*Review Article*

Adoption of Marketing Strategies in Online Tutoring: A Systematic Literature Review

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| **Aims:** This study aims to investigate the adoption of marketing strategies in online tutoring.  **Study design:** The study employs a systematic review methodology to synthesize global research on adopting marketing strategies in online tutoring.  **Place and Duration of Study:** This study was conducted in Bacolod City for two months (March-April 2025).  **Methodology:** Peer-reviewed articles focusing on adopting marketing strategies in online tutoring were analyzed, encompassing diverse educational platforms and freelance practices across various global regions. The review explores variations in marketing approaches, their effectiveness in income generation, and the challenges online tutors face in implementing these strategies. This review structure was informed by previous literature reviews on professional retention and organizational strategy synthesis (Montaño, 2025).  **Results:** Three major themes emerged from this analysis: referral programs, testimonials and reviews, and digital marketing. Under each central theme, the following sub-themes emerged: subject-based tutoring, coaching, language tutoring, and homework assistance.  **Conclusion:** This study examined how marketing techniques are used in online tutoring, especially in developing digital economies. Although digital advertising, testimonials, and referral programs are valuable resources, their implementation is still uneven among freelance tutors because of structural barriers like low marketing literacy and limited funding. Nonetheless, the study emphasizes the necessity of a more strategic approach within the industry by highlighting how integrating marketing strategies is crucial for independent contractors to improve visibility, credibility, and sustainable income. |

*Keywords: Freelance Online Tutors, Marketing Strategies, Referral Programs, Digital Marketing*

1. INTRODUCTION

The international online tutoring market has seen massive growth driven by technological advancements, increased internet penetration, and a growing demand for flexible and tailored learning. Hanham, Lee, and Teo (2021) say that the growth has provided scope for freelance tutors to teach learners worldwide while presenting challenges around technology adoption, academic self-efficacy, and gender equity. Online tutoring was an essential learning option in the Philippines during the COVID-19 pandemic, with teachers quickly adapting to digital platforms (Pontillas, 2021).

Unlike institutional teachers, independent online tutors operate independently and have difficulties advertising their services and sustaining regular client support. VanderPloeg and Blankinship (2022) discovered that freelance tutors must respond rapidly to evolving learning requirements and online competition. In addition, Zhen, Liu, and Zhang (2023) noted that freelancers in international platforms vary in their success levels based on their ability to showcase their services and gain the trust of learners.

Successful marketing has become a key determinant of success in online tutoring. Around the world, Kapoor and Sharma (2021) highlighted that online marketing tools like social media promotions, content creation, and email marketing can increase tutors' visibility and reach. Chang and Kuo (2022) also reinforced this, reporting that paid online advertising dramatically affects engagement and bookings for tutors.

Despite the increased interest in online education and freelance work, there is a significant gap in empirical studies examining marketing strategies among freelance online tutors, especially in local contexts. Saif and Aimin (2016) explained that there was a need for empirical examination of how marketing strategies are implemented and how they affect organizational performance.

Among freelance tutoring in the Philippines and Bacolod City, few studies explore how tutors advertise themselves, which tools they employ, and how these efforts are converted into earnings. The lack thereof highlights the need for localized studies to inform evidence-based decisions for tutors who operate within the online market.

This research is prompted by the growing use of freelance tutors in the online learning environment and the fact that no support or institutional training is provided to them on marketing and income sustainability. Since freelance teachers usually do not enjoy institutional support, they need to learn and acquire ways on their own to survive. This study will add to existing academic work and be a helpful guide for freelancers who desire to thrive within an ever-changing education marketplace.

1. methodology

This global systematic literature review investigated the adoption of marketing strategies among freelance online tutors across various educational and digital contexts. The review included peer-reviewed articles from international and local sources, focusing on diverse service structures such as independent tutors, tutoring platforms, and student-run tutoring services. This design allowed for an in-depth exploration of how different digital marketing approaches, such as referral programs, testimonials and reviews, and social media engagement, are adopted and utilized by online tutors. The studies were analyzed based on thematic focus, marketing technique, and effectiveness in increasing visibility and income generation. While the initial search considered geographic regions and levels of tutor professionalism, the analysis and presentation of findings are primarily organized by marketing strategy and platform type. This review structure was informed by earlier literature reviews on organizational strategies and retention analysis (Montaño, 2025).

* 1. **Research Design**

This systematic literature review employed a global scope, analyzing peer-reviewed journal articles relevant to adopting marketing strategies in freelance online tutoring. The analysis focuses on the nuances of strategy implementation across diverse online education settings, including individual freelance tutors, platform-based services, and student-run tutoring initiatives. The review examined how various marketing strategies, such as referral programs, testimonials and reviews, and digital marketing tools, are adopted in different digital environments. This design enabled the identification of patterns, challenges, and outcomes associated with marketing strategy adoption within the rapidly evolving online tutoring industry, following structures similar to PRISMA-based reviews across fields (Yoon, Bang, & Kim, 2021).

* 1. **Research Locale**

This study did not involve direct interaction with human participants. Instead, it systematically reviewed peer-reviewed journal articles from reputable academic databases, including Google Scholar, ProQuest, ResearchGate, and ScienceDirect. The target literature for this review consisted of studies focused on adopting and implementing marketing strategies such as referral programs, digital marketing, and testimonials and reviews within the context of freelance online tutoring. The selected articles covered international and local perspectives to comprehensively understand current practices and trends in the digital education marketplace.

* 1. **Research Participants**

The data for this systematic literature review consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles retrieved from reputable academic databases, including Google Scholar, ResearchGate, ProQuest, and ScienceDirect. The selected literature focused on the adoption and effectiveness of various marketing strategies such as referral programs, testimonials and reviews, and digital marketing used by freelance online tutors. These articles served as the primary sources of information, offering insights into how tutors across different educational and digital environments apply marketing techniques to attract and retain students, enhance visibility, and improve income generation.

* 1. **Research Instrument**

The extracted data underwent a two-phase analysis. First, a thematic analysis was performed to identify recurring themes related to adopting marketing strategies in freelance online tutoring, using a structured coding process to categorize findings from the selected peer-reviewed articles. Key themes included referral programs, testimonials and reviews, and digital marketing practices like SEO, content creation, and social media engagement. Second, a comparative analysis explored how these strategies varied across contexts, such as by region, tutor type, or platform-based vs. independent tutoring. This involved organizing data to assess the frequency and effectiveness of specific strategies and reported challenges like limited reach, inconsistent branding, or lack of digital literacy. This dual-phase approach reflects comparative frameworks often used in systematic reviews and meta-analyses (Baik & Kim, 2025). Qualitative insights were synthesized to determine patterns, impacts, and emerging trends in marketing strategy adoption among freelance tutors. To ensure rigor and credibility, the methodological quality of the included studies was evaluated using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, considering aspects such as study design, relevance, and data reporting practices (Okeke, 2021).

* 1. **Data Gathering Procedure**

The data-gathering process involved several methodical steps to comprehensively capture the breadth of research on adopting marketing strategies in freelance online tutoring. A systematic search was conducted across key academic databases. Google Scholar was utilized for its extensive coverage of multidisciplinary literature. At the same time, ProQuest, Scientific Research, and Philippine Electronic Journals were included to ensure the inclusion of international and regional studies.

The search strategy employed Boolean operators to combine keywords relevant to freelance tutoring and marketing strategies. For instance, search phrases included combinations such as “(online tutoring OR freelance education) AND (digital marketing OR referral programs OR client acquisition)” to refine and filter results.

Inclusion criteria were limited to peer-reviewed articles published from 2016 onwards to ensure the currency and relevance of the data. Only full-text articles with available Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) or stable links were included to maintain traceability and support future research replication.

* 1. **Ethical Considerations**

This research adhered strictly to ethical guidelines by ensuring that all reviewed literature was drawn from reputable, peer-reviewed journals, thereby enhancing the credibility and reliability of the data used. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines were followed, emphasizing transparency, methodological rigor, and reproducibility throughout the literature review process (Okeke, 2021).

Furthermore, ethical considerations concerning the proper citation and acknowledgment of all sources were strictly observed to uphold academic integrity and prevent plagiarism. Since no human participants were involved, concerns regarding consent, confidentiality, or personal data protection were not applicable.

3. results and discussion

This section presents the findings of the systematic literature review, emphasizing the adoption and effectiveness of various marketing strategies among freelance online tutors and their influence on income generation across service types. The discussion is structured by marketing strategies: Referral Programs, Testimonials and Reviews, and Digital Marketing, analyzed across four tutoring service categories: Subject-Based Tutoring, Coaching, Language Tutoring, and Homework Assistance.

**3.1 Referral Programs**

***3.1.1 Subject-Based Tutoring***

Referral programs are effective in subject-based tutoring, especially when tutors incentivize students or parents with discounts or free sessions. Santos and Reyes (2021) state that such strategies benefit tutors lacking formal advertisement tools. This technique enhances trust and visibility in competitive academic niches (Delos Santos & Ramos, 2022).

***3.1.2 Coaching***

In coaching, especially for academic goal-setting or performance improvement, referral programs work well when success stories are highlighted in personal networks. Morales and Cheng (2021) emphasized that the tutor's reputation often becomes a marketing tool, primarily through social validation. Coaches who blend testimonials with rewards attract higher-value clients (Kim & Torres, 2020).

***3.1.3 Language Tutoring***

Language tutors effectively utilize referral networks within diaspora communities. For example, Martinez and Herrera (2020) noted that learners often refer peers when tutors provide immersive and flexible lessons. Referral strategies generate long-term clients, particularly in IELTS or TOEFL preparation (Lopez & Zhang, 2019).

***3.1.4 Homework Assistance***

Referral programs in homework assistance platforms offer potential for recurring business. Clients who receive high-quality, urgent support are more likely to recommend services to peers. However, due to the transactional nature of the service, loyalty remains low (Du, Zhao, & Chen, 2024).

**3.2 Testimonials and Reviews**

***3.2.1 Subject-Based Tutoring***

Testimonials in subject-based tutoring often focus on student improvement, academic confidence, and exam performance. Nguyen and Soriano (2022) found that parents are likelier to hire tutors with visible, positive feedback on platforms like Facebook or Upwork. Tutors with consistently high ratings tend to attract higher-paying clients (Tan & Villanueva, 2023).

***3.2.2 Coaching***

In coaching, testimonials are social proof of transformation—highlighting outcomes like academic focus, life balance, or career clarity. Peterson and Ananda (2021) noted that reviews from students who overcame challenges increase credibility. These testimonials help justify premium fees and strengthen personal branding (Lee & Gonzales, 2022).

***3.2.3 Language Tutoring***

Language tutors benefit from testimonials that show fluency progression or passing language exams. According to Chen and Bautista (2019), real-time video testimonials create authenticity and engagement. Positive reviews also help position tutors for long-term contracts with international learners (Hernandez & Yu, 2021).

***3.2.4 Homework Assistance***

Feedback highlights speed, clarity, and academic accuracy in this service type. Del Rosario and Ahmad (2021) emphasized that clients value concise, efficient service and often express gratitude in quick messages or star ratings. Tutor showcasing these reviews reinforces trust among new clients (Cruz & Tan, 2022).

**3.3 Digital Marketing**

***3.3.1 Subject-Based Tutoring***

Subject-based tutors showcase problem-solving skills and tutorials using Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok. Bautista and Singh (2023) found that regular educational content significantly increases client inquiries. These strategies generate leads and establish credibility (Mendoza & Garcia, 2023).

***3.3.2 Coaching***

Academic coaches use Instagram and LinkedIn for personal branding, testimonials, and live streams. Tan and Herrera (2020) discussed how motivational posts and free advice attract learners seeking mentorship. Coaches with active digital presence report better income consistency (Gomez & Lin, 2022).

***3.3.3 Language Tutoring***

Language tutors use SEO, blog articles, and language learning reels to attract foreign learners. Lee and Agbayani (2022) showed that visibility on multiple platforms increases trust, mainly when supported by quality content. This omnichannel approach makes tutors more discoverable internationally (Garcia & Lim, 2023).

***3.3.4 Homework Assistance***

Tutors offering homework help often advertise in Facebook groups or through Google Ads targeting urgent needs. According to Delos Reyes and Sy (2020), urgency-based digital ads (e.g., "Need help with math homework now?") are highly effective. These ads must balance speed with professionalism to avoid quality concerns (Hernandez & Lim, 2021).

4. Conclusion

This study systematically explored the adoption of marketing strategies in online tutoring, particularly within emerging digital economies. The findings consistently underscore that while freelance tutors increasingly recognize the value of strategic marketing through tools such as referral programs, digital advertising, and testimonials, their implementation remains highly variable and often underdeveloped. Structural limitations such as limited marketing literacy, lack of financial investment, and low access to professional development resources hinder widespread and effective adoption.

Nonetheless, the study affirms that integrating marketing strategies is feasible and crucial for freelancers seeking to enhance visibility, credibility, and sustainable income. A central insight is that effective marketing in online tutoring is not an optional add-on but a core competency that directly influences client acquisition, retention, and long-term viability. This reinforces the need for a more intentional and strategic approach to marketing within the sector.

**Recommendations:**

To this end, actionable recommendations can be drawn for all key stakeholders:

For freelance tutors, there is a compelling need to invest in continuous upskilling, not just in instructional quality but also in digital marketing, brand management, and client communication.

For educational institutions and training centers, marketing literacy should be embedded into professional development programs, especially those supporting digital freelancers.

For platform providers and freelance marketplaces, there is a unique opportunity to offer built-in marketing support services such as analytics dashboards, promotional tools, and reputation systems to help tutors expand their reach.

For policymakers and industry advocates, providing access to affordable digital tools, mentorship networks, and localized marketing training programs can significantly enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of the freelance tutoring economy.

**DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)**

**Source:**

**ChatGPT:** https://chat.openai.com/

**Google Gemini:** https://gemini.google.com/

**Cici AI:** https://cici.ai/

The author hereby declares that generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (LLMs) have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript. This explanation includes the names, versions, sources of the generative AI tools used, and the specific prompts for each platform.

**Details of AI Usage:**

1. **AI Technology Used:** ChatGPT (Large Language Model)
2. **Version/Model:** GPT-4
3. **Source:** OpenAI(https://chat.openai.com/)
4. **Purpose of Use:** Grammar organization, Sentence structure improvement, Clarifying and simplifying academic concepts, and Improving logical coherence of arguments

**d. Input Prompts Used:**

1. Please check this text for grammar and spelling.
2. Rewrite this sentence to be more formal.
3. Improve the phrasing in this paragraph.
4. Does this argument make logical sense?
5. How can I better express this academic idea?

**2. AI Technology Used:** Google Gemini (Large Language Model)

**a. Version/Model:** Gemini 2.5

**b. Source: Google** (https://gemini.google.com/)

**c. Purpose of Use:** Grammar and syntax corrections, Improving text conciseness, and Suggestions for coherence and clarity

**d. Input Prompts Used:**

1. Check grammar and punctuation in this paragraph.
2. Rephrase this sentence for better clarity.
3. Suggest improvements to flow and coherence.
4. Does this paragraph explain the connection between X and Y clearly?

**3. AI Technology Used:** Cici AI (Large Language Model)

**a. Version/Model:** Cici AI (2024 version)

**b. Source:** Cici AI (https://cici.ai/)

**c. Purpose of Use:** Proofreading and paraphrasing, Formatting assistance, and Enhancing sentence impact in academic writing

**d. Input Prompts Used:**

1. Paraphrase this section in an academic tone.

**2**. Help rewrite this idea to make it more impactful.

**3**. Organize these bullet points into a coherent paragraph.

**4**. Suggest better transitions between paragraphs.

Definitions, Acronyms, Abbreviations

To facilitate a better understanding of the study, the following terms are defined conceptually and operationally:

**Digital Marketing.** Conceptually, digital marketing refers to using digital channels and technologies such as social media, email, websites, and online advertising to promote services, engage customers, and drive conversions in a measurable way (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022).

Operationally, digital marketing in this study refers to freelancers’ use of Facebook and other online platforms to promote their tutoring services, connect with clients, and manage their business presence.

**Freelancers.** Conceptually, freelancers offer services to clients without long-term employment contracts. They work flexibly, often using digital platforms to promote and deliver services (Spreitzer et al., 2021).

Operationally, this refers to individuals in Bacolod City who provide tutoring services independently, either registered under BIR/DTI or operating informally online.

**Online Tutors.** Conceptually, online tutors provide academic or skills-based instruction through digital platforms. Their services range from basic homework help to professional coaching (Santiago & Ray, 2022).

Operationally, this term refers to tutors in Bacolod City who deliver lessons, guidance, or coaching via online tools or platforms.

**Referral Programs.** Conceptually, referral programs are marketing strategies that encourage existing clients to refer new customers by offering incentives such as discounts or free services. These programs leverage customer networks to expand market reach (Kotler & Keller, 2021).

Operationally, this refers to freelancers using rewards-based referrals or word-of-mouth promotions to gain new clients.

**Testimonials and Reviews.** Conceptually, testimonials and reviews are user-generated feedback that provides social proof of the quality or effectiveness of a service. They influence trust and purchasing decisions (Moe & Trusov, 2021).

Operationally, this term refers to how freelancers display client feedback on social media, websites, or platforms to attract potential customers.

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