RESEARCH REPORT · INDIA

Pay & Pricing Benchmark 2026–27

Marketing and Creative industry, India

How the Indian marketing and creative industry is priced. Full-time salaries, freelancer rates and agency pricing, side by side, with key insights and trends highlighted.

DATA BEHIND THIS REPORT

22,000+
marketing and creative professionals

5,600+
freelancers' rates

790
agencies' pricing

Why we built this report

Every week, someone asks us a version of the same question. **A founder wants to know** whether to build a marketing team in-house or find the right agency. **A brand manager** is weighing an offer and lacks context on whether it's fair. A marketing leader wants to know what a specialist should cost, or whether they're paying the right rate for an agency partner.

There are salary guides for India, but they mostly cover full-time roles at large companies and stop there. **Nobody puts salaries, agency pricing and freelance rates in one place**, across different types of companies and roles, even though that's how great marketing teams are built today: a strong in-house core, the right agency partners, and a bench of specialists.

This report is our attempt to build that missing benchmark. **It goes deeper into marketing roles, looks across company types, and brings full-time salaries, freelance rates and agency pricing together in one place.** It also highlights the insights and trends we're seeing across the industry.

At SuperStuff, **our mission is to help the marketing and creative industry collaborate better**. As we build tools, connect people and bring more opportunities to the industry, we also want to contribute useful data and context. **This annual pricing benchmark is one part of that effort.**

This first edition draws on what more than **22,000 marketers, 5,600 freelancers and 790 agencies** shared with us. Some findings confirmed what we suspected. Others surprised us.

We hope this gives you better context to **price, hire, plan and make decisions with more confidence** through 2026–27. And we'd love to hear what you'd like to see in the next edition.

Thanks for reading,
Pranay Swarup & **Sonia Khurana**



Pranay Swarup
CEO & Co-Founder
LinkedIn ↗



Sonia Khurana
COO & Partner
LinkedIn ↗

Seven things worth knowing

2.2×

The pay gap for the same title at leadership level. A Head of Marketing earns a median **₹48 L** at a large Indian company and **₹21.5 L** at an agency.

34%

The median hike people ask for when they switch jobs. **6 in 10** ask for 30% or more.

₹23 L

What a Product Marketing Manager earns: the best-paid marketing role at every level, and **2.4×** a Social Media Manager.

⅓ less

What agencies pay at junior and mid levels compared with in-house teams. At Head level, it's **more than half** less.

½ less

An agency retainer typically costs up to half less than building the same team in-house.

9 in 10

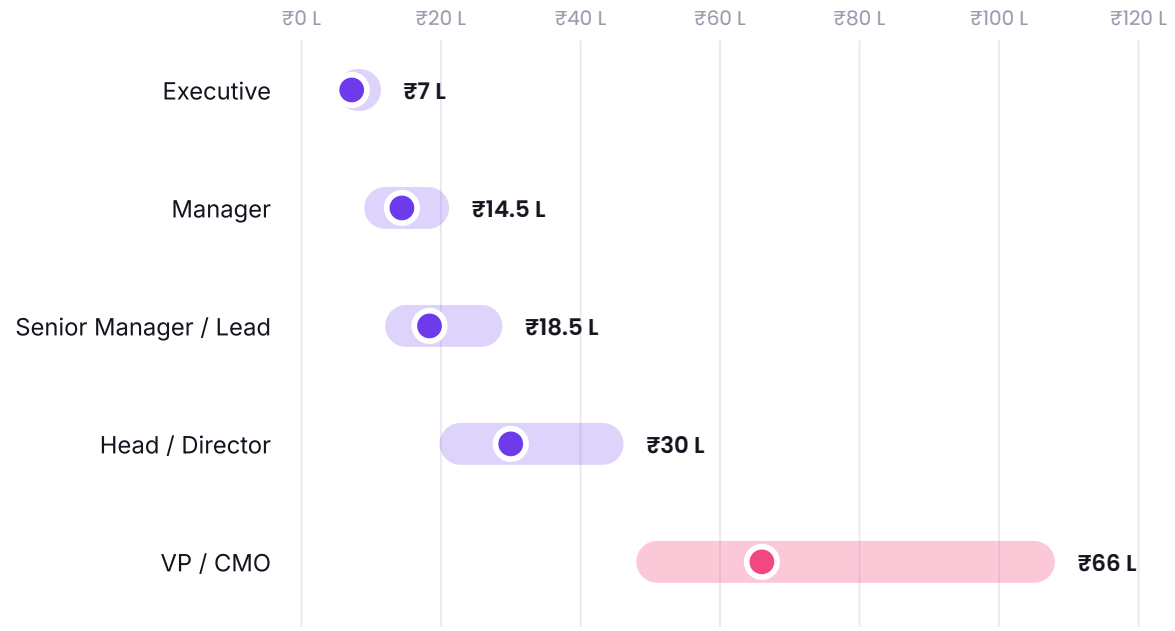
Marketers and creatives now use AI tools in their work. **Claude** is now the second most-used tool after ChatGPT.

₹15.5 L

What a Manager earns in Mumbai, the best-paying city, ahead of Bengaluru and Delhi NCR. Outside the big metros, salaries drop by about a third.

The pay ladder

Annual CTC (fixed + variable, excluding ESOPs) across marketing and creative roles. Bars show the typical range; the dot marks the median.



Typical range = the middle half of salaries at each level.

Executive	Manager	Senior Manager / Lead	Head / Director	VP / CMO
₹7 L	**₹14.5 L**	**₹18.5 L**	**₹30 L**	**₹66 L**

The jump that matters is Senior Manager to Head.

Pay climbs steadily through the manager grades, then rises by **almost two-thirds at Head level**. Above that the range opens right up: a VP Marketing at a 60-person startup and a CMO at a listed consumer company are very different jobs. At the top end, large consumer and tech companies pay their CMOs ₹1.5–2.5 Cr and more.

Pay by role

Median annual CTC in ₹ lakhs. Darker cells pay more.

MEDIAN CTC, ₹ L	EXECUTIVE	MANAGER	SENIOR MANAGER / LEAD	HEAD / DIRECTOR
Product Marketing	14.5	23	30	45.5
Marketing (generalist)	8.5	17	26	36
Brand	8.5	17	26.5	32.5
Performance & Growth	6.5	15	23	34
PR & Communications	9.5	15	23	35
Design & Creative	6.5	11.5	14.5	21.5
Content	7	10	14.5	23
Client Servicing (agency)	8.5	12	15.5	22
Social Media	7	9.5	14.5	21

Product marketing pays a premium at every level.

These roles sit mostly in SaaS and tech, where pay is benchmarked against product teams rather than marketing.

Social, content and design form a lower tier.

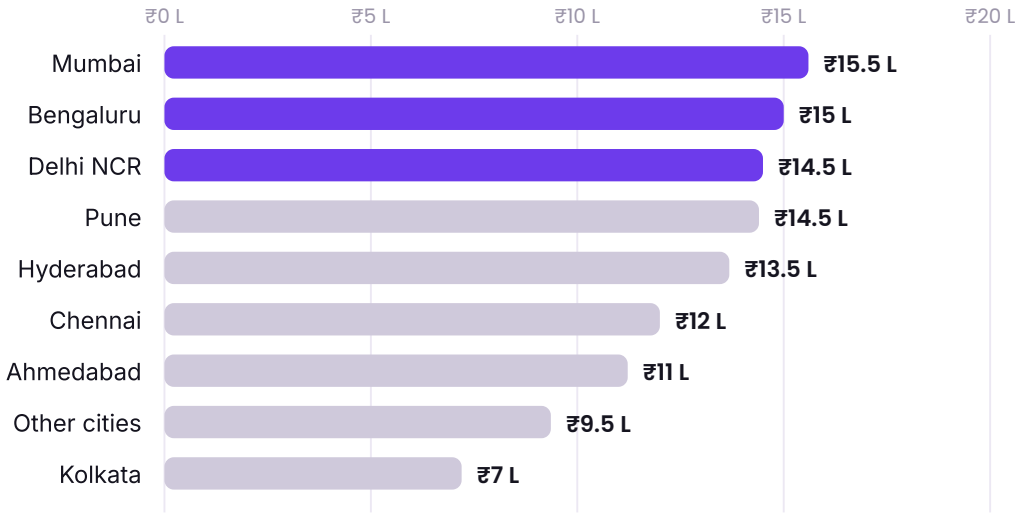
They earn ₹6–8 L less than brand roles at Manager level, widening to ₹10–12 L at Head level.

The market in brief

Highest-paying roles	Most hired on SuperStuff	Skills in demand
1. CMO / VP Marketing	1. Performance & Growth Marketers	1. Performance Marketing
2. Head of Product Marketing	2. Brand Managers & Brand Leads	2. AI GTM
3. Head of Marketing	3. Product Marketing Leads	3. Brand Strategy
4. Head of Communications	4. Head of Marketing / GTM	4. Content and Design
5. Head of Growth	5. Social Media, Content & Community Managers	5. AI SEO / AEO

By city

Median annual CTC for a Manager-level marketer.

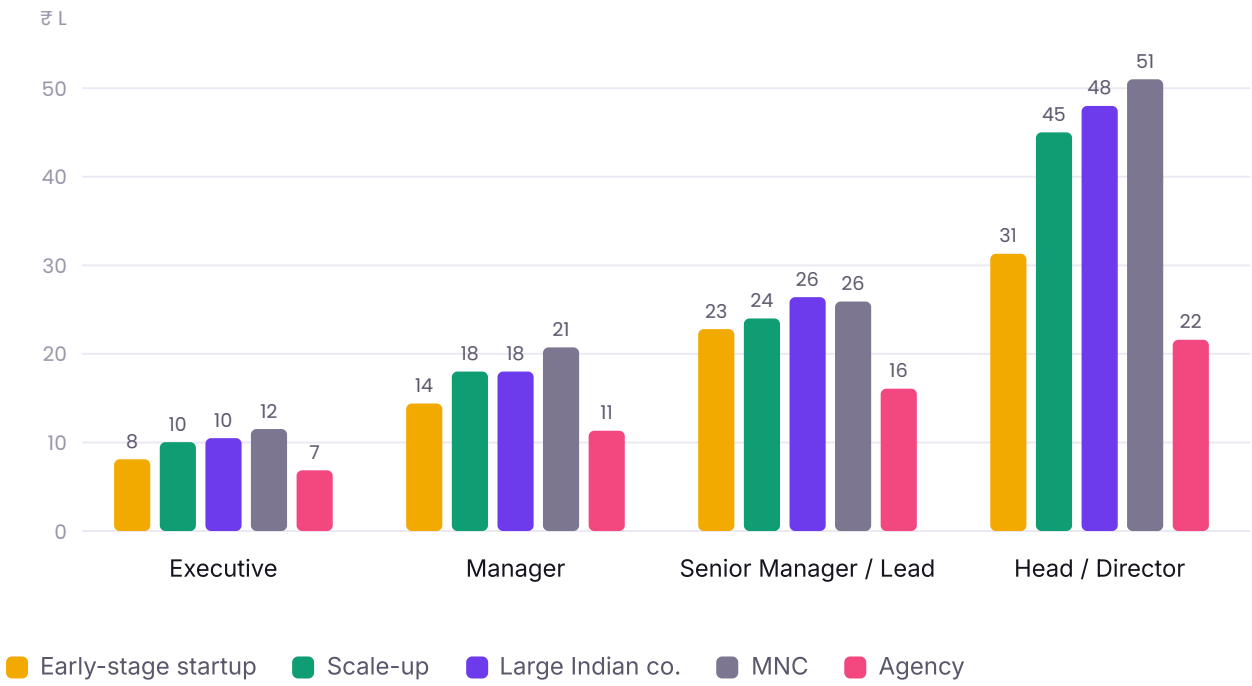


Mumbai leads, with Bengaluru and Delhi NCR close behind.

Mumbai's edge comes from the top of the market, where media, consumer and agency headquarters cluster. Bengaluru pays the most at Head level (₹33 L median) on the back of its tech and SaaS employers. Outside the major cities, a Manager typically earns around ₹9.5 L.

Where you work matters as much as what you do

Median annual CTC by company type and seniority, ₹ lakhs.



In-house employers pay alike until Head level.

Managers earn ₹18 L–20.5 L at scale-ups, large Indian companies and MNCs. The real divide is in-house versus agency, not startup versus corporate.

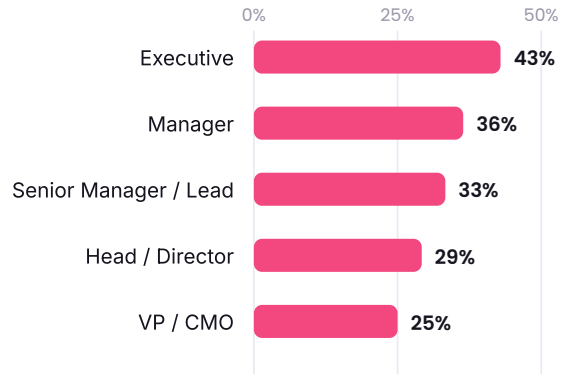
The agency discount grows with seniority.

Agency Managers earn about a third less than in-house peers. Agency Heads earn **₹21.5 L**, against ₹45 L–51 L in-house.

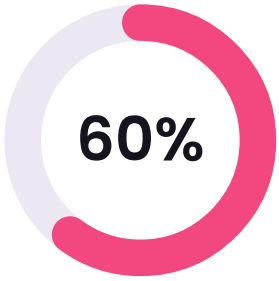
Early-stage startups pay less cash at every level, though more than agencies.

An early-stage Head of Marketing earns a median ₹31.5 L, about two-thirds of a scale-up Head. ESOPs usually make up part of the difference.

Everyone is asking for the next level



Median hike asked over current CTC when switching jobs.



6 in 10 candidates ask for 30% or more. About **3 in 10** ask for 50%+.

Asks track the next rung, not inflation.

The median Manager asks for ₹19 L, which is already above what the median Senior Manager earns (₹18.5 L). Read a 30–35% ask as normal and 50%+ as a bid for a bigger role.

Who asks for most?

Juniors (43%), people leaving agencies (37%), and social media and client-servicing professionals (38%), all from lower bases. Product marketers (29%) and senior scale-up leaders (25%) ask for least.

36%

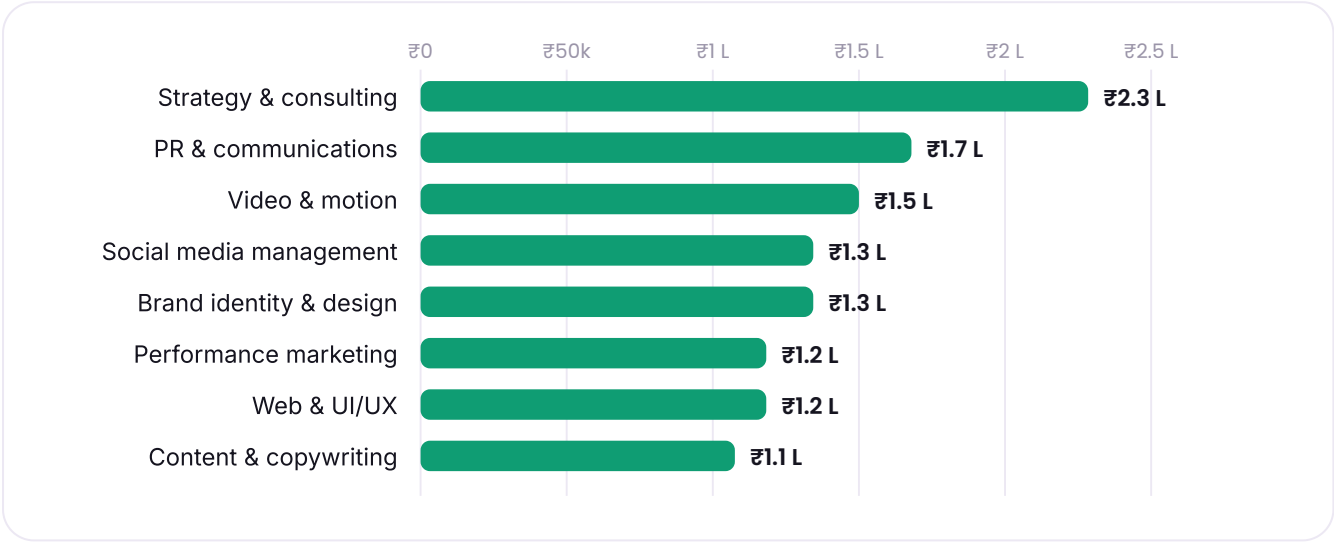
SENIOR TALENT IS GOING FRACTIONAL

of Heads and Directors are open to fractional or freelance roles, against 25% of Executives.

The more senior the marketer, the more open they are to flexible work. For companies, that means senior judgement and experience without a senior full-time salary: a fractional CMO, a part-time Head of Growth, or a brand lead for a launch.

What agencies charge

Starting monthly retainers at established Indian agencies. Most engagements land above these figures.



SERVICE	MONTHLY RETAINER, FROM	PROJECT, FROM
Strategy & consulting	**₹2.3 L** ₹1.2 L – ₹4.4 L	**₹1.3 L** ₹67k – ₹4.7 L
Performance marketing	**₹1.2 L** ₹67k – ₹2.5 L	**₹1.3 L** ₹67k – ₹4 L
Social media management	**₹1.3 L** ₹88k – ₹2.2 L	**₹1.3 L** ₹1.1 L – ₹4 L
Brand identity & design	**₹1.3 L** ₹81k – ₹2.7 L	**₹1.8 L** ₹88k – ₹4.1 L
Video & motion	**₹1.5 L** ₹91k – ₹2.3 L	**₹1.8 L** ₹67k – ₹3 L
Content & copywriting	**₹1.1 L** ₹67k – ₹2.3 L	**₹74k** ₹34k – ₹3 L
Web & UI/UX	**₹1.2 L** ₹60k – ₹2.7 L	**₹2.1 L** ₹1.2 L – ₹3.5 L
PR & communications	**₹1.7 L** ₹1.3 L – ₹3 L	**₹1.1 L** ₹67k – ₹2.2 L

₹1.3 L a month is the going entry point.

Half of agencies won't take a retainer below it. Strategy (₹2.3 L) and PR (₹1.7 L) command the highest floors; content is the cheapest way in.

Location changes the price.

Agencies in Mumbai, Bengaluru and Delhi NCR start at ₹1.3 L–1.6 L a month. Agencies elsewhere start at about half that.

What freelancers charge

Rates quoted by experienced independent marketing and creative professionals.
Bold is the typical rate; below it, the usual range.

SERVICE	PER HOUR	PER PROJECT, FROM	MONTHLY RETAINER
Strategy & consulting	**₹3,500** ₹1,400 – ₹7,100	**₹54k** ₹14k – ₹1.4 L	**₹1.1 L** ₹64k – ₹2.5 L
Performance marketing	**₹2,500** ₹1,400 – ₹5,700	**₹67k** ₹22k – ₹1.9 L	**₹85k** ₹50k – ₹1.7 L
Social media management	**₹2,200** ₹1,100 – ₹4,100	**₹42k** ₹28k – ₹96k	**₹78k** ₹50k – ₹1.3 L
Brand identity & design	**₹2,100** ₹1,000 – ₹3,600	**₹37k** ₹12k – ₹1.2 L	**₹85k** ₹57k – ₹1.4 L
Video & motion	**₹2,800** ₹1,400 – ₹6,200	**₹28k** ₹5,000 – ₹71k	**₹75k** ₹54k – ₹1.2 L
Content & copywriting	**₹2,100** ₹1,100 – ₹4,100	**₹28k** ₹7,100 – ₹1.1 L	**₹64k** ₹35k – ₹1.1 L
Web & UI/UX	**₹2,100** ₹1,400 – ₹3,500	**₹71k** ₹13k – ₹1.8 L	**₹71k** ₹42k – ₹2.1 L

Hourly rates are flat; retainers aren't.

Most freelancers charge ₹2,100–3,500 an hour whatever the service. Monthly retainers run from about ₹64k for content to ₹1.1 L for strategy.

Published prices run higher.

Freelancers who publish their services openly quote 1.5–2.5× the minimums others will accept. If you're below the range above, you're probably underpriced.

Hire, freelance or agency?

Example: what it costs to run social media for a year. Full-time figures include about 20% on top of CTC for benefits, tools, hiring and management time. Agency figures are starting retainers; Part 6 covers what top brands spend.

FREELANCER

₹9 L

One specialist, part-time and usually not exclusive. The cheapest option, but output depends on one person's bandwidth.

FULL-TIME HIRE

₹12 L

One Social Media Manager, fully yours. They'll still need design and copy support to run the channel well.

AGENCY

₹16 L+

A strategist, designer, copywriter and account manager, plus reporting, across 3–4 platforms.

SAME TEAM IN-HOUSE

₹30 L

Hiring that agency team yourself: a Social Media Manager, a designer and a copywriter.

THE TAKEAWAY

An agency is cheapest per capability.

A social media manager costs less than an agency retainer, but an agency brings a whole team for roughly half of what that team would cost in-house. Choose a hire when you need ownership and context, a freelancer for lower budgets, and an agency when you need range and output from week one.

Annual cost by function

Social media



Agency retainer covers: Strategy, content calendar, design, copy, community management and reporting, usually across 3–4 platforms. In-house, that means a Social Media Manager, designer and copywriter.

Performance marketing



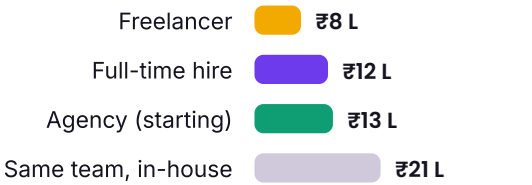
Agency retainer covers: Media planning and buying, ad creatives, testing and analytics. Media spend is extra. In-house, that means a Performance Manager, performance executive and designer.

Brand & design



Agency retainer covers: Creative direction plus a pool of designers, so output doesn't stall when one person is away. In-house, that means a Design Lead and designer.

Content



Agency retainer covers: Editorial planning, writing, editing and SEO, at more volume than one person can produce. In-house, that means a Content Manager and writer.

Video



Agency retainer covers: Scripting, shoots, editing and motion graphics, often with equipment and crew included. In-house, that means a Video Lead, editor and motion designer.

Reading the charts

Freelancer

One specialist on a monthly retainer.

Full-time hire

A Manager-level hire, including on-costs.

Agency

A typical starting retainer.

Same team, in-house

Hiring the roles an agency retainer covers.

What top brands spend on agencies

The agency figures earlier in this report are starting retainers for focused work. Larger brands buy more: stronger creative teams, more platforms, more video and always-on coverage. Here's how a monthly social media retainer scales. All figures are agency fees; media spend is separate.

Starting retainers Suited to startups and SMBs	One to a few platforms with a lean team: a strategist, design, copy and monthly reporting.	**₹75k–5 L** per month
Large brands Listed and category-leading brands	Senior creative teams, always-on across brands or markets, video-first content and full reporting.	**₹5–20 L+** per month

What moves the price

Talent and creative calibre. The biggest difference. Top brands pay for senior strategists and stronger creative teams, plus the governance their scale needs.

Video and YouTube. Video-heavy plans push retainers up fastest.

Production. Shoots are usually priced separately and are often the largest single cost.

Brands, markets and languages. Each adds planning, adaptation and approvals.

THE TAKEAWAY

Large brands typically invest ₹5–20 L a month on social.

More with heavy video or production. At this scale, an agency remains the most efficient way to get a complete team.

What top brands pay for talent

Typical offers for new hires at large Indian companies and MNCs, annual CTC. Large brands pay well above the market median, and the gap widens with seniority.

LEVEL	MARKET MEDIAN	TYPICAL OFFER AT LARGE BRANDS
Executive	**₹7 L**	**₹12–15 L**
Manager	**₹14.5 L**	**₹20–27 L**
Senior Manager / Lead	**₹18.5 L**	**₹30–35 L**
Head / Director	**₹30 L**	**₹60–65 L**
VP / CMO	**₹66 L**	**₹75 L–2.5 Cr**

Plan budgets around the offer.

Offers at large brands include the usual 30%+ switching hike, and senior searches can take months. Fractional and agency support often bridges the gap.

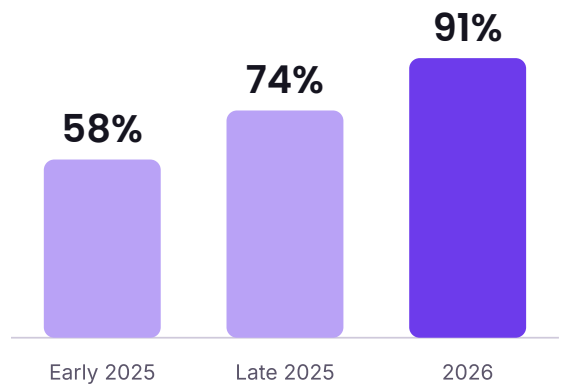
BUILDING A SOCIAL TEAM IN-HOUSE

8–10 people, about ₹2 Cr a year.

A social lead, managers, designers, copywriters, a video editor and community support at large-brand salaries, before production and tools. A typical ₹10–12 L monthly agency retainer covers the same range of skills for less, without the hiring time or fixed headcount.

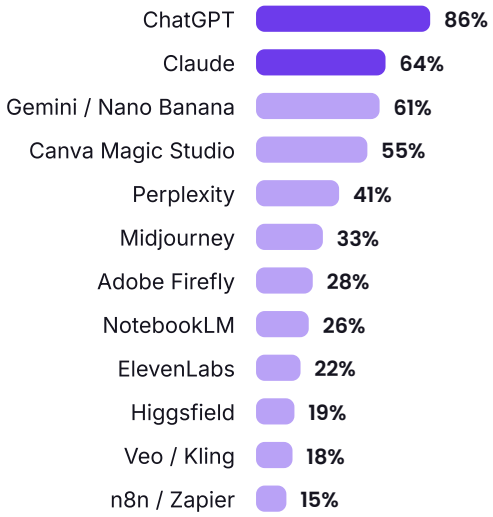
AI is now part of everyday marketing

Share of marketing and creative professionals using AI tools in their work.



From a majority to almost everyone in 18 months.

Most-used AI tools



IN THE EVERYDAY STACK

ChatGPT · Claude · Gemini · Perplexity · Canva · Firefly · ElevenLabs · Figma · Notion · n8n · Zapier · Meta AI

Claude has become the strategist's and writer's tool.

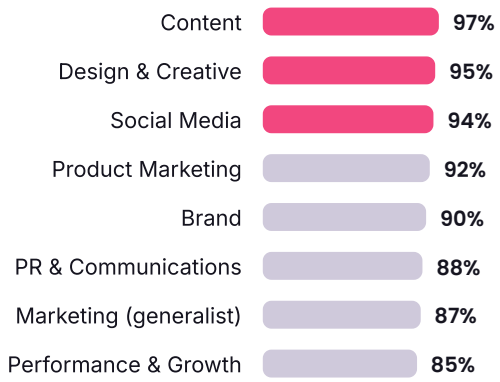
ChatGPT is still the default, but Claude is now the clear number two. It's especially popular for long-form writing, strategy documents and analysis. Most marketers use two or three assistants side by side.

Video is the fastest-moving category.

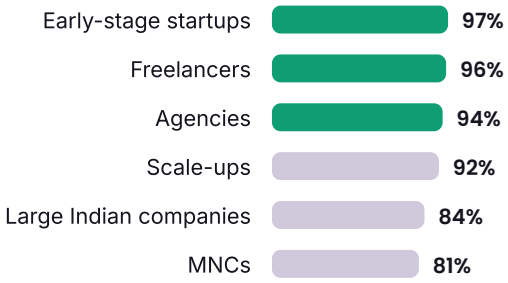
Tools like Higgsfield, Veo, Kling and ElevenLabs have moved from experiments to everyday production, especially for performance creatives and social video.

Who's using AI, and how

By role



By employer



The AI stack, by job

Strategy & brand	Claude · ChatGPT · Perplexity · NotebookLM
Content & copy	Claude · ChatGPT · Gemini
Design	Midjourney · Nano Banana · Adobe Firefly · Canva · Figma AI
Video & motion	Higgsfield · Veo · Kling · Runway · ElevenLabs · CapCut
Performance & growth	Meta Advantage+ · Google AI Max · ChatGPT · Claude
Ops & automation	n8n · Zapier · Lovable · Claude

Makers lead.

Content, design and social teams, whose output AI changes most directly, are close to universal users.

Smaller, faster companies adopt first.

Startups, freelancers and agencies lead. At MNCs and large Indian companies, tool access often waits on IT and legal approval.

It's expected, not rewarded.

AI users earn about the same as peers in the same role and level. AI fluency is now table stakes.

What we're seeing

Execution is getting cheaper; judgement isn't

Rates for routine design, copy and resizing work are under pressure. Strategy, creative direction and taste are holding their price, and the best people are charging more.

Agencies are rebuilding around AI

Nine in ten agencies now use AI in delivery, and a growing group sell AI-led services outright: AI content studios, AI video, and AI SEO / AEO. Expect them to compete hard on price for production work.

Smaller teams, same output

Companies increasingly ask for AI-fluent marketers and expect leaner teams to ship the same volume. People who combine one strong craft with AI workflows are the easiest to place.

New roles are appearing

AI content producer, creative technologist and marketing automation lead have moved from novelty titles to real openings, especially at scale-ups and agencies.

FOR TALENT

Show the work AI helped you ship rather than listing the tools. A portfolio of real outcomes beats a list of logos.

FOR HIRING TEAMS

Test AI workflows in interviews, and budget for tools as well as headcount. A ₹2–5k monthly tool stack per person is now normal.

FOR AGENCIES AND FREELANCERS

Price for outcomes, not hours. AI makes your hours shorter, and clients pay for the result.

Detailed salaries by role

Annual CTC. "Typical range" is the middle half of salaries at each level. VP / CMO pay is on the pay ladder.

Product Marketing

LEVEL	TYPICAL RANGE	MEDIAN
Executive	₹11–17 L	**₹14.5 L**
Manager	₹17–30 L	**₹23 L**
Senior Manager / Lead	₹23–39 L	**₹30 L**
Head / Director	₹32–58 L	**₹45.5 L**

Marketing (generalist)

LEVEL	TYPICAL RANGE	MEDIAN
Executive	₹6–12 L	**₹8.5 L**
Manager	₹12–24 L	**₹17 L**
Senior Manager / Lead	₹16–38 L	**₹26 L**
Head / Director	₹24–54 L	**₹36 L**

Brand

LEVEL	TYPICAL RANGE	MEDIAN
Executive	₹7–11 L	**₹8.5 L**
Manager	₹11–24 L	**₹17 L**
Senior Manager / Lead	₹17–36 L	**₹26.5 L**
Head / Director	₹21–56 L	**₹32.5 L**

Performance & Growth

LEVEL	TYPICAL RANGE	MEDIAN
Executive	₹5–11 L	**₹6.5 L**
Manager	₹10–22 L	**₹15 L**
Senior Manager / Lead	₹14–32 L	**₹23 L**
Head / Director	₹24–50 L	**₹34 L**

PR & Communications

LEVEL	TYPICAL RANGE	MEDIAN
Executive	₹7–12 L	**₹9.5 L**
Manager	₹11–23 L	**₹15 L**
Senior Manager / Lead	₹16–29 L	**₹23 L**
Head / Director	₹27–45 L	**₹35 L**

Design & Creative

LEVEL	TYPICAL RANGE	MEDIAN
Executive	₹5–10 L	**₹6.5 L**
Manager	₹8–17 L	**₹11.5 L**
Senior Manager / Lead	₹11–22 L	**₹14.5 L**
Head / Director	₹14–32 L	**₹21.5 L**

Content

LEVEL	TYPICAL RANGE	MEDIAN
Executive	₹5–10 L	**₹7 L**
Manager	₹7–15 L	**₹10 L**
Senior Manager / Lead	₹10–22 L	**₹14.5 L**
Head / Director	₹16–37 L	**₹23 L**

Client Servicing (agency)

LEVEL	TYPICAL RANGE	MEDIAN
Executive	₹7–18 L	**₹8.5 L**
Manager	₹9–16 L	**₹12 L**
Senior Manager / Lead	₹12–21 L	**₹15.5 L**
Head / Director	₹17–25 L	**₹22 L**

Social Media

LEVEL	TYPICAL RANGE	MEDIAN
Executive	₹5–11 L	**₹7 L**
Manager	₹7–16 L	**₹9.5 L**
Senior Manager / Lead	₹11–19 L	**₹14.5 L**
Head / Director	₹15–29 L	**₹21 L**

About the data

Based on information shared with SuperStuff through 2026 by 22,000+ marketing and creative professionals, 5,600+ freelancers and 790 agencies, focused on the experienced talent and established companies we work with. Salaries are annual CTC (fixed + variable, excluding ESOPs). Freelancer and agency figures are quoted rates and starting budgets. The AI section combines platform data with our view of the market. Figures are rounded medians and typical ranges, reviewed against wider market benchmarks. No individual or company can be identified.

How to use this report

01 Budgeting a team

Use the salary tables for bands, and "Hire, freelance or agency?" to choose how to staff each function. When hiring from an agency into an in-house role, expect candidates to benchmark against in-house pay rather than their current salary.

02 Negotiating an offer

Start with your role and level in the salary tables, then check pay by company type. It often moves your number more than your title. The upper end of the typical range is a fair ask if you're strong for the level, and a 30–35% hike on a switch is normal.

03 Pricing your agency, fractional or freelance work

Compare your rates with the ranges for your service. Below the lower figure, you're likely underpriced. Clients compare you with a full-time hire, so use "Hire, freelance or agency?" to frame your value.

ONE LAST THING

Quality pays.

These benchmarks describe the market, not your work. Don't raise or cut your price to match an average. Price on the quality of what you deliver and the results it drives.

The same goes for companies. **Category leaders don't win by paying the median.** The marketers, freelancers and agencies at the top of every range are there because their work moves the numbers that matter. Paying a premium for them is how you compete, and how you win.

Great brands deserve great marketing teams

SuperStuff is the faster, smarter way to hire top marketing agencies and talent. Matched by AI, curated and reviewed by humans.

40,000+
vetted marketers and creatives

2,000+
pre-vetted agencies

50+
specialisations

EXPERT PLATFORM

Find and hire experts and agencies

Browse rich profiles of India's best marketing and creative talent and agencies by skill, specialisation, location and budget, for full-time, fractional or freelance work.

experts.superstuff.ai ↗

MARKO

Your AI superconnector

Tell Marko what you're working on or drop in your brief. It shortlists the right agency or expert in seconds, matched to budget, expertise and context.

marko.superstuff.ai ↗

SUPER INTRO

Meet talent before the first call

Short, unscripted video intros that bring an expert's background, work and experience to life, so you know who you want to meet.

experts.superstuff.ai/videos ↗

SUPER PAGE

Proof of work, beautifully presented

The portfolio page for marketers, creatives and agencies: case studies, services and pricing in one link. Resumes show where someone worked; Super Pages show what they can do.

super.page ↗

1 **Share your brief or JD**, or chat about it with Marko.

2 **Get a shortlist** of pre-vetted experts and agencies, with warm intros within 72 hours.

3 **Kick off**, with contracts, payments and delivery in one place if helpful.

Let's create some super stuff together

Hiring a marketer, building a team or looking for an agency partner? Tell us what you need and get a shortlist in days, not weeks.

GET IN TOUCH

pranay@superstuff.ai sonia@superstuff.ai

BROWSE THE NETWORK
experts.superstuff.ai

CHAT WITH MARKO
marko.superstuff.ai

SEE OUR CREDENTIALS
SuperStuff creds deck 2026 ↗

BUILD YOUR SUPER PAGE
super.page

© Create Super Stuff Inc · SuperStuff.ai