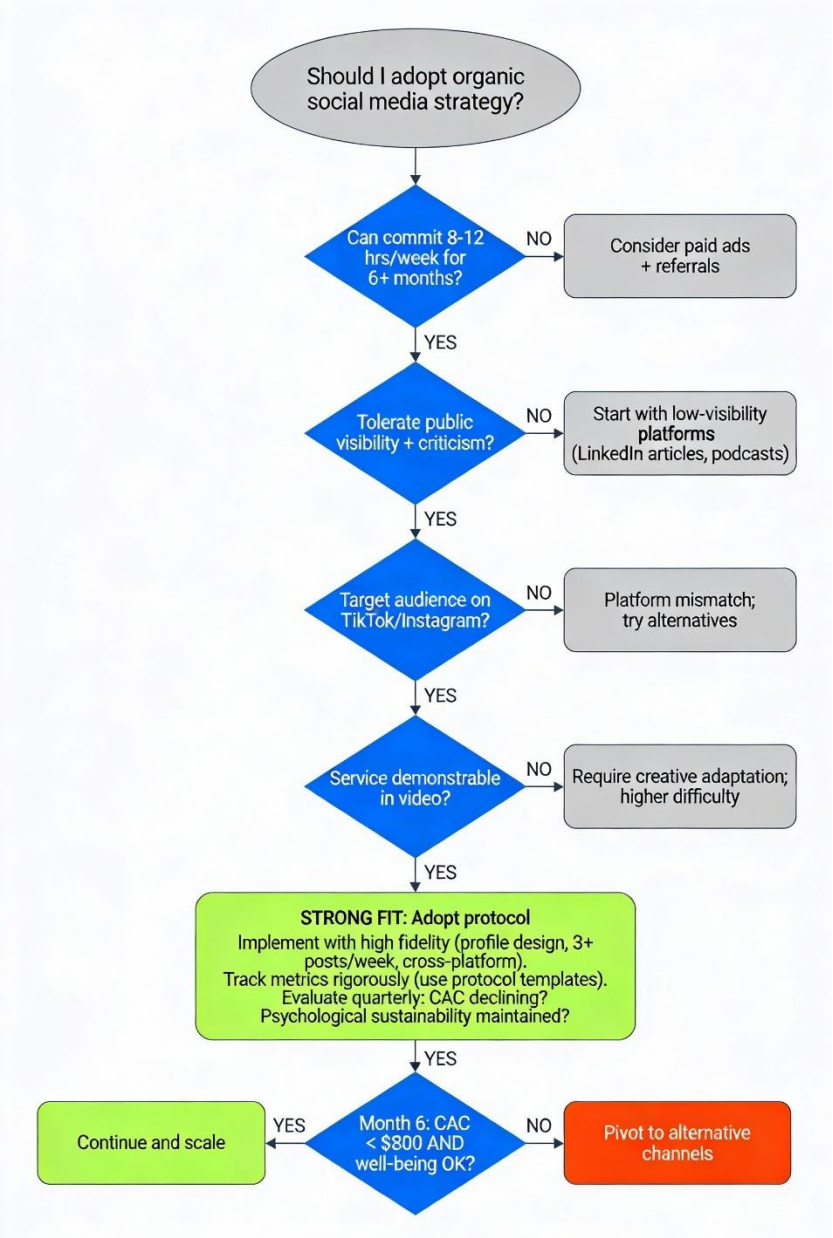
structure could include: weeks 1-3 (literature review, protocol training, baseline assessment), weeks 4-10 (active implementation with weekly analytics review), and weeks 11-12 (outcome analysis and presentation). Students learn platform analytics interpretation, fidelity measurement, and sustainability assessment - skills transferable beyond social media to broader business metric evaluation. Assessment combines posting consistency (40%), analytics documentation (30%), and critical reflection on sustainability dimensions (30%). This experiential approach addresses entrepreneurship education's persistent challenge of teaching marketing capabilities systematically rather than treating them as innate talents, while grounding learning in evidence-based practices rather than anecdotal advice.

4.4.3. For service entrepreneurs: Decision framework for strategy adoption

Practitioners should prioritize TikTok-first strategies when starting with small audiences, given the platform's superior algorithmic reach for new creators. Cross-posting to Instagram and Facebook maximizes touchpoints without proportional effort increases. Time-constrained practitioners should focus on 3 videos per week rather than attempting daily posting, which risks burnout and protocol abandonment. The decision tree (Figure 4) maps audience size, time availability, and platform experience to specific recommendations.

Implementation decision tree:

Figure 4: Implementation decision tree



Expected timeline for viable results:

- Months 1-3: Skill building, audience foundation (expect low leads)
- Months 4-6: Algorithm traction, initial lead flow (expect 2-5 qualified leads/month)
- Months 7-12: Momentum building, sustainable lead flow (target 8-15 leads/month)
- Month 12+: Mature strategy, declining CAC (organic CAC should be <$200 by month 18)

Decision rule: If by Month 6, organic CAC remains >$800 (above paid advertising benchmarks) and psychological strain is high, reallocate time to proven alternatives rather than continuing an ineffective strategy.

4.4.4. For policy makers: Entrepreneurship support and digital skills initiatives

Government agencies and economic development organizations increasingly recognize entrepreneurship as a driver of job creation and economic resilience. This protocol outlines policy interventions to support the development of small businesses in digital economies.

Policy applications:

Small business training grants: Fund cohort-based training programs teaching evidence-based content strategies to underserved entrepreneur populations (women, minorities, rural communities). The protocol provides curriculum structure and outcome measurement frameworks for program evaluation.

Workforce development initiatives: Integrate social media content creation into vocational training as a core digital literacy skill applicable across industries (not only coaching - also trades, retail, professional services).

Platform accountability frameworks: Use protocol findings to inform regulatory discussions about platform algorithm transparency. If research demonstrates that algorithm changes systematically harm small creator businesses, this supports arguments for requiring platforms to provide advance notice and impact assessments before major changes.

Economic inclusion metrics: Track whether organic content strategies reduce or reinforce entrepreneurial inequality. If disadvantaged populations cannot access strategies due to time poverty or harassment risks, this signals a need for compensatory supports (e.g., subsidized childcare enabling time investment, platform improvements for harassment reporting).

4.5. Future research directions

This protocol enables multiple research streams examining organic strategies as sustainable entrepreneurship:

Platform comparison studies: Systematic testing of TikTok-led, Instagram-led, and LinkedIn-focused strategies using standardized efficiency metrics would determine whether platform differences in algorithmic reach translate into business outcome differences, or whether cross-platform diversification neutralizes individual platform advantages.

Service type moderators: The protocol should be tested across diverse professional services (consulting, therapy, coaching subtypes, creative services) to identify boundary conditions. Trust-building mechanisms may operate differently for services that require regulatory credentials (e.g., licensed therapists) versus those that rely on expertise-based credibility (e.g., business coaches).

Longitudinal sustainability tracking: Follow-up studies at 6, 12, and 24 months post-intervention would assess whether organic strategies demonstrate true sustainability, whether creators experience declining returns as markets saturate, whether CAC continues to decline or plateaus, and whether psychological costs accumulate or diminish with experience.

Algorithm change vulnerability studies: Natural experiments during major platform algorithm updates would test platform dependency risks and evaluate whether cross-platform strategies provide meaningful resilience or whether systemic changes affect all platforms simultaneously.

Equity and access questions: Research should examine who can afford the time investment required for organic strategies. If successful implementation requires 8-12 hours weekly for 3-6 months before positive ROI, the strategy may disadvantage creators with caregiving responsibilities, multiple jobs, or limited economic buffers - potentially reinforcing rather than reducing entrepreneurial inequalities.

Automation and AI integration: As AI content generation tools proliferate, research should examine whether automated content creation enhances efficiency (enabling sustainability at lower time costs) or degrades authenticity (undermining trust formation mechanisms central to professional service marketing).

Randomized trials were feasible: While full RCTs face practical constraints in the entrepreneurship field research, component testing through randomized designs (e.g., profile design A/B tests, posting frequency experiments) could strengthen causal inference about specific protocol elements.

The ultimate research agenda question: Under what conditions - service type, creator characteristics, market contexts, platform configurations - does organic social media distribution constitute genuinely sustainable entrepreneurship versus precarious platform-dependent labor requiring unsustainable time investment?

5. Conclusion

5.1. Summary of contributions

This paper presents a comprehensive measurement protocol for studying organic social media distribution as a sustainable entrepreneurship practice in professional service contexts. Critically, this work contributes methodological infrastructure, not empirical findings. No data have been collected; no participants recruited; no causal claims advanced. Instead, we provide the conceptual framework, operational definitions, data collection procedures, and analytical specifications necessary for rigorous field research to proceed.

Our contribution operates across multiple levels:

Theoretical integration. We synthesize three previously disconnected research streams - influencer marketing theory, platform studies, and sustainable entrepreneurship scholarship - into a unified framework positioning content creation as simultaneously a distribution mechanism, a trust-building intervention, and a resource-efficient business practice. This integration generates novel, testable propositions about when and how organic strategies function as genuinely sustainable entrepreneurship rather than precarious platform-dependent labor. By extending influencer credibility research from consumer goods to professional services, we account for trust formation dynamics in which expertise evaluation precedes transaction commitment. By incorporating platform governance perspectives, we acknowledge algorithmic volatility as a sustainability threat requiring empirical assessment rather than assumption. By applying sustainable entrepreneurship frameworks, we move beyond simplistic "does it work?" questions toward multi-dimensional evaluation encompassing economic viability, labor conditions, and platform dependency risks.

Methodological specification. We provide operational definitions for 40+ variables spanning platform analytics (Table 3), behavioral fidelity markers (Tables 1-2), lead generation outcomes (Table 4), and psychological sustainability measures. Each variable includes explicit coding rules, data sources, measurement frequencies, and validation procedures designed to maximize replicability across studies. The statistical analysis plan (Section 3.7) prespecifies hypothesis tests, effect size calculations, missing-data strategies, and multiple-comparison corrections, thereby reducing researchers' degrees of freedom that can inflate false-positive rates. By distinguishing platform-native metrics from standardized efficiency indicators, we address a persistent measurement challenge, enabling valid cross-platform comparisons despite heterogeneous analytics systems. This level of specification transforms abstract concepts - credibility, authenticity, sustainable practice - into concrete, measurable phenomena amenable to empirical investigation.

Practical translation. For service entrepreneurs, we translate academic insights into decision frameworks and implementation guidance. The strategic fit assessment (Section 4.4.3) provides evidence-based criteria for determining whether organic strategies match individual resource availability, psychological readiness, audience accessibility, and competitive positioning. Rather than universal prescriptions ("everyone should post on TikTok"), we acknowledge boundary conditions and alternative pathways. For entrepreneurship educators, we demonstrate how content creation can be taught as a learnable skill set grounded in empirical evidence rather than intuition, with curricular examples spanning undergraduate, MBA, and executive education contexts. For policymakers, we identify measurement approaches to evaluate whether digital entrepreneurship initiatives genuinely expand economic opportunity or inadvertently reproduce inequalities favoring those with time, technical skills, and platform visibility.

Research infrastructure. Perhaps most importantly, we provide standardized tools enabling cumulative knowledge building. Field research in entrepreneurship has historically suffered from low replicability because studies have employed idiosyncratic measurement approaches, preventing direct comparisons. By offering validated instruments, coding protocols, and analytical templates, we lower barriers to other researchers conducting replication and extension studies. This cumulative approach - where multiple teams test similar protocols across diverse contexts - is essential for

distinguishing between entrepreneurial practices that produce robust effects and those that yield context-specific or chance findings.

5.2. Core assertions and boundary conditions

Our protocol rests on several core assertions derived from the literature synthesis, each requiring empirical validation:

Assertion 1: Content fidelity matters more than charisma. We propose that systematic protocol adherence (profile design consistency, posting discipline, technical quality standards) predicts lead generation outcomes more strongly than difficult-to-change personal attributes (charisma, existing networks, physical attractiveness). This assertion challenges the common belief that a "personal brand" is innate rather than developed. If validated, it supports treating content creation as a teachable skill; if refuted, it suggests organic strategies may not democratize entrepreneurship as proponents claim.

Assertion 2: Platform amplification follows measurable patterns. We propose that early video retention (watch-through rates in the first 3 seconds) and engagement velocity (likes/comments in the first hour) predict algorithmic distribution in quantifiable ways. This assertion assumes algorithm operations, while opaque, are sufficiently stable and measurable to inform creator strategy. Platform algorithm documentation would validate or refute this; absent such transparency, we rely on correlation between measurable creator behaviors and distribution outcomes.

Assertion 3: Credibility mediates exposure-to-leads conversion. We propose that content exposure alone is insufficient; it must generate perceived credibility and parasocial trust to convert to lead behaviors. This mediation hypothesis predicts that two creators with identical view counts may experience divergent lead outcomes based on how content affects audience credibility perceptions. Validating this requires both audience perception surveys and business outcome tracking - a data integration challenge, but theoretically essential.

Assertion 4: Sustainability is multi-dimensional and potentially conflicting. We assert that economic sustainability (declining CAC), labor sustainability (manageable psychological costs), and platform independence (owned channel migration) must all be assessed, and may trade off against each other. A strategy could be economically optimal but psychologically unsustainable, or labor-sustainable but economically unviable. This complexity resists simple "yes/no" effectiveness conclusions, requiring nuanced evaluation accounting for creator goals, constraints, and values.

Boundary conditions limiting assertion scope:

- Service type: Protocol designed for coaching; may not generalize to highly regulated professions (therapy, financial advice) or B2B services where LinkedIn dominates
- Cultural context: English-language, Western cultural norms embedded in credibility cues (e.g., direct self-promotion is more acceptable in the U.S. than in East Asian contexts)
- Platform era: Findings from 2026 algorithms may not apply after major platform updates or shifts in user demographics
- Creator lifecycle stage: Protocol targets emerging practitioners building initial audiences; established creators face different strategic questions
- Economic conditions: Effectiveness may vary with economic cycles (recessions reduce coaching demand regardless of marketing quality)

Acknowledging these boundaries prevents overgeneralization while identifying fertile ground for extension studies.

5.3. Implementation recommendations

Phase 1: Preparation (Weeks 1-2)

Audit current profiles against fidelity criteria, standardize avatars and bios across platforms, establish analytics export procedures, and baseline lead tracking systems.

Phase 2: Protocol Launch (Weeks 3-10)

Create 3+ videos per week with cross-platform distribution. Apply the two-take routine to reduce posting anxiety. Document weekly time investment and lead outcomes using standardized templates.

Phase 3: Optimization (Weeks 11-16)

Analyze which content formats drive the highest lead yield. Adjust posting frequency based on sustainability indicators - if burnout symptoms emerge, reduce to minimum viable consistency rather than abandoning the strategy entirely.

Critical success factors:

• Consistency over perfection: Algorithm favor accumulates through regular posting; sporadic high-production content underperforms consistent moderate - quality output

• Platform diversification: Cross-posting mitigates the risk of single-platform algorithm changes

• Lead attribution discipline: Track first touchpoint systematically to measure true organic contribution

• Psychological sustainability: Monitor fear of negative evaluation scores; if increasing over time, implement criticism management strategies

Common failure modes to avoid:

• Attempting daily posting without adequate time buffers (leads to burnout)

• Neglecting profile standardization (reduces cross-platform recognition)

• Posting without tracking (cannot assess ROI or optimize strategy)

• Abandoning prematurely (organic strategies require 8-12 weeks for audience compounding effects)

5.4. From protocol to practice: Researcher responsibilities

Researchers implementing this protocol bear several ethical and scholarly responsibilities:

Transparency obligation. Given persistent replication challenges in social science, researchers must report methods and results with maximal transparency. This includes:

- Pre-registering studies before data collection (OSF, AsPredicted)
- Reporting all outcomes measured, not only significant findings (publication bias mitigation)
- Distinguishing exploratory from confirmatory analyses
- Sharing data and code to enable independent verification
- Disclosing conflicts of interest (particularly relevant if researchers have commercial training programs)

Participant welfare. This protocol involves entrepreneurs who may face financial precarity and psychological vulnerability. Researchers must:

- Provide realistic expectations (organic strategies require months before returns; not guaranteed success)
- Monitor for adverse effects (excessive stress, harassment, financial losses from time investment)
- Offer exit pathways (participants can withdraw without penalty or shame)
- Connect struggling participants with alternative resources (mental health support, business counseling)

Contextual interpretation. Findings must be interpreted within boundary conditions rather than overgeneralized. A study finding positive effects for U.S. business coaches in 2026 does not automatically validate the protocol for Brazilian financial advisors in 2028. Researchers must explicitly discuss:

- Population specificity (who was studied?)
- Temporal specificity (when, under which platform algorithm versions?)
- Alternative explanations (what confounds might explain results?)
- Replication needs (what must be tested before confident generalization?)

Equity awareness. Researchers should examine whether organic strategies reduce or reinforce entrepreneurial inequality. This requires:

- Demographic data collection enabling intersectional analysis
- Oversampling underrepresented populations
- Analyzing heterogeneous treatment effects (does protocol work equally for all groups?)
- Discussing equity implications in publications (not only efficiency metrics)

Knowledge humility. Even rigorously conducted research provides probabilistic evidence, not definitive truth. Platform volatility, measurement limitations, and unobserved confounds create persistent uncertainty. Researchers must communicate findings with appropriate caveats rather than overconfident prescriptions.

5.5. Broader implications for sustainable entrepreneurship scholarship

Beyond immediate protocol applications, this work carries implications for sustainable entrepreneurship as an academic field:

Expanding sustainability beyond environmental focus. Sustainable entrepreneurship scholarship has historically emphasized environmental sustainability (clean tech, circular economy, green business models). While essential, this focus can obscure other sustainability dimensions crucial for service-based and digital entrepreneurship. By demonstrating how economic sustainability (resource-efficient business models), labor sustainability (creator well-being), and platform dependency risks constitute legitimate sustainability concerns, we broaden the field's aperture. Service businesses, which constitute 70-80% of the economies of developed countries, require sustainability frameworks that are not dependent on material resource flows or environmental footprints.

Interrogating platform capitalism critically. Much entrepreneurship scholarship treats digital platforms as neutral infrastructure enabling opportunity. Conversely, critical platform studies scholarship documents exploitation, precarity, and value extraction. This protocol bridges these perspectives by empirically assessing when platforms enable sustainable entrepreneurship versus when they extract labor without reciprocal value. Rather than assuming platforms are inherently good or bad, we provide measurement tools to determine under what conditions they function as enablers versus exploiters - a question amenable to data rather than ideology.

Centering measurement rigor. Entrepreneurship research has sometimes prioritized theoretical novelty over measurement validity, resulting in the proliferation of constructs measured idiosyncratically. By investing significant effort in operational definitions, validated instruments, and replicable procedures, we model an alternative approach that privileges cumulative knowledge-building. If multiple teams adopt common measurement protocols, meta-analyses can eventually synthesize findings with greater confidence than currently possible when each study employs unique measures.

Connecting micro-behaviors to macro-outcomes. This protocol links granular creator behaviors (posting frequency, profile design, video retention) to business outcomes (lead generation, client acquisition, revenue) through mediating mechanisms (algorithmic amplification, credibility formation). This multi-level integration demonstrates how sustainable entrepreneurship researchers can connect individual behavioral choices to economic sustainability outcomes through platform architectures and audience psychology. Such integrative models are essential for understanding digital entrepreneurship, in which platform algorithms fundamentally shape how individual actions translate into business outcomes.

Prioritizing equity and inclusion. By explicitly examining whether organic strategies are accessible to underrepresented entrepreneurs or whether they reproduce advantages for privileged populations, we model how sustainability scholarship can incorporate social equity as a core rather than peripheral concern. Sustainable entrepreneurship that benefits only those with time, capital, and platform privileges fails basic inclusivity tests central to sustainable development frameworks (SDG 8, SDG 10).

5.6. The paradox of measurement

A reflexive tension exists: systematizing "organic" strategies through protocols potentially undermines the authenticity that audiences value. However, the lack of systematic measurement perpetuates inequitable access to entrepreneurship: those with intuitive social media skills succeed, while equally competent service providers without such skills fail. Evidence-based protocols democratize capability development. The goal is not to eliminate authenticity but to provide scaffolding that enables authentic self-presentation to reach audiences, making entrepreneurial viability depend on service competence and learnable marketing skills rather than on pre-existing social media fluency.

5.7. Concluding statement

Organic social media distribution offers a compelling strategic option for service entrepreneurs seeking sustainable client-acquisition pathways that are not dependent on recurring advertising expenditures. However, compelling possibilities require rigorous validation before confident recommendation. This measurement protocol provides the methodological architecture necessary for such validation to proceed systematically, replicably, and cumulatively across research teams, cultural contexts, and service types.

To researchers: We offer this protocol as an invitation to collaboration. Adopt it, adapt it, improve it, and share what you learn so the field can build cumulative knowledge rather than isolated case studies.

To educators: We provide an evidence-based structure for teaching content creation as an entrepreneurial capability, grounded in theory and focused on skill development rather than a mystical "personal brand."

To entrepreneurs: We offer decision frameworks for assessing strategic fit and for setting realistic expectations about the investment required and the timelines for returns. Organic strategies are neither miracle solutions nor irrelevant tactics - they are resource-intensive pathways working under specific conditions for specific populations.

To policymakers: We demonstrate measurement approaches to evaluate whether digital entrepreneurship initiatives expand economic opportunity equitably or reproduce existing inequalities, thereby informing resource allocation for inclusive economic development.

Most fundamentally, we assert that sustainable entrepreneurship scholarship must grapple with the digital platform realities that shape how contemporary entrepreneurs access markets, build reputations, and generate livelihoods. Organic content strategies exemplify broader questions about platform capitalism, creator labor, algorithmic governance, and sustainable business development at smaller scales than venture-backed unicorn narratives dominating popular discourse. By providing rigorous measurement tools to study these dynamics, we aim to elevate discussion from anecdote and ideology to evidence and nuance.

The future of work increasingly involves self-employment, service provision, and platform-mediated entrepreneurship. Whether this future supports flourishing livelihoods or precarious subsistence depends partly on whether entrepreneurs develop sustainable practices - economically viable, psychologically healthy, and ethically grounded. This protocol contributes to that essential project by making sustainability measurable, testable, and improvable through research, education, and practice refinement.

We invite the scholarly community to help determine whether organic social media strategies can genuinely function as sustainable entrepreneurship practices, under what conditions, and for whom. The question is important; the methods are now available; the work remains to be done.

Conflict of interest statement

The author declares the following potential conflicts of interest:

The author operates a commercial consulting practice advising service professionals on digital marketing strategies, including content creation approaches similar to those described in this protocol. While this commercial experience informed the protocol design through practical knowledge of implementation challenges, no financial incentives from consulting revenue, training program enrollments, or platform partnerships were tied to this research project's design, execution, or reporting.

This manuscript presents a measurement protocol for future empirical research. No proprietary data from commercial programs has been included. The hypothetical population references (e.g., "2,600-person cohort") represent realistic sample sizes for protocol demonstration purposes and do not refer to any specific commercial program's participants.

To mitigate potential bias, future researchers implementing this protocol should recruit participants independently from the author's commercial activities or ensure independent data collection and analysis when such separation is infeasible. The author commits to supporting open science practices, including data sharing, protocol transparency, and replication support to enable independent validation of any findings emerging from this framework.

The author has no equity interests in TikTok, Meta (Instagram/Facebook), Google (YouTube), or other social media platforms mentioned in this research. The protocol does not endorse any specific platform; instead, it provides comparative measurement approaches enabling evidence-based platform evaluation.

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This protocol synthesizes insights from 25+ empirical studies spanning multiple disciplines. While space constraints prevent individual acknowledgment, the author gratefully recognizes the

scholars whose research on influencer credibility, platform governance, sustainable entrepreneurship, and coaching effectiveness provided the theoretical and empirical foundation for this integration.

Data availability statement

No data were collected for this study. This manuscript presents a measurement protocol for future empirical research. Upon publication, protocol materials, including survey instruments, coding templates, statistical analysis syntax, and implementation guides, will be made freely available via the Open Science Framework (OSF) repository.

Researchers implementing this protocol are encouraged to share de-identified datasets and analysis code to enable replication and meta-analytic synthesis. The author commits to maintaining a protocol registry tracking studies using this framework to facilitate cumulative knowledge building.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

The authors declare that they used Generative AI tools during the preparation of this manuscript. Specifically, Claude 3.7 Sonnet (Anthropic) was used to assist with text structuring, editing, and improving the quality of the English-language version. Additionally, Grammarly was used to check grammar and enhance language. The authors reviewed, verified, and took full responsibility for all content in the final manuscript.

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Appendix A: Baseline assessment survey

Survey Structure (47 items, ~15 minutes completion):

Section 1: Demographic Information (6 items)
Age, gender, location, education, years in industry, service niche

Section 2: Current Business Profile (5 items)
Business structure, price point, monthly revenue, active clients, client acquisition channels

Section 3: Social Media Experience (5 items)
Active platforms, follower counts per platform, posting history duration/frequency, and current ad spend

Section 4: Baseline Lead Generation - Past 30 Days (5 items)
• Total inbound inquiries from social media: _____
• Qualified leads meeting criteria: _____
• Discovery calls booked: _____
• Clients signed: _____
• Revenue from social media attribution: $_____

Section 5: Time Investment (4 items)
Weekly hours on content creation, engagement, support/assistance

Section 6: Psychological Measures (14 items)
• Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (BFNE-II): 12 items, 1-5 Likert (Carleton et al., 2006, 2007)
Sample: "I worry about what other people will think of me even when I know it doesn't make any difference"
• Posting Self-Efficacy Scale: 5 items, 1-7 Likert
Sample: "I feel confident I can post 3+ videos weekly even when busy"

Section 7: Motivations and Expectations (3 items)
Primary reason for participation, time availability, current challenges

Section 8: Consent Confirmation (3 items)
Study participation, data sharing, interview willingness

Appendix B: Weekly monitoring survey

WEEKLY CHECK-IN SURVEY
Week Number: _____

SECTION 1: POSTING ACTIVITY (Past 7 Days)
1. Total videos posted this week:
   - TikTok: _____ videos
   - Instagram Reels: _____ videos
   - Facebook Reels: _____ videos
   - YouTube Shorts: _____ videos
   - Total across all platforms: _____
2. Did you meet the minimum posting frequency target (3+ videos across all platforms)?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
3. If you posted fewer than 3 videos, what was the primary barrier? (Select one)
   - [ ] Lack of time
   - [ ] Technical difficulties
   - [ ] Didn't know what to create
   - [ ] Fear of posting/anxiety
   - [ ] Illness or personal emergency
   - [ ] Other: _____

SECTION 2: TWO-TAKE ROUTINE ADHERENCE
4. Of the videos you posted this week, for how many did you record 2+ takes before selecting one to post?
_____ videos (out of _____ total posted)
5. Two-take adherence percentage: _____ % (calculated automatically)

SECTION 3: PLATFORM ANALYTICS SNAPSHOT
Instructions: Please export this week's analytics from each platform and record key metrics below.
TikTok:
- Total video views this week: _____
- Total profile visits this week: _____
- Net follower change (+/-): _____
- Engagement (likes + comments + shares): _____

Instagram:
- Total Reels plays this week: _____
- Total reach (unique accounts): _____
- Total profile visits: _____
- Net follower change (+/-): _____
- Saves + Shares combined: _____

Facebook:
- Total Reels 3-second views: _____
- Total reach: _____
- Net follower/friend change (+/-): _____

YouTube:
- Total Shorts views: _____
- Watch time (minutes): _____
- Net subscriber change (+/-): _____

SECTION 4: LEAD GENERATION OUTCOMES
6. Inbound inquiries this week (DMs, emails, form submissions mentioning social media discovery): _____
7. Qualified leads this week (met criteria: expressed interest, asked about pricing/process, provided contact info): _____
8. Discovery calls booked this week from social media attribution: _____
9. New clients signed this week from social media attribution: _____

SECTION 5: CRITICISM EXPOSURE & IMPACT
10. In the past week, how many negative comments or reactions did you receive across all platforms?
   - [ ] 0 (none)
   - [ ] 1-2
   - [ ] 3-5
   - [ ] 6-10
   - [ ] More than 10

11. Negative feedback made me consider stopping posting.
Scale: 1 = Not at all | 2 = Slightly | 3 = Moderately | 4 = Very much | 5 = Extremely
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
12. I felt confident managing criticism this week.

Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree | 7 = Strongly agree
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]

SECTION 6: TIME INVESTMENT LOG
13. Hours spent this week on content creation (concept development, filming, editing): _____ hours
14. Hours spent this week on engagement (responding to comments, DMs): _____ hours
15. Total social media hours this week: _____ hours

SECTION 7: WELL-BEING & SUSTAINABILITY CHECK
16. This week, I felt overwhelmed by social media demands.
Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree | 7 = Strongly agree
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]
17. This week, posting felt sustainable alongside my other business responsibilities.
Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree | 7 = Strongly agree
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]
18. I enjoyed creating content this week.
Scale: 1 = Not at all | 7 = Very much
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]

SECTION 8: OPEN REFLECTION (Optional)
19. What went well this week with your content strategy?

20. What challenges did you face?

21. What would you like support with in the coming week?

Survey completed by: _____
Completion date: _____
Thank you! Please submit this survey and upload your weekly analytics exports to the secure research portal.

Appendix C: Profile design fidelity coding template

PROFILE DESIGN FIDELITY ASSESSMENT
Participant ID: _____ | Coder ID: _____ | Date: _____

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CODERS:
1. Access participant's public profiles on TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook
2. Capture screenshots of profile photos and bio text
3. Code each element using criteria below
4. Calculate composite fidelity score
5. Two independent coders must complete; compare for inter-rater reliability

ELEMENT 1: AVATAR CONSISTENCY
Criterion: Same image file used across all active platforms
TikTok profile photo: [Describe: Professional portrait / Casual photo / Logo / Other]
Instagram profile photo: [Describe]
Facebook profile photo: [Describe]
Coding:
- [ ] 0 = Different images on each platform
- [ ] 1 = Same image on 2 out of 3 platforms
- [ ] 2 = Same image on all 3 platforms

Score: ____

ELEMENT 2: FACE VISIBILITY
Criterion: Face occupies ≥40% of frame, clear frontal view
Profile photo analysis:
- Face present: [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Face occupies ≥40% of frame: [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Frontal view (not profile/side angle): [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Clear/unobstructed: [ ] Yes [ ] No

Coding:
- [ ] 0 = No face visible OR face <20% of frame
- [ ] 1 = Face visible 20-39% OR profile/side view
- [ ] 2 = Face ≥40% of frame, clear frontal view

Score: ____

ELEMENT 3: BIO LENGTH
Criterion: ≤100 characters total (excluding link)
TikTok bio character count: _____ characters
Instagram bio character count: _____ characters
Facebook about/bio character count: _____ characters
Average character count: _____ characters
Coding:
- [ ] 0 = >150 characters average
- [ ] 1 = 100-150 characters average
- [ ] 2 = ≤100 characters average

Score: ____

ELEMENT 4: EMOJI RESTRAINT
Criterion: 0 decorative emojis (functional symbols like → or ✉ permitted)
TikTok bio emoji count: _____ decorative emojis
Instagram bio emoji count: _____ decorative emojis
Facebook bio emoji count: _____ decorative emojis
Total decorative emojis: _____
Note: Functional symbols (→, •, |, ✉ used as icon) do not count
Coding:
- [ ] 0 = ≥3 decorative emojis total
- [ ] 1 = 1-2 decorative emojis total
- [ ] 2 = 0 decorative emojis

Score: ____

ELEMENT 5: CALL-TO-ACTION CLARITY
Criterion: Single link present, identical destination across platforms
TikTok link destination: _____
Instagram link destination: _____
Facebook link destination: _____
Link consistency analysis:

- Links present on all platforms: [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Links point to same destination: [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Single CTA per platform (not multiple links): [ ] Yes [ ] No

Coding:

- [ ] 0 = No links OR different destinations
- [ ] 1 = Links present but inconsistent destinations OR multiple CTAs
- [ ] 2 = Same link destination across all platforms, single CTA each

Score: _____

COMPOSITE FIDELITY SCORE

Element	Score (0-2)
1. Avatar consistency	_____
2. Face visibility	_____
3. Bio length	_____
4. Emoji restraint	_____
5. CTA clarity	_____
TOTAL	_____ / 10

Fidelity Classification:

- [ ] High fidelity (≥8/10)
- [ ] Moderate fidelity (5-7/10)
- [ ] Low fidelity (0-4/10)

QUALITATIVE NOTES:

Describe overall impression of profile professionalism, clarity, and adherence to protocol standards:

Inter-Rater Reliability Check (completed by second coder):

- Coder 1 Total Score: _____ / 10
- Coder 2 Total Score: _____ / 10
- Agreement: [ ] Exact agreement [ ] Within 1 point [ ] >1 point discrepancy

If discrepancy >1 point, coders must discuss and reach consensus.

Appendix D: Post-intervention assessment survey

POST-INTERVENTION SURVEY
Week 8/9 Final Assessment

SECTION 1: PROTOCOL IMPLEMENTATION SUMMARY
1. Over the 8-week study period, what was your average weekly posting frequency?
- [ ] <1 video/week
- [ ] 1-2 videos/week
- [ ] 3-4 videos/week
- [ ] 5-6 videos/week
- [ ] 7+ videos/week

2. Which platforms did you use most consistently? (Check all that apply)
- [ ] TikTok
- [ ] Instagram
- [ ] Facebook
- [ ] YouTube

3. Did you maintain the profile design standards (portrait avatar, minimal bio, consistent link) throughout the study?
- [ ] Yes, fully maintained
- [ ] Mostly maintained with minor lapses
- [ ] Partially maintained
- [ ] No, did not maintain

SECTION 2: BUSINESS OUTCOMES (Past 30 Days)
4. Total inbound inquiries from social media (final month): _____
5. Qualified leads (final month): _____
6. Discovery calls booked (final month): _____
7. Clients signed (final month): _____
8. Revenue from social media-attributed clients (final month): $_____
9. Compared to your baseline (pre-study), how would you rate your lead generation results?
- [ ] Significantly worse
- [ ] Somewhat worse
- [ ] About the same
- [ ] Somewhat better
- [ ] Significantly better

SECTION 3: PSYCHOLOGICAL MEASURES (POST-INTERVENTION)
Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (BFNE-II) - Repeat
Same 12 items as baseline survey, items 25-36
[Items repeated here with 1-5 scale]

Posting Self-Efficacy Scale - Repeat
Same 5 items as baseline survey, items 37-41
[Items repeated here with 1-7 scale]

SECTION 4: SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT
10. The protocol felt economically sustainable (time investment was justified by business results).
Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree | 7 = Strongly agree
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]
11. The protocol felt psychologically sustainable (manageable stress, maintained well-being).
Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree | 7 = Strongly agree
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]
12. I experienced burnout or significant stress related to social media posting.
Scale: 1 = Not at all | 7 = Extremely
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]
13. I plan to continue this posting strategy after the study ends.
- [ ] Definitely yes
- [ ] Probably yes
- [ ] Unsure
- [ ] Probably no
- [ ] Definitely no

14. If you plan to discontinue, what is the primary reason? (Select one)
- [ ] Too time-consuming
- [ ] Insufficient business results
- [ ] Too stressful/negative for well-being
- [ ] Platform concerns (algorithm changes, bans, etc.)
- [ ] Prefer other marketing channels

- [ ] Other: _____

SECTION 5: PROTOCOL SATISFACTION
15. Overall, how satisfied are you with the protocol implementation experience?
Scale: 1 = Very dissatisfied | 7 = Very satisfied
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]
16. The protocol instructions were clear and easy to follow.
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]
17. The researcher support was adequate.
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]
18. The weekly survey burden was manageable.
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]

SECTION 6: COMPONENT EFFECTIVENESS (Perceived)
Rate how helpful each protocol component was for your business:
19. Cross-platform posting (TikTok + Instagram + Facebook)
Scale: 1 = Not helpful | 7 = Extremely helpful
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]
20. Profile design standardization (portrait photo, minimal bio)
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]
21. Two-take routine (recording multiple versions)
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]
22. Posting frequency target (3+ videos/week)
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]
23. Technical quality standards (vertical format, eye-level framing, audio)
[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]

SECTION 7: PLATFORM COMPARISON
24. Which platform generated the most qualified leads for you?
- [ ] TikTok
- [ ] Instagram
- [ ] Facebook
- [ ] YouTube
- [ ] About equal across platforms

25. Which platform was most enjoyable to create content for?
- [ ] TikTok
- [ ] Instagram
- [ ] Facebook
- [ ] YouTube

26. If you could only use ONE platform going forward, which would you choose?
- [ ] TikTok
- [ ] Instagram
- [ ] Facebook
- [ ] YouTube
- [ ] LinkedIn (if you used it)

SECTION 8: OPEN-ENDED REFLECTIONS
27. What was the most valuable thing you learned from participating in this study?

---

28. What was the biggest challenge you faced during the 8-week protocol?

---

29. What would you change about the protocol to make it more effective or sustainable?

---

30. Any additional comments or feedback for the research team?

SECTION 9: FOLLOW-UP CONSENT
31. Would you be willing to be contacted in 3-6 months for a brief follow-up survey to assess long-term sustainability?
- [ ] Yes, willing
- [ ] No, prefer not to be contacted

32. May we contact you if we have follow-up questions about your responses?
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

Thank you for your participation in this research!
Your contribution will help advance understanding of sustainable entrepreneurship practices in the digital economy.
Participant ID: _____
Survey completion date: _____

Appendix E: Data collection checklist for researchers

RESEARCHER DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOL
Weekly Implementation Checklist

WEEK -4 TO -1: BASELINE PHASE

- [ ] Participant recruitment complete (target n=200-300)
- [ ] Informed consent forms signed and filed
- [ ] Baseline survey distributed and collected
- [ ] Platform analytics baseline exports received (4-week retrospective)
- [ ] Profile screenshots captured (all platforms)
- [ ] Participant IDs assigned and tracking spreadsheet created
- [ ] Secure data storage configured (GDPR-compliant)

WEEK 0: INTERVENTION START

- [ ] Protocol training materials distributed to all participants
- [ ] Group Q&A session conducted (recorded for absent participants)
- [ ] Analytics export tutorials shared (platform-specific guides)
- [ ] Research team contact information provided
- [ ] Weekly survey schedule communicated

WEEKS 1-8: ACTIVE MONITORING
Weekly tasks (repeat each week):

- [ ] Monday: Weekly survey link sent to all active participants
- [ ] Wednesday: Reminder sent to non-responders
- [ ] Friday: Analytics upload deadline, final reminder
- [ ] Weekend: Data entry and quality checks

Data quality checks:

- [ ] Survey completion rates tracked (target ≥80%)
- [ ] Analytics files received and uploaded correctly
- [ ] Missing data flagged for follow-up
- [ ] Outliers identified (e.g., impossible values like 10,000 videos/week)
- [ ] Profile screenshots updated bi-weekly (Weeks 2, 4, 6, 8)

Participant support:

- [ ] Respond to technical questions within 24 hours
- [ ] Bi-weekly check-in calls scheduled with struggling participants
- [ ] Attrition tracking (participants who stop responding)
- [ ] Re-engagement outreach for 1-week non-responders

WEEK 8-9: POST-INTERVENTION

- [ ] Post-intervention survey distributed
- [ ] Final analytics exports collected
- [ ] Profile fidelity coding completed (two independent coders)
- [ ] Inter-rater reliability calculated (Cohen's kappa)
- [ ] Qualitative interview recruitment (optional subset)
- [ ] Audience perception surveys sent to participant followers
- [ ] Participant completion incentives distributed

WEEKS 10-12: DATA PREPARATION

- [ ] Complete dataset compiled and de-identified
- [ ] Missing data analysis conducted
- [ ] Data cleaning decisions documented
- [ ] Analytic dataset created with codebook
- [ ] Statistical analysis software prepared (R, SPSS, Stata)
- [ ] Pre-registered analysis plan reviewed

ONGOING QUALITY ASSURANCE

- [ ] Weekly team meetings to discuss implementation challenges
- [ ] Protocol deviations documented in research log
- [ ] Adverse events monitored (participant distress, harassment)
- [ ] IRB/ethics updates submitted if protocol modifications needed
- [ ] Data security audits conducted monthly

Appendix F: Sample size calculator (R code)

STATISTICAL POWER CALCULATION CODE

```
# Power analysis for paired t-test
library(pwr)

# Parameters based on Section 3.3 assumptions
alpha <- 0.05         # Significance level (two-tailed)
power <- 0.80         # Desired statistical power
delta <- 4            # Minimum detectable effect (leads/month)
sigma <- 8            # Standard deviation of change
cohen_d <- delta/sigma # Standardized effect size = 0.5 (medium)

# Calculate required sample size
result <- pwr.t.test(
  d = cohen_d,
  sig.level = alpha,
  power = power,
  type = "paired",
  alternative = "two.sided"
)

print(result)
# Output: n ≈ 34 participants

# Adjust for 30% anticipated attrition
required_n <- ceiling(result$n / 0.70)
cat("Recruitment target:", required_n, "participants
")
# Output: 49 participants → recruit n = 50

# Field study recommendation: n = 200-300
# Enables subgroup analysis, platform comparison, attrition buffer

# Full code with sensitivity analyses available at OSF Repository
```


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