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Digital Visibility and Credibility in a B2B Market Research Firm: A Practice-Based Case Study of SEO, Content and Competitor Benchmarking

Sejal Thakare

School of Business, Indira University, Pune, India
Email: thakaresejal2001@gmail.com

ABSTRACT :

The study examined how search engine optimization (SEO), content development, professional networking and competitor benchmarking can be carried out together to build visibility and credibility in a business-to-business (B2B) market research firm. A single-case, practice-based qualitative design was used. Data were drawn from six fortnightly progress reports, task records and the public web pages of a privately held market research firm in India, where the author worked as a digital marketing intern from 1 June to 31 August 2026. Eight task streams were documented, including revision of titles, meta descriptions and links on more than 12 industry pages, diagnosis of more than 10 pages crawled but not indexed, correction of more than 30 broken client-logo images, verification of more than 15 citation and backlink sources, conversion of more than 20 case studies into scripts and a ten-element audit of one market-report page. The findings showed that on-page revision could be done routinely with a checklist, whereas indexing problems needed page-by-page diagnosis. Credibility signals such as memberships, certifications, client logos, case studies and verified citations recurred across the networking, website and citation work, and verification was the cost that recurred most often. The study concludes that visibility work and credibility work are separate jobs that meet on the same pages. It recommends one standard SEO checklist, a recurring competitor-benchmarking cycle and a structured outreach pipeline. No ranking, traffic or conversion data were collected, so further research should measure the effect of such work on search performance and compare several firms.

Keywords: SEO; B2B marketing; Market research industry; Content marketing; Competitor benchmarking; Digital credibility.

1. Background of the Study

Market research firms sell evidence, and buyers judge that evidence before they read it, through search results, the company website and the signs of credibility around it. The global market research services market was estimated at about USD 93 to 97 billion in 2025–26 and is projected to reach about USD 116 billion by 2030 (The Business Research Company, 2026). Industry commentary is already asking whether artificial intelligence (AI) is accelerating that growth (Forsta, 2026).

Search engine optimization is usually described as three strands: on-page, off-page and technical work (Almukhtar et al., 2021). Daoud et al. (2024) surveyed 400 respondents and found that the appropriateness of keywords was significantly related to website ranking, closely trailing technical SEO in importance for first-page position, with off-page strategies third. Reyes-Lillo et al. (2023) examined the Domain Authority, Authority Score and Domain Rating values produced by Moz, Semrush and Ahrefs and concluded that their reliability supports decision-making based on these indicators.

Visibility alone is not enough, because a buyer also needs reasons to trust the publisher. Marin and Nilă (2021) studied how communication and marketing specialists and recruitment specialists view building a professional identity on LinkedIn and found that they regard it as a tool for developing a personal brand, although communication and marketing specialists showed only average involvement. Cvetkovic et al. (2026) surveyed 11,259 participants in 12 countries and found that relatedness and positive attitudes towards AI predicted trust in AI systems and in the companies behind them across countries. For a firm that sells an AI-enabled research platform, how the platform is described is therefore part of its credibility.

Magnini et al. (2021), in a conceptual paper on hospitality, argued that performance should be judged against competitors' performance during market disruption, which depends on reliable competitor data and accurate identification of competitor sets.

The case firm is a privately held market research and consulting firm in India. It reports more than 1,500 research categories, more than 30 industries and more than 50,000 published reports (Case organization, n.d.). With a catalogue of this size, individual report and industry pages compete for search visibility, and small defects such as a weak title, a missing link, a page that is crawled but never indexed or a broken client logo are repeated across many pages. The firm also presents ISO certifications, professional memberships, client logos and case studies as reasons to trust it (Case organization, n.d.).

2. Statement of the Problem

A small digital marketing team in a B2B research firm has to make a very large content site both easy to find and easy to trust. The studies above describe SEO factors, authority metrics, professional branding, benchmarking and trust in AI separately. Most of them are general, survey-based or conceptual, and some are set in other industries such as hospitality.

Limited evidence was found on how these activities are carried out together, task by task, on a live B2B research website, and on which activities build visibility and which build credibility. Therefore, this study documented the SEO, content, networking and benchmarking tasks performed at one firm during a three-month internship. It addressed three objectives: to document the on-page, off-page and technical SEO tasks performed on the firm's website; to analyse how the networking, content and benchmarking tasks relate to those SEO tasks along an attention, interest, desire and action funnel; and to identify recurring challenges and propose practical improvements. The study does not test whether the work improved search performance.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Approach and Design

The study used an exploratory, single-case, practice-based qualitative approach. The author took part in the work as a digital marketing intern and records it as a participant observer. The design describes what was done and what the record suggests. It is not an experiment and contains no before-and-after comparison.

Three propositions guided the analysis. P1: on-page elements such as titles, meta descriptions, headings and links can be revised routinely, whereas indexing and other technical problems need individual diagnosis. P2: visibility tasks and credibility tasks differ in purpose but meet on the same pages. P3: verification effort is the dominant recurring cost, which a standard checklist and a recurring benchmarking cycle could reduce.

3.2 Study Context

The case firm was founded in 2017, is privately held and is based in India with one additional overseas office. It offers syndicated and custom research reports, consultation, market surveys and an AI-enabled subscription platform. It reports more than 700 enterprise clients in more than 100 countries and holds ISO 9001, ISO/IEC 27001 and ISO 20252 certifications, among others, together with professional memberships (Case organization, n.d.). These figures are the firm's own claims and were not independently verified. The firm describes its research method as a proprietary framework that combines primary evidence, credible sources, quantitative analysis and expert review (Case organization, n.d.).

3.3 Data Sources

Three sources were used: the six fortnightly progress reports submitted to the firm between 1 June and 31 August 2026; task records, including a spreadsheet of pages crawled but not indexed, logs, scripts, visuals, an audit checklist and competitor-comparison documents; and the firm's public web pages, read in September 2026. No interviews were conducted, and no web analytics, ranking or traffic data were collected.

3.4 Data Analysis

The reports were coded into task streams. The tools, platforms and concepts listed in each report were counted, with grouped items such as sitemaps, crawling, indexing, ranking and Robots.txt counted as one entry. Each stream was mapped to a stage of the attention, interest, desire and action funnel by the author's judgement. Volumes are stated as minimum counts (for example 12+) as recorded by the author.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Only the author's own work records, the firm's public web pages and published literature were used. No personal data or confidential client information is reported, and the firm and its competitors are not named. The author took part in the work described, so selection and interpretation may favour the activities performed.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Task Streams Carried Out

The first fortnights combined research with learning. The author studied citations, backlinks and Domain Authority/Page Authority (DA/PA) checking, crawling, indexing and ranking, XML sitemaps, Robots.txt and the HTTP error series. This produced no separate output but came before all execution tasks. Eight execution streams were then carried out, as summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Task Streams Carried Out, Recorded Scale and Working Structure

Task stream	Main activity	Recorded scale	Working structure
Networking and branding research	Events, awards, memberships and digital badges; experts and influencers on LinkedIn; outreach by email and telephone; foreign universities via Apollo	Structured database	Spreadsheet: type, relevance, credibility check, status
Crawled-but-not-indexed analysis	Possible reasons recorded for blogs, articles and market reports crawled but not indexed	10+ items	Excel sheet: URL and type, possible reason, status
On-page SEO on industry pages	Titles, meta descriptions, internal and external links revised	12+ industry pages	Checklist per page
Broken-image correction (Clientele page)	Broken or wrongly displayed client logos replaced with correct ones and checked on the live page	30+ images	Tracking log
Citation and backlink verification	Sources citing or backlinking the firm checked for relevance and credibility with a DA/PA checker; backend system updated	15+ sources	Backend log
Content development	Case studies converted into scripts with AI tools; blog and article visuals designed in Canva	20+ scripts; 15+ visuals	Script format; Canva layouts
Competitor analysis	The firm and its AI platform compared with rival websites using SEMrush and Google Keyword Planner	5+ competitor sites; 2 analyses	Comparative benchmarking sheet
SEO audit of one market-report page	Ten elements reviewed, with a rationale for each recommended change	1 page	Audit checklist

Source: Author's task records and fortnightly progress reports (2026).

Titles and meta descriptions were updated on more than 12 industry pages, and internal and external links were revised so that related pages connected logically. For the crawled-but-not-indexed task the firm supplied an Excel sheet. For each blog, article or report URL the author recorded the page type, a possible reason for non-indexing and a status. On the Clientele page, more than 30 broken or incorrectly displayed logos were replaced with correct versions and the live display was checked.

Networking research logged events, awards, memberships and digital badges and used LinkedIn to find experts for podcast invitations and collaboration. Each entry was rated for relevance and credibility before outreach by email, telephone and, for foreign universities, the Apollo platform. Citation and backlink work checked who cited or linked to the firm and recorded the result in the firm's backend system. Content work converted more than 20 case studies into scripts, with AI tools, and produced more than 15 blog and article visuals.

Two competitor analyses were completed, the first assigned by a co-founder for the firm itself and the second for its AI platform. Each compared website content, SEO structure, positioning and digital presence. A separate audit of one market-report page reviewed ten elements and documented a reason for each proposed change (Table 2).

Table 2: Elements Checked in the Ten-Element Page Audit

Element	What was reviewed	Why it matters
Title tag	Clarity and keyword alignment	Search-result presentation
Meta description	Relevance and keyword alignment	Search-result presentation
Headings H1–H6	Hierarchy and readability	Content structure and relevance signals
Meta keywords	Fit with page content	Completeness of metadata review
Schema markup	Structured-data implementation	Helps search engines interpret the page

Element	What was reviewed	Why it matters
Breadcrumbs	Navigation hierarchy	User experience and site structure
Open Graph tags	Social-sharing representation	Appearance when shared
Canonical tag	Handling of duplicate or similar URLs	Avoids duplicate-content dilution
CTA buttons	Visibility, placement and relevance	Guides the intended user action
Header and footer	Structure and usability	Navigation and consistency

Source: Author's audit checklist (2026).

4.2 Breadth of Tools Used

Figure 1 shows the number of tools, platforms and concepts listed in each fortnightly report: 4, 6, 6, 6, 4 and 8. The count reflects what was listed, not how intensively each item was used.

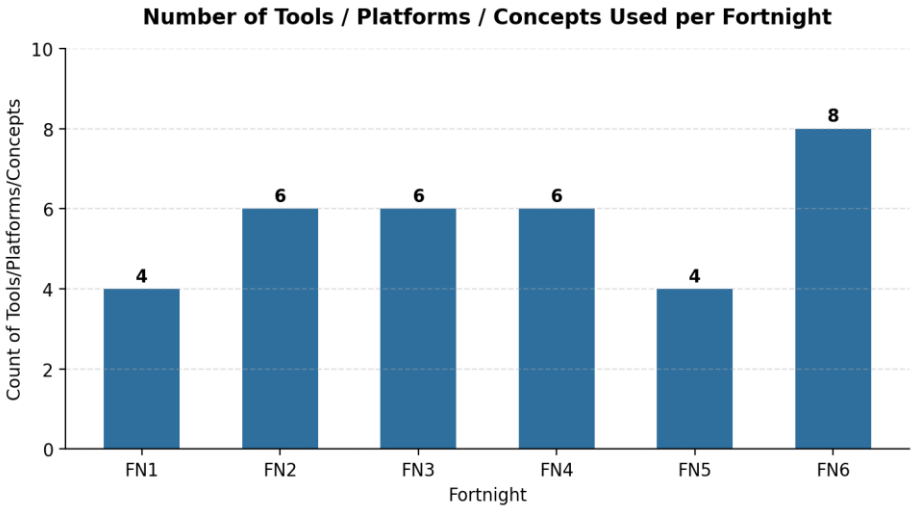


Figure 1: Tools, Platforms and Concepts Listed in Each Fortnightly Report (FN1 to FN6)

4.3 Task-to-Funnel Mapping

Table 3 maps the task streams to funnel stages. The mapping is an analytical judgement by the author, not an empirical test.

Table 3: Task Streams Mapped to Funnel Stages

Funnel stage	Task streams	Function	Evidence retained
Attention and interest	Networking and branding research; content development	Reach experts, events and readers; present case-study content accessibly	Database; scripts and visuals
Desire	On-page SEO; crawled-but-not-indexed analysis; broken-image correction	Make pages findable, consistent and professional	Checklists; Excel sheet; log
Action	CTA review within the page audit	Guide the visitor to the intended action	Audit checklist
Cross-cutting	Citation and backlink verification; competitor benchmarking	Judge authority; position the firm against rivals	Backend log; comparison sheets

Source: Author's analysis (2026).

4.4 Observations and Discussion

Learning preceded execution. The first two fortnights centred on research and learning with LinkedIn, Apollo, DA/PA checking, sitemaps, Robots.txt and HTTP errors. Hands-on revision of industry pages began in the third fortnight, and benchmarking and the page audit followed. Practical SEO work therefore rested on a prior conceptual base.

Some work was routine and some needed diagnosis. Titles, meta descriptions, headings and links could be revised page by page with a checklist. The crawled-but-not-indexed task instead required interpreting possible reasons for each URL rather than applying one fixed remedy, and schema, canonical and Open Graph elements were reviewed and documented with a rationale. This is consistent with P1, although the record contains no measure of how often each type of work was needed. The findings are consistent with Almukhtar et al. (2021) and Daoud et al. (2024), who treat the three SEO strands as complementary. The indexing task also showed an ordering: a page that search engines crawl but do not index gains nothing from better titles or headings, so technical diagnosis comes first.

Credibility signals recurred across functions. Memberships, awards and badges in the networking research, client logos and case studies on the website, and checked citations all served to show that the firm is trustworthy. The firm itself presents ISO certifications, professional memberships and client logos in the same way (Case organization, n.d.), which supports P2. DA/PA scores were used as indicators, not verdicts. Given the reliability reported by Reyes-Lillo et al. (2023), a checker score is a reasonable first filter, and the author combined it with a judgement of relevance before a source was logged. LinkedIn was used organizationally, to find experts, events and collaborators, which extends the individual-branding focus of Marin and Nilă (2021). This extension was observed here but not tested.

Verification was the common cost. Four of the six progress reports (fortnights 1, 2, 3 and 6) list verification, cross-checking, detailed checking or accuracy as a challenge: incomplete event and award information, citation sources of uncertain quality, finding the correct logo versions and accuracy across large volumes of research. This supports P3. Magnini et al. (2021) stress that competitor benchmarking depends on identifying the right competitor set. The choice of rivals was therefore the most consequential step in the benchmarking work, and a one-off comparison would age quickly. For the AI platform, Cvetkovic et al. (2026) suggest that trust in AI rests partly on how people relate to the technology and its developer. The firm's description of its method as combining primary evidence with expert review is one such signal, whose effect on buyers was not measured here.

4.5 Limitations

The principal limitations are a single case, a three-month window, the absence of analytics, ranking or conversion data, minimum-count volumes recorded from progress reports and the author's records, and company figures that are self-reported. Because no ranking or traffic data were collected, the study cannot confirm that any revision improved search performance. Tool counts show what was listed, not how intensively it was used, and the literature review is purposive rather than exhaustive.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that in a B2B research firm visibility and credibility are separate jobs that meet on the same pages. The documented workflow included routine on-page revision, diagnosis-led technical work and credibility signals running through networking, citations, logos and case studies, with verification as the common cost. The firm should adopt one SEO checklist for all industry and report pages, owned by the digital marketing team and reviewed monthly. It should run competitor benchmarking as a recurring cycle, for example quarterly, covering both report publishers and AI-platform rivals. It should also track networking, award and expert outreach in a simple pipeline with statuses from identified to responded. Further research should measure the effect of such work through indexed-page counts, impressions and clicks before and after changes, compare several B2B research firms and examine how buyers respond to AI-platform positioning.

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