

SEO VS PAID SEARCH – GROWTH ANALYSIS FOR A LANGUAGE LEARNING APP

Assignment Type:

Comparative Analysis Essay / Marketing Campaign Report

Subject Focus:

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) vs. Google Ads performance, keyword planning, funnel metrics, CAC, and ROI comparison.

1. Background

A startup language learning app, **LinguaSphere**, offers English, Spanish, and German lessons to South and Southeast Asian users. In early 2024, the team tested **two parallel acquisition channels**—SEO and Google Search Ads—to determine which provided better long-term value and sustainable growth for the freemium-to-paid model.

2. Campaign Setup

Aspect	SEO Strategy	Google Ads Strategy
Duration	Jan–Apr 2024	Jan–Apr 2024
Target Geography	India, Philippines, Indonesia	Same
Content	Blog + Tutorials + Review pages	4 Google ad sets targeting 'learn X fast'
Keywords Tracked	75 organic	25 paid
Budget	₹60,000 for content, outreach & tools	₹1,50,000 ad spend

3. Key Objectives

1. Drive **app installs** and **trial sign-ups**
2. Reduce **customer acquisition cost (CAC)**
3. Achieve long-term **ranking for key learning terms**

4. SEO Performance Overview

Metric	Value (After 4 Months)
Blog Pages Indexed	63
Monthly Organic Visits	18,200
Average Session Duration	2.3 minutes
Click-to-Install Conversion	3.2%
Total Installs (SEO)	582
Avg. CAC (SEO)	₹103.09

5. Paid Search Performance Overview

Metric	Value
Impressions	91,000
Clicks	5,500
CTR	6.04%
Conversion Rate (to Install)	10.8%
Total Installs (Paid)	594
Avg. CAC (Paid)	₹252.52

6. Engagement Funnel Comparison

Stage	SEO Funnel	Google Ads Funnel
Landing Page Visits	18,200	5,500
Clicks on “Download”	1,430	5,500
App Installs	582	594
Paid Subscriptions (30d)	84	77
Cost per Subscriber	₹714.28	₹1,948.05

7. ROI Evaluation

Revenue Breakdown:

- Monthly Plan: ₹249/month
- Average retention = 2.2 months
- Revenue per subscriber \approx ₹548

Channel	Total Spend	Revenue	Net Gain	ROI
SEO	₹60,000	₹46,032	-₹13,968	-23.3%
Paid Ads	₹1,50,000	₹42,196	-₹1,07,804	-71.8%

Note: Profitability wasn't the goal in 3 months; sustainable CAC was.

8. Visuals and Tables Provided

- **Figure 1:** Funnel Comparison: SEO vs Paid
- **Figure 2:** CAC and Cost per Subscriber Bar Chart
- **Figure 3:** Keyword Rank Improvement Line Graph
- **Table A1:** Monthly Metrics by Channel
- **Table A2:** Keyword Plan vs Click Yield

9. Interpretation

- **SEO provided long-term value**, building authority and lower CAC as the campaign matured.
- **Paid search scaled quicker**, delivering fast installs but at a significantly higher cost.
- SEO users showed **higher retention**, while paid users had **more bounce** and app uninstalls.
- Keyword overlap analysis revealed that 9 of the top 15 paid keywords later ranked organically due to SEO effort.

10. Lessons for Students

- **Short-term ROI is not the only metric:** SEO builds compound benefits, while ads need constant funding

- **Keyword consistency:** Targeting high-intent keywords in both strategies is essential
- **Cohort quality matters:** Organic users often convert better in freemium models
- **Both SEO and SEM** should be used in tandem with proper attribution tagging

11. Deliverables to Student

- 3,000–3,500 word marketing report with visuals
- Excel sheet of all tracked keywords, cost, CTR, CPC, CAC
- Google Data Studio dashboard mockup (PDF)
- Editable funnel diagrams and bar charts
- APA-style bibliography of 4 academic sources and 2 industry references