

Pawan Sharma

CREATIVE DIRECTOR AND STRATEGY CONSULTANT

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I help organizations understand their audiences, define what they need to communicate, and produce the work that puts that strategy in public. My 12-year practice spans streaming audience research, municipal technology programs, government communication, documentary production, and international cultural projects. I combine qualitative and quantitative analysis with hands-on creative direction, bringing policy and implementation experience into decisions about content and audience experience.

Experience across the United States, India, Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands. Led four municipal policy and program staff; managed work on initiatives supported by approximately \$1.5 million in government funding; co-led 15+ public programs connecting close to 100 organizations.

Audience research and technology strategy

Streaming and Audience Research Consulting

University of Minnesota | 2019–present

- Combine streaming surveys, quantitative analysis, and qualitative interviews to understand audiences, creator businesses, and digital media production. Completed a two-year study with media creators and studios.
- Analyze how recommendation systems, platform policies, and regional viewing practices affect content production and distribution. Translate findings into reports, presentations, content strategy, and creative decisions.
- Use Claude Code and LLMs for research synthesis, output comparison, and workflow prototypes. Collaborated with faculty and technology partners on Virtual Reality and New Media Lab development, 2023–2025.

Municipal Technology and Service Strategy | Policy Analyst

Smart City Corporation, Kakinada | Jan 2018–Jul 2019

- Led four policy researchers and program staff on public Wi-Fi, digital access, and park amenities. Prepared proposals, implementation plans, and operational documentation.
- Evaluated technology-vendor proposals as an institutional buyer, clarified requirements, and coordinated delivery across municipal departments. Developed public communication explaining how residents could use the services.
- Earlier municipal engagement: Communications and Civic Engagement Associate, 2015–2016.

Media Strategy Consulting | Shastri Research Fellowship

Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute / University of Alberta | 2017–2018

- Examined India–Canada documentary production, distribution, and co-production opportunities through interviews with filmmakers, executives, policymakers, and institutional stakeholders.
- Delivered reports and recommendations on bilateral media collaboration, regulatory conditions, and cross-cultural content development.

Media Specialist | Audience Research and Creative Development

Anti-Clock Films, Mumbai | 2015–2017

- Conducted audience testing and visual research; developed concepts and promotional approaches with writers, directors, and producers for films, branded content, and social campaigns.

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US consulting and creative delivery

Policy and Communications Consultant

SEWA-AIFW, Minnesota | 2020–2022

- Managed program development and implementation coordination for immigrant-serving initiatives supported by approximately \$1.5 million in government funding. Supported planning and evaluation across resettlement, civic participation, and transportation services.
- Developed digital content strategy and public information around the services. Set Instagram visual standards, caption style, and publishing rhythm; produced reusable templates, vertical videos, and infographics.

Policy and Program Development Consultant

Maji Ya Chai, Minnesota | 2022–present

- Advise a Black-led healing sanctuary on policy, grant strategy, program design, and partnerships. Connect the organization's service plans with the communication needed for partner and funding conversations.
- Created short films for its website, YouTube, and social channels, used in fundraising and partnership development.

Community Program and Public Communication Collaboration

Minneapolis City Council projects through SEWA-AIFW and Maji Ya Chai | Within the engagements above

- Worked with the council through nonprofit partner projects, combining program planning, policy advice, and public-facing communication. Brought knowledge of community services into the material used to explain those programs.

Creative Consultant and Documentary Director

Rochester Art Center | 2025–2026

- Directed *Extraordinary Elsewhere* for the center's exhibition, presenting the working lives of nine immigrant artists. Shaped the film's narrative and visual treatment for exhibition audiences.
- Used participant review and revisitable consent in production; explored limited AI-assisted visual treatments. Worked with interviews by Rituparna Rana.

Creative Direction for Immigrant Safety Communication

New York City Council projects through The New School | New York project work, 2017–2018

- Prepared reports and recommendations on immigrants' use of Union Square and Washington Square parks. Designed artwork and public-facing narratives for council-related projects delivered through The New School.
- Developed creative material supporting artists' product launches and awareness of city council projects. Work included *Faces of New York*; The New School mediated the collaboration and presented the work.

Institutional Advisor and Digital Content Producer

Liberal Arts Engagement Hub, University of Minnesota | Production 2022; advisory board 2025–present

- Advise on community partnerships and grant-supported public work. Produced *Sound Stories* audiovisual pieces for gallery, website, Instagram, and YouTube presentation.

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International projects and creative leadership

Creative Consulting and Audience Experience

State Library of Berlin, Germany | 2022

- Advised on public programming and audience experience, developing communication and storytelling for State Library Berlin through a government-mediated project. Delivered exhibition work and public presentations, including Narratives, Spaces and Constructs and Cinema Crossroads.

Creative Strategy and Product Launch Storytelling

Meraki / Foton Media / DAS Academy, Amsterdam | Selected project engagements

- Advised on programs, designed audience experiences, and produced communication materials and storytelling, including a product-launch narrative. International creative delivery also included Migration Echoes, Immigrant Faces of New York, and Moving Tracts at DAS.

Project Lead and Documentary Director

Gujarat government project through IIT Gandhinagar and Gir National Park | 2017–2018

- Led a 15-month communication assignment involving Maldhari and Siddi communities in Gir. Directed three documentaries connecting community experience with the project's public communication.

Campaign Film Director

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting mission through IIT Gandhinagar / Sabarmati Ashram | 2016

- Directed Be the Change to promote the Swachh Bharat cleanliness mission. The film received recognition from the ministry and the National Film Development Corporation.

Co-Founder and Program Lead

Memory, Movement, Montage / Institute for Advanced Study, Minnesota | 2020–2025

- Co-led a five-year program connecting close to 100 organizations. Managed grants, budgets, partnerships, communications, and delivery of 15+ public programs across exhibitions, screenings, workshops, and conversations.

Founder and Editorial Director

The Elsewhere Lab | 2023–present

- Run an independent publication and podcast with approximately 30,000 combined audience reach. Own research, writing, image selection, recording, editing, and publication.

Creative capabilities and tools

Audience and market research; qualitative and quantitative analysis; creative briefs; concept development; product and service communication; film direction; editing, color, and sound; content systems; exhibition and digital experience; vendor evaluation; program delivery; creative mentoring. Premiere Pro, After Effects, Photoshop, Lightroom, InDesign; Claude Code and LLM workflows.

Education

PhD candidate, Asian Literature, Culture, and Media, University of Minnesota

MA, Society and Culture, IIT Gandhinagar, 2018 | Film and Media exchange, The New School, 2017–2018

BA Honors, English Literature, Ambedkar University Delhi, 2014