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SpeakTaiwan.com: 語言, 人才, 商品和信息市場

SpeakTaiwan.com: a language, talent, goods, and information marketplace

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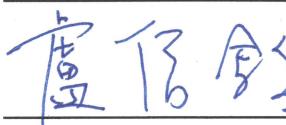
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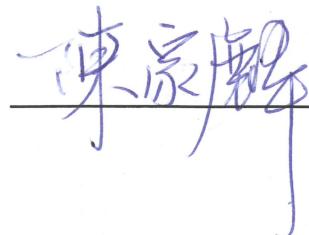
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Abstract

Taiwan is currently missing a de facto website for English classifieds. Taiwan is also missing a central website for the sharing of information. This paper analyzes the Private Tutoring, English Teaching, Job Search & Talent Acquisition, General Classifieds, and Information & Knowledge Sharing markets in Taiwan. It shows the market fragmentation that has resulted from the lack of user focus, and the lack of refined search functions. This paper proposes to create a single website that will rectify these issues, and suggests ways of promoting this website and moving it to profitability.



Dedication

To my beloved wife, *Amanda*.



Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Miriam Garvi for her initial help and direction. I would like to thank Dr. Tim Chou for his continued insight and guidance. I would like to thank all of the staff at NTU, especially those in the GMBA, for their incredible and diverse program. I would like to thank Taiwan for being a bastion of freedom, independent thought, education, and democracy in Asia. Finally, I would like to thank my mother.

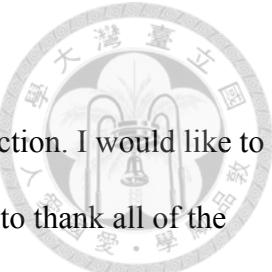


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Glossary of Terms



- **Buxiban**

- The Romanization of the Chinese characters 補習班
 - Pinyin: bǔxíbān
 - Zhuyin: 'ㄔㄨˇ ㄒㄧˊ ㄉㄧˊ ㄔㄨㄢ
- Buxibans are commonly referred to as “cram schools” within Taiwan.
- Buxibans are most commonly after school programs that provide food, homework assistance, and English teachers to Taiwanese students.
- Buxibans are often used in lieu of daycare.

Executive Summary

Taiwan is a wonderful place to live. Taiwan is full of kind people, has a strong economy, wonderful healthcare, excellent mass-transit, and ample opportunities for employment.

Taiwan's economy is transitioning from a manufacturing economy to one of skilled labor.

Taiwan is also hoping to become an international hub akin to Singapore and Hong Kong.

With such assets and aspirations, Taiwan is in need of a centralized website for its foreign visitors and workforce.

SpeakTaiwan.com would be a central website, akin to a better version of craigslist. It would satisfy demands in the Private Tutoring, English Teaching, Job Search & Talent Acquisition, General Classifieds, and Information & Knowledge Sharing markets in Taiwan. There is clear evidence of market fragmentation that has resulted from the lack of user focus, and the absence of refined search functions. These less than ideal current market alternatives are easily replaceable.

The services provided by SpeakTaiwan.com will benefit foreigners residing in or moving to Taiwan. It will also benefit Taiwanese corporations, public schools, and buxibans looking to hire foreign talent. SpeakTaiwan.com will help pair open positions and qualified applicants. SpeakTaiwan.com will boast a Taiwan-specific wiki, full of places to visit and things to purchase. The wiki will address topics such as how to get an ARC, a bank account, health insurance, and many other topics of interest to new residents. Eventually, we hope to be the de facto landing page of the expatriate community in Taiwan.

SpeakTaiwan.com will work with our users to reach non-intrusive forms of revenue generation, such as referral revenue, banner advertisements, sponsored content, featured classifieds, tutoring partnerships, and the solicitation of donations.

Introduction



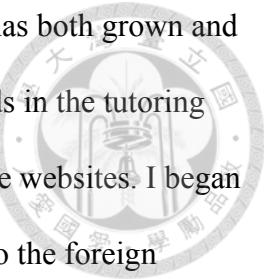
When I first applied to the GMBA program at NTU, my wife, Amanda, and I discussed the employment possibilities in Taiwan. Amanda and I were moving to Taiwan from our home in Utah. Amanda is a fully credentialed Biology teacher in Utah. Prior to our move to Taiwan, Amanda had taught 7th grade Biology for two years. Amanda voiced concerns over working full-time in a foreign country, and expressed her desire to research part-time employment opportunities in Taiwan. We found an overload of available, but confusing, information.

Although there were many different websites, none were very helpful. They were awkward, redundant and outdated, irrespective of western preferences and expectations. We had no idea if these websites and job listings were legitimate, and were concerned about applying for a job listed on such a website. Many of the job listings were already filled, or the requirements were not listed properly. There were many positions seeking English speakers that were listed in Chinese. Clearly, there was a problem connecting supply and demand.

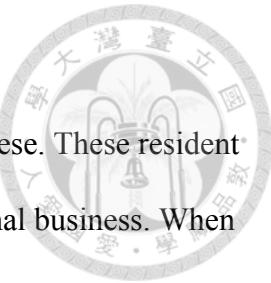
I have a B.A. in English, and am well qualified to teach the English language. I asked my friends and classmates where to find tutoring jobs. They informed me of the market leader, Tealit, a website where Tutors could post classifieds. I visited the website and found that there was an overabundance of available teachers, and that I would most likely never receive any interest in my advertisement.

This experience left me wondering if there was a better way to connect tutors and pupils. I wondered how many of the advertisements on websites such as Tealit were worthwhile. What I realized is that there is a very large disconnect between those who wished to work in Taiwan, and those in Taiwan who wished to hire foreign talent.

The idea of SpeakTaiwan.com has evolved since its inception. It has both grown and become more refined. It started with my desire to simply address the needs in the tutoring market. I was excruciatingly aware of the difficulties associated with these websites. I began by researching all sites that used English and would likely be accessible to the foreign market. It became painfully clear that they all suffered from the same limiting issues. I realized that it was possible to address these needs with a single website.



Market Analysis



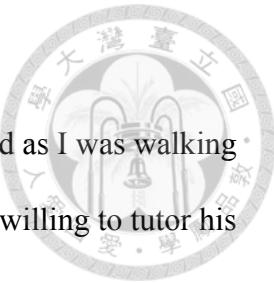
Many non-native Chinese speakers will never learn to read or write Chinese. These resident aliens rely on English classifieds to conduct both professional and personal business. When Taiwanese businesses desire to hire foreign employees, they use English classifieds to attract skilled talent. Taiwanese schools and buxibans desire to hire native English speakers, and also use English classifieds to advertise their openings.

Our proposed website, SpeakTaiwan.com serves multiple markets, and therefore required the analysis of these markets. They are:

1. The Private Tutoring Market in Taiwan
2. The English Teaching Market in Taiwan
3. The Job Search & Talent Acquisition Market in Taiwan
4. The General Classifieds Market in Taiwan
5. The Information & Knowledge Sharing Market in Taiwan.

These markets are highly fragmented but not saturated. There are many players but they all share obvious flaws. There are multitudes of unmet needs, and a significant lack of viable alternatives. There is an opportunity to create a workable site that addresses the needs of each of these markets, thereby acquiring a majority market share.

Private Tutoring Market Analysis



The realization that the needs for this market were not being met occurred as I was walking with my wife, Amanda. A man approached us and asked if we would be willing to tutor his children in English. He offered to pay us well. This man knew nothing about us, and had presumably overheard Amanda and I conversing in English. Yet, he was willing to offer us the most important job of teaching his children. Clearly this was a man who did not have viable alternatives.

As I pondered this man's dilemma, I realized that there are many individuals currently living in Taiwan, possessing valuable language skills, who would be happy to become private language tutors if given the opportunity. I believe that within the local population there is an untapped resource of knowledge, skills, and talents. This vast resource pool is not limited to teaching languages. SpeakTaiwan.com believes that tutoring music, arts, sports, and other skill based activities is a very lucrative and unrealized market. Individuals need suitable venues whereby they might share their talents.

Market Definition

The private tutoring market is defined as all learning that takes place outside of public schools and buxibans. This market is not limited to English language tutoring. It can include any spoken language and any learned skill. Things such as learning to play the violin or learning to swim could be included in the realm of the private tutoring market.

Market Size, Segmentation, and Leaders



Online Classifieds

A classified is a listing created by someone looking to buy or sell a specific product or service. With the rise of the internet, many would-be tutors post to online classifieds in an effort to attract students.

Tealit

Tealit is currently Taiwan's market leader for private tutoring. It offers classifieds for tutors and tutoring jobs. Tealit is neither intuitive nor user friendly. Tealit updated its website in March of 2018, but its backend remains archaic. At present, it only offers a basic keyword search of its classifieds, with no way to filter results. It therefore suffers from what I call "front-page weakness". A lack of a quality search function means that those tutors who were listed most recently receive the most attention. This is shown in my market research.

In an effort to track the amount of business done by Tealit, I have frequented their website, and tracked the posted classifieds. Each time I visited the Tealit website, I would save a copy of the Teaching Jobs, Teachers, Tutoring Jobs, and Tutors webpages. By so doing, I was able to track the new jobs posted, the new teachers and tutors posted, and the teachers and tutors who chose to remove their information.

Tealit's lack of a search function is a far greater problem when combined with the number of available tutors. As of Jan 11th 2019, there are 3283 tutor classifieds on their website.¹ Each classified contains a picture, biographical information, and a summary of the available tutor. However, none of this information is filterable or easily searchable. If a parent is looking for a female tutor available Thursday afternoons, they have to click through 3283 listings themselves. At present there is no way to filter the results.

What I found is that those tutors who were listed on the front page were far more likely to remove their postings (most likely after receiving a tutoring job offer) than those who were listed on the later pages. I had a tutoring listing posted on this website for many months, and can attest that the most attention comes from being on the front page. Once my classified moved to later pages, job offers became much more infrequent.

The greatest proof that the website is failing to serve the purpose for which it is designed is the current tutoring jobs classifieds. At present there are 3 tutoring jobs posted as available.² When I first visited the website, there were 4 tutoring jobs available.

Tealit Tutoring Jobs (November 28, 2018)

The image above shows the tutoring jobs as of November 28th. The image below shows the tutoring jobs as of Jan 11th, 2019. The tutoring job #2934 has remained unfilled throughout that entire time. This is an unmet need despite the incredible amount of willing talent.

Tealit Tutoring Jobs (January 11, 2019)



The screenshot shows the Tealit website interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the placeholder "Search". Below the search bar, there are three separate job listings, each with a small profile picture and a brief description. The first listing is for a "Native English Speaker" to teach English to a 15-year-old boy. The second listing is for a "Native English Speaker" to teach English to a 2-year-old girl. The third listing is for a "Native English Speaker" to teach English to a 10-year-old girl. Each listing includes a "POST JOB" button at the bottom.



There should be zero tutoring jobs available when you have 3283 available tutors. Clearly it is easier to make a classified posting than try and sort through endless personal classifieds without a decent search or filter function. Based on my research, over the course of two months only 8 tutors found work by posting a tutoring classified, while 10 tutoring jobs were filled by responding directly to a tutoring job classified.

It is possible that Tealit's motivations behind their lack of a functional search are selfish. The more time people spend on their site, the more ad revenue they receive. It is also possible that they do not want to change their current archaic system, and are simply victims to a backend that does not allow for filtering and searching. Either way, their position as Taiwan's market leader is vulnerable.

Alternatives

ESL Dewey

As of Jan 11 2019, ESL Dewey website had 3164 open positions for tutors and English teachers.⁵ This website does not filter tutoring, buxiban, and public schools separately, so there will be overlap. This website also does not offer a real search function.

Taiwan English

Taiwan English has not been updated since 2010. However, there are new profiles being created on its language exchange every month. Even though it is lacking in features and updates, people still use the website because of a lack of useful alternatives.



Online Tutoring

A large amount of private tutoring takes place online. The Chinese tutoring business is worth mentioning due to its proximity and size. It is also worth mentioning due to its potential to compete for talented tutors. As of 2017, The English teaching market in China was valued at over \$70 billion USD.⁶ As of January 2018, the online marketplace accounted for \$4.5 Billion USD of the total market.⁷ Without online tutoring, places such as China would otherwise find themselves in the unenviable position of trying to fill tutoring needs with local talent; an impossible task.

On the American side, the realization that one could have a marketable skill, without requiring anything other than being a native speaker, has driven many low-skilled and money hungry “tutors” into these online marketplaces.

VIPKID

VIPKID is the market leader in China. It is also the market leader worldwide in terms of attracting and paying teachers. VIPKID offers a very specific function, using native English speakers to teach Chinese children aged five to twelve years old. VIPKID advertises itself as paying its teachers anywhere from \$14-22/hour.⁸

Since May 2014, VIPKID has raised over \$825 Million USD in funding.⁹ In 2018, VIPKID closed a deal for \$500 Million USD in funding, at a 3 Billion dollar evaluation, despite posting losses of over \$174 Million USD.¹⁰

Alternatives

VIPKID is not alone in this market. There is China-based dadaabc, China-based Tutorjr and Taiwan-based Tutorabc who are both owned by the iTutorGroup, among many others.¹¹ The iTutorGroup was recently valued at \$2 Billion USD.¹² All of these try to accomplish the same thing; hiring foreign teachers to virtually tutor domestic clients. They work as middle men, providing curriculum, hiring talent, processing payments, and dispensing salaries. They are all essentially offering the same product, but working to find a competitive advantage.

Language Marketplace

These companies work by providing the means for language teachers and learners to come together in a relatively free marketplace. Tutors can set their own rates, and the payments are handled through the website. Tutors can post videos of themselves, and language learners can pay for “introductory” sessions with a tutor for a lower price to gauge compatibility.

italki

The largest of these online language marketplaces is talki.com. To date, they have raised \$3 Million USD.¹³ Italki requires each teacher to post a video of themselves speaking that is free to watch and easily accessible. All prices are listed, and there are no minimums. This could create an issue where qualified teachers are underbid and leave the platform. Italki tries to combat this by allowing students to rate each lesson performed by a teacher, allowing good teachers to gain high reviews.

Alternatives

There are websites such as AmazingTalker¹⁴ and SkimaTalk¹⁵ that offer nearly identical platforms to italki. SkimaTalk has the added complexity of using a platform currency called “coins” rather than dealing with currency fluctuations. A centralized currency for an

international marketplace is an interesting idea. It highlights one of the issues regarding targeting the entire world as your market.

Market Summary

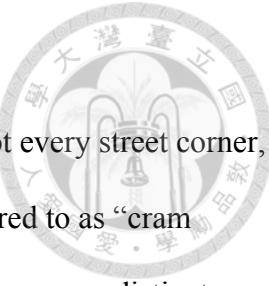
Clearly, the current market is extremely fragmented with a few clear leaders. The classified marketplace seems to be full of unmet wants and needs. However, such market confusion actually plays into our company's strength. The reason for the confusion is the identical product being offered by each company. SpeakTaiwan.com plans to offer a much better classifieds experience. This market is ripe for "blue ocean strategy" in that:

Competition should not occupy the center of strategic thinking. Too many companies let competition drive their strategies. What blue ocean strategy brings to life, however, is that this focus on the competition all too often keeps companies anchored in the red ocean. It puts the competition, not the customer, at the core of strategy. As a result, companies' time and attention get focused on benchmarking rivals and responding to their strategic moves, rather than on understanding how to deliver a leap in value to buyers which is not the same thing.¹⁶

SpeakTaiwan.com will place emphasis on the user experience, rather than trying to match our competitors.



English Teaching Market Analysis



Taiwan is home to nearly countless buxibans (補習班). They seem to dot every street corner, and are almost as common a sight as 7-11. Buxibans are commonly referred to as “cram schools” within Taiwan. Taiwan’s seeming obsession with buxibans serves many distinct purposes for the parents who spend large amounts of money sending their children to these schools.

Buxibans commonly offer after school programs that provide food, homework assistance, and English teachers to Taiwanese students. Because of this, buxibans are often used in lieu of daycare. Nearly every buxiban is looking to hire a native English speaker to teach its children. English teaching is not limited to buxibans. Many public schools are also looking to hire foreign teaching talent in Taiwan.

There are obvious differences between the two kinds of teachers. Language teachers at buxibans are often paid hourly rather than the salary paid to public school teachers. Public schools require teaching credentials while buxibans only prefer them. However, there are more similarities between these teachers than differences. Also, the teachers tend to frequent similar websites when searching for employment.

I believe that many of these schools would find far greater success by approaching schools of education across American college campuses. However, my beliefs aren’t going to change market behavior. Therefore, it is important to study how most current schools recruit their foreign talent.

Market Definition

All of these schools and buxibans that are looking to hire foreign talent are fighting a zero-sum game. If a buxiban attracts a teacher, very seldom can another school use that same

teacher. Each school must find, attract, and hire qualified teachers for their students. This can be difficult to do, especially if qualified teachers are unfamiliar with teaching abroad.

Market Size, Segmentation, and Leaders



Online Classifieds

Many buxibans pursue only the established route of posting to Taiwanese websites when searching for new and qualified teachers. While rather uninspired, this method seems to somewhat fulfill their needs.

Tealit

In addition to their tutoring classifieds, Tealit offers teaching classifieds as well. Similar to the tutoring section, there are two different pages for teachers. Their is a “Teaching Jobs Available” section, and a “Teachers Available to Teach” section. Tealit’s Available Teachers section suffers from an even greater amount of information overload than that of the Tutors section.

As of Jan 11 2019, there were 8692 teachers listed on the website.¹⁷ This is an impossible number without a proper search function.

Tealit Teachers Available to Teach (January 11, 2019)

Teachers Available to Teach 外籍教師、語言教師

8692 matches found. Listing 1 to 15.

Keywords

18

Also, as of Jan 11 2019 there were 89 teaching jobs listed on the website.¹⁹ With 8692 willing teachers, there should be zero available jobs on the website. Clearly, there is a major issue in getting relevant information to those who need it.

Tealit Teaching Jobs Available (January 11, 2019)

Jobs Available 教學工作

89 matches found. Listing 1 to 50.

Keywords Search



1. Teach with HESS - Starting rates from NT \$620 - 660/hour

Company: HESS International Educational Group

Full or Part-Time: Full-Time

Location: Taipei City 台北市

When Job is Available: NOW (multiple start dates year-round)

20

Tealit has the benefit of being the market leader in Taiwan. Tealit has the most name recognition, and people tend to use it because people recognize it. The great need for tutors creates a market where customers are willing to deal with this difficulty of usage and the frustration it involves.

The Teaching Jobs Available section seem to suffer from the same “front-page weakness” as the tutoring section. The ads listed on the front page seemed to be removed the most quickly. The demand for teachers seems to logically follow the school year. My market research shows around 125 teaching ads were answered from Tealit over the previous month, and an additional 45 available teachers found work via Tealit. It is very possible that these two numbers have overlap.

Alternatives

ESL Dewey

As of Jan 11 2019, ESL Dewey website had 3164 open positions for tutors and English teachers.²¹ This website does not filter tutoring, buxiban, and public schools separately, so there will be overlap.

Teach Taiwan

As of Jan 11 2019, this website had 300 open positions.²² This website tends to post government positions. This website is unique in that it offers no search function whatsoever.



Craigslist

As of Jan 11 2019, there are 26 education positions listed on Craigslist.²³ Craigslist isn't nearly as popular in Taiwan as it is in the United States of America, but 26 is still a lot of open positions. Craigslist offers a very basic keyword search function.

Facebook

Facebook is awash with alternatives. All membership information is as of Jan 11 2019.

The group Teaching English in Taiwan has 7,905 members.²⁴ The group Taiwan English Teaching Jobs has 11,399 members.²⁵ The group Taiwan English Teacher Job Openings has 19,886 members.²⁶ I found an additional ten groups with a minimum of 5,000 members each. Clearly, Facebook offers a fragmented market.

Facebook does not order post chronologically, nor does it offer a real search function. The fact that these groups have so many members is clearly indicative of the lack of viable alternatives.

Substitute Teaching

Buxiban teachers currently face a real dilemma if they get sick. Taiwan is not a country that believes in sick days or paid time off. Currently, employers only have to pay sick employees 50% of their regular pay if they miss work due to illness.²⁷ Not only that, but buxiban teachers often have to find their own substitute teachers, and pay them out of pocket.

This does seem to be a short sighted policy, as sick employees coming to work will cause further illness to those around them. These sick employees will all experience a drop in productivity far greater than the loss of a single individual.

Regardless of our thoughts on the matter, it seems as if many buxibans do not have a plan in place for replacing sick teachers. It is often the responsibility of the teacher to find a qualified substitute to take their class. The teacher then arranges to pay the substitute themselves, rather than the buxiban. This leads to the sick teacher having to negotiate with potential substitutes, confirm their identity, create a lesson plan, and organize payments while sick. Most teachers tend to go into work sick and infect their young students rather than suffer through the hassle.

The current market offers no central location to find qualified substitute teachers. Currently, Facebook seems to be the preferred method. Multiple groups have been created trying to address this problem. A quick search on Facebook reveals just a few of the many fragmented groups. Many of the previously listed groups also have frequent posts from teachers looking for substitutes, and substitutes negotiating a proper hourly rate. The greatest issue here is that when looking for work as a substitute, or when searching for a substitute, one must post to and check each one of these groups.

Market Summary

There is clearly a need for skilled teachers to make themselves available to prospective employers. This fragmented market is ready for a central location to search for and post teaching jobs. Taiwan needs an intuitive user interface system that can pair willing teachers with open positions.

Job Search & Talent Acquisition Market Analysis



Taiwan is moving its developed economy beyond manufacturing, and into high-skill vocations. Many Taiwanese companies are looking to hire foreign talent, but have no idea where to acquire it. The government has even created a program, Contact Taiwan, to try and pair talented employees with open positions.

Market Definition

This market is defined as anyone looking for gainful non-teaching employment in Taiwan, or any non-teaching Taiwanese company wishing to hire an employee. While SpeakTaiwan.com's primary focus would be pairing foreign talent with domestic needs, it would also welcome classifieds targeting native Taiwanese employees.

Market Size, Segmentation, and Leaders

Online Classifieds

Tealit

Currently, Tealit has 2 non-teaching jobs posted on its website.²⁸ Tealit's homepage is full of photos of "Thank You" notes sent to them from companies that had previous success using Tealit to hire an employee. Tealit's layout and design is a testament to its focus on Taiwanese employers, rather than prospective employees. The lack of an intuitive user interface, as well as the lack of any sort of western styling, is very off-putting to those unfamiliar with the site.

Letters of Gratitude from Taiwanese Businesses to Tealit



While Tealit had previously been the market leader for employers searching for foreign employees, that title now belongs to Contact Taiwan.

Contact Taiwan

Contact Taiwan is a government sponsored resource, managed by Taiwan's Ministry of Economic Affairs, designed to pair foreign talent with domestic need in Taiwan.³⁰ Contact Taiwan is excellent about hosting events whereby employers and potential employees can meet. These are hosted at colleges and other locations throughout Taiwan. Applicants can submit their applications in advance for potential employers to search through. Meeting face-to-face can overcome a great deal of translation issues, and reduces online issues of miscommunication. Personalities can be gauged in person, which is a valuable intangible asset to potential employers.

Like Tealit, contact Taiwan is greatly lacking in their searchable database. They offer many jobs, but searching these jobs, and their requirements, is monotonous, time-consuming,

and often futile. While there is a section in each job description asking for languages required, it is not a searchable or filterable option on the website.



Contact Taiwan's Search

Home

Member Area	
General Setting	
Search Jobs	
Job NEWS	
Search Jobs setup	
Search Jobs	
Matching Result	
Logout	

Search Jobs setup

Add search parameter 1

Keyword	<input type="text"/>
Job Category	<input type="text"/> Please select
Preferred Industries	<input type="text"/> Please select
Preferred Locations	<input type="text"/> Please select
Education	<input type="text"/> Please select
Work Experience	<input type="text"/> All
Pay Offer	<input type="text"/> Please select

※Notice: When you choose two or more conditions, talent who fit all conditions will be listed.

Submit **Cancel**

31

Therefore it is entirely possible that an applicant is shown jobs for which they do not have sufficient language ability.

A Contact Taiwan Job Listing

Language					
Language	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Annotations
Chinese	very good	very good	very good	very good	
English	very good	very good	very good	very good	
Thailand	excellent	excellent	excellent	excellent	

32

Employers lack the ability to quickly and efficiently sort through applicants to find those qualified for their needs.

Contact Taiwan's Talent Search



New Talents

By Location: Please select

By Job's Category: Please select

By Language: Please select

Search

Advanced Search ^

By Preferred Industries: Please select

By Degree: Please select

By Country of Residence: Please select

By Expected Salary: Please select

Search

33

Employers can do a basic search for location, however location is irrelevant when preferred work location is the real question. Employers can also do a quick language search, but that doesn't mean anything if the experience doesn't match up. The website is lacking and leaves both employers and employees unsatisfied.

prospective employees often lack the ability to search through open positions to find those for which they are qualified. In short, it seems that the greatest weakness for Contact Taiwan is a lack of a searchable relational database.

Alternatives

There are many alternatives that offer job listings without any real search function. As of Jan 11 2019, Xpat Jobs had 268 Jobs in Taipei.³⁴ Craigslist had 45 non-teaching jobs listed for Taiwan, which is worth mentioning because every ad has to be posted there specifically.³⁵ Jobs In Taipei listed 1,002 non-teaching jobs in Taipei.³⁶

Facebook

With the lack of reasonable alternatives, Facebook has quickly become a fragmented battleground where different groups try and serve the same people. Hopeful candidates find themselves joining multiple groups just to be sure they don't miss a listing. All membership information is as of Jan 11 2019. The group, Non Teaching Jobs in Taiwan, currently has 17,776 members.³⁷ The group Jobs in Taiwan currently has 13,811 members.³⁸ Facebook

does not order post chronologically, nor does it offer a real search function. The fact that these groups have so many members is clearly indicative of the lack of viable alternatives.



Market Summary

This market may be the most fragmented one yet. Furthermore, there is little information on those websites about the benefits of working in Taiwan, or for a Taiwanese company. It is hard to attract foreign talent when they do not understand the benefits offered to them. It is also even more difficult when they are unable to easily search through the posted classifieds.

General Classifieds Market Analysis



Before moving to Taiwan, I was living in the state of Utah, in the United States of America.

Utah and Idaho are unique, because residents of these states tend not to use Craigslist.

Craigslist is the online classifieds market leader in most parts of the United States of America. Craigslist averages 50 Billion page views per month.³⁹ However, in the states of Utah and Idaho, residents use a news website called KSL.com for their general classifieds. KSL.com is even the preferred method to search for cars, pets, and housing.

KSL.com is preferred over Craigslist because of its improved search functionality, and better user interface and user experience design. Both Craigslist and KSL.com are free to use, cost nothing, and do nothing more than store data in a central location. KSL.com offers the ability to “feature” advertisements at the top of lists for a standard fee. Craigslist has very little monetization at all.

Craigslist and KSL.com both offer sections for items, housing, and vehicles. I would like to explore those sections within this market.

Market Definition

Classifieds can represent the listing of any sort of good or service. Normally, employment listings are considered classifieds. However, as employment listings constitute such a large part of Taiwan’s classifieds, we have covered them separately.

This market is not only for foreigners or the English speaking community in Taiwan. SpeakTaiwan.com is designed to be easily accessible in both Chinese and English.

Market Size, Segmentation, and Leaders

Items Classifieds



KSL.com General Classified Section

A screenshot of the KSL.com homepage. The top navigation bar includes links for News, Sports, Brandview, TV, Radio, Live, Obituaries, Weather, and a search bar. The main menu has options for Categories, Keyword Search, Category Search, Price Range, Zip, Seller Type, Photos, and Listing Type (For Sale, In Search Of, For Rent, All). Below the search bar, there are buttons for Create Listing, My Listings, and Favorites. The main content area shows 'Newest Listings' with three items: 'Adorable Pedigree Pomeranian Puppies Ready' for \$800.00, 'New Costco Plush King Simmons Beautyrest Platinum' for \$475.00, and 'Beats solo3 Wireless Special Edition Gold' for \$180.00. The date '40' is visible in the bottom right corner of the screenshot.

Craigslist.

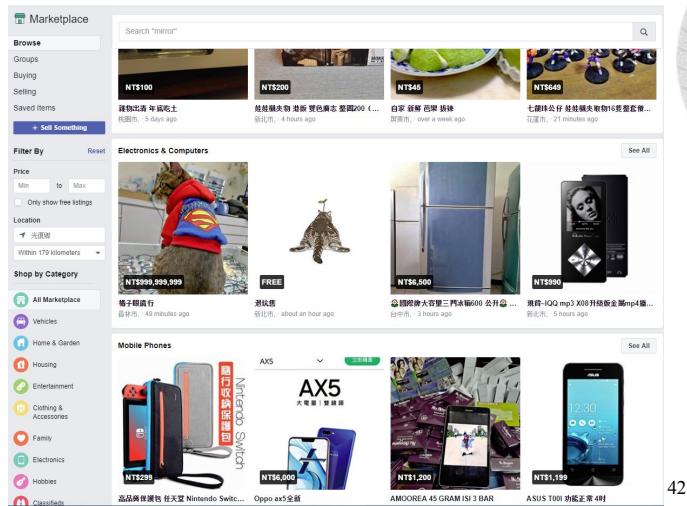
As of Jan 11 2019, Taiwan's Craigslist had 108 items listed for sale.⁴¹ This is worth mentioning because Craigslist is the market leader in the United States. Posting an advertisement requires the creation of an account. Craigslist advertisements require effort, and there are currently 108 of them in Taiwan.

Facebook

A lack of viable alternatives leaves many using Facebook as a place to purchase and sell items.

Facebook Marketplace is working very hard to be the centralized classified platform. However, many people dislike the fact that using this marketplace requires use of the Facebook or messenger app.

Facebook Marketplace



42



Others, finding a lack of success on Facebook's Marketplace, post to specific groups.

Facebook is a poor alternative as it does not order posts chronologically, nor does it have a proper search function. All membership data is as of Jan 11 2019.

A unique group, Taipei: Buy, Sell, Trade, requires all posts to be made in English. It currently has 43,388 members and averages multiple posts each day.⁴³ A different group, Taiwan: Buy, Sell Trade, currently has 21,242 members.⁴⁴ These groups exist on Facebook, despite the fact that Facebook Marketplace exists.

Clearly, Facebook Marketplace is not meeting the needs of the people. The ability to ask and answer questions seems to be a large selling point for the groups. I've even seen people post their classifieds to teaching groups as in the example below.



Changhua English Teacher's Group (Facebook)

The screenshot shows a Facebook group post from 'Changhua English Teachers' Group'. The post is from a member named Thomas Allen, dated January 9 at 10:36 PM. It features a blue Opel Corsa Swing 2-dr car for sale at NT\$55,000. The post includes a message from the seller: 'We bought this from friends a few years ago and it continues to be a fine car. We use it around town and occasionally it goes to Nantou or Taichung. It has 199000km on it. It has never been wrecked, at least by us, and shows now signs that it ever has been. We're going to be out of Taiwan for a bit so won't be using it. Contact me with any questions or to make an offer. We'd like to do this soon. Messenger is best.' Below the message are several photos of the car's interior and exterior. The post has 45 likes.

Forumosa

Forumosa, a play on the words forum and Formosa, offers another severely outdated option to post and reply to classifieds.⁴⁶ It seems to have a small but strong user base.

Housing Classifieds

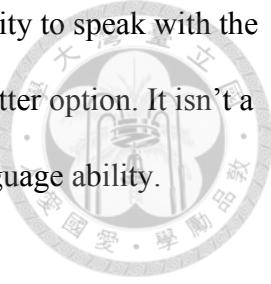
KSL.com Housing Classifieds

The screenshot shows the KSL.com Housing Classifieds search interface. The search bar at the top includes filters for 'For Sale', 'For Rent', and 'Search Living'. Below the search bar are various filters for location, property type, bedrooms, bathrooms, price range, and other criteria. At the bottom of the search interface are two thumbnail images of apartment interiors: a living room with a sofa and a balcony with a view. The page number 47 is visible in the bottom right corner.

Rent 591

When I moved to Taiwan, I needed to find a place to live. NTU does not offer much help for married international students who wish to attend their university. When I came to Taiwan, I stayed in a hotel that I found online for a month. Each day I would frequent Rent 591 and call

the available houses in my budget.⁴⁸ I would use my limited Chinese ability to speak with the landlords and ask about the property. I used it because there was not a better option. It isn't a bad option, but it would be impossible for someone without Chinese language ability.



Facebook

The group, Rental Apartments in Taiwan, currently has 16,564 members.⁴⁹ The group, Looking for Roommates or Apartments in Taipei and Taiwan, currently has 29,922 members.⁵⁰ These groups average 10 to 20 posts per day.

Vehicle Classifieds

KSL.com Vehicle Classifieds

A screenshot of the KSL.com vehicle classifieds search interface. The page is titled 'Find a Car' and includes various search filters: Keyword, Make (All Makes), Model (Please select a make), Year (From and To), Price Range (From and To), Zip Code (Hires from and To), Type of Listing (New, Used, Certified Used), Transmission (Please select a model), Cylinders (Select), Exterior Condition (Select), Interior Condition (Select), Fuel Type (Select), Exterior Color (All Colors), and Interior Color (All Colors). There are also buttons for 'Create Listing', 'Trade In Your Car', 'Browse By Body Type', 'Newest Listings', 'My Listings', and 'Saved Searches'. At the bottom, there are links for 'Print a Dealer', 'Browse Makes & Models', and 'Search'.

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While here in Taiwan, I tried to purchase a scooter. I asked all of my local Taiwanese friends which website I should use to try and find available second-hand scooters. I also asked my local foreign friends who had purchased vehicles, what website they used to find their scooters. I received many different answers.

I am exactly 200cm tall. I am considered very tall in The United States, and in Taiwan I often feel like a giant. Because of my height, I was interested in finding a larger scooter. I have seen many of the 250cc scooters in Taiwan, and I believed that these would be the most comfortable for me. However, I couldn't find a site that allowed me to search by engine size!

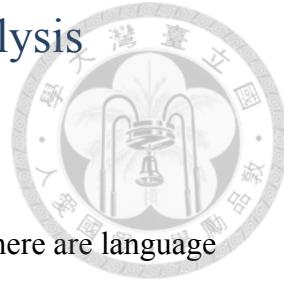
Scooters were grouped into one category, and larger (600cc+) motorcycles were grouped into another.

After a great deal of time and effort, I eventually decided that it wasn't worth my time to try and find a suitable scooter. I decided that I would continue to use mass transit, and that I would rent a scooter when going on vacation. This has led to me traveling less, visiting fewer places in Taiwan, spending less money on the local economy, and having fewer fun memories regarding this beautiful island. Not to be dramatic, but my entire life would have been improved if there was a better vehicles classified available.

Market Summary

The fact that these groups are active and growing, shows that there is a real need for these services. If we could make it easy and convenient to match consumer needs and requests with qualified individuals who can meet their specific needs.

Information & Knowledge Sharing Market Analysis



Market Definition

Moving to a new country can constitute a large amount of confusion. There are language barriers, culture gaps, and ill-conceived assumptions that can lead to great difficulty. Many of those who have chosen to immigrate to Taiwan find themselves without the information and knowledge necessary to succeed. Taiwan suffers with language and culture barriers when dealing with its foreign workers.

Problems facing foreign workers include finding preferred food products, locating a doctor they can understand, searching out recreational activities, or even learning more about Taiwan.

Issues such as finding a friendly English-speaking dentist can seem small, until you have a terrible toothache. How to apply for health insurance. How to apply for ARC APRC. How to pay taxes. How much to pay in taxes. What is legal; and such cultural questions as “Do I flush the toilet paper?” or “Can I drink the water?”

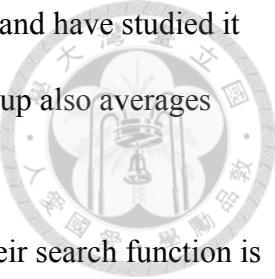
Market Size, Segmentation, and Leaders

Online Information Sources

Facebook

Currently, a large part of Taiwan's expatriate community is using Facebook to satisfy their information needs. A quick Facebook search found two groups regarding information about Taiwan. Taichung Info Exchange is a Facebook group with the written purpose of “This is a place to ask and answer questions related to living in Taichung and Taiwan.”⁵² On Nov 10th, 2018, this group had 8,216 members. As of Jan 8th, 2019 this number had risen to 8,357

members. I have been a member of this Facebook group for over a year, and have studied it throughout that time. This group averages multiple post per day. The group also averages multiple responses to each post, often from different users.



Facebook offers no options to view posts chronologically, and their search function is terrible. Many questions are asked and answered by multiple people, multiple times. There was also a “Taipei Info Exchange” on Facebook that was very popular. However, the person running the group decided to achieve the group, which meant that no new posts would be allowed. Everyone who was in the group had to find a new source of information. As of Jan 8, 2018 this group still had 1472 members.⁵³

[Reddit.com/r/taiwan](https://www.reddit.com/r/taiwan)

Reddit is a hugely popular website, with smaller communities called “subreddits.” Reddit is now the 3rd most popular website in the United States.⁵⁴ It continues to gain popularity domestically and internationally. While reddit is very popular, its user base is far from eclectic. According to Statistica, 69% of Reddit users are male, 54% of users are based in the United States, and 64 percent of users are between the ages of 18 and 29.⁵⁵

The /r/taiwan subreddit offers a “Weekly Questions & Discussion Thread” where users can ask their questions and get answers. Once again, reddit’s search function is far from ideal and many questions are asked and answered multiple times. As of Jan 8, 2018 the subreddit had 23,725 users who “subscribed” to see new content from this forum.⁵⁶ This forum also tries to offer information in other formats. It boasts a very small wiki, a Line group, a Discord group, and a Steam group.⁵⁷

The /r/taiwan subreddit seems to average around 5 new posts per day. The forum seems to be an echo chamber for DPP politics, and pro-KMT users are quickly “downvoted” (an option to lower the score of a post if you feel it does not contribute to present discussion).

The subreddit carries bias, and its wiki is not being utilized. Still, people use the weekly question thread as there is currently not a better alternative.



Tealit Articles

Tealit offers an “articles” section on their website which offers limited information about certain aspects of Taiwan. The articles try and attract attention by working as a catch-all for general topics about Taiwan. They create an article with the winning receipt lottery numbers every two months. Their website is often used by people only to find an English explanation with the winning numbers.

Tealit Taiwan Receipt Lottery Numbers

Taiwan Receipt Lottery Most Recent Winning Numbers

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Tealit is making an effort to address foreign needs in Taiwan, however it is severely lacking. The context supplied is written exclusively by Tealit employees. It lacks diversity, clarity, and requires human capital each time it is updated.



The screenshot shows a search result on the Tealit.com website. The top navigation bar includes links for 'Article Sections 文章類別' (such as ARCs, Working, Contracts, Business, Culture, Health, Learn Chinese, Learn English, Living, Banks & Money, NHII, Shopping, Sports, Exercise & Outdoors, Study & Scholarships, Teaching English, Typhoon Report, Transportation, Travel, Weather, Winning Lottery Numbers), 'Articles Home', and 'Classifieds'. The search result for 'Taiwan ARC offices are offices- the National Immigration Agency' is displayed, showing a thumbnail image of an office building, a brief description, and two small images of office interiors.

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Just Landed

The Just Landed website offers the most comprehensive website regarding Taiwan that I could find.⁶⁰ While very useful, much of the information is out of date. Many of the articles were written in 2013.⁶¹ The website suffers from a lack of updates, which is a result of the content requiring resources. Each update requires paying someone to write another article.

Market Summary

Two of these three current market alternatives embrace forums. It is possible that users would also like a forum whereby they could discuss current news, offer insights, share jokes, and make friends. SpeakTaiwan.com will use surveys and further market research to decide if we should create a forum as part of our website.

Market Research Conclusion

Taiwan has substantial overlapping markets with unmet needs. Most of these could be easily addressed with a centralized classifieds platform with a sufficient search function.



Company Products, Services, and Features

Ideally, the Taiwanese community will find our platform so beneficial as to continue using it for all of their needs. When Gabe Newell, founder of Valve Corporation, was asked about piracy he responded “We think there is a fundamental misconception about piracy. Piracy is almost always a service problem and not a pricing problem.”⁶² I reference Mr. Newell as I believe the question asked of him could be applied to SpeakTaiwan.com. The question being “Why will people visit, and continue to use, your platform?”

I believe that by offering services currently unavailable in Taiwan, and by keeping a high quality of service, SpeakTaiwan.com will never become obsolete. The key is to always offer a more valuable service than the alternative.

Our Services and Features

According to the Utility Maximization Rule, a customer will always choose the product that gives them the highest utility they can afford.⁶³ In terms of free-to-use websites, consumers are paying with their time.

When doing a conjoint analysis, customers are assumed to act rationally. Customers make tradeoffs among attributes, picking the attributes they most value, and choosing the product that gives them the greatest utility. In layman's terms, you don't have to do everything perfectly. A product only needs to excel where it matters to your customer.

All of the markets researched in this paper have substantial overlap. These markets have needs that are very easily addressed with the same web platform. There



At Launch

Improved Classified Search Function

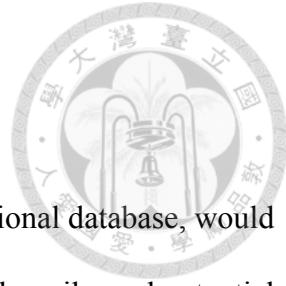
An improved classified search function, facilitated by a searchable relational database, would benefit nearly every market that we have listed. It would help tutors find pupils, and potential pupils find tutors. It would help teachers find jobs and schools find teachers. It would help renters find apartments, and apartments find renters. It would help jobs find employees, and prospective employees to find jobs.

Teachers could have the option of picking areas of proficiency such as writing, reading, conversation, business, poetry, technically writing, banking, and many other specific backgrounds. We could allow tutor searching based on gender to facilitate parent and student preference.

The current market alternatives group time into generation options such as “Morning, Afternoon, and Evening.” This is a ridiculous way to search. We would allow teachers to list, to the minute, their free time. That way, schools and pupils could search for tutors and teachers who could exactly fit their schedules.

In regard to the private tutoring market, our tutors and pupils could specify where they were willing to meet. We could have tutors who were willing to host students at their own home, or pupils willing to host tutors. If we gathered addresses, it would be possible to perform a search based on travel time while keeping addresses anonymous in a style similar to Airbnb.

The benefits to an improved search function are nearly endless. It would be impossible to list every conceivable benefit in this paper. Furthermore, facilitating a better search function requires very little effort. It only requires a sufficient searchable database. As



creating such a database for all information entered on our website is SpeakTaiwan.com's first priority, these benefits are easily within reach.



Profiles

SpeakTaiwan.com would like to avoid, as much as possible, the front-page weakness seen in current market competitors. We would therefore like the user profile to be the classified itself. Each user wishing to teach or tutor would create a user profile. A tutor or teacher could simply choose whether they are looking for work, their available hours, and their preferred salary.

We will allow teachers to post their preferred contact method, such as direct messaging via our website, Line, WeChat, Facebook, or email. We would even offer to act as an intermediary email service - such as how craigslist operates - to reduce spam and solicitation emails. Giving our users freedom of communication encourages them to return to our website.

SpeakTaiwan.com would also encourage all teachers to post a video of them speaking in the language they desire to teach. These videos would be hosted via YouTube, so hosting and data fees would be passed on to YouTube. By removing barriers to finding teachers, to posting advertisements, and to quickly gauging the quality of a candidate, SpeakTaiwan.com can quickly become a market leader.

Substitute Teachers

Teachers who are looking to substitute could put in the distance they are willing to travel, the hours they are free, and the lowest hourly pay they are willing to accept. When a teacher requires a substitute, they could put in the location, time, and pay. SpeakTaiwan.com could then send an email alert to willing substitutes each time a job matching their desired characteristics is posted.

Job Search

Our job search would be better than alternatives by requiring pertinent information to post.

Each post would require the spoken and written languages necessary to be considered for employment. Each post would also have information regarding all other relevant qualifications.

All of these would be searchable by our prospective employees.

Each prospective employee would be able to save a profile with their qualifications, and would have the option to set an alert anytime jobs are posted for which they are qualified. While requiring pertinent information is clearly important to those looking for jobs, it is important to make the experience of posting an opportunity as easy as possible. Job posters will be able to save and reuse general information to save time and increase productivity.

Classifieds

Free, easy to use, and easily searchable classifieds is key to the success of SpeakTaiwan.com. We will model our classifieds section after the KSL.com classifieds section, with categories for items, and a robust search function located at buy.speaktaiwan.com. We will also offer specific classifieds for housing at house.speaktaiwan.com, and automotive sales at car.speaktaiwan.com. All of these pages will be easily accessible from the main page of the website. Nothing will change for the user except the preface of the domain name. This is to help users quickly navigate, and link to, their desired classified.

Wiki

Taiwan suffers from a fragmented knowledge base when dealing with its foreign workers. A Wiki is “a website on which users collaboratively modify content and structure directly from the web browser.”⁶⁴ The most famous wiki is Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia project.

Wiki's have strengths and drawbacks, but many of the weaknesses do not apply when working on objective issues. It is difficult to show bias when writing the steps needed to apply for an ARC, or other informative articles.

Taiwan's current government resources often have English sections, but these are - in my experience - poorly worded and very confusing. I have always looked for other avenues, particularly social media, to find answers to my Taiwan questions. A Wiki could consolidate information and ensure that valuable knowledge is preserved and accessible.

The software required to create a wiki are open source, and therefore free. The most popular software options are mediawiki.org, dokuwiki.org, and tiki.org. Wiki's have moved from a profitable side business for enterprising tech-savvy hopefuls, to big business owned by large corporations. Currently, the largest of these is Wikia, Inc., which is also known as Fandom. According to Crunchbase, Wikia has raised \$145.5 Million USD in capital.⁶⁵

The reason for Wikia's success is because all moderation, information, content creation, and editing is done for free, by the users themselves. The same users who create content also generate revenue by being counted as website viewers and visitors. Many other users will come to visit the wiki, looking for the information added by previous users. Most for-profit Wikis are ad-supported, meaning that they run advertisements - normally in the shape of banner advertisements - to gain revenue and cover server costs. When hosting the wiki it would be possible to host it under a new name, such as wikitapei.org, or to appendix our current site, wiki.speaktaiwan.com.

I believe adding the appendix to our current site would offer the most value, as it would serve to strengthen our current brand. It would help speaktaiwan.com to become part of the common vernacular, rather than a fringe website.

Teacher Aids

This would be similar to the wiki in that it would host user generated content. However, since a great deal of the foreign talent in Taiwan comes here to teach English, it would be focused on empowering English teachers. The website, teach.speaktaiwan.com, would allow teachers to upload and share teaching resources. It would allow users to rate, search and filter, and find valuable content. Taiwan has unique holidays and traditions that require worksheets available nowhere else in the world. The website, teach.speaktaiwan.com, would quickly become a hub for teachers looking for lesson plans, worksheets, and fun classroom ideas.

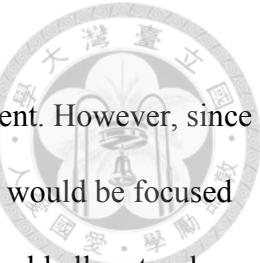
Dual Language Interface

SpeakTaiwan.com will have two different versions, speaktaiwan.com/en, and speaktaiwan.com/tw. Each website will offer the same exact information, with the only difference being the language of the website. Each web page will be offered in Traditional Chinese and in English. Therefore, non-English speaking persons can navigate and post on the website, and non-Chinese speaking persons can do so as well. However, all user-generated content, such as classifieds and the wiki, will not be translated, and will require separate versions.

Future Projects

Tutor Assistance

SpeakTaiwan.com would like to partner with select tutors in finding suitable venues and students to teach unique and worthwhile classes. My wife was a competitive swimmer for over 13 years. She was a successful collegiate athlete who competed at the national level. She was also a swimming instructor for 3 years.



Since coming to Taiwan, many parents have asked her to teach their children how to swim. However, she does not have a suitable venue where she can teach. She has no Chinese ability to find a venue, or to negotiate fees with the parents. Yet, these parents would love to sign up their children for English swimming lessons. It would be a two-for-one opportunity, whereby their children could learn English and how to swim at the same time.

My wife is not unique in this situation. Many foreigners have useful skills, outside of speaking English, that they would love to share with the Taiwanese. Taiwan, as a whole, struggles in terms of creativity. Taiwan's young people often find it difficult to explore creative pursuits, such as learning sports, developing artistic or musical abilities, and other specific interests.

SpeakTaiwan.com would love to help tutors find venues where, and students with whom they can share these talents. SpeakTaiwan.com believes in a future consisting of non-traditional language tutoring. We could facilitate music tutors, athletic tutors, dance tutors, programming tutors, and much more. SpeakTaiwan.com would call these tutoring sessions, activity-based tutoring.

Translation Services

SpeakTaiwan.com will quickly become the central hub for foreign talent in Taiwan. Many of the foreign students in Taiwan prefer the “gig economy” rather than part-time work. SpeakTaiwan.com could therefore facilitate translation services between our talented users, and Taiwanese companies.

Ratings

SpeakTaiwan.com would like to allow constructive feedback between schools, teachers, pupils, tutors, employees, and businesses.



It would be rather easy to start a list of all known buxibans in Taiwan that hire foreign talent.

We could have the teachers review their employers. It is possible that a “conflict resolution” feature, between buxiban and teacher, would also be beneficial.

Background Check Assistance

Currently, one of the requirements for teaching at a buxiban in Taiwan is a background check from the teacher’s home country.⁶⁶ This background check is not needed when working as a private tutor, nor is it needed to teach at a public school, as it is assumed parents can judge for themselves. Therefore, one of the issues regarding finding qualified substitute teachers for buxiban classes is finding a teacher who has a background check.

Currently, the government has no programs in place to facilitate the use of substitute teachers. SpeakTaiwan.com will work hard to petition the government to allow willing, yet currently unemployed teachers, to receive the government certifications necessary to substitute buxiban classes.

Late-Game Projects

International Schools

Eventually, I would like to start an international school similar to Taipei American School. However, there would be no national requirement to attend. All students would be welcome, so long as they had sufficient speaking ability. I would like to place these schools throughout Taiwan, and bring international education to all of Taiwan.

Marketing Strategy

Free



It is my belief, that in order to quickly become the market favorite, that SpeakTaiwan.com should begin as a completely free-to-use and advertisement free experience. Being completely free should help users quickly calculate the cost to benefit ratio of using our website.

Current Websites

The fact that SpeakTaiwan.com will initially be free-to-use and advertisement free should allow us to post links to the website on the groups and forums listed in the market research. By posting the link in a way such as:

I was frustrated by the lack of a decent alternative to these websites, so I made my own. It is 100% free-to-use and doesn't have any advertisements. It offers a robust search function and addresses many of the issues I've found while here in Taiwan. Please feel free to use it and let me know what you think.

SpeakTaiwan.com could be accepted as the wonderful alternative for which it is, rather than shunned as a quick money grab.

Buxibans

It is important for SpeakTaiwan.com to create relationships with the buxibans here in Taiwan. We want them to post their open positions on our website. We will reach out to those buxibans advertising on tealit and other websites and invite them to post to our website. We will also message as many other buxibans as possible.

Taiwanese Companies

It is equally as important for SpeakTaiwan.com to cultivate partnerships with Taiwanese companies. We would do this by searching the ContactTaiwan website for companies wanting to hire foreign talent. We would reach out to these companies and ask them to post to our website.



Taiwan Government

We will also work to cultivate relationships with the government and schools in Taiwan to have them advertise on our website.

Taiwan's Web Services

Many of Taiwan's websites and forms have English language versions that are far from comprehensible. It is possible that we could translate government instructions and forms in exchange for advertisements such as "Translation Service Provided Free of Charge by SpeakTaiwan.com".

News Sources

SpeakTaiwan.com should work with local bloggers and local English news sources, such as TaiwanNews.com and TaipeiTimes.com, to publish stories about the website and attract attention from the English-speaking community in Taiwan.

Local Universities

SpeakTaiwan.com could also partner with local Taiwanese universities in an effort to reach their foreign and exchange students. It is possible that many of these universities would be willing to send out an email introducing their students to SpeakTaiwan.com.

Emulate The Local Competition

Many local buxibans stand out front of schools and wait for the kids to be picked up by their parents. They hand out fliers and pamphlets advertising their local buxibans.

SpeakTaiwan.com could emulate this behavior and advertise their tutoring services in a similar manner. SpeakTaiwan.com could also use this approach to visit buxibans and advertise our ability to help them hire qualified teachers.

Marketing Strategy Summary

SpeakTawian.com's marketing strategy focuses on publicity. It is our belief that the website offers enough appeal on its own to merit use. Once users find the website, they will start to use it. The key is attracting enough people to the website for it to become the market leader.



Objectives

First Year

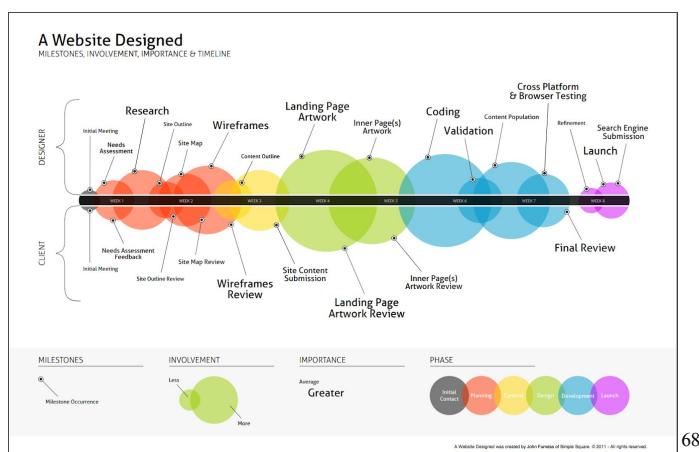
Market Research

SpeakTaiwan.com will begin with extensive market research, through a vast online survey aimed at our target market, about user experience and user preferences. We will use this information to shape our developing website.

Website Development

Website development is an ongoing process. The best websites continually improve their user experience in response to user feedback, and self-evaluation within the company. Current market research varies about the length of time needed to finish a website. This makes sense, as each website has different needs and requirements. Website design consists of strategy development, architecture development, web design, and then development.⁶⁷

Website Development Timeline



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Market Share

Our first year objective is to gain as much market share as possible. I will work with colleges, foreign students, alumni, forums, and teachers to organize as many people as possible to do a

soft-launch. This is where we have the site running, but aren't doing any active advertising.

We want to make sure all of the systems work. We would ask people to post items for sale to help us test the system.



Second Year Objectives

Profitability

Once we have a large enough market share, SpeakTaiwan.com will do a survey among our users. This survey will discuss various "roads to sustainability" for the website. The survey will ask users if they would approve of corporate sponsors, banner advertisements, sponsored listings, or any other viable alternative. SpeakTaiwan.com will then carefully examine and consider all of the survey responses. We will then implement the options that give us the greatest amount of profitability with the least cost of user satisfaction.

Three Years and Further Objectives

SpeakTaiwan.com will continue to listen to users and analyze website data in an effort to continually improve the website. Once the website is profitable, we will begin working towards implementing our long-term goals of activity-based language learning, and international schools.

Key Concerns and Challenges

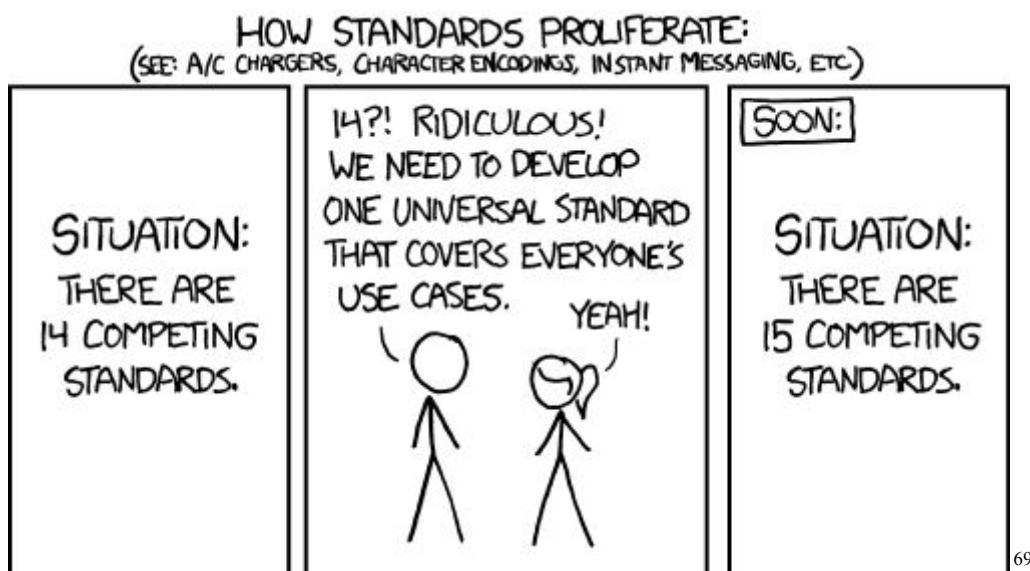


Market Share

SpeakTaiwan.com's success is dependent upon our ability to gain market share. Finding and attracting qualified teachers, schools, and businesses will require real marketing efforts. We must provide proper incentives, through the appeal of our high functionality website, to attract these individuals, businesses and schools.

Further Fragmentation

A key concern is that of only attracting a partial amount of the market. We could then become another competing website, and further market fragmentation. Rather than fixing the problem, we could then, in essence, contribute to it.



However, I believe that this scenario is highly unlikely. SpeakTaiwan.com, while similar to current market alternatives, offers a different value with its robust search feature. Therefore, we are not competing in the same market, as we have changed the market.

Organizational Management

Website

SpeakTaiwan.com will require both website developers and a server administrator. It is important to weigh our options and consider whether it would be better to hire full-time developers, or to use contractors. I believe that with Taiwan's excess of talented individuals, it should be relatively easy to find willing and qualified applicants. The real question is where we will post the job listing.



Wiki

Initially, all wiki content creation and moderation will be done by the SpeakTaiwan.com team. A lot of this can be done by finding useful articles on different websites, and adapting them to our own wiki. This initial content creation is crucial for the wiki to become adopted by users. It would therefore be in our best interest to have as much content as possible. We could then pay a few "content creation contractors" to make specific sites for our wiki.

Ideally, these would be native Taiwanese individuals who understand their country, but who have also lived abroad. These individuals would have no issues understand current government policies written in Chinese, and could then easily explain them in English. We would pay these individuals on a per-project basis, rather than hourly, to encourage productivity.

Wiki Moderation

Initially, all wiki moderation will be done by the SpeakTaiwan.com team. Once the wiki gets popular, we will following the example of other wikis and identify users who are the most active in posting and correcting quality content. We would then contact them and invite them to become moderators.

Financial Considerations



While here at NTU, I had the privilege of having Andy Kuo, co-founder of the Kuo Brothers' Websites, visit one of my classes as a guest lecturer. Andy told us that while his first website had garnered a large user base, he never found a way to make the website profitable. He explained to the class the multiple pivots and strategies his website went through in an effort to become profitable. None of them worked. Andy and his brother decided from that day forward, any website they created needed to have a plan for profitability before creation.

However, this does not mean that a website had to be profitable from day one, it only needs a plan for profitability. In fact, his current seafood websites started by losing money on every item sold. The more items they would sell, the more money they would lose. What was most important to him was gaining market share. This market share then allowed him to become profitable, by using that market share to negotiate lower prices from providers.

Free To Use

One of the most important selling points for our website is that the basic functionality is free to use. Our “market share” is the public participation. Our plan is to gain the attention of both prospective employers and employees. We need to create awareness of our website, through both SEO efforts and or marketing strategies. The majority of site content will be user generated. We therefore want as few barriers to user entry as possible.

While initially completely free, we will have a donation location somewhere on the website. We do not believe that this will generate a sustainable amount of revenue, and therefore believe donations to be short-term unsustainable solution. However, it does allow the website to advertise itself as 100% free, and 100% donation supported. This in turn could increase user interest and market share.

Five Year Plan

Income

Affiliate Links & Product Referral Bonuses

There are many businesses in Taiwan that would like to attract foreign talent. We could partner with restaurants, hotels, vacation resorts, and activity providers to advertise quality entertainment for non-Chinese speakers. SpeakTaiwan.com could increase tourism to Taiwan. We could generate revenue from advertising their services on our website. We could also charge affiliates each time a user clicks on an affiliate link, or purchases something from their website.

There are many household items that people new to Taiwan will need to purchase. SpeakTaiwan.com could review common Taiwanese goods and offer referral links to the best ones. We could advertise these items on the website, and receive a referral for each item purchased. This is actually quite common in online retail. These affiliate links will be placed in SpeakTaiwan.com recommendation articles or newsletters that are sent to those who want to receive them. We estimate 5 people will use these links per month the first year, then 10 people per month the second year, followed by 15 per month years 3 through 5. The average revenue generated per click through is estimated to be \$500 TWD.

Advertisement Revenue

A quick visit to Taiwan's leading language marketplace shows no shortage of advertisements aimed at foreign nationals in Taiwan. I believe that non-intrusive banner advertisements, especially those developed specifically for mobile platforms, will be the most successful form of monetization for our website. Instead of partnering with an advertising platform, we will



speak to companies directly about purchasing advertisements on our website. We will do this because our user base is extremely specific.



This is especially lucrative when paired with our Taiwan-Wiki that offers users a great deal of page-turning material. Restaurants could pay for advertisements in Wiki articles about food in Taiwan. Dentists could place advertisements in Wiki articles about dentistry in Taiwan. The possibilities really are as endless as the topics our users will be writing and researching. Research has shown that rectangle banner ads are the most successful kind of advertisement. We would charge \$300 NTD per 1,000 impressions for these advertisements. We give a conservative estimate of approximately 10,000 page views per day by year 3. This is not a stretch when compared to previously mentioned facebook groups consisting of members in multitudes of 10,000.

Activity-Based Language Learning

This is regarding our late-stage plans for activity-based language learning. SpeakTaiwan.com will work to pair teachers, students, and venues together. SpeakTaiwan.com will charge a small service fee to do so. Local buxibans charge around \$18,000 TWD for a week-long class that meets 3 hours per day. This averages out to \$1,200 per hour. We would like to charge \$1,000 per hour per child. SpeakTaiwan.com's share of this revenue would be 10%. We estimate around 250 children per week will take part in activity-based language learning the first year SpeakTaiwan.com offers the option to do so. The next year 350 children. The year after 500 children. The year after that 700 children.

Featured Classifieds

For the low price of \$300 TWD/day, your ad can be featured on one of the classified pages. This means it will be at the top of the page and listed as a "featured" Classified. The day consists of an entire 24 hour period. It is an excellent value for the price. The featured

classifieds are not for items only. Businesses can pay for classifieds as can schools and tutors.

As the price really is so low, we estimate selling out every featured listing by year 3.

Expenses

Employees

A native-Chinese speaking employee would be very beneficial in terms of dealing with local buxibans, schools, and businesses. This employee would be a native of Taiwan who also possessed excellent English. Ideally, we would pay this employee \$80,000 TWD/Month. Taiwan has an extremely well-educated workforce, so finding educated talent should not be an issue.⁷⁰ After the first year, we will hire a second employee to help with our referral links, and activity-based language learning programs.

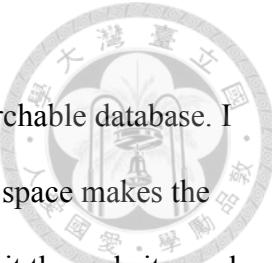
Domain Name

Every website needs a unique Domain Name. This is the unique set of words needed to reach your website. Google.com is a Domain Name. Ntu.edu.tw is a Domain Name. I have found that businesses in Taiwan alternate between using the .tw and .com endings for their domain name.

I believe that to maximize our success, as well as to limit potential IP theft, SpeakTaiwan.com should purchase both the SpeakTaiwan.com and SpeakTaiwan.tw domain names. I believe that having SpeakTaiwan.tw redirect to SpeakTaiwan.com would be best. This would allow our company to minimize marketing expenses while maximizing brand exposure. I believe that purchasing our domains through domains.google.com would make the most financial sense. These domains are offered at \$12/year USD.

Server Virtualization

Our website will require a server of some kind. We will be hosting a searchable database. I believe that since we are a small company, purchasing virtualized server space makes the most financial sense. We will also be collecting the data of those who visit the website, and will need server space to store that information. We also need a server to run our website. There are companies such as Hostgator that offer cloud services with unlimited outbound traffic for \$9.99/month USD.



Corporate Tax Rate

It is necessary to calculate tax when planning Taiwan's Corporate Tax Rate is scheduled to increase to 20%. For companies earning less than TWD \$500,000 this increase will follow a gradual increase from 17% in 2017 to 18% in 2018, 19% in 2019, and 20% in 2020.⁷¹

Pension Fund

Businesses in Taiwan must contribute 6 percent of earnings towards an individual pension fund account for Taiwanese employees. If the employee is a foreigner this amount can be anywhere from 2 percent to 15 percent of earnings.⁷²

National Health Insurance

Businesses in Taiwan must also contribute to the National health insurance. This contribution is 4.53054 percent of gross salary.⁷³

Labor Insurance

Employers must also contribute to a Labor insurance premium. This premium is currently 6.65 percent of gross salary.⁷⁴

Office Space

Office space in Taipei is not cheap. As SpeakTaiwan.com is an online only company, I wonder if an office space is needed at all. If I have zero employees, an office space is unnecessary as I can use my home. It seems as if Taiwan has very few zoning laws regarding where commercial businesses can operate. My market research shows that a budget of \$20,000 TWD a month will suffice. Utilities will be budgeted at \$3,000 NTD a month.



Website Development

Website development has an average cost of anywhere from \$1,556.64 to \$11,145.80 USD.⁷⁵ SpeakTaiwan.com is a relatively simple website, but it is also more complex than a simple blog. Taiwan also has many qualified web developers. Therefore, we believe a budget of approximately \$196,000 TWD to be appropriate.

Database Development

SpeakTaiwan.com will run an open source database software such as MYSQL, SQL Server Express, or PostgreSQL. Large commercial websites, such as Booking.com, run on MYSQL.⁷⁶ The initial fee for this software is the setup costs involved in the website creation.

Content Management Systems

There are many open source Content Management Systems, such as Hippo CMS, Apache Roller, and DotCMS, that support our proposed relational databases. Having a CMS would ensure that we are able to update our website after development.

CRM

There are entirely open source versions of CRM, such as Apache OFBiz, but they require a great deal of local customization. SpeakTaiwan.com would be better off using free versions of popular CRMs, such as BitRix24 or Agile CRM.

Accounting

There are free open source versions of accounting software such as GnuCash and Money Manager EX, but once again the free and upgradable version of paid software is the best option. Therefore, we will be using the free version of ZipBooks.⁷⁷



Mobile Phone & Internet

T Star has an unlimited data plan that includes a cell phone for \$599/month.⁷⁸ This plan includes free calls within the network and 30 minutes free outside of the network. Therefore, we will use VOIP for all non-network calls.

Computers

We will need computers to manage our website, contact customers, and use our accounting and CRM software solution. Therefore we are budgeting \$60,000 TWD for our first-year hardware expense. We will purchase high-quality second-hand computers and monitors. Each subsequent year we will budget \$30,000 TWD for upgrades to our equipment.

Cloud Backups

We will use the free versions of Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, and Dropbox to store backups of any sensitive information.

SEO

Search Engine Optimization is necessary for the success of any new online business. We plan to partner with an SEO service for the first year of our website. We estimate that a campaign will cost around \$15,500 TWD a month for the first year.⁷⁹ After that, organic interest should fuel our search engine rankings.

Merchant Services

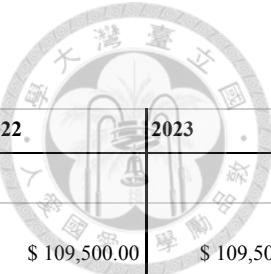
Merchant Services, such as payment processing, should never cost more than 4% of total revenue. Ideally, merchant services should cost around 2% of total revenue. However, we are budgeting 4% of total revenue to be safe. An excellent merchant services partner can help you analyze payment analytics. Hong Kong offers many companies offering exceptional merchant services for relatively cheap.

Residency

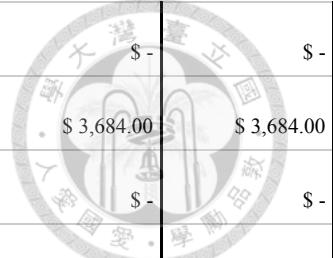
As a non-Taiwanese national, I will need to raise \$2,000,000 TWD to be considered an entrepreneur in Taiwan.⁸⁰ This amount is actually perfect, as my five year plan shows that we will burn through approximately \$3,000,000 TWD before we begin making a profit. I should be able to raise this amount through the three F's of Family, Friends, and Fools.



Five Year Plan Spreadsheet (All \$ in TWD)



Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Revenue						
Featured Classifieds Tutors (\$300/day)	\$ -	\$ 54,600.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00
Featured Classifieds Businesses (\$300/day)	\$ -	\$ 54,600.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00
Featured Classifieds Buxibans (\$300/day)	\$ -	\$ 54,600.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00
Featured Classifieds Teachers (\$300/day)	\$ -	\$ 54,600.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00
Featured Classifieds General Classifieds (\$300/day)	\$ -	\$ 54,600.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00
Featured Classifieds Cars (\$300/day)	\$ -	\$ 54,600.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00
Featured Classifieds Motorcycles 50cc-250cc (\$300/day)	\$ -	\$ 54,600.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00
Featured Classifieds Motorcycles 250+ (\$300/day)	\$ -	\$ 54,600.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00
Featured Classifieds Phones (\$300/day)	\$ -	\$ 54,600.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00
Featured Classifieds Housing Rentals (\$300/day)	\$ -	\$ 54,600.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00	\$ 109,500.00
Banner Advertisements (\$300/1,000 Impressions)	\$ -	\$ 547,500.00	\$ 1,095,000.00	\$ 1,095,000.00	\$ 1,095,000.00	\$ 1,095,000.00
Affiliate Links & Product Referral Bonuses	\$ -	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 90,000.00	\$ 90,000.00	\$ 90,000.00
Activity-Based Language Learning	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 520,000.00	\$ 1,040,000.00	\$ 2,080,000.00	\$ 3,640,000.00
Total Revenue	\$ -	\$ 1,123,500.00	\$ 2,770,000.00	\$ 3,320,000.00	\$ 4,360,000.00	\$ 5,920,000.00
Expenses						
Employee Pay (\$80,000/month)	\$ 960,000.00	\$ 1,920,000.00	\$ 1,920,000.00	\$ 1,920,000.00	\$ 1,920,000.00	\$ 1,920,000.00
National Health Insurance (Employer)	\$ 43,493.18	\$ 86,986.37	\$ 86,986.37	\$ 86,986.37	\$ 86,986.37	\$ 86,986.37
Labor Insurance (Employer)	\$ 63,840.00	\$ 127,680.00	\$ 127,680.00	\$ 127,680.00	\$ 127,680.00	\$ 127,680.00



Website Development (Contractor)	\$ 196,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Virtual Server Costs (HostGator)	\$ 3,684.00	\$ 3,684.00	\$ 3,684.00	\$ 3,684.00	\$ 3,684.00	\$ 3,684.00
SEO Optimization (Partner)	\$ 186,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Domain Name (Google Domains)	\$ 740.00	\$ 740.00	\$ 740.00	\$ 740.00	\$ 740.00	\$ 740.00
Hardware Budget (Computers)	\$ 60,000.00	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00
Mobile Phone & Internet (T Star)	\$ 7,200.00	\$ 7,200.00	\$ 7,200.00	\$ 7,200.00	\$ 7,200.00	\$ 7,200.00
Payment Processing	\$ -	\$ 44,940.00	\$ 110,800.00	\$ 132,800.00	\$ 174,400.00	\$ 236,800.00
Office Space (Rented \$20,000/month)	\$ 240,000.00	\$ 240,000.00	\$ 240,000.00	\$ 240,000.00	\$ 240,000.00	\$ 240,000.00
Utilities (For Office \$3,000/month)	\$ 36,000.00	\$ 36,000.00	\$ 36,000.00	\$ 36,000.00	\$ 36,000.00	\$ 36,000.00
Total Expenses	\$ 1,796,957.18	\$ 2,497,230.37	\$ 2,563,090.37	\$ 2,585,090.37	\$ 2,626,690.37	\$ 2,689,090.37
EBIT (Earnings Before Interest & Tax)	\$ (1,796,957.18)	\$ (1,373,730.37)	\$ 206,909.63	\$ 734,909.63	\$ 1,733,309.63	\$ 3,230,909.63
Tax						
Corporate Income Tax	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 41,381.93	\$ 146,981.93	\$ 346,661.93	\$ 646,181.93
Pension Fund Contribution	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,482.92	\$ 8,818.92	\$ 20,799.72	\$ 38,770.92
Net Income	\$ (1,796,957.18)	\$ (1,373,730.37)	\$ 163,044.79	\$ 579,108.79	\$ 1,365,847.99	\$ 2,545,956.79
Running Total	\$ (1,796,957.18)	\$ (3,170,687.55)	\$ (3,007,642.76)	\$ (2,428,533.97)	\$ (1,062,685.98)	\$ 1,483,270.81

Fire Year Plan Summary

Obviously, the decision to start as a 100% free website with zero monetization means that we will burn through cash. However, our plans to monetize the website should yield profits by year three, and allow us to recoup all initial investments by end of year five.

Conclusion

The online classifieds marketplace in Taiwan, especially for non-native Chinese speakers, is full of opportunity. SpeakTaiwan.com requires relatively little risk and capital to begin operations. Its aims and goals would serve to benefit both native Taiwanese, and resident aliens. Its platform would benefit Taiwanese businesses, the current government, and anyone else looking to hire foreign talent. With real market needs that aren't being addressed, SpeakTaiwan.com could quickly become the most popular English site in Taiwan.



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