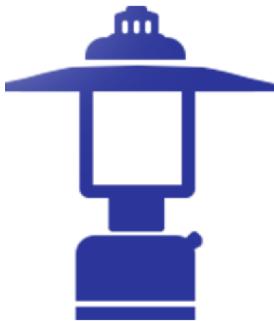


ANALYSIS OF THE CERTIFICATION SERVICES OF THE BUCKINGHAM ENGLISH CENTER LANGUAGE ACADEMY IN GUAYAQUIL



ANÁLISIS DE LOS SERVICIOS DE CERTIFICACIÓN DE LA ACADEMIA DE IDIOMAS BUCKINGHAM ENGLISH CENTER DE GUAYAQUIL

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ABSTRACT

Teaching English has excellent social and cultural significance, acquiring more significant connotation in all spheres of human life associated with technological, scientific, cultural, sports, and tourism development, among others. This impacts the strengthening of international cooperation among people. Consequently, there is a growing need for language schools to market certification services, which face the challenge of adequately marketing these services. For example, the language school Buckingham English Center S.A. in Guayaquil is developing a marketing strategy to gradually position itself in this market and increase the number of clients/students who wish to learn to communicate in this language and aspire to legitimize their communication skills through Cambridge certifications, backed by the Common European Framework of Reference for the teaching, learning, and assessment of the languages of this continent. As a result, the actions implemented in the marketing strategy allow for the analysis of the ways Ecuadorian language academies develop their business management by promoting training and certification services in the language teaching market for young people and adults.

Keywords:

English Teaching and Learning, Strategy, Clients/Students, Market, Profits, Certifications.

RESUMEN

La enseñanza del inglés tiene gran significado social y cultural, al adquirir mayor connotación en todas las esferas de la vida humana asociadas al desarrollo tecnológico, científico, cultural, deportivo y turístico, entre otras; lo que repercute en el fortalecimiento de la cooperación internacional entre los pueblos. Por consecuencia, existe una creciente necesidad de la comercialización de los servicios de certificación de las academias de idiomas, las cuales tienen como reto, lograr un adecuado mercadeo de estos servicios. Por ejemplo, la academia de Idiomas Buckingham English Center S.A de Guayaquil, desarrolla una estrategia comercializadora para posicionarse paso a paso en este mercado e incrementar los clientes/estudiantes que desean aprender a comunicarse en esta lengua y aspiran a legitimar sus competencias comunicativas a través de las certificaciones Cambridge, respaldadas por el Marco Común de Referencia Europeo para la enseñanza, aprendizaje y evaluación de las lenguas de este continente. Como resultado, las acciones implementadas en la estrategia comercializadora permiten el análisis de las vías que poseen las academias de idiomas ecuatorianas en el desarrollo de su gestión empresarial, mediante la promoción de servicios de capacitación y certificación en el mercado de la enseñanza de idiomas con jóvenes y adultos.

Palabras clave:

Enseñanza Aprendizaje del inglés, Estrategia, Clientes/Estudiantes, Mercado, Ganancias, Certificaciones.



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INTRODUCTION

The role of language academies in teaching English grants access to this language, which has become a communication and interaction tool that facilitates individuals' understanding of the great discoveries of science and technology in all spheres of socioeconomic development in any society.

Researchers such as (Suzina, 2021; Adriansen et al., 2023; Alam, S. 2023), among others, maintain that the English language is considered today's "lingua franca": the language in which economic, political, technological, academic, and cultural transactions between peoples are conducted. This global interconnection has generated the internationalization of this language, revolutionizing it as new English speakers around the world imprint their own identity on it, generating regional variants. "As global English diversifies, we may see a functional split where international communication relies on standardized norms, while localized varieties dominate intranational contexts" (Lee & Park, 2021, p. 215).

Also, according to Azar: "The hegemony of English in international communication stems not from its native-speaker base but from its entrenched role in transnational commerce, science, and digital platforms" (Jenkins & Mauranen, 2023, p. 112).

Having a language that serves as a bridge of communication between people of different races, ethnicities, religions, and cultures is of great value and importance in today's world. An Ecuadorian businessman is likely to communicate with his Japanese counterpart in English. For most global markets, the main sources of valuable information on financial resources—Time, Economist, and Newsweek magazines, CNN, and the Wall Street Journal—

Likewise, this language is dominant in matters related to various professions and science. It is frequently the language in which international conferences are held, and papers and technological and scientific advances are published in English all over the world, so that they can be made known to the greatest possible audience. Even papers published in other languages have titles, abstracts, and keywords in English; this is especially appreciated among publications considered scientific. This is the language par excellence of international business and events, technology, science, education, art, sports, among other human activities. There are even areas of the world where English has replaced languages that have become obsolete. However, the importance of teaching this language requires preserving the sociocultural identity of the country, in this case, Ecuador. In this regard, (Rodríguez, 2022; Ramirez, 2023) emphasize the need to preserve the processes of identity construction based on

language, revealing this through both theory and practice. This criterion should underpin the training and marketing of language academies. In 2016, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education issued an agreement establishing mandatory English language teaching. "This seeks to ensure that students complete high school at a B1 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, which means they are able to read and write without difficulty," the document stated. Mandate 14 proposes a restructuring of higher education with a view to fulfilling the Buen Vivir plan. To this end, the higher education regulations declare the presentation of an international certification in English language teaching under the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) mandatory for obtaining a higher education degree. This represents a challenge for the student population, who, in most cases, have a deficiency in this communicative competence (Kleckner & Butz, 2021).

Therefore, accelerating the social and economic development of the population of the Canton of Guayaquil implies the need to promote English language training and accredit its knowledge through international certifications, both in person and through blended learning and/or distance learning (Gordon & Montenegro, 2025).

Thus, language academies are required to provide services. They face a real challenge as they fail to adequately market and promote the services they offer. To achieve this goal, it is essential to define the concept of "commercialization" in business management terms. According to (Rui et al., 2023), this concept is associated to the action and effect of marketing (putting a product on sale or providing the conditions and distribution channels for its sale). Likewise, it is necessary to achieve adequate sustainability in the academy's training and certification services (Jokila et al., 2021).

This paper aims to analyze the different avenues Ecuadorian language academies pursue in developing their business management by promoting training and certification services in the language teaching market to a youth and adult audience that can access scientific and technical output on their country's socioeconomic development.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To develop marketing strategies, it will be necessary to establish a method that addresses the driving variables and develops the relevant strategies based on this context. The proposed method is outlined below:

- a. Expert selection
- b. Construction of a SWOT matrix
- c. Marketing strategies

Expert Selection

The number of experts M is determined using a probabilistic method and assuming a binomial probability law $M = p(1-p)k / i^2$ where i^2 is the level of precision achieved, recommended between 0.14 and 0.5, p is the estimated proportion of the error and "k" a constant whose value is associated with the confidence level selected. Taking as a basis for the calculation an error of 10%, for a confidence level of 95% and the mean i value of 0.25, the number of experts is calculated: $M = 5.5296$ experts, that is, six experts are required to perform the first analysis with a 10% error in the estimate.

The selection of experts will be carried out using the coefficient of expert competence "K" based on the opinion shown by the expert about his or her level of knowledge about the research problem, as well as the sources that allow him or her to argue the established criterion (Silva-Quiroz, et al. 2025). This coefficient is based on the breakdown of the formula $K = \frac{1}{2} (K_c + K_a)$

SWOT Matrix Construction

Internal Analysis

Strengths

- Being an authorized center for International Certifications in English, endorsed by the University of Cambridge, England.
- Possession of the latest technologies for teaching and taking exams, abandoning pencil and paper to embrace the digital age.
- Affordable prices with easy payment options.
- Teachers trained with International Certifications.

Weaknesses

- Limited number of cultural and sports activities that integrate teachers, administrators, and students.
- Small business size.
- Need to strengthen the brand nationally.
- Resistance to change: Users are accustomed to dropping out due to different occupations and time constraints.

External analysis

OPPORTUNITIES

- Extension of the range of Cambridge International Certifications.
- Signing of agreements with Guayaquil's universities and higher technological institutes, as well as schools and colleges in the city, for international certifications and English training.
- A range of schedules to meet the needs of all society, students, workers, and professionals in training.
- Availability and possibilities of social media for disseminating information related to the company's activities.

Threats

- Emergence of new private training institutions.
- Social and economic factors that limit the student population from attending English language schools.
- Changes in the environment (Organic Law on Higher Education).
- Growing competition.

Marketing strategy

A marketing strategy facilitates the promotion of a language school's training and certification services. According to (Leider, et al., 2021), it can be supported by a combination of tools that allow the individual to reach the desired market. The broadest and most important topics are based on the business's purpose and the general and long-term objectives it hopes to achieve. This author also explains that when developing a strategy, which can be short-, medium-, or

long-term, a SWOT analysis of the business in question is first conducted, and then a plan is designed using the OGSM methodology.

The SWOT analysis must take into account the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats that would be present in an academy's training and certification services. Hence, the mission of a language academy's marketing strategy is to provide students/clients with communicative skills through training so that they can master and improve their use of the English language.

Recognizing that English is a necessary tool for the country's technical, technological, and cultural development strengthens the bonds of cooperation and communication between Spanish and English speakers.

The phases of the marketing strategy at Buckingham English Center are represented and explained below Figura 1

Fig. 1 Marketing strategy diagram



Fuente: Elaboración de autores

RESULTS-DISCUSSION

1. The diagnostic phase aims to gather criteria regarding the current state of the training process, including the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the academy. In this phase, it is important to analyze each of the vulnerable areas within each of the processes that make up the academy's internal life and focus attention on the results of each person's or department's activities. With the help of a matrix, it is possible to visualize the activities carried out within the process and their objectives and interactions to identify if any unnecessary or omitted activities are included within this activity.

2.- The planning and organization phase begins with a detailed study of the academy's market, the supply and demand for English language services, costs, prices, the investment required to achieve quality services that are competitive in that market, how to make feasible pricing proposals to the various users who access the academy, how to improve the quality of training, the selection of teaching staff with high levels of linguistic and pedagogical qualifications, how to improve the constructive functionality of the center and the aesthetic beauty of the building.

Regarding the selection of human talent, the focus is on highlighting the impact that a good human talent selection process can have on generating positive results for companies, for the employees themselves, and for the users of goods and/or services produced by the academy. Martínez & Fernández maintains that: "Human talent management has evolved from an operational cost to a strategic investment, recognized as the core driver of intellectual capital and organizational resilience in the knowledge economy" (Martínez & Fernández, 2023, p. 45).

A good selection of teachers and support staff guarantees efficiency, effectiveness, and a sense of belonging to the language academy.

The selection process seeks the most suitable candidates for the available positions among the recruited candidates with the intention of maintaining or increasing the efficiency and performance of the staff and the organization (Zhai & Wibowo, 2023). If the academy has an efficient selection process, this becomes a competitive advantage that will differentiate it from other language academies.

A detailed study of the opportunities and possibilities for growth in this sector over the past decade led its management to visualize different strategic areas and plan other offerings through the application of the historical-logical method. These includeSince 2010, English language training for the population of the Canton of Guayaquil.

- Since 2013, training for a niche market of people who only want to prepare for the Cambridge certification exams in an intensive eight-week period and at a single level. These clients are generally English teachers or those from other professions who already have a command of the language and need certifications that certify their English communication skills.
- Since 2013, we have been training a niche market for people who wish to prepare for Cambridge certifications, such as one of the levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, or C2, in 12 weeks.
- Since 2015, we have been providing translations and interpretations for scientific events or other activities of academic and cultural interest. We also translate documents for people wishing to pursue master's or doctoral studies abroad.
- Since 2017, we have been marketing the interactive B-Learning platform, which has been progressively increasing in demand. That year, 500 clients used it. In 2018, the client base increased to 20,000, and in the first three months of 2019, 2,000 students benefit from this platform, where they learn, have fun, and enjoy learning this language.

3.- In the execution phase, the relevant changes are made, materializing the transformations that allow for achieving both global and specific objectives. Each of the actions described in the procedural outline developed when conceiving the strategic plan to solve the English language academy's main problem is executed: how to increase the number of students/clients requesting both training and completing assessment exercises to obtain the various certifications offered by Cambridge University, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Buckingham English Center is the leader in this service in the canton of Guayaquil.

Language academies that demonstrate their ability to offer products or services that meet student/client requirements and the applicable regulations according to the international standards of the British Council and the University of Cambridge have already achieved one of their objectives by being accepted into this chain. With this recognition, academies already benefit from obtaining a quality certification by meeting a requirement for doing business in sectors where such certification is required (Zhai & Wibowo, 2023). The same authors point out that constant exploration, supported by scientific study, of the results of the work of a company or institution's departments is already a guarantee of success. Likewise, interdependence and teamwork generate good results when offering training and accreditation services for a language academy.

4. In the control and evaluation phase, the execution of planned activities is recorded and assessed to readjust the marketing strategy and provide feedback to the process so that the desired objectives are achieved. Evaluation, in a general sense, is to estimate, judge, appreciate, determine the value of something, and issue a value judgment. It is also important to evaluate the frequency of the activities carried out, which allows for reviewing staff flow, the vulnerability of the process, and visualizing the achievement of objectives.

Monitoring allows for the evaluation of results, the comparison of initial income with that obtained at this stage, the assessment of current conditions in relation to previous ones, the evaluation of the possibility of implementing other actions through other channels, and finally, a comparison of statistics related to the number of clients entering the academy with a before and after, and of those who certify their language level according to the European Framework for the Study of Languages in the Canton of Guayaquil.

A commercial or marketing strategy that manages to create the right product or service, in the right place, at the right cost, and at the right time, with the right promotion (price, promotion, location, product), is only possible when the consumer's wants, the elements they demand from a product, and the adaptation of the brand to that specific market are carefully considered, so that the logo and slogan can communicate with the consumer.

In this sense, authors such as (Ali et al., 2021) points out that a causal relationship is established between service quality and its effect and impact on customer loyalty and satisfaction. In the case of a language academy's marketing services, this causal relationship would be found in the loyalty of students/clients to the institution. A satisfied customer can generate a strong identity with the academy's offerings, thus generating greater financial and customer revenue for the company. The basis of its competitive

advantage, as well as sustained profitability, lies in providing a high-quality service to satisfy students/clients.

These authors also highlight the need to foster an entrepreneurial attitude in students/clients, who in many cases are pursuing university studies. Knowledge of English facilitates this, as well as guarantees youth employment and prospects for consolidating career goals in an increasingly competitive world. Attracting clients in this increasingly professional market demands digital marketing, which is broadly accepted by the younger population. The development of digital tools, websites, and communication with companies are in English. This makes language skills necessary to ensure that quality communication will generate better results.

Therefore, the concept of quality is defined and interpreted in various ways. Quality is a term widely used by both those who purchase products and services (customers) and those who produce and offer them (companies). It seems that quality defines whether the product or service is efficient and suitable for meeting needs.

Dissatisfied customers can adversely affect business if not managed effectively. Therefore, complaints should be viewed as opportunities for improvement, and well-defined processes should be in place to collect and analyze information about complaints and then use it for improvement. This requires the evolution of systems and their reinforcement to ensure the required results (Gultom & Oktaviani, 2022).

On the other hand, the use of technology has led to the creation of digital platforms where operations can be carried out more quickly and conveniently. This is the result of a transformation process triggered by Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), which have driven technological change and advancement in various areas of production, services, education, and government. This does not negate the use of the internet for entertainment and school learning by students. At the same time, they learn, train, and mobilize all their cognitive and metacognitive reserves.

Song & Song (2023) argue that it is not possible to provide adequate attention to students/clients in a language academy, whether in-person or blended, without the support of technology.

This allows them to practice content, communicative and evaluative tasks for future certification in a self-taught manner, thus developing self-learning and metacognition with appropriate levels of support according to the desired level. In turn, the use of electronic media makes it possible to consolidate other services in the marketing management of academies outside of teaching, such as: Taxpayer Services, Declaration and Payments, Audit, Collection,

Transparency, and Accountability, which has minimized the time spent capturing financial information. To achieve a leadership position in the market requires that everyone working in the academy come together and efficiently perform their assigned tasks. It is about a strategic union that generates the loyalty of its students/clients given by the satisfaction they have with the services received. (Song & Song, 2023).

Thus, according to Millenium, a website is a communication tool where a company provides relevant information to its clients through the use of the internet. This information can be consulted by anyone connected to its global communications network. In fractions of minutes, and perhaps seconds, the client/student can access a vast amount of information about an academy's academic services. Other digital media used to promote these services include radio, TV, film, print media, social media, etc.

Today's labor market is highly competitive, and organizations increasingly demand personnel who can provide their companies with new knowledge. For this reason, Buckingham English Center S.A. offers International Certifications as part of its academic training services for citizens.

From a professional perspective, International Certifications offer advantages to participants who obtain them, which will help them differentiate themselves significantly from their peers in the professional, employment, and business markets. At the same time, participants will develop the skills necessary to obtain an internationally valid certification in accordance with the new higher education framework under the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

This academy is constantly seeking potential clients for this service, specifically those with a basic level of English or higher who wish to obtain an International Certification, either at the KET level (A1) or C2, such as university students at an advanced stage of their studies or just starting out. The academy's main clients are students from the Bolivarian Technological Institute, the State University of Milagro, and other students who wish to acquire the institution's services.

These services set you apart from other language academies and constitute a strength you must continue refining through your sales or marketing strategy. Holding a certificate from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is a strength and guarantee of quality in your foreign language skills, enabling you to communicate effectively.

CONCLUSIONS

In 2016, the Ministry of Education issued an agreement establishing compulsory English language teaching. The goal is for students to achieve a B1 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages by the end of high school. Therefore, there is a need to strengthen the teaching of this language through language academies, universities, and other educational centers.

The direct beneficiaries are the students/clients who attend Buckingham Center S.A., primarily to improve their Communicative Competence and, secondly, to obtain Cambridge international certificates, as well as the staff working at this institution. Furthermore, obtaining these certificates indirectly benefits Ecuadorian society, as it would increase the number of Guayaquil residents who could communicate in this language, reflecting the country's sociocultural development. These residents would be prepared to communicate with people from different geographic regions, races, ethnicities, religions, and cultures, a highly valuable and important aspect of today's world.

Based on an analysis of the market, competitors, prices, investment/profit, and internal and external factors that influence the proper marketing of training and certification services, a marketing strategy was structured consisting of four phases: diagnosis, planning/organization, execution, and control/evaluation. These, in turn, are comprised of short-, medium-, and long-term actions to address the problem, attract more students/clients, and improve the profitability of language academies in general and Buckingham English Center S.A. in particular.

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