



**International Journal of Teaching and Case Studies**

ISSN online: 1749-916X - ISSN print: 1749-9151

<https://www.inderscience.com/ijtcs>

---

**Launching AI marketing solutions for small and medium enterprises in Morocco: a teaching case study**

Rachid Ejjami

**DOI:** [10.1504/IJTCS.2024.10063025](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJTCS.2024.10063025)

**Article History:**

Received: 17 November 2023

Last revised: 21 November 2023

Accepted: 06 December 2023

Published online: 21 March 2024

## Launching AI marketing solutions for small and medium enterprises in Morocco: a teaching case study

---

Rachid Ejjami

Datacemia,  
15 Rue A. Sitou, Bd Med V,  
20000 Casablanca, Morocco  
Email: rachidejjami@gmail.com

**Abstract:** This teaching case study explores HPT vocational training school's AI marketing department, managed by Moroccan teaching, business management, and vocational training expert Bouazza Bousalham. When COVID-19 hit in 2020, Bousalham, as managing director, pushed the board to create a new department and recruit three data scientists and two digital marketers. Their AI-driven strategies boosted admissions by the end of 2021, and the board tasked Bousalham with extending AI marketing to Moroccan SMEs in 2022. His initial failures in this endeavour caused staff uncertainty about the department's future. Bousalham needed to establish a recognisable brand, implement a strategic marketing plan, and develop comprehensive marketing strategies. Despite early setbacks, he persuaded the board to reassess the department's fate by late 2022, considering closing it or creating 'Datacemia', a new AI marketing firm. This case is insightful for management, marketing, and entrepreneurship students, highlighting AI marketing's potential and challenges in small business contexts.

**Keywords:** AI marketing; SMEs; marketing strategy; marketing plan; Morocco.

**Reference** to this paper should be made as follows: Ejjami, R. (2024) 'Launching AI marketing solutions for small and medium enterprises in Morocco: a teaching case study', *Int. J. Teaching and Case Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp.276–292.

**Biographical notes:** Rachid Ejjami was a member of the Moroccan Ministry of Professional Training's National Commission for 14 years, is a Doctoral student at Ecole des Ponts in Paris, France. He received his Executive MBA from the same institution. Before that, he obtained his Master's in Science and Technology from the Moroccan University FSTE. His educational journey began with a Technical University Studies degree, following a technical high school degree. He also pursued studies in AI and machine learning at the American University MIT. Currently, he is an AI Modeler at Datacemia and a trainer in AI and machine learning. Furthermore, he was involved in the vocational training school CAFP as the CEO and Director of Studies for 14 years.

---

## 1 Case study brief

“Artificial intelligence may make marketing autonomous and marketers courteous.” (Mr. Bouazza Boussalham, 2021)

Mr. Bouazza Boussalham is a successful Moroccan manager who started his business management career in 2014 as a managing director at HPT, a private vocational training school, after three years of experience working as an IT trainer and seventeen managing his own projects. When COVID-19 hit the world in 2020, the school suffered from a downturn, and he persuaded the board of directors to create an AI marketing department in January 2020. He was passionate about business management and technology, so he combined these two fields in his career after his promotion as the AI marketing department head.

To further increase the school’s revenue, Boussalham employed three data scientists and two digital marketers to exploit machine learning, natural language processing, and data mining and learn about existing and future client needs through extracting useful patterns with the help of the relevant algorithms of artificial intelligence. Boussalham and his team used machine learning to segment their consumers based on criteria such as demographic data and high school background, to design more focused marketing campaigns, and to tailor marketing material and messaging depending on the preferences and behaviours of individual students. The AI marketing team also utilised algorithms to analyse massive amounts of data to make forecasts and enhance sales, process social media data and discover trends, comprehend student perspectives, monitor social media campaigns’ performance, and use natural language processing (NLP) to automate conversations within the school’s various social media networks.

Boussalham mobilised his team to use NLP-powered chatbots to automate communication with potential trainees, analyse their feedback, generate new marketing content, target ads to the most relevant audience, and optimise email-open and click-through rates. He and his team used data mining to gain insight into customer behaviour to develop targeted marketing campaigns and strategies, adopt retention strategies, and improve overall marketing effectiveness. Thanks to his successful AI marketing tactics, the school’s admissions increased 30% by 2020–2021 and 50% by 2021–2022.

On the heels of this success, HPT’s board of directors gave Boussalham the directive to sell his successful AI marketing solutions to local SMEs under the umbrella of the AI marketing department. After his poor first half of 2022, the board considered disbanding the department, but he advised them to examine his development by the end of 2022 and either start an AI marketing company or close the business. Eventually, they decided to expand their profit reach into Morocco’s small and medium enterprises (SMEs) market by launching their own AI marketing services start-up venture named Datacemia and appointed Mr. Bouazza Boussalham as its Chief Executive Officer in January 2023. HPT’s new venture, Datacemia, would absorb the school’s marketing operations. Datacemia’s three primary strategic goals included the following:

- 1 design AI marketing tools and AI marketing solutions for SMEs
- 2 develop AI marketing training programs for SMEs and professionals
- 3 provide generalised AI marketing consulting services for SMEs.

Six months into his leadership stint in 2022 with HPT as head of the AI marketing department, Boussalham launched his AI marketing services sales strategy for SMEs in Morocco, where he encountered a common issue with introducing digital transformation within developing markets: a low-level technology acceptance adoption for smart, intelligent products and intelligent services based on Internet 4.0 tools. In the first six months of 2022, Boussalham faced challenges convincing SME owners of the positive impact of AI marketing solutions on their profit margin. SME owners resisted digital transformation to their daily customer services and resisted new organisational learning strategies on AI marketing solutions and products.

To address the digital transformation resistance he found in Moroccan SMEs, Boussalham conducted market research and discovered that SMEs needed AI marketing for data processing by distributing a survey to prospective customers (see Exhibit A). Next, Boussalham consulted his data scientists, who told him that “there are more and more AI marketing tools available for use and others being created, but their commercialisation depends on the willingness of SMEs to implement them”. His marketing team remained steadfast on using AI marketing solutions in local businesses but expressed the need for SMEs to be sensitised to its benefits. Boussalham then benchmarked how SMEs abroad were using AI marketing and found that they were using machine learning to get marketing models, natural language processing to understand client inquiries and feelings, and data mining to develop an appropriate marketing campaign for the Moroccan SME market.

In July of 2022, Boussalham realised that to bring his AI marketing solutions to market, he would need to develop a comprehensive strategy for marketing intelligent products and services to SMEs, a solid marketing plan to break SMEs’ resistance to digital transformation, and his AI marketing solutions as a recognisable brand. Boussalham did not have a well-designed marketing plan and faced challenges introducing AI products and services to a digitally underdeveloped market. His brand legitimacy was lacking because it was new to the market, an unrecognised brand and the tools he used were developed and suitable for an educational organisation. Boussalham indeed needed to find a way to cross over from a digital adoption strategy suited for the education sector to one suited for SMEs in various industry sectors presently resistant to digital transformation. This move prompted him to do in-depth research into the industry sectors where he will market his AI services, their customer base, products, annual operation costs, and presently-used marketing plans.

Although Boussalham improved HPT’s income by incorporating AI into his marketing efforts, he failed in the first semester of 2022 regarding business-to-business (B2B) marketing, as he found it challenging to approach SMEs with the department’s AI marketing services. He could not commercialise his AI marketing solutions because SMEs were unfamiliar with AI tools and did not recognise them as a market advantage to their businesses. Boussalham took the risk of introducing new services to a new market and developing authentic high-tech solutions for SME’s existing marketing issues, which proved futile, even through advertising and networking, since he could not implement the proper marketing strategy.

Boussalham called and emailed most SMEs but did not receive the response he expected because of business owners’ ongoing resistance to new learning and digital transformation for their business activities, including AI marketing solutions.

Boussalham sent detailed information to SME owners about the effectiveness and impact of AI marketing solutions on a business's profit margin. However, he failed to persuade most SME owners he contacted because they lacked an AI culture and refused to adopt one. As a result, his team began to worry about their future within the AI marketing department, fearing they would lose their jobs due to SME's lack of responsiveness. Boussalham did not give up despite these obstacles since he was naturally a risk-taker and tenacious in solving this business challenge.

Boussalham also knew that AI adoption in companies is aligned with national investments in technology. Artificial intelligence now touches several realms thanks to its various applications and is prominent in the average citizen's daily life. However, Marouane et al. (2021) state that amid its exponential growth, artificial intelligence has yet to penetrate several countries and industries, including Morocco. In researching AI investments in the Middle East-Africa region, Boussalham discovered that "Morocco invests very little in this area, with just \$57 million for seven transactions and \$52 million for other transactions, a massive difference from Turkey's \$3,459 million for 252 transactions, the United Arab Emirates \$2,151 million for 160 transactions, and South Africa's \$1,658 million for 134 transactions" [Marouane et al., (2021), p.785]. After thoroughly analysing the business problem of a lack of technology acceptance and adoption among SMEs in Morocco, Boussalham realised that he needed to devise a suitable marketing strategy to familiarise hesitant SME owners with AI marketing solutions as a new market entry product for their company in order to gain them as customers.

Nonetheless, Boussalham struggled to bring AI products and services to the desired market and was under pressure to retain his workforce of digital marketers and data scientists, who feared for the business's long-term sustainability. Despite his tireless efforts to raise awareness of his AI marketing solutions among small and medium-sized businesses, he could not generate enough sales due to the ineffectiveness of his prospecting. Boussalham realised that his strategies for B2B marketing were ineffective when it came to targeting enterprises with new services. Thus he performed a SWOT analysis to assess the most important benefits and weaknesses of the commercialisation of AI marketing solutions to analyse the hurdles involved (see Exhibit B). Boussalham's business growth has been limited by a lack of SME's implementation expertise in digital tools and their distrust of AI technologies.

Bouazza Boussalham had to decide whether to organise an AI marketing campaign to sensitise SMEs about the importance of AI marketing, make presentations about its effectiveness, or attend trade shows to network with potential business partners. He was compelled to consider expanding his products to include AI training programs in the form of AI courses and AI marketing advice in the form of consulting sessions. He was required to create a comprehensive marketing plan to consider the appropriate customer base, customise his promotional techniques, optimise his product pricing, and enhance his performance indicators. Boussalham needed such a comprehensive marketing strategy to effectively work on creating revenue opportunities through brand stretching and increasing profitability by convincing SMEs to seek out his AI marketing solutions and training services.

## 2 Background information of the protagonist's problem

### 2.1 *The state of AI solutions for digital marketing in SMEs*

Moroccan companies have experienced significant sales growth by utilising digital marketing and artificial intelligence tools, which they use to a great extent, demonstrating the positive impact these tools can have on business outcomes (Oukhayi, 2021). Using artificial intelligence solutions for digital marketing by SMEs has allowed them to target their marketing efforts more precisely, resulting in higher conversion rates and more effective customer engagement. Using digital marketing and AI tools, Moroccan companies can create highly personalised customer experiences tailored to each customer's needs and preferences. With the help of artificial intelligence, Moroccan SMEs can track and analyse consumer behaviour in real time, which allows them to adapt their marketing strategies on the fly and stay ahead of the competition. However, SMEs must be encouraged to choose automation and digitalisation in Morocco through cutting-edge, all-encompassing education workshops that deliver top-notch training for experts and managers in Moroccan SMEs (be Isa et al., 2021).

Implementing automation and digitalisation in SMEs can improve efficiency, reduce costs, and enhance customer satisfaction, translating into increased profitability and competitive advantage (Bhalerao et al., 2021). In order to stay competitive, SMEs in Morocco need to stay abreast of the latest technologies and trends in automation and digitalisation, which can be achieved through cutting-edge training delivered by customised education workshops. Filali and Faraj (2022) assert that the Moroccan SME managers should invest in resources to obtain the skills and knowledge required to capitalise on digitalisation's competitive advantages. Although the digital transformation in Morocco is in line with the worldwide tendency of businesses to view digitalisation as a competitive advantage, the evolution of digital practices among Moroccan companies has been slowed by a need for the required resources (Bassim, 2021).

### 2.2 *Challenges to technology readiness and adoption of AI services and products by Moroccan SMEs*

AI marketing is rising, but SMEs may need help to obtain funding and resources to keep up with rapidly evolving technology and enhance their AI-based marketing strategies (Pitt et al., 2021). The high cost of implementing AI technologies can also be a barrier for many companies, especially small and medium-sized enterprises with limited resources. Earlier studies (Ljepava, 2022) showed that the need for specialised knowledge to develop and implement AI marketing strategies can make it difficult for SMEs to compete with larger businesses. AI marketing would enable SME's marketing campaigns to benefit from AI's advantages, but they need financial support to access AI tools and platforms. For managers to design an AI strategy, they need to use the latter to meet the marketing needs in terms of automation and optimisation, as well as the expected benefits of prediction, anticipation, and personalisation (Oberoi, 2023).

Jarek and Mazurek (2019) affirm that managers should consider the possibilities of marketing automation and efficiency by taking advantage of AI capabilities when making an AI strategy. The complexity of AI technologies can challenge SME managers, who

may need more technical expertise to design and implement effective strategies. Above all, most Moroccan SMEs need more willingness to transition to Industry 4.0 because they fear digitalisation and ignore its benefits. They need to be made more receptive by raising awareness of the advantages of automation and encouraged to shift to Industry 4.0. Moroccan SMEs may be hesitant to implement Industry 4.0 because they need to understand the advantages of automation, such as increased productivity and final product quality (El Hamdi et al., 2020). Even if they attempt to transition to Industry 4.0, Moroccan SMEs may need a supportive environment, such as technological infrastructure and expert consultants. In addition, it was discovered that the tools provided by the industry are generally rejected by SME owners, who view them as unreliable, and managers of SME businesses have reported that many Industry 4.0 solutions are already on the market (Rajaa, 2021).

### **3 Historical timeline of events**

- *October 2014*: Bouazza Boussalham starts his career as a managing director at HPT, a Moroccan private vocational training school.
- *January 2020*: Boussalham encounters a downturn in HPT's revenue due to COVID-19.
- *January 2020*: Boussalham persuades HPT's board of directors to create an AI marketing department within the school.
- *January 2020*: Boussalham, head of the AI marketing department, recruits three data scientists and two digital marketers.
- *October 2020*: Boussalham increased the HPT admissions rate by 30%.
- *October 2021*: Boussalham increases HPT's admission rate by 50%.
- *January 2022*: the board of directors will task Boussalham with selling AI marketing solutions to SMEs.
- *January–June 2022*: Boussalham faces difficulties commercialising AI marketing solutions to SMEs.
- *March 2022*: Boussalham realised that his strategies for B2B marketing were ineffective when it came to targeting enterprises with new services.
- *April 2022*: Boussalham has to decide whether to organise an AI marketing campaign to sensitise SMEs about the importance of digital transformation AI marketing.
- *May 2022*: Boussalham conducts market research, consults his data scientists and digital marketers, and benchmarks SMEs abroad who use AI marketing solutions.
- *June 2022*: Boussalham is required to develop a business plan for selling AI marketing solutions to SMEs.

- *June 2022*: Boussalham creates a comprehensive marketing plan to consider the appropriate customer base, customise his promotional techniques, optimise his product pricing, and enhance his performance indicators.
- *June 2022*: Boussalham develops a comprehensive marketing strategy, designs and launches a marketing plan to disseminate information about his services to SMEs, and raises brand awareness of his AI marketing solutions.
- *July 2022*: Boussalham persuades some SMEs to acquire his AI marketing services.

#### **4 The current challenge: the protagonist's dilemma**

In order to boost the sales of his services within the AI marketing department, Mr. Bouazza Boussalham had to choose the channels that would provide him with the maximum level of ease to raise the profile of his AI marketing brand among SMEs, present AI marketing solutions, introduce AI training programs, and give AI marketing advisory services. He needed to develop strategies that would acquaint potential clients with the AI marketing services he provided and urge them to make purchases.

Boussalham was conflicted about which channels he should utilise to offer incentives to attract the greatest number of potential customers for his AI marketing services. He needed to select the best marketing media for his AI marketing services advertising campaigns and use the best metrics to track daily marketing activities. He believed that by doing so, he would be able to assess his brand awareness among SMEs, evaluate the response rate to advertisements about his AI marketing solutions, assess the attractiveness of his AI training programs, and learn about Moroccan SMEs' needs for AI marketing consultancy.

Furthermore, Boussalham had to create a data-driven marketing plan, collect sufficient data about SMEs, and briefly draw a precise road map. He was expected to market his services by launching appropriate advertising campaigns among SMEs, providing the right services at the right time, and following up for performance evaluation. His ultimate goal was to reach out to his target customers and motivate them to act using the four marketing mix components: product, price, place, and promotion.

Should he not have convinced the board of directors that he would be successful by the second semester of 2022, they might have decided to shut down the AI department he was leading at HPT in late June of that same year. They told him that the department would either be replaced with a new firm or shut down entirely based on the results he produced. Boussalham felt compelled to identify the obstacles to commercialising his AI marketing services and set business objectives for the beginning of the second half of 2022. He had to exploit AI capabilities in marketing to meet customers' needs, convince them of the importance of moving ahead with digital transformation, and become a pioneer in AI marketing commercialisation. Boussalham needed to specify every weakness and threat that existed within his department to maximise the potential of every opportunity and strength.



Late in July 2022, he contacted numerous SMEs and compiled a list of prospective customers. In order to convince the latter to purchase his services, he had to overcome ineffective B2B marketing strategies, insufficient profiles, and the lack of relevant patents. Boussalham soon discovered four barriers he faced in communicating with SME leadership: a lack of implementation resources, distrust of artificial intelligence software, lack of data collection systems, and hesitancy with further digital transformation in the companies.

Boussalham needed to develop a business plan attractive enough to sell his AI marketing solutions by capitalising on Morocco's AI-driven business model transformation, digitalisation policy, and *AI Horizon 2025*, the national policy to accelerate AI and digital transformation (Mhamdi and Barka, 2021). It can infer from the article by Mhamdi and Barka (2021) that strategies to reach Boussalham's business goals will be closely informed by the national policy's suggested administrative stages in AI Horizon 2025 to accelerate digital transformation across industry sectors. These target goals included diversifying his services, maximising the use of his networks, developing a qualified team, leveraging cutting-edge AI technologies, and conducting market research to learn about potential clients' problems with any existing AI marketing solutions. Boussalham understood that he needed to relaunch his AI marketing solutions to increase sales and provide SMEs with customised training to facilitate digital transformation and their implementation of his AI marketing solutions.

In short, the challenge questions facing Boussalham are as follows:

- 1 How could Boussalham design a promising marketing plan that would likely pave the way for his AI marketing department to thrive by implementing an inclusive marketing strategy?
- 2 How would Boussalham allocate resources to realistically meet his goal of developing a well-established action plan and allocating the necessary resources to reach 100 SMEs in Morocco by the end of December 2022 and increase the annual revenue by at least 10% annually by December 2025?
- 3 What new human capital resources would he need within his department to support his business goals, and what role would each new job position fulfil?
- 4 What strategies does Boussalham need to develop and launch a marketing plan to convince an anachronistic and hesitant SME marketplace to buy and apply his AI marketing solutions and AI training services?

## **5 Biography of the protagonist**

As a managing director with teaching and business management background experience, Mr. Boussalham Bouazza was able to save HPT vocational training school from bankruptcy in 2020. He did that by creating an AI marketing department that provided him with cutting-edge marketing tools that helped the school restore its profitability. He succeeded in increasing school admissions by 50% at the end of 2021 and started

marketing his AI marketing services to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) ever since. The board of directors was so satisfied that they appointed him the CEO of Dataemia, an AI marketing company established in 2023 to expand the commercialisation of his AI marketing solutions to SMEs. He made a significant career move thanks to the efficient way he dealt with the crisis his school faced with the eruption of COVID-19.

Boussalham is a creative manager who has acquired managerial skills first from his business as a businessman, next from the classroom as a teacher, then from HPT as a managing director. Through running his businesses from 1993 to 2010, he acquired many competencies and skills regarding management. Managing a restaurant allowed him to develop various managerial skills, such as time management, leadership, communication, problem-solving, customer service, human resource management, and quality control. Investing in aesthetics developed his proficiency in financial management, market research, project management, creativity, and risk management. Operating his own transportation company allowed him to gain knowledge of regulatory compliance and strategic planning. His classroom management experience from 2012 to 2014 taught him how to foster a positive and productive environment. Running a vocational training school from 2014 on has taught him how to create curricula and market and promote services.

Boussalham, born in Morocco in 1964, struggled to cope with hardships early on. He stopped studying after graduating from high school with a degree in mathematical sciences in 1986. As the eldest sibling, Boussalham took over the family's affairs after his father died when he was only 12. Boussalham managed his family's inheritance at 16 while balancing school duties and home responsibilities. From 1986 to 1992, he cared for his family while learning commitment and diligence. Boussalham married in 1994 and had two children, Khaoula and Mohamed Amine. He ran his businesses and educated his children for three years after his wife died in 2005. Khaoula is a logistics expert in France, while Mohamed Amine studies IT engineering in Germany. Boussalham remarried in 2008 and has two girls, Nourelhouda, 9, and Arij, 8. He resumed his studies in 2010 and received a Bachelor's degree in IT Engineering and a Master's in Engineering and Information Systems.

Boussalham's determination to continue his education led him to sell his businesses to finance his studies and concentrate on them. After obtaining his Master's degree in IT engineering and information systems, he began teaching. He taught IT in various vocational training schools for two years, culminating in a teaching position at HPT. Through his work as a teacher, Boussalham shared his knowledge and experience with others, helping to inspire and educate the next generation of IT professionals.

Boussalham's passion for teaching and expertise in IT did not go unnoticed. As he was teaching at HPT, the board of directors was impressed by his efficient classroom management style and appointed him the school's managing director in 2014. Since then, Boussalham has exhibited remarkable pertinence and professionalism in his role. His leadership has been characterised by dedication to excellence and an unwavering commitment to providing quality education to his students. Under his leadership, HPT has continued to thrive, and Boussalham's ability to inspire and motivate others has contributed significantly to the school's success.

It is fascinating to see Mr. Bouazza Boussalham, 59, demonstrate passion, perseverance, and an astute sense of business in his managerial career. However, it remains to be seen whether the challenges of AI marketing will keep him as CEO of Datacemia. He began working with HPT's AI marketing department in 2020 when the school was struggling financially due to the outbreak of COVID-19, and he has successfully commercialised AI marketing solutions to Moroccan SMEs since the last half of 2022. Will Datacemia expand into North Africa under Boussalham's leadership? How will he keep up with the ever-changing technological landscape?

Mr. Bouazza Boussalham continues to inspire others with his determination and resilience thanks to his motto, "it is never too late to fulfill goals as long as there is a will".

## **Exhibit A**

### *Research survey on AI marketing needs for SMEs*

- 1 How do you feel about AI marketing?
  - It is complicated.
  - It is promising.
  - It is costly.
  - All the above.
- 2 Have you ever used AI in your marketing activities?
  - Yes.
  - No.
- 3 Is AI marketing a useful marketing tool?
  - Yes.
  - No.
- 4 Why do some SMEs think that AI marketing is only for big companies?
  - They can afford it.
  - They have the expertise for its implementation.
  - They have enormous amounts of data to process.
  - All the above.
- 5 What would encourage you to use AI marketing?
  - Customised AI training.
  - Affordable prices.
  - Easy data access.
  - All the above.

**Exhibit B***Initial SWOT analysis on selling AI marketing solutions for Moroccan SMEs*

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Product diversification</li> <li>• Networking</li> <li>• Qualified team</li> <li>• Cutting-edge technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor B-to-B marketing</li> <li>• Insufficient profiles.</li> <li>• Unavailability of relevant patents</li> </ul>
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AI-driven business model transformation</li> <li>• Morocco's digitalisation policy.</li> <li>• Morocco AI Horizon 2025.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fierce competition</li> <li>• Shortage in SMEs implementation funds and expertise</li> <li>• Lack of trust in artificial intelligence software</li> </ul>

**Teaching note***Case overview*

HPT was the first vocational training school ever to create an AI marketing department in Morocco, and its head Mr. Bouazza Boussalham succeeded in transforming it into an independent company called Datacemia. As a managing director, he managed to increase HPT admissions through AI marketing, and the board of directors took advantage of that success to establish a spin-off technology venture. The AI marketing department was operational from January 2020 to December 2022, and Datacemia replaced it in January 2023. During the first two years, Boussalham used it only to raise the school's income by 30% in 2020 and 50% in 2021. He was then tasked to sell its services to Moroccan SMEs, which he did successfully by the end of 2022 after coping with the hardships he encountered in the first half of the same year. Following his success in targeting and reaching Moroccan SMEs with HPT's AI marketing department solutions, the board of directors decided to set up Datacemia as an AI marketing company and appoint Boussalham as its CEO in 2023.

*Keywords*

- Artificial intelligence.
- AI marketing.
- SMEs.
- Digital transformation.
- Market research.
- Branding.

- B2B marketing.
- Marketing strategy.
- Technology.

### *Potential audience*

The potential audience for this teaching case study could be undergraduate and postgraduate business students researching marketing, digital transformation, and entrepreneurship. Technology and marketing students in developing markets like Morocco may also profit from the case study.

### *Case fit*

In this AI marketing teaching case study, the protagonist, Mr. Bouazza Boussalham, created an AI marketing department to boost revenue at a Moroccan private vocational training school during the COVID-19 pandemic and struggled to persuade SME owners to buy his AI marketing solutions. This case sheds light on all choices students learn regarding a marketing plan, as Boussalham tried several marketing strategies to cope with the school's downturn and SMEs' AI marketing resistance. He first convinced the board of directors to create an AI marketing department and employed three data scientists and two digital marketers. He could, thus, exploit machine learning, natural language processing, and data mining to design more focused marketing campaigns, tailor marketing material and messaging, analyse massive amounts of data, and automate conversations with potential trainees. To teach this case study, one has to introduce the key concepts, discuss the case study background, analyse the challenges faced by Boussalham, evaluate his strategies, discuss the outcomes, encourage critical thinking, provide real-life examples, and assign a group project.

Boussalham convinced SME owners of the positive impact of AI marketing solutions and broke their digital transformation resistance by providing AI training programs and AI marketing advice, creating a comprehensive marketing plan, and optimising the pricing of their services. He, therefore, got rid of the pressure to retain his workforce of digital marketers and data scientists, who feared for the business's long-term sustainability. He also succeeded in selling his successful AI marketing solutions to some local SMEs under the umbrella of the AI marketing department as instructed by the board of directors. After the AI marketing department tactics proved successful in both the school and the Moroccan SME market, the board of directors launched their own AI marketing startup, Datacemia, and appointed Boussalham as its CEO. They took advantage of the Moroccan government's significant efforts to promote AI development to make Morocco a leader in Africa by 2025.

### *Expected learning outcomes*

After the completion of this case study, students will be able to:

- 1 Exploit the impact of artificial intelligence and its utility to improve marketing effectiveness.

- 2 Determine the challenges of introducing digital transformation in developing markets and how to address them.
- 3 Develop a comprehensive marketing plan using a given canvas for introducing new services to a new market (business.gov.au, 2023).
- 4 Create a brand identity and legitimacy for new services (Armah and Attafuah, 2020).
- 5 Leverage customer research and data analysis to develop effective marketing strategies.
- 6 Develop AI training programs and consulting services for SMEs through diversification, according to the Ansoff matrix (Hussain et al., 2013).

In addition to analysing the case study's issue, students should generate at least two potential solutions and evaluate them, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of each option. They need to provide sufficient quantitative and qualitative justification for their judgements. Students can have the opportunity to demonstrate that they comprehend the issue at hand and can develop potential solutions. Remember that there might be multiple answers to the problem presented in the case study. Every choice comes with a set of benefits and drawbacks, and it is essential to have a thorough understanding of each one.

### *Research method*

Secondary data collection is available via open-access business reports on AI marketing, AI scholarly papers, and the website Datacemia.

### *Discussion questions*

In order to stimulate discussion among students, present the protagonist's challenges. HPT's AI marketing department and Boussalham, in his role as the department's head and the school's innovative managing director, faced a marketing plan dilemma and a brand recognition problem. In short, the challenge questions facing Boussalham were as follows:

- 1 How could Boussalham design a promising marketing plan that would likely pave the way for his AI marketing department to thrive by implementing an inclusive marketing strategy?
- 2 How would Boussalham allocate resources to realistically meet his goal of developing a well-established action plan and allocating the necessary resources to reach 100 SMEs in Morocco by the end of December 2022 and increase the annual revenue by at least 10% annually by December 2025?
- 3 What new human capital resources would he need within his department to support his business goals, and what role would each new job position fulfill?
- 4 What strategies does Boussalham need to develop and launch a marketing plan to convince an anachronistic and hesitant SME marketplace to buy and apply his AI marketing solutions and AI training services?

### *Teaching plan*

This case can be taught in a 120-minute class period, and the course may be structured as follows:

- 1 Introduction of the case (15 minutes).
- 2 A brief overview of what Mr. Boussalham did to deal with his hardships (20 minutes).
- 3 The students are divided into groups; each group should discuss the four questions mentioned above (45 minutes).

In addition, for every question, students should provide two answers. There should be a clear discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of each option. Students must have a firm grasp of the problem(s) and the range of solutions available to the protagonist. When faced with a challenging teaching case study, there are typically more than two viable solutions. The advantages and disadvantages of each choice must be made very apparent.

- 4 Activity: a single student shall assume the position of Mr. Bouazza Boussalham, and they will determine the most suitable exit strategy after hearing the recommendations of each group (20 minutes).
- 5 Epilogue, conclusion, and some thoughts (20 minutes).

### *Conducting a discussion about this challenging case study*

- Ask the right questions, concentrating on complex and debatable issues to foster critical thinking.
- Give instances of uncommon, marginal, inadequate, or unsatisfactory responses.
- Try to promote a range of viewpoints and methods because there may not be a single correct answer in every situation.
- The conclusion of the discussion section of this teaching case study presentation and analysis should emphasise the previously described intended learning goals.

### *Epilogue: how did the protagonist resolve his dilemma?*

This instructional case study focuses mainly on the marketing and managerial frameworks that Mr. Bouazza Boussalham has used in his everyday marketing operations. Since he was nominated as marketing director of the AI marketing department at the vocational training school he manages, he has encountered many challenges and obstacles in developing an efficient marketing plan. For most Moroccan SMEs, AI marketing solutions were novel, but Boussalham and his focused team entered this newly opened market with his newly provided services smoothly owing to his management methods. He knew stringent and brilliant management and marketing tactics were required for his brand positioning, yet he encountered some marketing challenges.

Boussalham performed a SWOT analysis to assess the essential benefits and weaknesses of the commercialisation of AI marketing solutions to analyse the hurdles involved. His business's growth has been limited by a lack of SMEs' implementation

expertise and tools and their distrust of AI technologies. He could not do business with SMEs because they did not believe that AI marketing would help them achieve their business objectives. Students can learn how to apply SWOT analysis by observing how Boussalham addressed the threats and weaknesses of his firm by capitalising on its strengths and opportunities. They will eventually be able to examine an organisation's internal and external environments like the protagonist did in the AI marketing department.

Boussalham's marketing plan includes an executive summary, vision, mission, services, anticipated demand, SWOT analysis, market research, business issues and solutions, business competitors, objectives and actions, and a marketing strategy. He offered AI marketing solutions and training services to SMEs and professionals to help them promote their enterprises and improve their abilities. In the long run, he envisioned pioneering AI marketing commercialisation, attracting more Moroccan SMEs, and extending across North Africa. He wished to be remembered as a passionate and motivating manager who turned an AI marketing department into a success and a milestone in AI marketing implementation.

Boussalham's marketing department aimed to exploit AI capabilities in marketing and meet clients' expectations for AI marketing deployment and optimisation. In truth, he intended to extend his marketing methods while assisting small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) with conducting business AI marketing implementation. He provided them with high-quality, long-term AI marketing solutions to boost their marketing efforts while lowering costs.

After analysing his business opportunities and threats and their strengths and weaknesses, Boussalham successfully addressed each threat and weakness. For ineffective B2B marketing, he would approach partners of SMEs and the managing directors of such businesses. He would use LinkedIn as a recruitment tool to compensate for the lack of profiles. As for the lack of relevant patents, he would attend international high-tech events. In the face of solid rivalry, he would use economies of scale. Concerning the SMEs' lack of implementation tools and experience, he would supply them with suitable platforms and teach their employees how to use AI in marketing. To persuade SMEs to trust artificial intelligence software, he would organise weekly seminars to speak about successful firms that used intelligent marketing.

In April 2022, Boussalham conducted market research by interviewing 25 SME managers to identify market demand, gaps, and challenges. He found out that many were not using AI in marketing as there was an overwhelming choice of marketing tools. To solve this issue, he would show them the profitability of AI marketing and offer AI marketing training to them, and he would also broaden his business to reach all professionals.

Boussalham initiated a brand awareness campaign, participated in regional trade fairs, arranged AI training programs, and engaged in additional brand stretching. Moreover, he had broadened his offerings to include AI marketing training and consultancy to monetise his AI marketing solutions. As a unique selling point, he sourced his AI marketing solutions and AI training programs from his department, which also supplied consultation services. To make a profit and remain competitive, he priced his AI marketing services at the cost of development plus a mark-up of 33% and offered discounts to regular customers. He also employed a sales director, whose responsibilities included writing sales reports, reaching sales objectives, and calculating product sales profit. His sales channels were direct for AI marketing solutions and training programs, which accounted



for 50% and 30% of his total revenue, respectively, and AI marketing consultation, which accounted for 20%.

The AI marketing department utilised emailing and telephoning for brand awareness among SMEs, seminars for introducing AI training programs and networking for developing an AI marketing consultancy. Boussalham would call and email SMEs to present his AI marketing solutions to prospective clients and try to push their purchases. He would conduct weekly seminars concerning AI training programs for experts in the marketing industry and small and medium-sized businesses to discuss their contents and uses. He would benefit from his SME contacts to spread the word about the effectiveness of his AI marketing consultation services. He would review his marketing activities regularly, and he would measure the impact of each activity.

Toward the end of 2022, Boussalham saw things start to come together for him, and he got to work on accomplishing the goals he had set for himself. By the end of 2022, the school's board of directors planned a meeting with Boussalham to decide whether to close the department or establish an AI marketing company to take its place. The board of directors asked that he provide them with an in-depth report on his accomplishment so they could properly evaluate it and decide. They assured him that if they were convinced of his success, they would appoint him as the new company's chief executive officer. He anticipated that such an initiative would give the AI marketing solutions he provides a well-known brand name and that his business would gain the trust of SMEs.

During his presentation in front of the board members, Boussalham discussed everything he had done to accomplish the objectives that they had assigned to him. He explained to them that he reached out to small and medium-sized businesses through telephoning, networking, and face-to-face meetings; he had expanded his offerings to include AI marketing advice and training, besides delivering AI marketing solutions. He drew their attention to the fact that he had organised weekly seminars to which he had invited managers from small and medium-sized businesses and had given presentations about his services. He wanted to show the board of directors that he had given his business a clear brand identity in the minds of his target customers by putting a targeted focus on the quality of his services. In brief, Mr. Bouazza Boussalham tried to persuade the board of directors that he had successfully familiarised SMEs with the services he was attempting to sell through the AI marketing department and had compiled a list of leads.

Mr. Bouazza Boussalham's excellent performance in launching his AI marketing plan prompted the school's board of directors to establish Dataemia as a spin-off venture of their AI marketing department and engage Boussalham as its CEO in January 2023.

## **References and supplemental materials**

- Armah, M. and Attafuah, H.F. (2020) 'The impact of brand awareness on customer loyalty', *Journal of Multi-Disciplinary Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 9, p.15.
- Bassim, H. (2021) 'An exploratory study on digital transformation and communication within the Moroccan firms', *Current Journal of Applied Science and Technology*, pp.92–101, <https://doi.org/10.9734/cjast/2021/v40i131235>.
- be Isa, J. et al. (2021) *Analysis of the Current Situation on Automation and Digitalization in Moroccan Industry*, Available at: <https://doi.org/10.15488/11288>.
- Bhalerao, K. et al. (2021) 'A study of barriers and benefits of artificial intelligence adoption in small and medium enterprise', *Academy of Marketing Studies Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp.1–7.

- business.gov.au (2023) *Develop your Marketing Plan* [online] <https://business.gov.au/planning/business-plans/develop-your-marketing-plan> (accessed 15 November 2023).
- El Hamdi, S., Oudani, M. and Abouabdellah, A. (2020) 'Morocco's readiness to Industry 4.0', in Bouhlel, M.S. and Rovetta, S. (Eds.): *Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Sciences of Electronics, Technologies of Information and Telecommunications (SETIT'18), Smart Innovation, Systems and Technologies*, Cham, Springer International Publishing, Vol. 1, pp.463–472, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21005-2\\_44](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-21005-2_44).
- Filali, S. and Faraj, N. (2022) *Marketing of SMEs in the Digital Age: Challenges and Issues* [online] <https://ideas.repec.org/p/hal/journal/hal-03895605.html> (accessed 15 November 2023).
- Hussain, S. et al. (2013) 'ANSOFF matrix, environment, and growth-an interactive triangle', *Management and Administrative Sciences Review*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp.196–206.
- Jarek, K. and Mazurek, G. (2019) 'Marketing and artificial intelligence', *Central European Business Review*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp.46–55, <https://doi.org/10.18267/j.cebr.213>.
- Ljepava, N. (2022) 'AI-enabled marketing solutions in marketing decision making: AI application in different stages of marketing process', *TEM Journal*, pp.1308–1315, <https://doi.org/10.18421/TEM113-40>.
- Marouane, M., Mkik, S. and Kaoutar, E.M. (2021) 'The challenges of artificial intelligence for Moroccan companies?', *Int. J. Adv. Res. Innov. Ideas Educ.*, Vol. 7, No. 3, p.6.
- Mhamdi, I. and Barka, H. (2021) 'Digital transformation in Morocco by 2025: how ADD is catalysing this transformation?', in Torralbo, J.A.L. et al. (Eds.) *DATA'21: International Conference on Data Science, E-learning and Information Systems 2021*, 5–7 April, ACM, Petra, Jordan, pp.231–233, Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1145/3460620.3460762>.
- Oberoi, P. (2023) *How Artificial Intelligence Is Impacting Marketing?*, IGI Global [online] <https://services.igi-global.com/resolvedoi/resolve.aspx?doi=10.4018/978-1-7998-9220-5.ch036>; <https://www.igi-global.com/gateway/chapter/www.igi-global.com/gateway/chapter/317474> (accessed 15 November 2023).
- Oukhayi, B. (2021) *The Impact of Digital Marketing and Artificial Intelligence on the Sales Growth of Moroccan Companies*, <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.21070.18241>.
- Pitt, C. et al. (2021) 'Artificial intelligence, marketing, and the history of technology: Kranzberg's laws as a conceptual lens', *Australasian Marketing Journal*, Vol. 31, p.183933492110441, <https://doi.org/10.1177/18393349211044175>.
- Rajaa, M. (2021) *The Readiness of Moroccan Companies towards the Utilisation of Industry 4.0 Advanced Tools* [online] [https://www.academia.edu/85425502/The\\_Readiness\\_of\\_Moroccan\\_Companies\\_towards\\_the\\_Utilisation\\_of\\_Industry\\_4\\_0\\_Advanced\\_Tools](https://www.academia.edu/85425502/The_Readiness_of_Moroccan_Companies_towards_the_Utilisation_of_Industry_4_0_Advanced_Tools) (accessed 15 November 2023).