Strategic Digital Marketing Approaches for Enhancing Enrollment and Client Acquisition of TESDA-Accredited Training and Assessment Centers in Pangasinan

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Abstract - Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA)-accredited training and assessment centers play an essential role in improving workforce skills and employability in the Philippines. However, in provincial settings such as Pangasinan, many centers struggle with visibility, market positioning, and sustained enrolment. With the increasing dominance of digital information ecosystems, understanding how learners interact with online channels and what motivates training enrolment becomes crucial. This study examined strategic digital marketing approaches suited for TESDA-accredited institutions in Pangasinan by analyzing the digital behaviors, channel preferences, and decision factors of potential trainees and clients. Using a descriptive-quantitative research design, fifty respondents completed a structured survey covering demographics, media use, promotional exposure, channel preference, and program selection criteria. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were used to synthesize findings. Results revealed that most respondents were young trainees aged 18–25 who predominantly accessed information through smartphones and social media platforms. Social media, followed by the TESDA website and in-person orientations, were the most preferred channels for training-related information. Meanwhile, institutional reputation, employment outcomes of graduates, scholarship availability, and curriculum relevance emerged as highly important considerations in training program selection. These findings are consistent with prior studies suggesting that Generation Z and young adults depend heavily on digital platforms when evaluating educational options and that outcome-based messaging significantly affects enrolment decisions. The study highlights the need for TESDA centers to adopt data-driven digital marketing strategies that feature success stories, scholarship campaigns, and value- driven promotional narratives. It concludes that optimizing social media presence, enhancing official web portals, and integrating digital outreach with physical engagements can substantially improve enrolment and client acquisition. Recommendations include strengthening content-based storytelling, building industry partnerships, and expanding promotion of job placement pathways to strengthen TESDA's competitive advantage.

Keywords – client acquisition, digital marketing, enrolment strategies, TESDA, vocational training

INTRODUCTION

Technical and vocational education institutions play a significant role in national workforce development, particularly in emerging economies where industry demands require a steady supply of trained labor. In the Philippines, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) functions as the primary government agency mandated to provide competency-based training, assessment, and certification services intended to improve employability and productivity.

Despite TESDA's critical mandate, many accredited training and assessment centers located outside highly urbanized areas experience challenges in visibility, market reach, and program enrolment. These challenges have intensified due to increasing competition among public and private training providers, expanding online education options, and evolving learner expectations in digital environments.

In recent years, the rapid penetration of internet connectivity and mobile technologies has

transformed the way individuals search, evaluate, and select educational opportunities. Generation Z learners - those born from the late 1990s onward - tend to rely heavily on online resources, social media networks, peer validation, and digital content to inform their choices (Prensky, 2020; Turner, 2019). Consequently, traditional offline marketing strategies such as flyers, static postings, or personal referrals have become insufficient for reaching and engaging digitally native audiences. Strategic digital marketing - encompassing social media, content marketing, targeted campaigns, institutional websites, and online community engagement - has emerged as a central requirement for educational institutions seeking to sustain enrolment and relevance.

Although TESDA and its accredited centers maintain online spaces, existing literature and practitioner observations indicate gaps in consistency, message strategy, content appeal, and strategic targeting. Unlike higher education institutions where branding efforts are more established, TESDA centers often operate with limited marketing frameworks and underutilized communication potentials. Studies in educational technology emphasize that institutional branding, digital storytelling, and outcome-based narratives strongly shape student perception, enrolment intention, and organizational competitiveness (Kotler & Keller, 2019; Alalwan, 2018). However, empirical studies assessing how these principles apply to TESDA environments remain scarce, particularly in provincial settings such as Pangasinan.

This research therefore examines the digital behaviors, channel preferences, and decision-making factors of target learners and clients in Pangasinan to support evidence-based marketing strategies for TESDA-accredited training and assessment centers. Specifically, it seeks to identify which digital platforms influence awareness and enrolment intention, which institutional attributes matter most to prospective clients, and how TESDA centers can enhance alignment between communication strategies and learner priorities. The findings contribute not only to local institutional planning but also to the broader discourse on vocational education marketing, digital engagement, and strategic communication in developing country contexts.

The urgency of strengthening TESDA's outreach strategies is further amplified by persistent labor market challenges in the Philippines. National employment reports note that job mismatches remain prevalent, with employers frequently citing the lack of industry-relevant skills among applicants (PSA, 2022). TESDA's competency-based programs were designed to address these gaps; however, limited awareness and ineffective dissemination hinder participation, especially among underserved communities (Ortega, 2019). Given these conditions, the role of digital marketing becomes instrumental - not only in promoting enrollment but also in improving access to skills development pathways that are vital for poverty reduction and inclusive growth.

Moreover, the increased emphasis on digital transformation under both public and private sectors introduces new expectations for training institutions to demonstrate responsiveness, transparency, and adaptability in service delivery. International studies underscore how vocational education providers that effectively utilize digital engagement tools experience stronger recruitment outcomes, brand loyalty, and employer recognition (Elken, 2020; Yeoh, 2020). Thus, aligning TESDA-accredited centers with strategic digital marketing practices is not merely a promotional requirement but an operational imperative for sustaining competitiveness within an evolving skills ecosystem.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this study is to determine how strategic digital marketing approaches can enhance enrolment and client acquisition among TESDA-accredited training and assessment centers in Pangasinan. This study was guided by the assumption

that if TESDA centers realign their communication strategies with the digital behaviors and motivations of their target markets, they may increase visibility, strengthen interest, and improve enrolment outcomes. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Describe the demographic and digital behavior profile of respondents in terms of age, gender, device usage, and frequency of engagement with online platforms;
2. Identify existing awareness levels and exposure sources through which respondents encountered TESDA-accredited training centers or programs.
3. Determine the most preferred communication channels for receiving training-related information, including social media, websites, SMS, email, and in-person events.
4. Assess the perceived importance of institutional and program-related selection factors, such as accreditation, cost, job placement outcomes, scholarship availability, and curriculum relevance, in respondents' decisions to enrol; and
5. Recommend appropriate strategic digital marketing approaches that align with respondent preferences and institutional needs to improve TESDA's enrolment reach and client acquisition.

These objectives collectively aimed to evaluate the degree of alignment between current TESDA marketing practices and the expectations of potential trainees, generating empirical insights that may contribute to more data-driven and responsive promotional strategies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This section presents the research design, population and sampling procedure, instrument structure, data gathering process, statistical treatment, and ethical considerations undertaken in the conduct of the study. These methodological components were aligned with the purpose of establishing reliable and valid findings regarding digital behavior, channel preferences, and decision factors influencing enrollment in TESDA-accredited training and assessment centers in Pangasinan.

Research Design

A descriptive-quantitative research design was employed in this study. This design was deemed appropriate because it enables the systematic description of prevailing conditions, behaviors, and perceptions of respondents concerning TESDA exposure and digital marketing engagement. Descriptive research allows the investigation of what is occurring in a population, while quantitative analysis supports the interpretation of trends, relationships, and significance within collected data. Given the study's aim of identifying channel preferences and priorities among potential trainees, a structured survey approach served as the most fitting strategy.

Population and Sampling

The population of interest consisted of potential and existing clients of TESDA-accredited training and assessment centers across Pangasinan. Respondents included students, job seekers, workers, and community residents who had knowledge of or exposure to TESDA services. A convenience sampling technique was adopted due to accessibility constraints and the online nature of data collection. A total of 50 qualified participants were successfully surveyed, which falls within acceptable minimum requirements for exploration marketing and behavioral research, providing baseline insights for institutional strategy development.

Research Instrument

A research-developed survey questionnaire served as the primary data collection instrument. It comprised five sections: (1) demographic characteristics. (2) internet devices used and access frequently; (3) awareness and exposure sources to TESDA programs. (4) channel preference rankings based on a 1–5 Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5 = highly

preferred); and (5) perceived importance of selection factors influencing enrollment decisions, also rated using a 1–5 Likert scale (1 = not important, 5 = very important). To improve clarity and content relevance, the instrument underwent expert review by academic practitioners.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection was conducted through an online survey distributed via social media platforms, email networks, and personal contacts. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research and voluntarily agreed before completing the survey. Respondents accessed the questionnaire using their digital devices and submitted responses electronically. Responses were automatically encoded into a spreadsheet database to minimize data transcription error. After collection, raw responses were screened for completeness, anonymized for confidentiality, and prepared for statistical analysis.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Frequencies and percentages were computed for demographic variables and awareness indicators. Mean values were calculated for channel preference and selection factor variables to determine relative ranking and degree of importance among respondents. The use of mean scores facilitated interpretation of which platforms generated the strongest engagement and which institutional attributes most influenced enrollment intentions. Tables and figures were constructed to summarize findings in visual form, allowing patterns to be readily compared and discussed.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines were observed in the conduct of the study. Respondents were informed of the purpose and nature of the research, and participation was voluntary. No personal identifying information was collected, ensuring anonymity. Responses were handled with confidentiality and used solely for academic analysis. The study complied with

the Data Privacy Act of 2012, and consent was acknowledged when participants submitted their responses online. Feedback and results were made available upon request to participants or collaborating stakeholders to support transparency and academic integrity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 50 respondents participated in the survey conducted among potential and current clients of TESDA-accredited training and assessment centers in Pangasinan. As shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents were students or trainees, followed by private sector employees and a small proportion of business owners or entrepreneurs. This indicates that the primary market segment of TESDA centers remains youth and early-career individuals seeking skills enhancement for employment or career progression.

Table 1. Profile of Respondents by Category, Age Group, and Gender

Profile variable	Category/ Group	Frequency (n = 50)
Respondent category	Student or trainee	45
	Private sector (company/or ganization) employee	4
	Business owner/entre preneur	1
Age group	Below 18 years old	1
	18-25 years old	44
	26-40 years old	5
Gender	Female	40
	Male	8
	Prefer not to say	2

The age distribution is heavily concentrated in the 18-25 age group (44 of 50 respondents), reinforcing that the core clientele of TESDA centers are emerging adults who are typically digital natives. This profile is consistent with literature describing Generation Z learners as highly connected, mobile-first, and responsive to digital content in educational decision- making (Prensky, 2020; Turner, 2019). The predominance of female respondents suggests a strong participation of women in technical and vocational training, echoing trends observed in recent Philippine vocational education studies that highlight increasing female engagement in skills programs (Ortega, 2019).

Digital behavior results showed that smartphones are the primary device for accessing the internet, followed by laptops or desktops. Respondents indicated frequent daily use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Messenger, and YouTube. This confirms the high penetration of social media in the information environment of learners and supports earlier arguments that social media has become a key channel for education-related search and engagement (Chugh & Ruhi, 2018; Alalwan, 2018).

When asked how they first heard about TESDA- accredited training centers or programs many respondents cited social media posts, online advertisements, peers or friends, and school or institutional referrals. Awareness sourced from social media and peer networks aligns with the assertion that digital word-of-mouth and peer validation are powerful influences in the decision-making of young individuals (Turner, 2019; Kotler & Keller, 2019).

Channel Preferences for Digital Communication

To determine which digital channels should be prioritized in strategic marketing, respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they would like to receive information about TESDA programs through various channels using a 1–5 Likert scale (1 = Not at all, 5 = Highly preferred). The computed mean scores are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Mean Preference Scores for Information Channels (1 = Not at all, 5 = Highly preferred)

Channel	Mean preference (1-5)
Social media platforms	4.60
Official TESDA website	3.98
In-person events/ orientations	4.06
Email announcements/ newsletters	3.76
Webinars/online information sessions	3.58
SMS/text alerts	3.48

The highest mean score was observed for social media platforms (4.60), clearly positioning them as the dominant preferred channel among respondents. This is followed by in-person events and orientations (4.06) and the official TESDA website (3.98). Email, webinars, and SMS alerts, while still moderately preferred, received relatively lower scores.

These findings strongly suggest that TESDA accredited centers in Pangasinan should prioritize social media as the main vehicle for promotions and client engagement. The result is consistent with studies that identify social media as the most influential digital environment for youth-focused educational marketing (Alalwan, 2018; Chugh & Ruhi, 2018). At the same time, the relatively high rating for in-person events and orientations indicates that digital marketing should not entirely replace physical engagement; instead, digital channels can be used to invite, inform, and register participants for on-ground activities, which is aligned with integrated marketing communication principles (Kotler & Keller, 2019).

The preference for the official website as a reliable channel reflects the importance of having an updated and user-friendly TESDA online portal where prospective trainees can easily find course offerings, schedules, scholarship information, and accreditation

details. This supports Yeoh's (2020) observation that institutional websites act as credibility anchors that complement the more informal and dynamic content of social media.

Selection Factors Influencing Enrollment Decisions

Respondents rated the importance of various factors in deciding whether to enroll in TESDA-accredited programs using a 1–5 scale (1 = Not important, 5 = Very important). The resulting mean importance scores are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Mean Importance Scores for Selection Factors (1 = Not important, 5 = Very important)

Selection factor	Mean importance (1-5)
Reputation/credibility of the center	4.80
Employment or job placement outcomes	4.80
Cost of tuition or training fees	4.74
Scholarships/financial aid	4.70
Curriculum relevance to industry needs	7.68
TESDA accreditation/certification	4.68
Duration and schedule flexibility	4.66
Proximity of training location	4.62
Mode of delivery (in-person vs online)	4.52
Recommendations from friends/peers	4.42

All selection factors have mean scores above 4.40, indicating that respondents consider them as important to very important in their decision-making. The reputation or credibility of the training center and employment or job placement outcomes for graduates 6 www.sajst.org Volume 1, Issue 1, 2016 P-ISSN:

2672-2984 E-ISSN: 2672-2992 www.sajst.org share the highest mean (4.80), followed closely by cost of tuition, scholarships/financial aid, and curriculum relevance.

1. The high importance free or discounted programs is clearly presented and easily shareable online.
2. Optimizes website usability so that prospective trainees can easily search for programs, view schedules, understand requirements, and initiate inquiries or applications online.
3. Integrates digital and physical engagement, using social media and SMS to drive attendance to orientations, career talks, and on-site enrollment events.
4. Leverages peer influence and testimonials, encouraging current trainees and alumni to share their experiences through short videos, quotes, and sharable posts.
5. Explores flexible and blended learning modes, addressing concerns related to schedule, proximity, and delivery mode while making TESDA more accessible to working learners and those in remote areas.

Future research may include larger samples, comparative studies across other provinces or regions, and qualitative exploration of employer perspectives on TESDA graduates. Such studies can enrich the strategic framework for digital marketing and ensure that TESDA-accredited centers remain responsive to evolving client needs and digital behaviors.

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