

DECISION STRATEGY TO INCREASE THE MARKET SIZE OF EPLC

STRATEGI KEPUTUSAN UNTUK MENINGKATKAN UKURAN PASAR EPLC

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to improve the decision-making strategies of EPLC's marketing team through the usage of Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP). EPLC, an English language learning institution in Bandung, Indonesia, wants to increase its students up to 1000 students. Historical data analysis revealed that there are gaps reaching this target, necessitating improved marketing strategies. The study evaluates four alternatives which are social media campaigns, regular referrals, and alumnus referral program, and a student ambassador program based on some key criterias, cost efficiency, reach, impact, and improvable. Using AHP, social media campaigns rank to be the most effective strategy, followed by the student ambassador program. This research concludes that combining two strategies could maximize the results without interfering with one another. It highlights the importance of decision-making tools, such as AHP, in optimizing marketing strategies for educational institutions.

Keywords: *Analytic Hierarchical Process, Decision Strategy, Marketing Strategy.*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan strategi pengambilan keputusan tim pemasaran EPLC melalui penggunaan Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP). EPLC, sebuah lembaga pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di Bandung, Indonesia, ingin meningkatkan jumlah siswanya hingga 1000 siswa. Analisis data historis menunjukkan bahwa ada kesenjangan dalam mencapai target ini, sehingga perlu dilakukan perbaikan strategi pemasaran. Studi ini mengevaluasi empat alternatif yaitu kampanye media sosial, rujukan reguler, program rujukan alumni, dan program duta siswa berdasarkan beberapa kriteria utama, efisiensi biaya, jangkauan, dampak, dan dapat ditingkatkan. Dengan menggunakan AHP, kampanye media sosial menempati peringkat pertama sebagai strategi yang paling efektif, diikuti oleh program duta mahasiswa. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa menggabungkan dua strategi dapat memaksimalkan hasil tanpa mengganggu satu sama lain. Penelitian ini menyoroti pentingnya alat bantu pengambilan keputusan, seperti AHP, dalam mengoptimalkan strategi pemasaran untuk institusi pendidikan.

Kata Kunci: Proses Hirarki Analitik, Strategi Keputusan, Strategi Pemasaran.

INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive digital marketing landscape, institutions like EPLC face increasing pressure to adopt effective strategies to meet their enrollment goals. Despite steady progress, achieving the milestone of 1000 students has proven challenging, highlighting gaps in decision making and resource allocation

To craft impactful strategies, businesses might need to leverage both their historical and existing data. By analyzing trends, marketing managers can identify opportunities to penetrate specific market segments effectively. This is of course not an easy job, because

gathering the data and making the decision whether the strategy could be deemed to increase the market size of the brand requires more than just analytical skills, but also the understanding of the data and decision making.

EPLC is a company that revolves around education, started in 2012 their motto is to provide English programs with affordable prices and flexible schedules, allowing students to change their learning hour when they are packed with their daily lives. Residing in Bandung, Indonesia, it is one institution that focuses on teaching English whether intensively / privately. Despite its strategic location, and built up a lot of

customers, there are still some goals that EPLC wanted to achieve. The target that EPLC had right now is to achieve the goal of having 1000 students. Of course, this is not an easy feat, but having to be a popular place to learn English, there are still some aspects regarding how EPLC presents their marketing strategy to prospective customers.

While EPLC has implemented various marketing strategies, such as social media campaigns and referral programs, these efforts have not consistently translated into the desired enrollment growth. Resource constraints and low engagement rates underscore the need for a systematic evaluation of alternative approaches.

This is a concern that arises from the CEO himself, therefore the problem definition and the concentration of the research had been already discussed with the CEO of EPLC. This research would be used as an assessment tool and an asset to improve the decision strategy of EPLC's marketing team and build up some techniques for their decision-making outlook. The focus of this research would be to improve the decision strategy through AHP (Analytic Hierarchy Process) method.

EPLC urgently needs a robust decision-making strategy to empower its marketing team to adopt more effective and advantageous approaches. This urgency stems from recent changes within the marketing team and evolving marketing approaches. Therefore, not only that there are better ways to improve their decision-making strategy but also coming from the Head of Marketing himself, it is also because there are some changes through the approach of marketing.

Mostly what is at stakes right now are basically to pump up the numbers of that through better marketing strategy, EPLC's marketing usually focused on

making a brand image in social media, mostly this method is the one that utilized the most throughout few study periods.

Although engagement rates have steadily increased from 0.20% to 0.36%, they remain low overall, suggesting room for improvement in content effectiveness and audience targeting, not only that due to budget constraints and insufficient staffing exacerbate the inefficiencies in EPLC's content creation process, often leading to delays and repetitive, low performing social media strategies.

Gathering also some information from the head of the marketing team, the efficiency of content creation quite a bit hindered because there are only 3 staffs from the marketing team and each of them had their hands packed with some job desks. One of the staffs that are responsible for content creation, they said that they had more on her plate and sometimes had to postponed some of the content creation.

Given the diverse factors influencing EPLC's marketing outcomes, such as resource constraints, engagement potential, and content innovation, AHP offers a structured method to prioritize decisions effectively. AHP method is particularly suited to EPLC's challenges because it enables the marketing team to systematically prioritize factors like content type, budget allocation, and engagement potential.

EPLC's marketing team faces challenges in decision making due to limited resources, staffing constraints, and the evolving digital landscape. This research seeks to address these challenges by identifying and prioritizing effective marketing strategies using the AHP framework.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are some main references that were used in this research, the first one is research called “Strategy Selection in Universities via Fuzzy AHP Method: A Case Study” from Omur Hakan Kuzu (Omur, 2020). The research from Omur focuses on utilizing fuzzy AHP method to evaluate and prioritize internal and external strategic factors in universities. Combining both SWOT analysis and AHP, the research could demonstrate how decision making could be optimized to improve institutional governance and strategic planning (Omur, 2020).

The second one is research called “Evaluating Alternative Governance Strategies for Language Schools” from Murat Culduz, Filiz Mizrak, Senay Caylan, Jamaliah Said, and Naila Erum, covers about the application of AHP to assess and rank governance strategies for language schools, emphasizing the importance of structured decision making for operational success (Murat et al., 2023).

Another research called “Digital Marketing Strategy in Education Management : Increasing School Visibility and Attractiveness” from Joni Bungai, Heddy Setiawan, Feby Arma Putra, Bayu Purbha Sakti Bayups, and Hendro Sukoco would also worth to be mentioned, the research explored the role of digital marketing in educational institutions and how strategic frameworks could enhance visibility and attractiveness, which highlighted the role of decision making in determining optimal digital marketing approaches. (Joni et al., 2024).

Finally, research called “Applicaion of Analytical Hierarchy Process Model in Selecting an Effective Marketing Strategy” from Bekzod Tokhirovich Mukhsinov, and Shaxnoza Djasurovna Ergashxodjayeva, covers about the application of AHP to

prioritize marketing strategies in retail sector, showing how criteria like cost, reach, and market impact could be structured for better decision making. (Bekzod and Shaxnoza, 2023).

Theoretical Foundation

Decision-making frameworks have been widely used across industries to streamline strategy development. Among these frameworks, Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) is particularly notable or its structured and hierarchical approach to evaluating alternatives. Developed by Saaty in the 1970s, AHP enables decision-makers to prioritize options based on multiple criteria by decomposing complex decisions into manageable parts (Saaty, 1980). In the context of marketing for small-medium businesses (SMBs), AHP offers a valuable tool for balancing competing priorities such as cost, reach, and effectiveness.

Marketing strategies in the education sector often hinge on building trust and showcasing value to prospective students and their families. Traditional approaches, such as print advertising and community engagement, have gradually evolved to include digital platforms. One of the examples like Open University, which have leveraged data-driven insights to personalize marketing campaigns (Smith and Chaffey, 2021). Their strategies demonstrate that blending traditional and digital methods is crucial for reaching that diverse audience.

Unlike large universities, small-medium educational institutions face resource constraints that limit their ability to execute comprehensive campaigns. However, targeted strategies like referral discounts, student ambassador programs, and localized advertising have proven effective for such institutions. Research indicates that

word-of-mouth marketing, bolstered by incentives like referral programs, yields high returns on investment by leveraging existing social networks (Hennig et al., 2004).

The rise of digital marketing has introduced platforms like TikTok, LinkedIn, and Instagram as indispensable tools for educational institutions. These platforms excel in engaging young audiences through authentic contents, even though LinkedIn would probably more viable for those professionals (Boyd, 2020). Tools such as, Google Analytics optimize campaigns and measuring success (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

AHP's hierarchical structure makes it particularly suited for complex decisions in marketing strategy development. Enabling decision-makers to systematically evaluate criteria such as cost, reach, and alignment with institutional goals, AHP ensures that

resources are allocated effectively. Studies on AHP applications in education highlight its versatility, from campus planning to marketing initiatives. One of the examples would be research by ABC University demonstrated that AHP facilitated the identification of the most impactful marketing channels, resulting in a 20% increase in applications (Lee et al., 2019).

Therefore, by combining AHP with digital marketing analytics it could present a compelling opportunity for educational institutions. For example, integrating AHP with tools like Google Analytics enables institutions to prioritize marketing channels that yield the highest engagement or conversions, optimizing their budget allocation (Chen et al., 2018). This integration bridges the gap between qualitative decision-making and quantitative data analysis, creating a more comprehensive framework for strategic planning.

Conceptual Framework

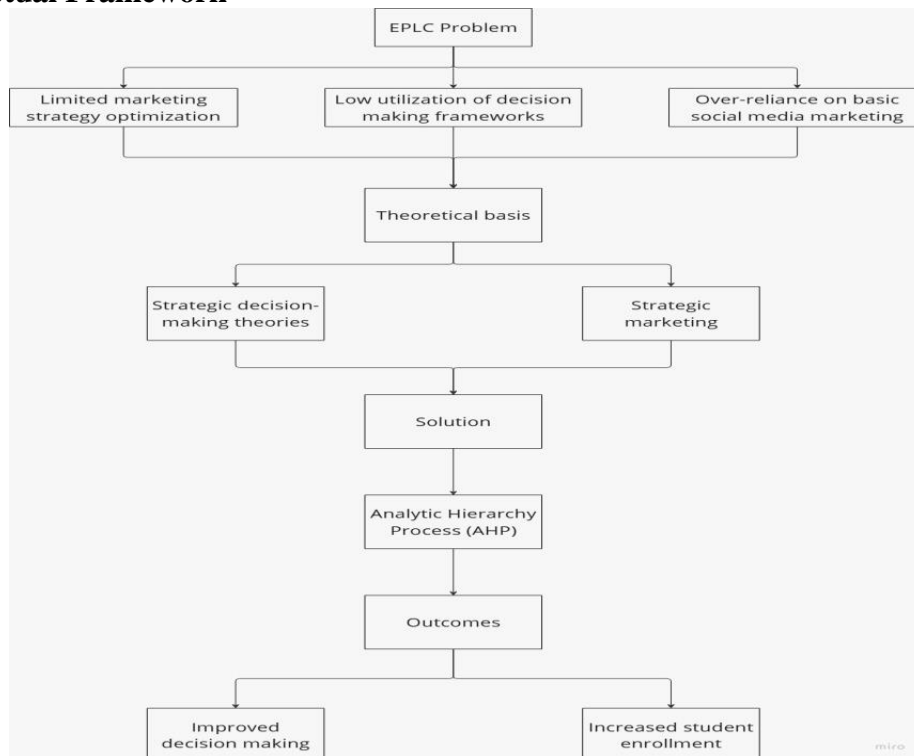


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHOD

This research focuses on using Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) as the decision-making framework. The approach would leverage existing historical data to derive insights, prioritize marketing strategies, and improve decision-making. The research focuses on analyzing the historical data of EPLC which would then be taken as the base to make the strategies, after everything is compiled, then the

strategies would be taken into AHP to determine which strategy gives out the most efficiency for EPLC to increase their students.

Research Design

The research design covers a systematic approach aimed at identifying the optimal marketing strategy for EPLC. The methodology incorporates four interconnected phases:

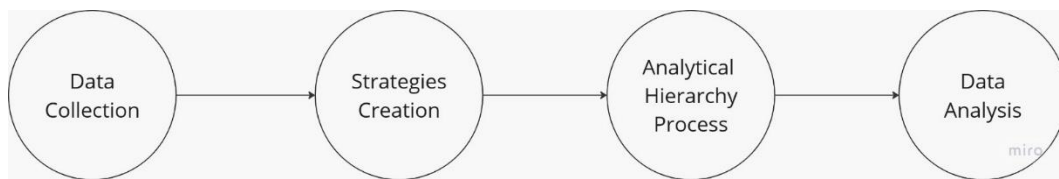


Figure 2. Research Design

- **Data Collection:** Historical data from EPLC's previous periods form the foundation for analysis, ensuring decisions are evidence-based.
- **Strategy Creation:** Based on the consultations with stakeholders, innovative alternatives like the Alumnus Referral Program and Student Ambassador Program are introduced alongside existing strategies.
- **Analytical Hierarchy Process:** AHP is utilized to prioritize marketing strategies based on defined KPIs, integrating qualitative and quantitative evaluations.
- **Data Analysis:** Results from the AHP process are analyzed to derive

actionable insights for strategy implementation.

Data Collection Method

The data for this research consists of historical metrics from EPLC's operations, ensuring the analysis is grounded in actual organizational performance. The choice of enrollment numbers, efficiency rates, and previous marketing outcomes reflects a comprehensive understanding of factors influencing EPLC's success.

These are the data gathered from EPLC:

Enrollment Numbers: Five periods of data to provide sufficient granularity to identify trends in student acquisition.

Table 1. Study Period

Study Period	Students Enrolled
75 th	683
76 th	690
77 th	720
78 th	737
79 th	692

Efficiency Rates: Comparing an evaluation of operational student enrollment with capacity enables effectiveness.

Table 2. Students Enrolled

Students Enrolled	Capacity	Efficiency
683	1000	68.3%
690	1000	69.0%
720	1000	72.0%
737	1000	73.7%
692	1000	69.2%

Previous Marketing Outcomes: Social media engagement rates and referral program performance provide insights into the effectiveness of past strategies.

Instagram: Instagram posts from EPLC had deemed to be quite a good strategy for EPLC to improve their engagement, starting from 75th period until 78th period there is always an increase even though it is not significant

Social media engagement:

Table 3. Social Media Engagement

Engagement Rate (75 th period)	Engagement Rate (76 th period)	Engagement Rate (77 th period)	Engagement Rate (78 th period)	Engagement Rate (79 th period)
0.20%	0.23%	0.29%	0.33%	0.36%

Referrals: Referrals in EPLC is always become one of its own interesting points for students. Because, EPLC referral program will give students some cash as their take on inviting new students to EPLC.

By focusing on these data points, the research ensures that strategic recommendations are both evidence-based and actionable. To mitigate potential biases from historical data, supplementary strategies are evaluated alongside existing approaches.

Data Analysis Method

Before going into the analysis, having more strategies as an alternative would be pretty much preferred, after several discussions with the stakeholders, it is decided that there will be two more candidates for the strategy:

- Alumnus Referral Program

This program would be used a method to gain more students based on the connections of EPLC's alumnus, having more alumnus gathering, and giving discounts to those that who registered using the referral code.

- Student ambassador program
This program would be used as a method to utilize the students in EPLC that are currently enrolling to spread the word about EPLC, and they could also become the bridge for EPLC to open maybe a fair in that said student's university.

Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) serves as the backbone of this research, offering a structured framework for evaluating competing marketing strategies based on predefined criteria. This method is particularly useful for EPLC, given the qualitative and quantitative nature of its decision-making content.

- a. Determining the Key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess the marketing strategies:
1. Cost Efficiency: Ensures budget optimization
 2. Reach: Measures the potential audience reached
 3. Impact: Evaluates the tangible outcomes of a strategy
 4. Improvable: Reflects the scalability and adaptability of strategies
- b. Alternatives:
1. Social media campaigns
 2. Regular referral
 3. Alumnus referral program
 4. Student ambassador program
- c. Structuring the AHP Hierarchy:
- Level 1 : Goal ---> Identifying the best marketing strategy
- Level 2 : Criteria ---> Cost efficiency, Reach, Impact, Sustainability
- Level 3 : Alternatives ---> Social media campaigns, Regular referral, Alumnus referral program, Student ambassador program

Analytical Steps

- a. Pairwise Matrices: Creating pairwise comparison matrices to evaluate the importance of each criterion relative to the others and compare the alternatives under each criterion.

Table 4. Criteria

Criteria	Cost Efficiency	Reach	Impact	Improvable
Cost Efficiency	1	5	7	3
Reach	0.2	1	1.4	0.6
Impact	0.142	0.714	1	0.428
Improvable	0.333	1.667	2.333	1
Sum	1.675	8.381	11.733	5.028

- b. Normalizing the matrix
- The matrix had to be normalized to calculate the relative weights (w_i) for each criterion.
- Normalized value = Individual cell value / Sum of column values*
- c. Consistency ratio
- The matrix would then need to be counted for its consistency, and if the value of CR (consistency ratio) < 0.1 it means the data is consistent.
- $CR = CI / RI$
- Where:
- CI (Consistency Index) = $\lambda_{max} - n / n - 1$
 - RI is the Random Index
 - λ_{max} = Principal Eigenvalue
 - n = Number of criteria
- d. Compare alternatives under each criterion
- For each criterion, conduct pairwise comparisons between the alternatives. Construct pairwise matrices for each criterion, normalize them, and calculate the priority weights.
- e. Calculate overall priority weights and rank the alternatives
- The final priority weights for each alternative are calculated by combining:
1. The weights of the criteria
 2. The weights of the alternatives under each criterion
- Final score of alternative = $\sum_{i=1}^n$ (criterion weight x alternative weight under criterion)
- f. Rank the alternatives
- The alternatives are ranked based on their final scores. The strategy with the highest score would represent the

most effective marketing strategy for EPLC.

A potential challenge lies in achieving stakeholder alignment during pairwise comparisons. To address this, the research incorporates iterative feedback loops and discussions with stakeholders to refine the AHP matrices.

The validity and reliability of AHP results will be ensured through sensitivity analysis, which tests robustness of rankings by varying the weights of criteria. Stakeholder reviews further validate the findings, ensuring that it aligns with the organizational objectives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter would present the results derived from the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP). The findings

based on historical data, stakeholder discussions, and pairwise comparisons of marketing strategies. The analysis would be as follows:

- Structuring the AHP hierarchy
- Conducting pairwise comparisons for criteria and alternatives
- Calculating weights for criteria and alternatives
- Assessing consistency using the Consistency Ratio (CR)
- Ranking strategies based on priority weights

The criteria weights were determined based on pairwise comparison matrices, as described in the methodology. The normalized matrix and weights for the criteria are as follows:

Table 5. Criteria

Criteria	Cost Efficiency	Reach	Impact	Improvable	Priorities
Cost Efficiency	0.597	0.596	0.596	0.596	0.596
Reach	0.119	0.119	0.119	0.119	0.119
Impact	0.084	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.085
Improvable	0.198	0.198	0.198	0.198	0.198
Sum	1	1	1	1	1

Consistency Check:

Consistency Index (CI) = 0.02

Random Index (RI) for n = 4: 0.90

Consistency Ratio (CR): $0.02 / 0.90 = 0.022$

Therefore, since $CR < 0.10$, the matrix is consistent.

Pairwise comparisons were performed for each alternative under the four criteria. The resulting weights are summarized below:

Table 6. Cost Efficiency

Alternative	Weight
Social Media Campaigns	0.47
Regular Referral	0.12
Alumnus Referral Program	0.21
Student Ambassador Program	0.30

Table 7. Reach

Alternative	Weight
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Social Media Campaigns	0.35
Regular Referral	0.20
Alumnus Referral Program	0.18
Student Ambassador Program	0.27

Table 8. Impact

Alternative	Weight
Social Media Campaigns	0.45
Regular Referral	0.22
Alumnus Referral Program	0.15
Student Ambassador Program	0.18

Table 9. Improvable

Alternative	Weight
Social Media Campaigns	0.25
Regular Referral	0.10
Alumnus Referral Program	0.27
Student Ambassador Program	0.38

Final priority weights and rankings, calculated by combining the criteria weights with the alternative's weights

under each criterion. The results are as follows:

Table 10. Final priority weights and rankings

Alternative	Cost efficiency (0.596)	Reach (0.119)	Impact (0.085)	Improvable (0.198)	Total Score
Social Media Campaigns	$0.47 \times 0.596 = 4.172$	$0.35 \times 0.119 = 0.833$	$0.45 \times 0.085 = 0.595$	$0.25 \times 0.198 = 1.386$	3.752
Regular Referral	$0.12 \times 0.596 = 1.788$	$0.20 \times 0.119 = 0.357$	$0.22 \times 0.085 = 0.255$	$0.10 \times 0.198 = 0.594$	0.133
Alumnus Referral Program	$0.21 \times 0.596 = 2.384$	$0.18 \times 0.119 = 0.476$	$0.15 \times 0.085 = 0.34$	$0.27 \times 0.198 = 0.792$	1.337
Student Ambassador Program	$0.30 \times 0.596 = 2.98$	$0.27 \times 0.119 = 0.595$	$0.18 \times 0.085 = 0.425$	$0.38 \times 0.198 = 0.99$	1.910

Table 11. The final scores yield the following rankings:

Alternative	Total Score	Rank
Social Media Campaigns	3.752	1
Student Ambassador Program	1.910	2
Alumnus Referral Program	1.337	3
Referral Program	0.133	4

Social Media Campaigns emerged as the most effective strategy with a final score of 3.752, supported by the team's strong social media expertise and historical engagement trends on platforms like Instagram.

Student Ambassador Programs ranked second with a final score of 1.910, indicating a strong potential for leveraging student networks while maintaining cost efficiency.

Alumnus Referral Programs and Regular Referral Programs ranked lower, with the final scores of 1.337 and 0.133, respectively due to scalability challenges.

The results derived from the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) suggest that Social Media Campaigns are the most effective marketing strategy for EPLC, with a final score of 3.752. This outcome is expected, as the marketing team at EPLC is already well-versed in social media marketing, especially platforms like Instagram. The team's expertise, coupled with historical data showing consistent engagement growth on social media, makes this strategy a natural choice.

Student Ambassador Programs, which came in second with the score of 1.910, present a promising opportunity for EPLC. The program's cost-effectiveness stands out, especially given that it involves leveraging students who volunteer to act as ambassadors. These students can promote EPLC brand on their own networks, offering more organic and potentially viral form of marketing. This strategy also aligns well with EPLC's focus on community engagement, as students who represent the students are likely to inspire trust and influence peers to consider EPLC's services.

While Alumnus Referral Programs (1.337) and Regular Referral Programs (0.133) have been identified as less impactful in comparison, they still show

potential, particularly in establishing long-term relationships with alumni. The challenge lies in their scalability and initial setup requirements, as well as the level of engagement that can be sustained over time.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that Social Media Campaigns should remain the flagship marketing strategy. However, Student Ambassador Programs provide a cost-effective and scalable way to tap into student networks, which can complement and amplify the success of social media strategies.

Business Solution

Given the results, combining Social Media Campaigns and Student Ambassador Programs presents the most effective business solution for EPLC. This combination ensures the strengths of both strategies are leveraged, with Social Media Campaigns maintaining visibility and engagement across a broad audience, while Student Ambassador Programs add a personal touch and an additional layer of credibility to EPLC's outreach efforts.

Social Media Campaigns will provide the necessary broad reach and engagement across digital platforms. The marketing team can create impactful content that resonates with potential students, engaging them through interactive features like posts, stories, reels, etc.

Student Ambassador Programs on the other hand, will help build trust within local student communities by utilizing peer influence, which is a powerful form of word-of-mouth marketing. The voluntary nature of the program also means that students will act as genuine advocates for EPLC, potentially increasing enrollment rates at a lower cost than traditional marketing approaches.

With the combination of these methods, EPLC could address different market segments simultaneously, which would be Digital-first audience and Campus-focused audience.

Implementation Plan & Justification

The implementation plan would work just like the business solution, agreeing with the discussion from the stakeholders, it is believed that both methods could become a great impact for EPLC to increase their students in the future periods to come. They will start with creating the program first and make some trials and error towards the ambassador program, because some students might not want to move forward and registered themselves, therefore coaches later would start on encouraging some of their students to join the program, as for the social media campaigns EPLC would still do what they are doing but with also adding some new contents along the way.

From that point, the first thing that EPLC must do would be to prepare towards those methods, these preparations would be to recruit the ambassadors by utilizing coaches in EPLC, and it would continue to the trial-and-error phase, which would bring a collection of feedbacks from ambassadors to identify challenges and areas for improvement. After assessing the effectiveness of the program from the trial-and-error phase, EPLC could extend the ambassador programs to more students across different academic disciplines.

On the other hand, for the social media campaigns, EPLC should analyze the engagement across different campaigns to determine which types of content generate the most interest, assessing social media analytics could tweak better targeting method for optimal impact.

That implementation ensures that both strategies are tested, monitored, and optimized before a full-scale implementation. Using a data-driven decision-making, EPLC can refine both strategies for maximum impact while also ensuring cost-effectiveness. The combination of both methods provides a balanced approach that addresses different types of prospective students through both digital and personal engagement methods.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATION

After the deliberation and having to receive the results as it mentioned in chapter IV, the future of EPLC growth would be undetermined because it is still a work in progress and implementation.

CONCLUSION

EPLC is a growing company with a unique challenge, while the institution boasts a loyal student base, it has not yet fully explored or implemented a broad range of marketing strategies. This study employed the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) to identify the most effective marketing strategies for EPLC in achieving its enrollment target of 1,000 students. Based on historical data analysis and stakeholder consultations, Social Media Campaigns emerged as the most impactful strategy, achieving the highest score in the AHP model. The consistent engagement growth observed on platforms like Instagram, coupled with EPLC's expertise in digital marketing, highlights the potential of social media to drive enrollment efficiently. The Student Ambassador Program ranked second, showcasing a strong capacity for cost-effective outreach and leveraging peer networks for organic growth.

Recommendation

This research underscores the value structured decision making in addressing EPLC's marketing challenges. By leveraging the AHP framework, EPLC can make data-driven choices that align with its resource constraints and enrollment goals. Future research could explore additional metrics, such as student retention and long-term engagement, to refine marketing strategies further, and to apply it to company that might not have limited staffing issue.

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