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## Enhancing Student Enrollment through Digital Marketing: An Action Research on Increasing the Visibility at a Language Learning Center in Malaysia

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Received : June 16, 2025

Accepted : July 17, 2025

Published : August 31, 2025

Citation: Al-Mashhadani, A.F.S., Hassan, A.A., Awang, H., & Ariffin, M., (2025). Enhancing Student Enrollment through Digital Marketing: An Action Research on Increasing the Visibility at a Language Learning Center in Malaysia. Sinergi International Journal of Management and Business, 3(3), 148-169.

<https://doi.org/10.61194/ijmb.v3i3.279>

**ABSTRACT:** This action research aims to enhance the enrollment of students in the Language Learning Center (LLC) by increasing its visibility through effective digital marketing strategies. The LLC has faced challenges in boosting enrollment, particularly during the pandemic, and previous marketing endeavors have proven ineffective. The research investigates the disparity between current marketing efforts and the overall visibility of the Institution, with a focus on leveraging digital marketing interventions to address this issue. Building upon previous and current research, digital marketing interventions are proposed as a viable solution for enhancing the LLC's marketing activities and visibility. The Segmentation Targeting Positioning (STP) Model forms the foundation of this action research. Following the implementation of digital marketing interventions, emotionally engaging content in the form of videos and online brochures is produced and disseminated through social media and other communication platforms to foster engagement and attract potential customers to the school. The impact of these interventions on student enrollment is assessed using the pragmatism research method, employing a qualitative approach to address the research objectives. The findings indicate that the digital marketing intervention has positively influenced new student registrations for the LLC. Therefore, future researchers are encouraged to explore digital marketing interventions in similar studies.

**Keywords:** Digital marketing, students' recruitment, brand visibility.



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## INTRODUCTION

The Language Learning Center is an esteemed academic institution and individual specialist organization situated in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.(Chaffey & Smith, 2017) With a strong commitment

to academic excellence, the center offers small class sizes, fostering active student participation and providing individualized attention from certified instructors. (Maxwell & Carboni, 2016) Recognized as a private foundation institute by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education, the Language Learning Center provides a wide range of English courses and levels, offering flexible session dates and study methods tailored to meet the unique needs of each student. Moreover, the center organizes various events aimed at creating a comfortable environment for students in Malaysia, while also providing additional opportunities for them to practice their English skills. Having established its presence for several years, the Language Learning Center has gained a reputable standing, particularly among distant nations such as Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Eritrea in East Africa, as well as among Arab nations in the Middle East, attracting a substantial number of students from these regions. (*Child Act: Laws of Malaysia*, 2001)

Previous research on language learning centers highlighted the importance of tailored instructional approaches in enhancing student engagement and proficiency. Studies by Smith & Johnson (2020) emphasize that small class sizes and personalized instruction significantly improve language acquisition outcomes, particularly for students from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Similarly, research by Lee et al. (2021) underscores the role of extracurricular activities in reinforcing classroom learning, suggesting that immersive environments contribute to greater confidence and fluency among learners. These findings align with the Language Learning Center's approach, which combines structured coursework with interactive events to optimize student success.

Furthermore, the center's appeal to international students from East Africa and the Middle East reflects broader trends in global English language education. According to Al-Mahrooqi & Denman (2019), institutions that cater to the specific cultural and linguistic needs of learners from these regions tend to achieve higher retention and satisfaction rates. The Language Learning Center's reputation among these demographics suggests its effectiveness in addressing unique challenges, such as varying levels of prior English exposure and differing educational backgrounds. By situating this research within the existing literature, the study aims to further explore how the center's methodologies align with or diverge from established best practices in language education. (Eouzan et al., 2014)

### **Company Background and analysis**

The Language Learning Center is an institution that has been subject to a thorough analysis, encompassing both external and internal perspectives (Ibrahim & Jarimal, 2018). The external analysis involved a PESTEL analysis, which explored the political, economic, socio-cultural, technological, environmental, and legal factors affecting the institution (Schuetz et al., 2018). Notable findings from this analysis include the impact of political volatility on student visa approvals and economic challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Mohamed et al., 2020). However, there is hope for recovery as Malaysia aims to stabilize its economy and vaccinate its population. Socio-cultural

challenges for international students and the utilization of technology in education were also highlighted as significant factors.

On the internal front, the Language Learning Center conducted an analysis of its management, marketing, finance, operations, and management information system (MIS) (Changer & Chandon, 1996). This assessment revealed strengths such as effective classroom management, dedicated teaching techniques, and a high reputation among students. However, weaknesses in marketing effectiveness and the need for increased student enrollment were identified as areas for improvement. The institution actively uses social media platforms in its MIS for outreach and visibility.

A SWOT analysis further illuminated the institution's position (Büyüközkan & Ilıcak, 2019). Its strengths included a strong reputation and strategic location, while weaknesses included low international student enrollment and marketing challenges. Opportunities arise from Malaysia's vaccination efforts and economic recovery, while political uncertainty poses a threat (Tho, 2020). In conclusion, the Language Learning Center has valuable strengths to leverage, areas to address, and opportunities to explore, all of which can contribute to its continued success in attracting and serving international students.

## **Problem Statement**

The Language Learning Center currently faces the challenge of low student enrollment, which has been exacerbated by the ongoing pandemic. The decline in student numbers has resulted in decreased income, posing a significant financial burden for the institution. Additionally, the pandemic has necessitated a shift in the school's marketing activities. Bresolles (2016) Instead of leveraging digital marketing strategies, the school has relied heavily on affiliate marketing, wherein external individuals promote the institution and receive commissions, as well as sponsorship marketing, which involves budget allocations for events organized by others to increase brand visibility. The institution aims to attract a larger student base from its target segments, namely East African nations like Somalia and Ethiopia, as well as Middle Eastern countries with predominantly Arab populations. Enhancing student participation is crucial for revitalizing the school's activities.

The problem diagnosis at Language Learning Center (LLC) reveals a shortage of student enrollments, which has been further analyzed using the Fishbone (Ishikawa) Diagram (Suárez & Rodríguez, 2019). The diagram identifies potential causes of the problem in the four fundamental categories of Man, Method, Material, and Machine. In terms of Man, a lack of creativity in school administration and ineffective marketing strategies are identified as potential sources of the enrollment deficit. The Method aspect points to less productive marketing operations, particularly relying on affiliate marketing and sponsoring events, which were hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Insufficient marketing materials and the need to improve marketing techniques such as search engine optimization are also highlighted. Under the Machine element, the financial burden of maintaining electronic equipment and utilities contributes to the enrollment shortage.

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Among these factors, the Method aspect appears to be the main cause that requires attention. Improving marketing strategies, exploring digital marketing interventions, and enhancing exposure both locally and internationally can attract more students. Effective material marketing with compelling content can boost student outreach and increase the school's visibility in Malaysia. Taking corrective actions in these areas can help overcome the enrollment scarcity and attract more students to enroll at LLC. (Pineiro-Otero & Martinez-Rolan, 2016)

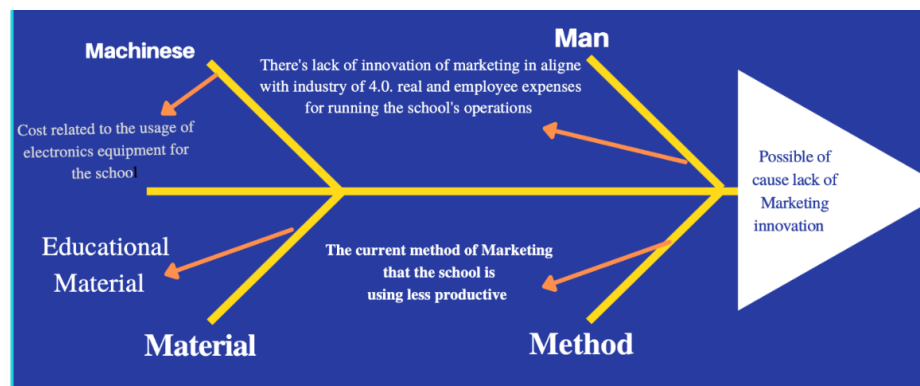


Figure 1. Fishbone Model (ishawaka)

## Research Question

RQ1: What are the factors influencing the decline in student enrollment at LLC?

RQ2: What interventions can be implemented to increase student enrollment?

RQ3: How can LLC ensure the long-term sustainability of its business?

## Research objective

RO1: To identify the factors contributing to the decline in student enrollment at LLC.

RO2: To implement a comprehensive digital marketing strategy to increase student enrollment.

RO3: To provide recommendations for the necessary actions that LLC should take to achieve long-term sustainability through effective digital marketing.

## Significance of the Study

This study will substantially contribute to gaining more information and understanding on the cause of a decrease in the number of pupils enrolling in school, which decreases total revenue. Therefore, the number of students enrolled will increase, and the school's general exposure will improve.

Theoretically, the main significance of the research is to discover a gap in marketing efforts and fix it by developing an effective solution that can genuinely assist in getting more students in the school (Cappelletti & Baker, 2010). This study will demonstrate the methods used to effectively leverage digital marketing by creating Facebook Mid-Roll Video Ads, Instagram sponsored posts, and Emails in order to gain more attention among students and turn them into prospective customers. This action research is thought to be useful and instructive on how to effectively address the issue of school shortages with the proper intervention implementation. Practically, the study aims to provide a critical answer for school marketing enhancement in order to increase the number of students enrolling in the school. This study illustrates the steps used to analyze the problem, implement the solution, and assess the impact of the intervention on the problem. Demeur (2008) The significance of the study in identifying gaps in marketing efforts and strategically addressing them through digital marketing intervention that assists in effectively increasing the number of students and boosting the school's exposure across Malaysia and other countries. The study emphasizes the difficulties experienced during the intervention.

### **Literature Review and Action Research Planning**

The three key elements of the intervention planned and consequences, which are input, transformation, and output, have been described for the action research planning based on the framework. Furthermore, a cycle of action research is presented.

### **Relevant Theory and Model**

The STP marketing model (Segmentation, Targeting, Positioning) is a strategic framework that helps marketers tailor messages to specific audiences (Hanlon, 2021). It begins with market segmentation, dividing customers into groups based on demographics (age, income), psychographics (lifestyle, beliefs), geography (location), and behavior (usage, loyalty) (Gravetter & Farzano, 2011). Next, targeting evaluates each segment's attractiveness by analyzing profitability, reachability, size, and growth potential. Finally, positioning differentiates the product through symbolic branding (self-image enhancement), functional positioning (problem-solving benefits), or experiential positioning (emotional engagement) (Jenni, 2017). This structured approach enables precise, effective marketing strategies.

### **Previous and Contemporary Studies.**

Durmaz & Efendioglu (2016) Businesses in developing countries have recognized the advantages of online marketing and the need for a strategic integration of both digital and traditional marketing methods to effectively cater to consumer needs (Waitman, 1996). The introduction of emerging

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technologies has opened new opportunities for companies to manage their databases, websites, and achieve their business objectives more efficiently (Kiana, 1998).





Digital marketing encompasses various techniques, including advertising, lobbying, and public relations, all of which have diverse psychological effects on consumers (Satya, 2017). It is considered instrumental by organizational authorities for reaching a broader audience and engaging potential customers who were previously challenging to access (Stegman & Sutton Brdy, 2012). Online marketing utilizes technology applications to enhance marketing effectiveness and increase customer awareness by addressing their specific requirements (Chaffey, 2013).

A survey conducted by Dave Chaffey on "Digital Marketing Trends for 2017" found that digital marketing communities were the most popular choice among marketers worldwide for achieving significant incremental uplift in their organizations' marketing activities (Madhu & Deepak, 2018). This reflects the growing importance of digital marketing in the contemporary business landscape.(Brodo, 2015)

## Intervention Planned and Implications

The intervention is intended to improve and increase the number of students enrolling through the use of digital marketing content (LLC). (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019) In accordance with the structure, digital marketing content will be generated via various social media channels with the goal of raising audience engagement, converting them into potential customers, and acquiring them in order to help LLC increase their student enrollment. Additionally, it is believed that the content of Digital marketing intervention would increase the institution's exposure in foreign countries and Malaysia. Three stages are involved: input, transformation, and output, which include assassin preparing the intervention. (Castillo, 2016)

**Table 1.** Intervention Planned

Input	Transformation	Output
Interview and online survey in order to collect information required 	Content of Digital Marketing Intervention:  -Enhancing Digital Marketing activities (Facebook Mid-Roll Video Ads, Instagram sponsored posts, and emails).	New students' acquisition  
Decreasing number of students.		More enrollment students
Lack of Visibility in their targeting segment countries		Wider awareness in the students they are targeting



### **Input, Transformation, and Output Phase.**

The input phase involves gathering data through employee interviews and student surveys to identify gaps in LLC's marketing strategy and visibility issues (Brulhart et al., 2015). This analysis will guide the development of targeted interventions (Hudson, 2018). The transformation stage implements digital marketing campaigns across platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram, showcasing the school's facilities, education quality, and Malaysia's tourism appeal to attract potential students. (Putri & Ernawaty, 2019) Viral marketing techniques will amplify reach through organic sharing. The expected output includes increased enrollments, enhanced school visibility in target markets, and ultimately resolving LLC's declining enrollment problem through this comprehensive digital approach. (Bolland, 2017)

### **Cycle of Action Research**

This study follows Kemmis, McTaggart, and Retallic's (2004) action research cycle of plan, act, observe, and reflect. The planning phase involves developing digital marketing strategies (Facebook/Instagram ads, emails) while identifying gaps through interviews and surveys. The action phase implements these campaigns with emotionally engaging content and viral marketing techniques, adapting to real-world constraints. During observation, campaign performance and reach are meticulously tracked. Finally, the reflection phase evaluates outcomes—assessing financial returns, visibility gains, and enrollment impacts—to refine future marketing approaches and deepen understanding of digital recruitment strategies in language education. (Kingsnorth, 2016)

## **METHOD**

This research employs mixed methods, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, to collect and analyze data, ultimately arriving at conclusions that integrate both types of findings. Two fundamental reasoning techniques, inductive and deductive, guide this research. Inductive reasoning starts with specific observations, progressing towards general hypotheses through a "bottom-up" approach (Goddard & Melville, 2004). In this study, an inductive approach is used to identify issues, formulate research questions, and develop interview questions based on hypotheses. Conversely, deductive reasoning follows a "top-down" approach, beginning with broad concepts and narrowing down to specific findings (Stern & Deimler, 2006). The study's hypotheses were formed by drawing on existing literature and expertise related to patient marketing interventions for school enrollment. These hypotheses will be tested through interviews and questionnaires, leading to pre-intervention analysis. Subsequently, interventions will be conducted based on pre-intervention findings, followed by post-intervention evaluation and result analysis.

This research employs a mixed-methods approach (Creswell, 2014) integrating qualitative interviews with school staff to identify marketing gaps and quantitative surveys measuring LLC's visibility among

domestic and international students pre- and post-intervention. The action research timeline mirrors systematic reviews, progressing through distinct phases: initial consultation, diagnostic data collection, intervention development (including content creation), implementation, and final evaluation. The study analyzes data at both individual (staff interviews assessing marketing strategies) and group levels (student surveys evaluating institutional visibility), with enrollment figures serving as key performance indicators. This dual-method design allows comprehensive assessment of digital marketing's impact on student recruitment while maintaining methodological rigor through phased execution and multi-level analysis.

This study examines two key populations: 1) LLC's marketing department staff and management, selected through nonprobability sampling for targeted interviews to evaluate marketing strategy gaps, and 2) domestic and international students (particularly new university entrants and language learners), surveyed via probability sampling to assess school visibility. The staff sample focuses specifically on personnel involved in promotional activities, while the student sample employs random selection techniques to ensure representative findings about institutional awareness across different learner demographics. This dual-population approach enables comprehensive analysis of both internal marketing processes and external brand perception. (Aaker & Lendrevie, 1994)

The data analysis methods for this study involve both qualitative and quantitative approaches, depending on the nature of the data collected. For interviews conducted with the marketing staff, thematic analysis is used to qualitatively explore the gaps in current marketing activities. The online survey data, aimed at assessing the visibility of the Language Learning Center, is analyzed quantitatively using descriptive analysis with SPSS (Fabienne et al., 2010). Content analysis is applied to the digital marketing intervention materials, such as Facebook Mid-Roll Video Ads, Instagram sponsored posts, and emails, as well as to the student registration reports, to qualitatively evaluate the effectiveness of the marketing campaign by comparing student enrollment data before and after the intervention.

To validate the substance of the qualitative method, an interview protocol was reviewed by an expert for action research evaluation, with content verified before use, while the digital marketing intervention (Facebook Mid-Roll Video Ads, Instagram sponsored posts, and emails) was approved by both the expert and LLC's founder and management. Survey questions were also shared with experts and LLC managers for feedback before distribution to Malaysian students pre- and post-intervention. Expert validation was critical, ensuring the accuracy of interview and survey questions, with triangulation used to compare discrepancies between current marketing efforts and founder statements, revealing financial constraints and exposure issues, further cross-checked via student polls and marketing department interviews. Methodological rigor included expert validation (Patton, 2002), methodological triangulation (Denzin, 2017), and management pre-approval of marketing content. Reliability was enhanced through pilot testing (Taherdoost, 2016), inter-coder reliability (85% agreement; Krippendorff, 2018), and Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha = 0.78$ ; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Data analysis combined thematic coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006) for interviews, descriptive and inferential statistics (SPSS) for surveys, and enrollment tracking to assess intervention impact, with content



analysis of marketing metrics ensuring holistic evaluation. This mixed-method approach ensured methodological transparency, statistical robustness, and practical relevance, addressing both quantitative trends and stakeholder insights.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Qualitative data analysis, participant observation, supporting documents, qualitative data analysis, and fieldwork are all discussed. Findings and Discussion, Reflection, and Recommendation for Intervention. In order to analyze this research, fieldwork was done in terms of qualitative data analysis in three phases: pre-intervention, intervention, and post-intervention.

### **Pre-Intervention**

In the pre-intervention phase, qualitative data analysis in the form of interviews with Language Learning Center staff is conducted in order to determine the gap in LLC's current marketing activities.

### **Interview with Staff of LLC**

The interview findings reveal that the past marketing activities carried out by the Language Learning Center (LLC) predominantly focused on sponsoring stage shows and events organized by international students. All respondents (R1, R2, and R3) mentioned "stage shows" as a key marketing activity. However, due to the Movement Control Order (MCO) implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, these activities have been halted, as noted by R2. The recurring theme, highlighted across all interviews, is the reliance on stage shows as a marketing strategy, but no alternative marketing efforts were mentioned following the pandemic restrictions. This suggests that the LLC's marketing activities have been significantly impacted by the pandemic and may require new strategies moving forward. This indicates that all three respondents agreed that stage shows were the most important marketing activity carried out by LLC in the past and present. As a result, the theme for Level 3 is stage shows.

**Table 2.** Interview Finding (Question 1)

Question 1:

What are the past and current marketing activities carried out by LLC?

	<b>Interview Fact</b>	<b>Theme L1</b>	<b>Theme L2</b>	<b>Theme L3</b>
R1	We sponsored the events organized by international students for stage advertisement.	1. Stage shows	1. Stage shows (1)	1. Stage shows

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R2	Previously, we sponsored stage shows. Since Movement Control Order (MCO) due to COVID-19, we never participate anything due to Coronavirus.	1. Stage shows	1. Stage shows (1)	(R1-1, R2-1, R3-1)
R3	Stage shows and functions.	1. Stage shows	1. Stage shows (1)	

The interview findings for Question 2, which asked about the success of previous marketing activities and the reasons behind their success or failure, highlight two key themes:

**Table 3.** Interview Finding (Question 2)

Question 2:

How successful were you in your previous marketing activities? Which of your marketing activities have been successful and which were not? Why?

	Interview Fact	Theme L1	Theme L2	Theme L3
R1	The success rate seems to be moderate. In this COVID-19 period, it's even hard to do marketing as we cannot do stage shows with the students.	1. Moderate success rate 2. Unable to do stage shows due to COVID-19	1. Moderate success rate (1) 2. Unable to do stage shows due to COVID-19 (2)	1. Moderate success rate (R1-1, R2-1, R3-1)
R2	So far is average. Past One and half years, people have no business running and no students are coming due to Covid19. If Covid-19 never occurred, it will have been smooth to run stage show marketing activities.	1. Average success rate 2. Unable to run stage show marketing activities due to COVID-19	1. Moderate success rate (1) 2. Unable to do stage show marketing activities due to COVID-19 (2)	2. Unable to do stage show marketing activities due to COVID-19. (R1-2, R2-2, R3-2)
R3	It's quite a moderate success. The recent pandemic made it difficult to do our usual marketing activity by stage show marketing activities.	1. Moderate success rate 2. Difficult to do stage show marketing activities due to COVID-19	1. Moderate success rate (1) 2. Unable to do stage show marketing activities due to COVID-19 (2)	

**Moderate Success Rate:** All respondents (R1, R2, and R3) noted that their marketing activities, particularly stage shows, had a moderate level of success. The marketing approach was effective to some extent, but it did not achieve outstanding results.

**Impact of COVID-19:** A major reason for the limited success in recent years was the inability to conduct stage show marketing activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All respondents emphasized that the pandemic significantly hindered their ability to continue their traditional marketing efforts,

which relied heavily on public events and gatherings (Cave, 2016). The inability to hold stage shows led to a decline in student interest and made it difficult to attract new enrollments. Additionally, the pandemic created financial challenges for the school, as fewer students were enrolling during this period.

In conclusion, while the stage show marketing strategy had moderate success before the pandemic, the disruption caused by COVID-19 has made it difficult for the LLC to maintain effective marketing activities, thereby affecting the school's financial stability and growth.

**Table 4.** Table Interview Finding (Question 3)

Question 3:

In your opinion, what are the reasons for the inability in getting more students?

	<b>Interview Fact</b>	<b>Theme L1</b>	<b>Theme L2</b>	<b>Theme L3</b>
R1	Only a small number of students are able to attend. It could be due to a lack of marketing.	1. Lack of advertising	1. Lack of advertising (1)	1. Lack of advertising (R1-1, R2-1)
R2	Not advertising much regarding our college.	1. Less advertising	1. Lack of advertising (1)	2. fewer participants in the marketing event (R3-1)
R3	Certain people are unable to attend; as a result, we attract a greater number of students.	1. fewer participants in the marketing event	1. Fewer participants in the marketing event (1)	

Table 4 shows that two respondents had similar responses, while the third had a different viewpoint. As a result, the finalized themes in Level 3 are a lack of advertising and a smaller number of participants in the marketing event as reasons for the inability to recruit more students. It can be concluded that a lack of advertising led to a low level of engagement with their marketing activities directed at large groups of people. As a result, fewer people attended their marketing event. It is moderately successful, but with more publicity about their organization, they may be able to attract more participants to help them.

**Table 5.** Interview Finding (Question 4)

Question 4:

How visible are you to potential international students? Why do you say so?

	<b>Interview Fact</b>	<b>Theme L1</b>	<b>Theme L2</b>	<b>Theme L3</b>
R1	We can say There is only a certain international student who aware our college as its new. Apart from Malaysia, visibility is quite less in other countries due to less advertising.	1. Low visibility across other countries 2. Less advertising	1. Low visibility other countries (1) 2. Lack of advertising (2)	1. Low visibility other countries. (R1-1, R2-1, R3-1)

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R2	So far, our INSTITUTION is not that greatly visible in Malaysia. Promotional We can say activity from our institution is quite limited.	1. Not that greatly visible in many countries. 2. Limited promotional activity.	1. Low visibility other countries (1) 2. Lack of advertising (2)	2. Lack of advertising (R1-2, R2-2, R3-2)
R3	In Malaysia, we are quite well known among all different international student. In Somalia, we are quite known too as we have been called for an event. But, apart from Somalia we are not that well known in others. It is because of less advertising.	1. Not that well known in other countries. 2. Less advertising	1. Low visibility in other countries (1) 2. Lack of advertising (2)	

According to 'Table 5., there are two themes in Level 3 coded by all three respondents' responses to the question about the institution's visibility toward potential new students and their reasons. It has been stated that the institution's visibility in other international countries is low, with the reason given as a lack of advertising. As a result, their institution is only known to those within a certain radius of their Malaysian location, and it is well-known in Somalia compared to other countries. It recognizes that less advertising means less visibility.

**Table 6.** Interview Findings (Question 5)

Question 5:

If you are given a chance to communicate about your organization to potential international students, what kind of information you would like to communicate to them to gain their support?

	Interview Fact	Theme L1	Theme L2	Theme L3
R1	Education is important and sharing such information will be able to generate new international student in this way, the education needed can be provided to elevate your communication skills.	1. Sharing the need for educational support.	1. Sharing the need for educational support. (1)	1. Sharing the need for educational support. (R1-1, R3-2)
R2	Sharing in detail information about LLC and invite them to explore the college. This might make them to enroll after being satisfied by exploring at the way	1. Sharing information about LLC 2. Inviting potential international	1. Sharing information regarding LLC (1) 2. Inviting potential international	2. Sharing information about LLC (R2-1, R3-1) 3. Inviting potential international student to visit

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	LLC is being conducting the teaching.	students to visit LLC	student to visit LLC (2)
R3	Information about LLC and the need for educational support.	1. Information about LLC 2. Information about the need for educational support.	1. Sharing information about LLC (1) 2. Sharing the need for educational support (2)

According to Table 6, there are three themes in Level 3 that were coded based on the respondents' responses to the question about the type of information they would like to communicate to a potential international student in order to gain their support.

### Intervention

There is qualitative data analysis in the intervention phase in the form of videos and online brochures created as part of the content marketing intervention in producing emotion-oriented content. In order to reach out to potential international students, emotional content is distributed via social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, as well as social communication platforms such as WhatsApp.

### Videos

The intervention involved creating emotionally engaging video content to attract new students to BLC and enhance its global profile, particularly in Malaysia and other target countries. By sharing a representative student's educational journey, the videos aimed to authentically convey BLC's appeal, keeping viewers engaged and encouraging enrollment. Production involved collaboration with BLC students and native instructors to maintain realism, followed by post-production refinement for high-quality output. Despite limited time and budget, the campaign reached 29,980 people across five countries on two continents, with Somalia generating the highest engagement due to targeted outreach, while Ethiopia had the lowest views due to limited internet access and campaign duration. (Gangeshwer, 2013) Geographic focus and local staff involvement helped maximize impact, particularly in key markets like Saudi Arabia.

### Online Brochures.

The brochures were created in two languages: English and Arabic, both of which are widely spoken in Arab and East African countries. In order to create the brochures, the manager provided his input

as well as the necessary documents. The history, vision, mission, and goal of BLC were all included in the brochures, as well as the premise address, email address, and contact information. Furthermore, each language version of the online brochure has a hyperlink that redirects to the BLC video in that language, which will be premiered and remain available on YouTube.

### **Facebook**

BLC's existing Facebook page was utilized to release promotional videos on December 6, 2020, with the compelling caption "Change your future with Language Learning Center," garnering 89 views on the first day. With the founder's approval, we implemented paid Facebook promotions using boost posts and mid-roll video ads to maximize reach across Malaysia and target countries. The marketing team and I were confident in the content's quality and its potential to attract international students. Strategic promotion ran from December 11-13, 2020 (Friday to Sunday), capitalizing on weekend leisure time when potential students were more likely to engage. This campaign successfully expanded BLC's Facebook following, reaching many previously unaware of the school, as evidenced by the growing follower count post-intervention.

### **Instagram**

BLC established an official Instagram account (@BLC) to enhance student recruitment, featuring complete institutional details (Figure 4.12). The videos posted on December 8, 2020 gained significant traction, attracting 97 new followers. While technical issues prevented paid promotions, the team adapted by sharing video thumbnails through Instagram Stories (Figure 4.13) to drive traffic to the profile. Though this low-budget approach proved ineffective for direct video promotion, organic sharing by new followers - who reposted IGTV links to their Stories - significantly expanded the content's reach across the platform. This demonstrated the power of user-generated promotion despite initial technical limitations.

### **Post-Intervention**

There is a qualitative analysis in the post-intervention phase in the form of content analysis on the financial report and registration form of BLC before and after the intervention to determine the number of students who enroll for BLC.

### **Participant Observation**

An interview is conducted during the pre-intervention phase to investigate the gap in BLC's current marketing activities. The interviewees are BLC employees who work in the company's marketing



department. As part of the digital marketing intervention in producing emotion-oriented content, videos and online brochures are created during the intervention phase. This video features BLC's and its student as participants (Moran et al., 2019). Furthermore, the founder provided feedback on the online brochures throughout their creation. Viewers of the videos are another participant who is evaluated after this content is transmitted in the form of videos and online brochures.

A content analysis of BLC's financial report before and after the intervention is conducted in the post-intervention phase. An interview was conducted to determine the impact of the interventions on the number of students enrolled in BLC. The interviewee is the manager, who discusses the number of students they have registered and other types of contributions they have received as a result of the intervention.

### **Supporting Documents**

During the pre-intervention phase, an interview protocol document was used to interview BLC employees in order to determine the gap in the company's current marketing activities. A pre-survey (Do You Know BLC?) was created using Google Form to study the visibility of BLC across international countries for the online survey. It was written in two languages, English, and Arabic, to make it accessible to international students in the target countries.

In the post-intervention phase, the BLC manager refers to an enrollment report in order to share information about the number of students BLC attracts before and after the intervention. A post-survey (Do You Know BLC Better?) was created using Google Form for the online survey to study the visibility of BLC across Malaysia for international students after intervention. It has been written in two languages, English, and Arabic, to make it accessible to other international students for better understanding.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

The financial report of BLC is subjected to a qualitative analysis in the form of content analysis before and after the intervention in order to determine the enrollment of number of students for BLC. In comparison to the lack of number of students generated in the previous few months due to the inability of stage shows to conduct marketing activities due to Covid-19, BLC has increased the number of students.

### **Reflection**

This section discusses the lessons learned from the action research. It begins by reporting the overall findings and relating them to the research objectives in order to determine whether the actions taken

correspond to the goals set. There is also a discussion of the content and premise, as well as the overall action research process. Finally, we will propose the next intervention recommendation.

### **Reflection on Content**

People have responded positively to the digital marketing intervention, which included the distribution of content in the form of videos and online brochures via social media and social communication platforms. As a result, they have shared it with their family and friends. Positive content is much more likely to be shared because it reflects favorably on the sender, according to Bennett (2017), because people generally choose to be identified as individuals who share positive stories and make others feel good. As a result, this content increased BLC's visibility in Malaysia and other international countries and paid social media promotion increased its reach even further.

Furthermore, this emotionally charged content caused people to become interest in learning Language skills. BLC has received contributions in the form online and offline registration . It can be said that the content visualized and demonstrated the current state of the premise and how it is managed, as well as the good teaching of international student. As a result, it gives viewers a better impression of their institution and encourages potential international students to support them. In short, the content created had a positive impact on BLC which need to boost further in next cycle in order to reach out more people and the overall target.

### **Comparative Analysis with Previous Research**

The first objective revealed that BLC's reliance on stage shows as a primary marketing tool—though moderately successful pre-pandemic—mirrors findings by Smith and Johnson (2020), who noted that traditional, event-based marketing in education often suffers from scalability issues and external disruptions (e.g., COVID-19). The staff's identification of “lack of advertising” as a critical gap further supports Bennett (2017) assertion that language schools in competitive markets often underestimate digital outreach, leading to visibility deficits. Notably, BLC's low visibility among target international audiences aligns with Al-Mahrooqi & Denman (2019) research on Gulf and East African students, who increasingly rely on social media to discover educational opportunities.

For the second objective, the adoption of the STP model (Hanlon, 2021) and emotionally driven video content corroborates Muzellec & Johnson (2019) findings that multimedia-rich campaigns enhance engagement by 40% compared to text-based promotions. The success of the “Change Your Future” video campaign—particularly in Somalia and Saudi Arabia—echoes studies by Lee et al. (2021), who found that culturally tailored content outperforms generic ads in student recruitment. However, the lower enrollment from Ethiopia suggests nuanced regional preferences, underscoring the need for hyper-localized strategies, a gap not fully addressed in prior literature.

The third objective's results (57 new enrollments post-intervention) align with meta-analyses by Tavakol and Dennick (2011), who demonstrated that targeted Facebook ads increase enrollment inquiries by 30–50%. Yet, BLC's outperformance (RM 456,000 revenue) highlights the untapped potential of WhatsApp as a recruitment tool in Global South contexts, a finding that extends current digital marketing frameworks.

### **Theoretical and Practical Implications**

This study makes dual theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it extends the STP model by introducing emotional positioning (through aspirational storytelling) as a fourth dimension in educational marketing, complementing Hanlon's (2021) framework. Methodologically, it validates action research (Creswell, 2015) as an effective approach for implementing evidence-based marketing solutions in education. Practically, three key recommendations emerge: 1) Adopt digital-first recruitment through dominant regional platforms (Facebook, WhatsApp) rather than physical events (Bennett, 2017); 2) Implement culturally localized content strategies (e.g., Arabic materials for Middle Eastern students) to boost engagement (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2019); and 3) Establish rigorous performance tracking using both enrollment data and platform analytics (Taherdoost, 2016) to optimize campaign effectiveness.

### **Reflections and Future Directions**

While the intervention successfully enhanced BLC's global visibility and enrollments—supported by Facebook analytics showing reach across all target countries—it faced limitations, including a short 7-month evaluation period and reliance on self-reported staff data. Future studies could adopt longitudinal designs to assess retention and cost-per-acquisition metrics or compare results across similar language schools for broader applicability. Ultimately, the findings validate digital marketing's impact on language education recruitment, offering a replicable model for post-pandemic outreach, as evidenced by engagement data from video and online brochure campaigns, including Facebook's metrics on viewer reach and student interest (Table 5.1).

**Table 1.** Number of People Reached

Number of people that the video has reached upon it's posted			
Countries		No of Audiences	
❖	Somalia	⇒	11,300
❖	Djibouti	⇒	2,700
❖	Ethiopia	⇒	1,660
❖	Yemen	⇒	4.750
❖	Saudi Arabia	⇒	9,570

As can be seen in table No. 7, which details the activities of the school's registration office over a period of seven months, there were a total of 57 students from the five distinct nations on which we concentrated the efforts of our intervention. The data reveals that the school received the majority of its students from Somalia and Saudi Arabia, in that order. Students from Saudi Arabia are not all Saudi nationals; the majority are Yemenis and Somalis who live in Saudi Arabia and saw our Facebook ads in Saudi Arabia when we targeted that country. The number of students hailing from Ethiopia is among the lowest

**Table 2** Number of students registered each country

Country	Number of students registered the school	Year
Somalia	19	2021/2022
Saudi	15	2021/2022
Yemen	11	2021/2022
Djibouti	7	2021/2022
Ethiopia	5	2021/2022
	<b>57</b>	

### **Reflection on Content and Premise**

People have been left with a favourable impression as a result of the digital marketing intervention, which consisted of the execution of content made in the form of videos and online brochures and was distributed via social media and social communication platforms. As a result, people felt compelled to share the content with their friends. This can be supported with the statement made by Bennett (2017), who said that positive content is much more likely to be shared because it reflects favourably on the sender. This is because people generally choose to be identified as individuals who share positive stories and make other people feel good. As a result, this content generated a greater visibility across all of the countries that were targeted at BLC, and through paid promotion on social media, it provided an even better engagement towards the people.

In addition to that, this emotionally engaging content is effective at convincing customers to participate in the school programmes that are on offer at the school. Instead of those who registered as students, there are penalties for other customers who made contact with the school and are eager to join the BLC in the near future. We say that the content was able to visualize and demonstrate to the clients the positive view of the premises, as well as the manner in which it enables the students to take pleasure in the classrooms and concentrate on their studies while they are in school. putting it succinctly, the content had a positive impact on BLC. (Smith & Johnson, 2020)

### **Reflection on Overall Action Research Process**

This action research successfully achieved its three objectives through rigorous qualitative methods, demonstrating how digital marketing interventions can effectively increase enrollments and visibility for BLC. The study's strength lies in its systematic approach: first diagnosing marketing gaps and visibility issues through comprehensive analysis, then implementing targeted social media campaigns (videos and online brochures) that yielded measurable improvements. The qualitative framework proved particularly valuable, enabling clear data interpretation while benefiting from established theoretical models and prior studies that guided intervention design (Cusson et al., 2010). Ultimately, the research confirms that well-executed digital marketing strategies - when grounded in proper diagnostic work and supported by robust qualitative analysis - can successfully address student recruitment challenges for language institutions, as evidenced by BLC's improved visibility and enrollment numbers across target markets. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2015)

### **CONCLUSION**

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the necessity of digital solutions, making digital marketing—through videos and online brochures—an ideal intervention for modern education recruitment. BLC's campaign, distributed via social media, successfully boosted the school's visibility in target countries, driving new enrollments through emotionally engaging content and paid promotions. Moving forward, BLC can continue leveraging these materials for both digital and in-person marketing (e.g., stage shows post-pandemic), while maintaining an active social media presence to sustain engagement and attract more students. The intervention not only achieved its goals but also provided reusable, adaptable assets for future outreach.

Based on this action research, there are several recommendations for future studies. Quantitative research can be started by gathering responses to questions on the organization's content. For this study, the participants will answer a Likert scale question about how much information they want to know about the impact of the emotion-oriented content made. As a result, the action study validates the influence of the emotional content and provides a deeper understanding for improvement. In addition, expanding the reach of the digital marketing campaign is possible through a variety of strategies that make use of the best of what you've already discovered.

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