TIẾP THỊ TRUYỀN THÔNG MẠNG XÃ HỘI ĐỂ THU HÚT NGƯỜI HỌC: NGHIÊN CỨU TÌNH HUỐNG TẠI MỘT TRUNG TÂM LUYỆN THI IELTS Ở HÀ NỘI

Ngô Phương Anh[1]

Sinh viên CTTT KT - K56 – Viện KT & KDQT
Trường Đại học Ngoại thương, Hà Nội, Việt Nam

Trần Thu Trang

Giảng viên Viện Kinh tế và Kinh doanh Quốc tế
Trường Đại học Ngoại thương, Hà Nội, Việt Nam

Tóm tắt

Mục đích của nghiên cứu này là để phân tích cách các doanh nghiệp giáo dục sử dụng tiếp thị truyền thông mạng xã hội để thu hút người học. Dựa trên một nghiên cứu định tính về một trung tâm luyện thi IELTS nổi tiếng ở Hà Nội, các tác giả chỉ ra cách trung tâm này lập kế hoạch và triển khai các hoạt động tiếp thị truyền thông mạng xã hội của mình. Nghiên cứu cũng đánh giá điểm mạnh và điểm yếu của hoạt động tiếp thị của trung tâm và đưa ra một số đề xuất cho trung tâm cũng như các doanh nghiệp giáo dục khác để cải thiện hoạt động tiếp thị truyền thông xã hội hiệu quả hơn.

Từ khóa: Mạng xã hội, tiếp thị truyền thông mạng xã hội, giáo dục kinh doanh, trung tâm luyện thi IELTS

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING TO ATTRACT STUDENTS: CASE STUDY OF AN IELTS TRAINING CENTER IN HANOI

Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine how education businesses use social media marketing to attract students. Drawing on a qualitative case study of a renowned IELTS training center in Hanoi, we show how the center plans and implements its social media marketing activities. The study also highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the center's social media marketing and provides several suggestions for the center as well as other education businesses to improve social media marketing more efficiently.

Keyword: Social media, social media marketing, education business, IELTS training center.

---

[1] Tác giả liên hệ, Email: k56.1717140004@ftu.edu.vn

1. Introduction

Nowadays, the demand for studying international English certificates is increasing, especially for students. The main reasons are for employment opportunities, for educational purposes or simply for self-improvement. Among which, the IELTS certificate (short for International English Language Testing System) is becoming more and more popular, with 3.5 million tests in 2019, and given that universities in Vietnam have begun to allow direct admission for students with an IELTS score of at least 6.5, this certificate is becoming even more attractive to prospective test-takers. This perk has made teaching IELTS and other IELTS-related services a lucrative market for many. In recent years, a large number of IELTS training centers have sprung up to meet students' growing needs, and to distinguish itself in an era where social media is consumed daily, an IELTS center needs to establish a strong social presence. Social media, if used wisely and efficiently, can contribute to a loyal customer base and great business opportunities.

Most IELTS teaching centers mainly rely on social media channels to promote their courses, but it is a fact that their efforts are often misdirected and ineffective due to a lack of understanding of the market and of marketing principles. Past research has examined the various benefits of social media for marketing purposes, but there is hardly any research on promotional efforts of education businesses on social media. Therefore, a research which attempts to find out how an IELTS center can utilize social media to attract leaners should be useful and relevant.

2. Theoretical background on social media marketing

2.1. Social media

Social media have been defined in numerous ways. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) defined social media as "a group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content". Essentially, the widespread use of social media represents a paradigm shift in communication. Everyday, people exchange texts, messages, information, ideas via these platforms. It is commonly thought that such platforms only recently became popular, but the truth is that social media have been present since as early as 2004. The classification of social media was based on two concepts, "social presence" and "media richness" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social presence can be defined as the acoustic, visual, and physical contact between two communication partners and is influenced by the medium's intimacy and immediacy (Short, Williams & Christie, 1976). Media richness is concerned with the degree to which a medium is able to resolve ambiguity and uncertainty in communication (Daft & Lengel, 1986).

Table 1. Classification of social media by social presence/ media richness

		Social presence/ Media richness		
		Low	*Medium*	*High*
Self - presentation/ self - disclosure	*High*	Blogs	Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)	Virtual social worlds (e.g, Second Life)
	Low	Collaborative projects (e.g, Wikipedia)	Content communities (e.g, YouTube)	Virtual game worlds (e.g, World of Warcrafts)

Source: Kaplan and Haenlein (2010)

There are six different types of social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). *Collaboration projects*, such as Wikipedia, can be found on social media. These are open-source platforms that allow anonymous participants to create content, with the goal of achieving a better result than any single actor could achieve alone (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The oldest type of social media was *blogs*, which are commonly characterized as websites that show chronologically reversed date-stamped entries (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The third type of social media is *content communities*, where the primary goal is for users to share media material. Photos (e.g. Flickr), movies (e.g. YouTube), and PowerPoint presentations can all be shared through content communities (e.g. Slideshare). *Virtual game worlds*, as defined by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), are a fourth type of social media in which users create avatars and engage with one another in a three-dimensional virtual setting. Users engage with avatars in a three-dimensional virtual environment in *virtual social worlds*, too. *Social networking sites* are the last and most popular type of social media. There are numerous definitions of social networking sites. Ellison & Boyd (2013) define social networking sites as "networked communication platforms in which participants 1) have uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-level data; 2) can publicly articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others; and 3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user-generated content provided by their connections on the site." Belch & Belch (2018) provide an alternative definition of social networking sites as "platforms for networks or social relations among people who share interests, activities, backgrounds, or real-life connections". In general, there is a consensus that social networking sites comprise web-based services allowing individuals to construct personal profiles, which range from photos, videos, audio files and blogs (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) and articulate a list of other users who share a connection (Boyd & Elison, 2008).

To consumers, the use of social media is truly a worldwide phenomenon; there is a presence on every continent, with over 3.6 billion users in 2020 (Statista, 2021). As can be seen in Figure 1, consumers have numerous ways to access social media (desktops, laptops, tablets, smartphones, and connected devices).

To businesses, the primary reason for using social media are to (1) drive traffic to one's site, (2) communicate with customers, and (3) gain brand exposure. The most important benefit marketers believe they derive from the use of social media is increased exposure (Belch and Belch, 2018).
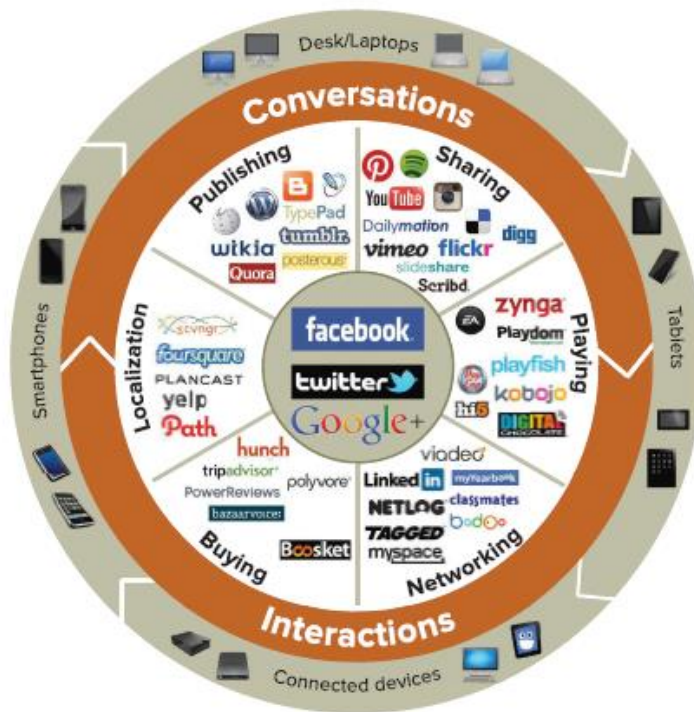
Figure 1. The social media landscape

Source: Belch and Belch (2018)

2.2. Social media marketing

At its core, social media marketing involves the use of social media platforms to reach target customers, to build brand loyalty, boost sales, and drive website traffic, along with other business goals (Wilson, 2010). De Swaan Arons, van den Driest & Weed (2014) stressed that the digital market place is fast becoming more dynamic, and that there is a need to factor in organizational and managerial elements in conducting marketing activities, i.e. involving other departments or employees in the marketing process. Sharing the same viewpoint, Felix, Rauschnabel and Hinsch (2017) regard social media marketing as cross-functional and interdisciplinary. The authors propose a holistic framework of strategic social media marketing encompassing scope, culture, structure, and governance (Felix, Rauschnabel & Hinsch, 2017).

Scope means that firms go from 'defender' to 'explorer'. The 'defender' approach is restrictive in terms of scope, only focusing on a few stakeholders and is not involved in the communication with customers. By contrast, the 'explorer' approach takes advantage of social media's "intergrative, interactive and collaborative nature" to form and maintain beneficial relationship with customers (Felix, Rauschnabel & Hinsch, 2017)

Culture reflects the shift from 'conservatism' to 'modernism'. A conservative corporate culture tends to be safe, internally focused and risk-averse in decision-making while modernistic social media marketing requires an "open, permeable, authentic and sometimes risk-taking culture" (Felix, Rauschnabel & Hinsch, 2017)

Structure refers to whether the company prefer its organization to be hierarchies or network. Traditional hierarchy indicates a concentrated and centralized social media marketing approach. In other words, the marketing decisions lie in the hands of a few in the hierarchy. In contrast, the network perspective suggests that social media activities "are a common responsibility for all

employees regardless of the department to which they are assigned" (Felix, Rauschnabel & Hinsch, 2017).

By the same token, **governance**, controls the extent to which employees are free to communicate on social media and regulates the content they are allowed to upload accordingly. In 'autocracy' systems, decisions are centralized, dictated and administerd by a single department. By contrast, the 'anarchy' perspective means that empoyees are given free rein to communicate on social media.
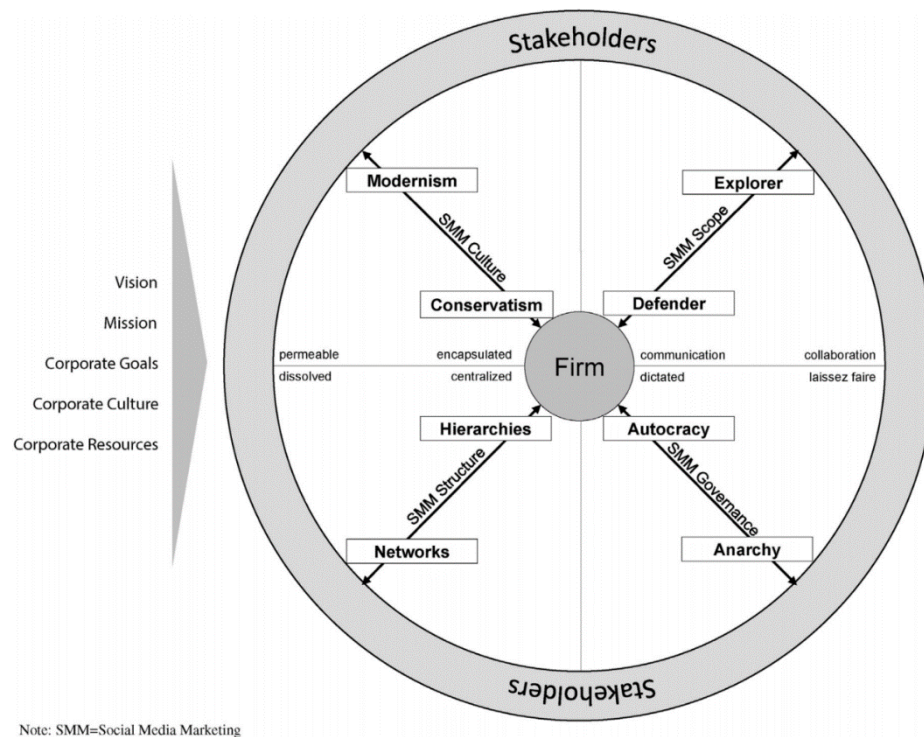

Note: SMM=Social Media Marketing

Figure 2. Strategic social media marketing framework

Source: Felix, Rauschnabel and Hinsch (2017)

3. Research Method

The authors use a qualitative case study to explore how companies plan and implement social media marketing. According to Yin (2017), case study research 'is said to allow for in-depth review of new or unclear phenomena whilst retaining the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events', meaning it provides analytical rather than statistical generalizations. Applying the case study method might benefit the literature with novel insights and findings, especially in the context of social media marketing.

The IELTS Workshop (TIW) has been chosen as a case study because the center has had a robust social media marketing history since its establishment in 2016, with year-round campaigns of diverse themes as well as a systematic and organized marketing strategy. The study focuses on The IELTS Workshop's overall marketing process and its marketing campaigns on social media platforms in the year 2020. Specifically, one typical campaign from each platform will be presented and analysed. Subsequently, the study will point out the strengths and weaknesses of the company's current social media marketing.

Data are collected in several rounds through observation and archival documentation. Observation was conducted by the first author, who has spent more than one year at The IELTS

Workshop. Besides, a variety of documents was collected from both internal and external sources. The documents include marketing plans, statistics and post-campaign reports of The IELTS Workshop gathered from the marketing department. In addition, the authors also consulted books, jounals and articles related to the literature on social media and social media marketing.

The authors used thematic analysis – a method that emphasizes identifying, analysing and interpreting patterns of meaning (or "themes") within the collected data. We presented these themes in detail in the finding section..

4. Findings

This section of the study provides background information of the case study (The IELTS Workshop) and an in-depth analysis of the center's overall marketing process and its marketing campaigns on two important social media platforms (Facebook and YouTube) in the year 2020.

4.1. Background information of the case study: The IELTS Workshop

The IELTS Workshop (TIW) was formerly an IELTS knowledge sharing site focusing on four linguistic skills: Reading; Listening; Speaking and Writing and has become one of the leading IELTS centers utilizing modern pedagogy.

With a view to to making IELTS a tool to help learners access the English language, thereby obtaining the key to greater goals in study, research and even life, The IELTS Workshop opened the first course in December 2016 under the guidance of head teacher Dang Tran Tung – the first Vietnamese to achieve IELTS 9.0 overall 4 times.

The center boasts a team of teachers with Bachelor's degrees/Master of English Language Teaching, CELTA with many years of teaching and research. The IELTS Workshop adopts novel teaching practices that places a strong emphasis on learners. Textbooks are the company's intellectual products, which are thoroughly compiled based on authentic English materials and teachers' pedagogical methodology. The curriculum is exclusive and is revised annually based on the feedbacks of the students to become more refined and useful.

Together with a team of excellent IELTS 8.0+ teachers, enthusiastic 7.0+ teaching assistants and enthusiastic consultants, the center aims to bring students the most valuable knowledge and contributes to corporate stability and common good.

The IELTS Workshop started out as an IELTS sharing webpage and opened its first headquarter at 55A Vo Van Dung Street, Dong Da, Hanoi, on December 22nd, 2016.

Along with the Hanoi headquarter, a branch was set up in Danang around the same time. However, it went under 2 years later due to managerial dispute.

After 3 years of operation and another two branches in Hanoi, The IELTS Workshop made its forray in the Southern market, opening its first Sai Gon branch in mid 2019. Most recently, the company opened its newest Hanoi branch in the busy Thanh Xuan district in May.

Up until now, The IELTS Workshop has 7 branches currently in operation, with four in Hanoi and three in Saigon.

4.2. Analysis of The IELTS Workshop's social media marketing

4.2.1. Marketing process

Marketing activities at The IELTS Workshop are directed and overseen by the marketing department. Each marketing campaign goes through 5 steps. This procedure applies to its social media marketing as well.

Figure 3. The IELTS Workshop's marketing process

Source: The IELTS Workshop

Research includes conducting market research and identifying latest market trends and fluctuations, customers' immediate needs for the IELTS. Data from all platforms are gathered and analysed weekly on Thursday.

After that, the marketing department drafts a *proposal*, detailing the specific aims and budget of the campaign. The proposal is then sent to all stakeholders involved in order to seek collective approval.

Figure 4. Sample proposal of a marketing campaign

Source: The IELTS Workshop

Planning is a crucial step in the process. It involves developing an implementation schedule/ timeline, delegating human resource as well as allocating budget. A premiliminary outline is usually made 6 months in advance, while a specific action plan is made one month prior to the actual campaign.

Execution is the step where all previous planning efforts are put into practice. In this step, The IELTS Workshop assembles a "crisis management team" to cover possible social media scandals and malicious rumors relating to the center.

Remarketing is the final and also the most critical step. After the campaign, the marketing department re-examines the gains and losses from the campaign by analyzing social media metrics (reach, interaction, follows) and decides which subgroups of customer need more marketing effort, and what type of content is the most viral.

4.2.2. Facebook marketing of The IELTS Workshop

Fanpage system

The center acquires most customers from Facebook and therefore it directs the majority of budget and marketing efforts to Facebook. Apart from its main Facebook page – *The IELTS Workshop*, the center also has 2 Facebook groups dedicated to knowledge-sharing and 6 satellite fanpages each serves three different purposes.

- **Location-based marketing**: The center has 4 sub-fan pages representing branches nationwide. The name of the fanpage includes the district/ city in which it is located in, for example, the fanpage for the branch situated in *Cau Giay* would be named "*The IELTS Workshop Cầu Giấy*". At first glance, this decentralized model may seem counterproductive, since page engagement will not be focused on the main fanpage, but spread out onto satellite ones. In reality, dividing The IELTS Workshop into sub-pages based on geographical location is actually an optimal strategy for the center, as potential customers who are interested in learning IELTS often have a tendency to Google "Where can I learn IELTS in Cau Giay District?" or "good places to study IELTS in Cau Giay District". By putting the location keyword in their fanpage, "*The IELTS Workshop Cầu Giấy*" is likely to be the first Google result that pops up when a customer makes a search.

- **Personal branding**: A separate fanpage was created with a view to developing a personal brand image for Dang Tran Tung, the founder and also the face of the center. With roughly 129,000 followers on his personal Facebook account, Dang Tran Tung can be classified as a macro-influencer recognizable by the majority of IELTS leaners. People largely associate The IELTS Workshop with Dang Tran Tung, therefore it is a good idea to take advantage of his influence and bring him closer to the generic audience, not just IELTS learners. Bearing this in mind, a fanpage exploring other, non-academic aspects of the founder's life was created, called "*The Dang Vlog*". It portrays Dang Tran Tung not as an IELTS achiever or a teacher, but a new role as a vlogger. The page's content mainly revolves around everyday topics like menswear, food and lifestyle.

- **Viral content**: The IELTS Workshop aspires to bring social media audience not only academic, IELTS-related knowledge, but it also wants to make English-learning a creative and fun process. To do this, the marketing division conceived "*This page was created to remind you to study English*" *(Page này lập ra để nhắc nhở các bạn học Tiếng Anh).* The targeted audience consists mostly young people who are frequent social media users and keep up with the latest social media trends. True to its name, the fanpage provides social media users with English knowledge using the most recent "viral" quotes and sayings from a social media phenomenon.
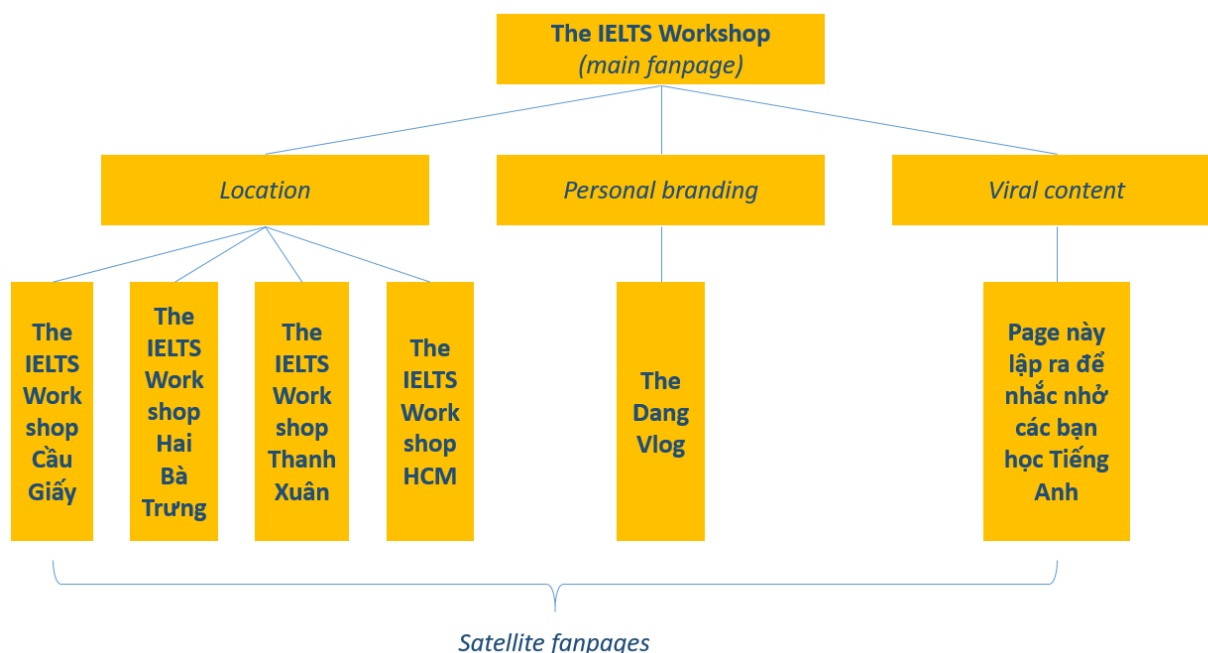
Figure 5. The IELTS Workshop's fanpage system

Source: The IELTS Workshop

Content

Each year, The IELTS Workshop comes up with a central theme for its Facebook campaigns. From the central theme, there will be micro campaigns, each lasting from 2 to 3 months, all serving the purpose of conveying the message of the big theme. In 2021, the theme is "**CREATE YOURSELF**" and all of The IELTS Workshop's facebook posts must somehow impart this message. In 2021, the first two campaigns are currently being carried out and given the severity of the COVID – 19 pandemic in Vietnam, the 5 remaining campaigns from June to December are quite unlikely to be conducted in full scale, therefore this thesis is only highlighting 2 campaigns "New Year – New me" and "Generation E". To ensure the unity and consistency of social media content, the marketing department plans all of the campaigns 6 months ahead. The planning process determines:

(1) The tentative topic for the month;

(2) The overall concept;

(3) Core message;

- *New year – new me*

This campaign was formulated at the beginning of the year 2021. The purpose is to elicit the audience's desire for "novelty" in the new year. To attract students who do not have any previous experience with the IELTS and want to try out "new" things, The IELTS Workshop hosted a series of "free trial lessons" and knowledge-sharing webinars. The duration of the campaign is one month.

- **Overall concept:** Year of the buffalo with the tagline "Work smarter, not harder"

- **Core message:** A new year begins, The IELTS Workshop enters its 5th year, starting a new journey with many changes. The new year is also a good time to make new plans, new choices, new directions for tudents - including studying and taking the IELTS.
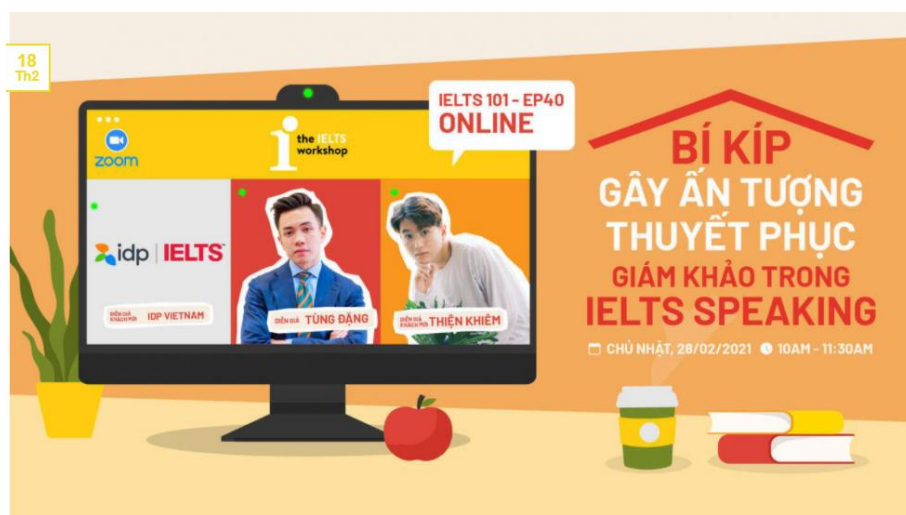
Cùng thầy giáo **Đặng Trần Tùng** 9.0, Youtuber Thiện Khiêm "khiemslays" và giám khảo IELTS chính thức từ IDP chia sẻ kinh nghiệm để "thuyết phục" các IELTS Examiner trong phòng thi **IELTS Speaking** nhé!

Figure 6. Promotional poster of a webinar in the New year – new me campaign

Source: The IELTS Workshop

- *Daily content*

Aside from campaign posts, The IELTS Workshop's fanpage also uploads a diverse range of daily content. Due to its nature as an education business, the majority of the page's content will be related to IELTS and English learning. Regular posts are divided into 3 categories

(1) Knowledge-sharing;

(2) Recreational;

(3) Branding;

Table 2. The IELTS Workshop Facebook post structure

Category	Post type	Content	Frequency
Knowledge-sharing	*TIW – news*	Learn English through news	2 posts/ week
	#570Academic words	Weekly vocabulary	5 posts/ week
		Special occasions, holidays, celebrations, events, topic-specific vocabulary	*Flexible*
	TIW – on air	English learning livestream	Once a month
	Tips4IELTS	Tips and tricks to deal with IELTS, sample answers, learning guides.	1 post by Dang Tran Tung
			2 posts by other teachers

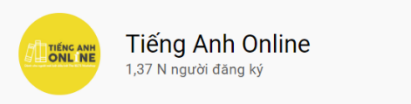| Category	Post type	Content	Frequency
Recreational	*Fun posts*	Trendy and viral videos or posts	1 post/ day
Branding – About TIW	*New courses*	Information about upcoming courses	1 post/ month
	Course information		3 posts/ week
	Class review	Learners' reviews on Facebook fanpage	
	Moment of TIW	Images from a lesson at The IELTS Workshop	
	Teacher profile	Teachers' background information and achievements	*Flexible*
	Wall of fame	Honoring high-scoring students	

Source: The IELTS Workshop

- **Knowledge sharing** posts comprise the majority of The IELTS Workshop Facebook marketing. The center's core value lies in education, therefore it is utilizing social media to deliver education content of high quality to all users. The information presented on the fanpage is also a good indicator of the teachers' levels at The IELTS Workshop. Moreover, the marketing team uses colorful visuals and fascinating images to illustrate new words and phrases, so that learners found the learning process less rigid. If the center is committed to offering social media users relevant English knowlegde, it is likely to prompt students to register for a course here.

- *Recreational* posts consists of funny and viral videos, images and texts. They can either be The IELTS Workshop's orginal content or content borrowed from other platforms and fanpages. The purpose of these posts is to take students' minds off learning and establish a fresh and innovative brand image for the center.

- *Branding* posts serve the purpose of building a positive image about The IELTS Workshop, using both external and internal inputs. Internal inputs include teacher profiles and external inputs are students' reviews and feedbacks about their learning experience at The IELTS Workshop. Each post is embedded with The IELTS Workshop's distinct yellow logo, which boosts the center's brand identity and makes it more recognizable to the public.

4.2.3. YouTube marketing of The IELTS Workshop

In addition to Facebook, The IELTS Workshop established its presence on YouTube in 2017 as an exclusive information sharing channel about IELTS and English lessons created by teacher Dang Tran Tung (9.0 IELTS) and a team of qualified teachers at the center. Its YouTube strategy includes dividing into 2 distinct YouTube channels ('The IELTS Workshop' and 'Tiếng Anh Online'), each accommodating a different group of target audience.

Table 3. The IELTS Workshop YouTube channel segmentation

Channel	Focus	Target audience
TIẾNG ANH ONLINE Tiếng Anh Online 1,37 N người đăng ký	*General English*	- Age group: 11-17; 18-25; 25-32 - Education: Middle school; High school; University and Working people - Purpose for studying English: Communication; travel; office English; watching movies (listening to music) - Location: Hanoi, Danang, Saigon and other big cities
THE IELTS WORKSHOP The IELTS Workshop ✔ 140 N người đăng ký	*Academic English (IELTS – related)*	- People who are already aware of The IELTS Workshop - Intend to take the IELTS and want to look for studying materials - Age group: 11-17; 18-25; 25-32 - Location: Hanoi, Danang, Saigon and other big cities

Source: The IELTS Workshop

The reason why The IELTS Workshop has branched out into two distinct channels is because it does not want to limit itself to teaching IELTS only, but wants to position itself as a business that creates valuable content for the English learning community as a whole. The content featured on each channel will also differ according to the audience that the channel targets.

Table 4. The IELTS Workshop YouTube channel's message and content

	Channel content	
	TIẾNG ANH ONLINE *(General English)*	**THE IELTS WORKSHOP** *(Academic English)*
Message	Anyone can learn English!	All about IELTS with The IELTS Workshop
Content	Beginner English (basic grammar and pronunciation) Content is simple and easy to understand Knowledge is made clear and concise	Academic English Advanced English Test preparation guidelines Sample answers

Source: The IELTS Workshop

4.2.4. The IELTS Workshop's social media marketing SWOT analysis

To evaluate the effectiveness of its social media marketing, TIW use both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitatively, The IELTS Workshop tracks vital statistics such as the number of *likes, follows, reach, and reactions.* Qualitatively, the center makes use of the conventional SWOT matrix to identify its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Table 5. The IELTS Workshop's social media marketing SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Invests heavily in marketing - Marketing campaigns and content are renewed daily - Has a widespread social presence - "Top-of-mind" when it comes to IELTS teaching - Teachers are also famous KOLs	- Limited human resource for marketing - Budget spending is often misdirected - Selection of campaign KOL is unsuitable - Unable to create viral content due to the nature of the business - The provision of academic social media content is rigid and repetitive
Opportunities	**Threats**
- IELTS enables students to gain direct entry to several universities, therefore demand for IELTS courses will go up - Collaboration with KOLs from different industries (singer, actor, MCs,…) - The possibility of offering courses in general English or other English qualifications	- COVID-19 makes it impossible to plan ahead. Offline events are also postponed - Competitors in the IELTS teaching market also invest in paid marketing - People can learn by themselves without having to pay for a course

Source: The IELTS Workshop

5. Reccomendations and conclusion

Overall, it can be seen that The IELTS Workshop is one of the few educational businesses that implements social media marketing in a methodical and organized manner. The effective use of social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube allows the center to seize opportunities and recognize weaknesses in time. This has brought the center a large number of loyal customers and widespread coverage. However, COVID-19 has made marketing activities stagnant and marketing planning for the future is uncertain. The center has recently witnessed a drop in reach, Return on Investment and YouTube views. The center is advised to take the following solutions to improve its social media marketing.

Increase 'Call-to-action' content on social media posts

'Call to action'(CTA) refers to any content design that triggers an instantaneous response or stimulates an immediate sale. As the name suggests, a call to action (CTA) is a set of words or phrases that can be used in sales scripts, advertising messages, or web sites to persuade the audience to take a specified action (Steinberg, 2013).

Calls to action often make use of *imperative* verbs to communicate necessity and urgency, and this is likely to intrigue and prompt the consumer to act. A CTA can be simple, non-binding request such as "Watch this video" or "Eat this product".

For education businesses like The IELTS Workshop, creating a CTA that is short, impactful and still retains the rigor nature of academia can be a challenge. However, the majority of The

IELTS Workshop's audience are young and open-minded people; therefore, the message does not have to be too rigid and serious. To create the maximum media influence, it is best to pair a CTA with the placement test URL (*test.onthiielts.com.vn*). Displaying a call to action next to the placement test URL is likely to convey a sense of importance, thus motivating visitors to the page to click on the link and do the placement test immediately.

Focus on content that brings 'value' to the English learning community

Nowadays, there are many English centers in the IELTS market and this leads to a strong competition. Social networks prove to be a convenient marketing tool, so it is easy for English centers to abuse these platforms so that they can demonstrate to customers the level and quality of their products. English learning content on social channels gradually becomes overloaded and saturated, making it difficult for learners to find the necessary content for their needs. Another downside of overusing social media as a medium to convey knowledge is the focus on viral content. Marketers want their content to be viral so as to increase reach and eventually, sales, but for education businesses, they may risk losing their business identity if they focus too much on virality. Education businesses need to reflect on their own core values and try to adjust the content on their social channels so that it clearly represents the mission statement and values of that business as stated.

As for The IELTS Workshop, the business could benefit from diversifying their content portfolio. Audience is already familiar with the existing series of content, so it is time to introduce new categories. There are several types of content that can provide the community with actual, tangible value when it comes to English learning. The types of contents include: "How- to" content (which provides straightforward solutions to learners), Question-based content (which puts the learner at the center of the problem and can foster learners' independence and critical thinking), *Reviews* (highly practical content that can save learners a great amount of time because they do not have to chooose between different products), *Experiments (*which provide learners with confidence because they are able to experience the event through the lens of another, which helps avoid possible mistakes in the process), and *Templates* (which benefit learners greatly in terms of time and effort).

This study has contributed to the literature on social media marketing by analyzing how companies plan and implement social media marketing through a qualitative case study. It also provides recommendations for the company to improve social media marketing effectiveness. The main limitation of the study is possibly the use of a single case in the educational sector and secondary data, which restricts the generalizability of the research findings. The examined center has to close during the Covid-19 pandemic and the number of students gets also smaller, which made primary data collection through a large survey difficult. Future research can use mix methods to examine social media marketing strategies and practices of companies in different industries.

References

Belch, G.E. & Belch, M.A. (2003), *Advertising & promotion : an integrated marketing communications perspective* (11th edition), McGraw Hill, USA.

Daft, R.L. & Lengel, R.H. (1986), "Organizational information requirements, media richness, and structural design", *Management Science*, Vol. 32 No. 5, pp. 554 - 571.

Ellison, N.B. & Boyd, D.M. (2013), "Sociality through social network sites", In Dutton, W. H. (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of Internet studies*, England: Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 151 – 172.

Felix, R., Rauschnabel, P. & Hinsch, C. (2017), "Elements of strategic social media marketing: A holistic framework", *Journal of Business Research*, No. 70, pp. 118 - 126.

Kaplan, A.M., & Haenlein, M. (2010), "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media", *Business Horizons*.

Short, J., Williams, E. & Christie, B. (1976), *The social psychology of telecommunications*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, UK.

Statista. (2021), "Number of global social network users 2017-2025", Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/ (Accessed 23 May, 2021).

Steinberg, B. (2005), "Call to Action' Ads Give Clients Results They Can Measure", *Wall Street Journal.*

The IELTS Workshop documents.

Wilson, S. (2010), *Social Media and Small Business Marketing*, University Business Publishing and Printing.

Yin, R.K. (2017), *Case study research and applications: Design and methods*, Sage publications. Thousand Oaks, California, USA.

Zomerdijk, L. & Voss, C. (2010), "NSD Processes and Practices in Experiential Services", *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, Vol. 28 No. 1, pp. 63 – 80.