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Early Access to Support for Families of Foreign Origin in Japan: An Exploratory Study of Social Work Outreach utilizing Web Advertising

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Abstract

This study reconceptualizes outreach as a preventive social work practice aimed at facilitating early access to support for individuals and families who remain invisible to formal support systems, with a particular focus on families of foreign origin (FFO) in Japan who face structural and social barriers to accessing support information. To empirically examine this form of preventive outreach, the study analyzes the outcomes of a multilingual web advertisement campaign implemented by a Japanese non-profit organization Florence. The analysis draws on outreach activities conducted through Global Oyako Chat initiative, which disseminated support information in English, Tagalog, and Vietnamese language. Data, such as number of ads displayed ($n = 2,643,927$), click-throughs ($n = 18,467$), and "Add Friend" button clicks ($n = 343$) were analyzed and further disaggregated by language, users' gender, device type, and residential area to identify patterns of engagement and access behavior. The findings indicate that, in contrast to conventional outreach that primarily targets "visible clients" whose challenges are already apparent, web-based outreach enables connection with "invisible clients" whose needs may be unrecognized or have not yet fully emerged. This approach can be characterized as a form of preventive outreach, enhancing early access to support before problems escalate. The findings suggest that, when thoughtfully designed and implemented, digital outreach strategies can help bridge structural gaps and improve access to support information for underserved FFO communities in Japan.

Keywords: outreach, web advertisement, migrants, families of foreign origin, digital social

Introduction

Despite the growing number of families of foreign origin (FFO) in Japan, many remain socially invisible within local communities. Structural and social barriers, limited familiarity with administrative systems, geographic dispersion, and social isolation often prevent these families from accessing necessary information on childcare and parenting support. As a result, existing support systems frequently fail to reach those who need them most. As of the end of 2024, the number of foreign residents in Japan reached a record 3,768,977, representing a 10.5% increase from the previous year (Immigration Services Agency of Japan, 2025). In response to labor shortages caused by the declining birthrate and aging population, the Japanese government has accelerated its acceptance of foreign workers. As the number of foreign residents has increased, so too has the number of young children under 5 of foreign origin living in Japan for the mid- to long-term, reaching 118,863, approximately 1.5 times the figure from 10 years ago (calculated by the author based on foreign resident statistics from the Immigration Services Agency of Japan, 2024).

Accordingly, the need for policies that integrate foreign parents and children in society is growing. However, foreign parents often face difficulties due to differences in support systems and customs between Japan and their home countries during pregnancy, childbirth, and child-rearing. These challenges are compounded by a lack of awareness about available systems, differing perspectives on accessing support services, and linguistic barriers (Lee, 2005; Hara, 2013; Nukaga, 2019).

With the increase in the number of foreign residents living in Japan on a mid-to long-term basis, support programs at the national and local levels targeting foreign residents have been increasing. However, it

is difficult to say that these programs are fully recognized and utilized by those in need. For example, according to a survey conducted by the Immigration Services Agency of Japan (2023), of 5,016 foreign residents living in Japan, 93.7% of the respondents answered that they did not know about “Tsunagaru Hirogaru Nihongo de no Kurashi”, a comprehensive information website on Japanese language learning operated by the Agency for Cultural Affairs Japan. Also, 80% of the respondents answered that they did not know about the Lifestyle Support Portal Site for Foreigners, which provides comprehensive information about the lives of foreign residents in Japan in multiple languages. Similarly, 81.4% of the respondents answered that they did not know about the Living and Working Guidebook, which provides information on living and working in Japan for foreign residents. Furthermore, 17.1% of the respondents answered that they had used or knew about the Integrated General Contact Center, a general contact point for foreigners, but had never used it.

As mentioned above, even if support systems for foreign residents exist, foreigners face obstacles in gathering information on support systems. Caidi, Allard, & Quirke (2012) categorized the barriers to obtaining support information for immigrants into “structural barriers,” which include language, understanding of the system, and institutional standing such as residency status, and “social barriers,” which include social isolation, cultural practices, and differences in values and communication methods. Previous studies have shown that when FFO experience difficulties, many consult their family members as well as friends and acquaintances from their home country (Sakamoto, Asano, Hashimoto, Ohashi, & Mizutani, 2017; Saito, Okubo, Tezuka, 2018; Toda, 2019; Saitama Prefecture, 2023). Many foreign residents overcome difficulties in their lives by utilizing social networks consisting of close family members and friends, which is a great strength for people who are building their lives in a new environment. However, other studies have pointed out the limitations of solving problems within one’s circle of immediate family members and friends, and within one’s own ethnic/cultural community. In a survey of foreign residents conducted by the Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation TSUNAGARI (2022), 54.6% of respondents answered that they did not have a family member who understands Japanese and can help them. Furthermore, Saito et al. (2018) and Toda (2019) reported cases in which foreign residents do not have many or any friends who are in the same situation as themselves or with whom they can consult and are thus unable to utilize social networks as a source of information. In Japan, many parents of foreign origin raise children in scattered areas with few other foreign residents, often through international marriages. The resulting geographic dispersion contributes to their social isolation.

In areas where foreign residents are dispersed, it can be difficult for the government to fully recognize the needs of foreign residents, and there are regional differences in the government’s proactive efforts to inform foreign residents. For example, Okanou (2019) analyzed the availability of multilingual information on child-rearing in Japan in ethnic enclaves (areas with a large population of foreign residents of the same nationality), urban dispersed areas (areas with a large population of foreign residents with many nationalities), and minority areas (areas with a small population of foreign residents regardless of nationality). The percentage of multilingual information on child-rearing was 28.4% in ethnic enclaves, 32% in urban dispersed areas, and 4.8% in minority areas. The survey also showed that 19.4% of ethnic enclaves, 5.5% of the urban dispersed areas, and 0% of the minority areas had a specialized consultation service for foreign residents to consult on preschool enrollment and child-rearing. The percentage of foreign residents who had access to information on preschools in multiple languages was 35.8% in ethnic enclaves, 15.6% in urban dispersed areas, and 0% in minority areas, indicating that there is a large disparity in administrative response depending on the percentage of foreign residents.

Although national and local governments have expanded various support programs for foreign residents, these formal systems often rely on individuals’ Japanese language proficiency, prior awareness of available support, and the specific availability of services within their local municipalities, as well as their ability to navigate complex administrative procedures. As a result, families who face linguistic, cultural, or social barriers may remain disconnected from the formal support system, particularly in areas where foreign residents are geographically dispersed. In this context, local non-profit organizations have increasingly played a complementary role by addressing gaps left by formal support systems. Through flexible, community-based, and multilingual approaches, NPOs are often better positioned to reach families who remain invisible to public institutions.

In this paper, the term families of foreign origin (FFO) refers to households in which one or both parents are of foreign origin, regardless of legal status or nationality. This term encompasses families with varied migration histories and integration experiences and is used to capture the complexity and diversity of contemporary migrant and multicultural families in Japan.

Building on this definition, the term children of foreign origin (CFO) refer to children who have at least one parent of foreign origin, regardless of the child’s nationality, place of birth, or length of residence in Japan. This inclusive term has been widely used in Japanese academic literature, policy documents,

and professional practice to describe children with diverse cultural backgrounds (Kobari, 2014; Tanaka, 2015; Nagaro, 2018; Mitsubishi UFJ Research & Consulting, 2021). It encompasses children born in Japan to foreign parents, children who have migrated to Japan, and children with Japanese nationality but raised in multicultural households.

The author would like to point out the importance of outreach by professionals to address language and institutional barriers, the limitations of response by social networks, and regional differences in support. Outreach is defined as “any attempt to take a service to people who need it and who would otherwise probably not use the service” (Thomas & Pierson 1995, p258). Some individuals (1) have difficulty or (2) prefer not to come to consultation agencies (Fukutomi, 2011). Therefore, outreach is used as a method of support for such cases.

However, it should be noted that the term “outreach” has been interpreted in various ways in the domestic and international social welfare field (Arai, 2019). For example, Iwama, Nomura, Yamada, & Kiridoushi (2019) define outreach as “workers looking at needs and actively reaching out to people who cannot request assistance on their own, such as those who refuse services, are not willing to receive assistance, or are unaware that they have needs or issues.” Fukutomi (2011, p34) similarly defines outreach as “social workers going out into the community and their living spaces where people are in need of help to reach them.” In Japan, in domestic social work practice, it is often used with a nuance similar to home visits, where social workers go to those who need help (Takaoka 2013, p16).

Nemoto (1999) organizes the definitions into “outreach in a narrow sense” and “outreach in a broad sense.” Outreach in the narrow sense refers to “a technique in which a helping organization or person actively approaches a subject who has issues and objectively evaluated to require assistance and is socially maladjusted but does not voluntarily seek assistance, identifies the obstacles, motivates the subject to utilize assistance, and promotes problem solving,” whereas outreach in the broad sense of the term includes, in addition to the activities in this definition, active efforts by specialized agencies aimed at (1) identifying needs, (2) providing information, (3) providing services, and (4) engaging in community building.

The non-profit organization OVA (2019) categorizes outreach as “traditional outreach,” in which the concerned parties request support and visiting support is provided by a supporting organization, and “pre-outreach,” in which information and support are delivered to those who are not yet visible to the supporting organization, so that those in need of support can be connected to the appropriate support. The definitions of outreach mentioned in previous studies are summarized in Table 1.

It has been pointed out that FFO raising children in the community may have difficulty connecting with

Table 1. Definition of outreach practice in social work

	Outreach	
	Broader Definition	Narrower Definition
1 . Target	Not yet seen by social workers	Visible by social workers
2 . Applications for Support and Assistance	Not yet completed	Comepleted
3 . Definition	Implementing measures to enhance accessibility to appropriate assistance.	Support providers visit in person
4 . Needs	Includes service recipients and communities with potential needs	Service recipient's issues have surfaced
5 . Approach	Prevention	Problem Solving

Source: Rows 1–3 are based on OVA (2019), row 4 on Zama (2001), and row 5 on Midgley and Conley (2012). The table was developed by the author.

support due to structural and social barriers (Caidi et al., 2012), making it important for supporters to conduct “outreach in a broader sense.”

It has been pointed out that outreach targeting “hard-to-reach people” including foreign residents, is useful both in Japan and abroad. Among information and communications technology (ICT), social media and online ads are being used to deliver support information to targeted groups and to recruit research participants. In previous studies conducted overseas, social media has been used as a means to reach research participants who are difficult to contact using conventional methods. For example, a study used Facebook to recruit mental health research participants (Kayrouz, Dear, Karin , & Titov, 2016), a study used ads on Facebook and Instagram to reach LGBT youth (Guillory, Wiant, Farrelly, Fiacco, Alam, Hoffman, Crankshaw, Delahanty & Alexander, 2018); a study used Facebook and Instagram to reach individuals with bipolar disorder, while emergency workers and their spouses were recruited using ads on Facebook (King, O'Rourke & DeLongis, 2014); a study analyzed the results of contacting transgender or gender-nonconforming people using ads on Facebook (Russomanno, Patterson,& Jabson Tree, 2019); a study used ads on Facebook to recruit long-term smokers (Carter-Harris, Bartlett Ellis, Warrick, Rawl, 2016); a study recruited Latino homosexuals through Facebook, the study team’s website, Craigslist, and matching apps for LGBTQ people (Martinez, Wu, Shultz, Capote, López, Sandfort, Manusov, Ovejero, Carballo-Dieguez, Chavez Baray, Moya, López Matos, Delacruz, Remien, & Rhodes, 2014); a study recruited gay men and women by displaying ads on Facebook and matching apps (Iribarren, Ghazzawi, Sheinfil, Frasca, Brown, Lopez-Rios, Rael, Balán, Crespo, Dolezal, Giguere, & Carballo-Diéguez, 2018).

Beyond research participant recruitment, online ads have also been increasingly utilized to raise target population’s awareness of health information and to promote behavioral changes, such as undergoing medical testing. The non-profit organization FHI 360 and Meta collaborated to utilize social media advertisements to increase awareness and uptake of HIV prevention and testing services in South Africa, Nepal, Ghana, Cambodia, and Thailand, and reported the results (Family Health International, 2023). In Indonesia, a field experiment using Facebook advertisements to promote participation in online diabetes self-screening demonstrated a significant effect on behavioral change (Fritz, Grimm, Weber, Yom-Tov, & Praditya, 2024).

Outreach using ICT to those in need of support in Japan has been pointed out as particularly important in the context of suicide prevention, and the Comprehensive National Suicide Prevention Plan (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2022) mentions the use of ICT not only for face-to-face activities such as “visiting people at home and talking to people on the street” who are at high risk of

suicide but also to strengthen outreach to young people. In Japan, efforts to provide support information using social media and online ads are spreading, but few studies have verified the effectiveness of such outreach activities, and research in this area can be said to be in the early stages. The non-profit organization OVA is one of the organizations in Japan that is actively engaged in the provision of support information using online ads. In particular, it conducts “Online Gatekeeping” activities to guide users who search for suicide-related keywords on the Internet to support information by displaying search-linked web ads and disseminating the results in an academic manner (Ito, Sueki, and Takahashi, 2019; Ito, 2019; Takahashi, Tsuchida, Sueki, Ito, 2020). Based on those results and building on their expertise, in 2023, OVA expanded their support targets to pregnant and nursing women, survivors of domestic violence and other forms of abuse, individuals with substance abuse issues, individuals with depression, and sexual minorities and reported the results of outreach through search-linked advertising (Tokyo Metropolitan Government Bureau of Public Health, 2023; OVA, 2023a; OVA, 2023b).

Taken together, prior studies demonstrate that outreach has been conceptualized in both narrow and broad definitions, ranging from reactive interventions targeting individuals with visible needs to more proactive efforts aimed at identifying unmet needs within communities. Building on literature, the present study conceptualizes outreach as a form of preventive social work practice that seeks to establish early access to support for individuals who remain socially invisible due to structural and social barriers. In this study, web advertisement is not treated as the primary object of analysis, but rather as a practical means through which preventive outreach can be operationalized and empirically examined.

Although prior studies have examined the use of ICT and digital tools in information delivery, recruitment efficiency, or online gatekeeping to prevent at-risk behavior, less attention has been paid to how digital outreach can be theoretically positioned within social work as a form of preventive practice aimed at reaching socially invisible populations before problems escalate. In addition, little empirical research has examined how such outreach can be operationalized to reach underserved FFO in Japan. This study therefore investigates web advertisements as a method of preventive outreach which was implemented by the NPO Florence (hereinafter referred to as “Florence”) for a limited period from November 2022 to March 2023, analyzing who can be reached through this approach and how it differs from conventional outreach practices.

The following research questions were set for this study.

RQ1: What types of users were reached through outreach activities using online ads?

RQ2: What is the difference between outreach through online ads and conventional outreach methods?

Methodology

Method of the Research

This study employs a descriptive quantitative case study design, focusing on web advertisement metrics collected from a single NPO-led digital outreach initiative to examine preventive outreach practices. Supplementary chat-based text data are used to contextualize user characteristics and concerns, but are not subjected to systematic qualitative analysis.

Table 2. Overview of the web advertisements used in this study

Types of Web Advertising	Display advertisement
Target Area	Nationwide in Japan
Target Gender	Male and Female
Target Age Groups	20s to 40s
Device Language Setting	English, Tagalog, and Vietnamese
Web Advertising Placement Period	November 7, 2022 - January 25, 2023
Search Keywords Translated into English, Tagalog, and Vietnamese	(go to)Japanese daycare , (go to) Japanese kindergarten, parenting, daycare, kindergarten, enrollment, child, want to consult, baby, baby food, formula, worry, Japanese language class, park, someone to take care of a child, concerns, struggles, pediatrician, Japanese language

Source: Created by the author based on information provided by Florence.

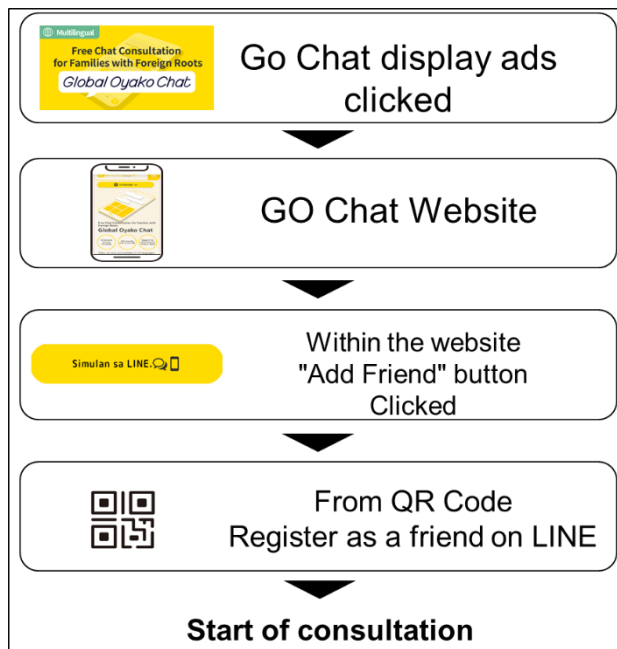


Figure 1. User inflow process via display advertising

Source: Created by the author based on information and materials provided by Florence.

This study examined the results of outreach activities utilizing online ads conducted by Florence aimed at promoting Global Oyako Chat (hereinafter referred to as Go Chat), an online accompaniment support service for FFO in Japan (see Figure 1 and Table 2).

Florence is one of the largest NPOs in Japan that supports families raising children in Japan, doing so by operating a wide range of child-rearing-related services, including childcare services for sick children, nursery school services, adoption services, support for families with needs, and support for children with special needs. Since fiscal year 2021, Florence has been providing online consultation services for child-rearing families with social work professionals, including social workers, mental health workers, and nurses. As part of this program, Florence also offered online support services to FFO in Japan.

Go Chat utilized web advertisement to spread service information to FFO in Japan. There are three main types of online ads: search-linked ads, social media ads, and display ads (see Table 3). In this study, display advertising was examined.

Search engine ads are displayed on search engines when users search for predetermined keywords. Because ads can be displayed directly to users with specific interests, more detailed targeting is possible than with other types of online ads. In contrast, social media ads are displayed according to an analysis of user attributes based on user information and behavior within the social media platform (e.g., Facebook and Instagram). They are displayed in the same format as other posts on the platform and are more likely to be shared by the user's with their followers. Finally, display ads are displayed on websites and smartphone apps based on user attributes (e.g., gender, device language, location) and interests (e.g., past search keywords). Some of the FFO targeted by Go Chat

Table 3. Types of web advertising

	Display Advertising (Used in this study)	Search Engine Advertising	Social Media Advertising
Placement Locations of Web Advertisements	Various online platforms such as websites, apps, and video streaming sites	Search engine results page	In SNS services, such as timelines and search results
Purpose	Increasing awareness	Promoting action	Raising awareness among potential users
Methods of Targeting	User attributes and interests provided by platforms, ads placement locations (content)	Specified search keywords	User attributes, interests, and preferences based on in-service information and actions
Visual Elements	Text, images, and videos	Mainly text	Text, image, video
Potential for Advertisement Content to Be Shared	Low	Low	High
When Advertisements Catch the Target Audience's Attention	Various locations such as websites, apps, and video streaming sites	When the specified search keywords or related terms are searched on a search engine	When engaging in communication or gathering information on social media

Source: Adapted from OVA (2023b). The column order has been rearranged by the author.

in this study had difficulty communicating in Japanese or had different ways of referring to certain concepts; for example, the word “*hoikuen*” in Japanese is sometimes translated as “nursery school,” “pre-school,” or “kindergarten” in English. Display ads were chosen because they can be displayed as text, images, and video in a variety of media.

In this study, banners (several types, including illustrations of cell phones with speech balloons, logos of organizations, and so on) and advertising text (English, Tagalog, and Vietnamese) reminding users of the service content was set to be displayed according to user attributes (e.g., the language of device settings, gender, age) (see Figure 2).

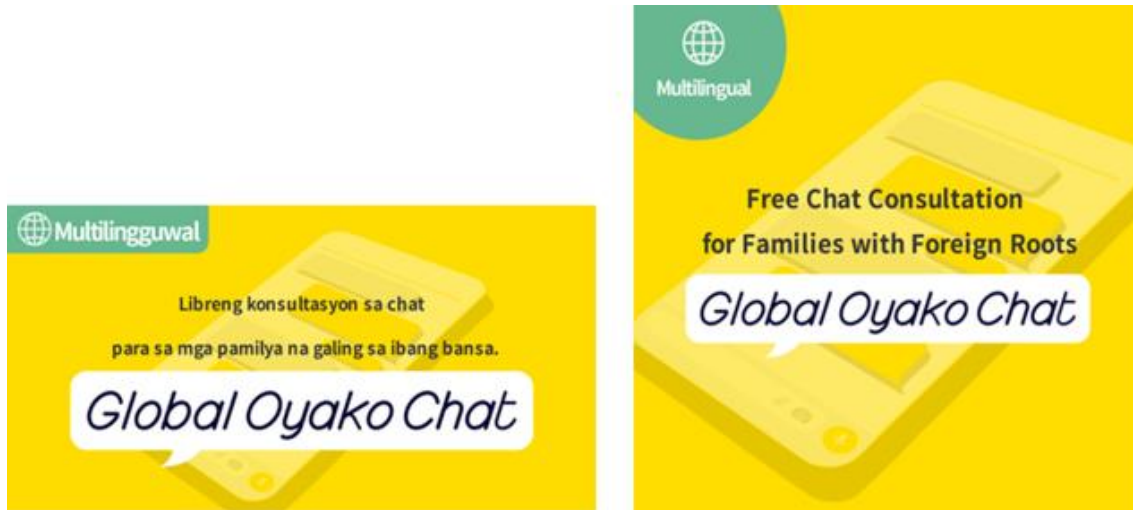


Figure 2. Samples of banners used in this study
Source: Materials provided by Florence

Among users who accessed the service through web advertisements, the consultations encompassed a wide range of issues (see figure 3). In addition to common childcare concerns, such as navigating preschool enrollment procedures, building relationships with other parents, worries about children’s development, and preparing baby food in Japan, users also raised more complex and sensitive matters, including poverty and immigration status. These issues were often difficult to share with those around them and frequently required professional support. Some cases involved urgent health-related concerns, such as pregnant women who had not yet received medical checkups and needed to be connected with appropriate healthcare institutions. The Go Chat social workers responded to these diverse and multilayered needs not only by addressing parents’ concerns through chat-based communication, but also by acting as intermediaries, actively listening to users’ concerns and linking them with relevant local services.

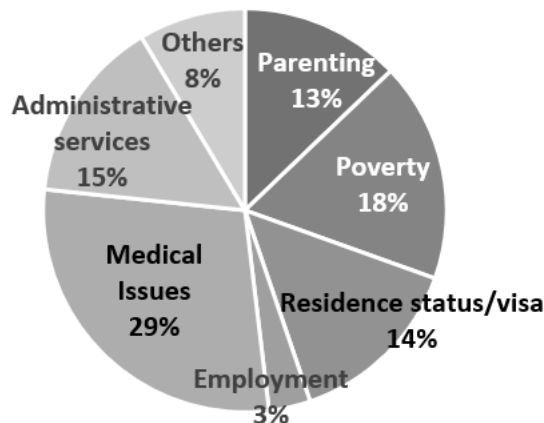


Figure 3. Breakdown of consultation topics (number of analyzed talks: 210)

Source: Created by the author based on information provided by Florence. For the purpose of analysis, each individual user message was assigned a consultation category based on the most representative thematic content. Minimal backchannel utterances (e.g., “Uh-huh,” “Right,” “Got it”) were excluded from the analysis of substantive responses.

Ethical Considerations

This study analyses the service of online interactions with potentially vulnerable populations, including parents of foreign origin raising children in Japan. To ensure ethical considerations, the following measures were implemented.

First, users who accessed the Go Chat service via display advertisement were required to read and agree to Florence’s Privacy Policy and Go Chat’s Terms of Use prior to initiating any consultations.

These documents explicitly stated that (1) users could discontinue use of the service at any time without penalty, (2) their messages would be anonymized and used in aggregate for purposes such as project evaluation and academic dissemination.

Second, this study primarily analyzes non-identifiable, aggregated numerical data obtained from Google Ads, such as ad impressions, click-through rates, and user access patterns. These data are collected automatically by the advertising platform and contain no personally identifiable information. Individual users cannot be identified from these data, and no tracking of user behavior beyond general metrics was conducted. Consultation contents analysis (see Figure 3) was conducted only on anonymized text-based data generated through chat interactions. The raw data provided by Florence was pre-processed to remove any potential identifiers before being made available to the author for academic analysis.

Third, in line with data protection standards, special attention was paid to securing data confidentiality throughout the research process. All data were stored on password-protected, encrypted devices, and access was strictly limited to the author.

Finally, permission to conduct the analysis and publish the findings was formally obtained from Florence, the organization operating Go Chat. Prior to submission for publication, the contents of the manuscript were reviewed and approved by Florence’s project team.

Data Acquisition and Method of Analysis

In this study, Google Ads from November 7, 2022 to January 25, 2023 were used to display ads publicizing the Go Chat service and to collect data.

Results

The results by language (Table 4) show that although Vietnamese had the highest number of ad clicks, English had the highest “Add to LINE” click rate. In web advertising, the number of available ad spaces is limited, and the right to display an advertisement is granted to the advertiser with the highest score, which is determined by various factors, including the content and quality of the ads as well as the bid price paid by the advertiser. Regarding the number of ads displayed according to language, the relatively low number of English ads displayed is likely due to the high level of competition among advertisers submitting ads in English.

Table 4. Number of ad impressions and clicks by language

Language	(A) Ads Displayed	(B) Clicks (B/A)	(C) 「Add Friend」 Clicks (C/B)
Vietnamese	1,765,274	9913 (0.56%)	132(1.33%)
English	214,003	3275(1.53%)	119(3.63%)
Tagalog	664,650	5279(0.79%)	92(1.74%)

Source: Created by the author based on information provided by Florence.

The results by gender (Table 5) show that the number of ad clicks and “Add to LINE” clicks were both higher among men.

Table 5. Number of ad impressions and clicks by gender

Gender	(A) Ads Displayed	(B) Clicks (B/A)	(C) 「Add Friend」 Clicks (C/B)
Male	1,261,574	9537(0.76%)	184(1.93%)
Female	921,564	6176(0.67%)	115(1.86%)
Unknown	460,789	2754(0.60)	44(1.60)

Source: Created by the author based on information provided by Florence.

The results by device (Table 6) show that approximately 90% of the respondents used smartphones.

Table 6. Number of ad impressions and clicks by device

Device	(A) Ads Displayed	(B) Clicks (B/A)	(C) 「Add Friend」 Clicks (C/B)
Smartphone	2,360,694	17485(0.74%)	325(1.86%)
Tablet	141,597	631(0.45%)	10(1.58%)
PC	140,562	346(0.25%)	8(2.31%)

Source: Created by the author based on information provided by Florence.

The results by place of residence (see Figure 4) showed that “Add to LINE” clicks came not only from areas with high concentrations of foreign residents (indicated in dark colors on the map on the right) but also from areas with low concentrations as well (indicated in light colors on the map on the right).

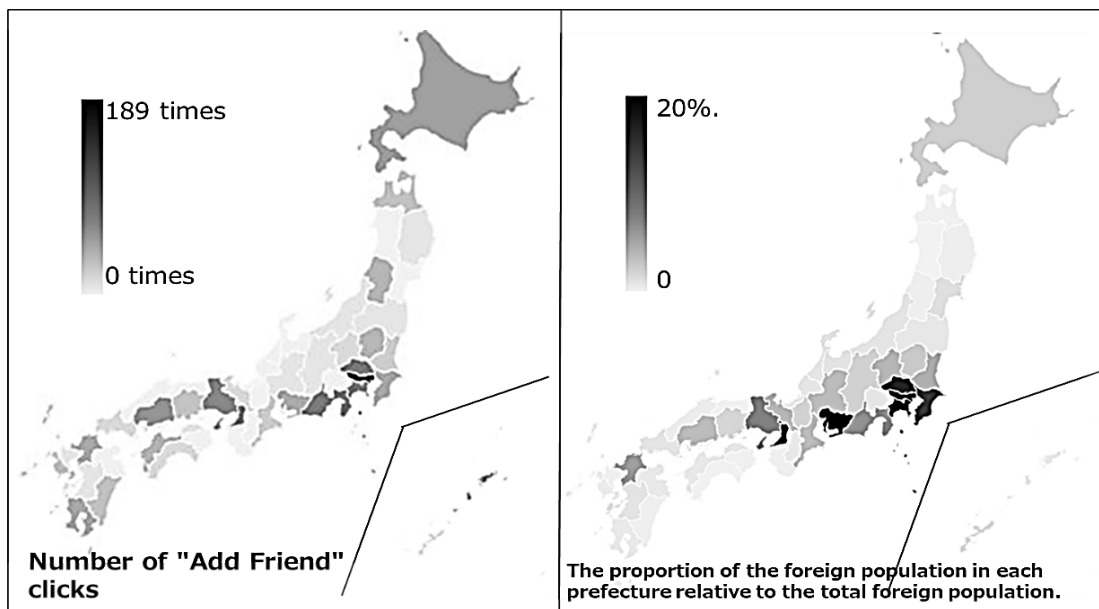


Figure 4. “Add to LINE” clicks by place of residence and distribution of foreign residents

Source: Created by the author based on information provided by Florence.

Discussion

This section discusses the results of efforts to disseminate support information to FFO using online ads, from the perspective of the two research questions.

RQ1: What types of users can you connect with through outreach using online ads?

Through outreach using online ads, it has become possible to deliver support information and connect with supporters to target audiences that are difficult to reach through conventional methods, including residents of dispersed areas where support for foreign residents is scarce as well as male childcare providers and speakers of languages other than English. The English, Tagalog, and Vietnamese online ads were displayed approximately 2.64 million times, with 18,462 ad clicks which led to Go Chat website accesses, and 343 people clicking the “Add to LINE” button to register as a friend on LINE. (1) In terms of results by language, English had the highest “Add to LINE” click rate, including cases where the users’ first language was not English but requested consultations in English. The high click rate for the English ads was thought to be due to an influx of non-native English speakers.

At the same time, the creation of ad banners in multiple languages and the design of the ads with illustrations of cell phones and speech balloons to make the support content visually understandable in addition to the language information may have also contributed to the increase in the number of clicks. (2) The results by gender showed that more men clicked on the ads and the “Add to LINE” button compared with women, suggesting that the use of online ads may be effective in reaching not only women, who are generally the target of child-rearing support information but also men who are engaged in child-rearing. In this study, the gender-neutral design of the advertisements may have also had an impact. (3) The results by device used showed that the majority of respondents accessed support information on their smartphones. This suggests the importance of devising display ads specifically for smartphones. (4) The results by place of residence showed that there was an influx of users from areas with a small percentage of foreign residents, suggesting the effectiveness of display advertisements as a method of delivering support information to those living in areas where foreign residents are scattered, which may be difficult to reach through conventional methods such as distributing flyers and disseminating information via the community of ethnic minorities. (5) Analysis of the consultation content suggested the effectiveness of display advertisements as a method of delivering support information to foreign residents living in areas where outreach is difficult. Analysis of the consultation contents also showed that there were a certain number of consultations unique to FFO, including consultations on residence status and medical care, which were not limited to the general area of child-rearing consultation.

From the perspective of outreach theory, these findings illustrate how web advertisements can function as a novel outreach method that extends beyond the reach of conventional, place-based, face-to-face forms of support information delivery. In particular, the ability to reach individuals in geographically dispersed areas and those who are less likely to access existing support information aligns with broader conceptualizations of outreach aimed at reducing invisibility and structural barriers to access.

RQ2: What is the difference between outreach through online ads and conventional outreach?

The difference between outreach using online ads and conventional outreach is that online ads enable “preventive” intervention for a broader target population who have potential support needs and can connect individuals who are not visible in the community to local supporters. In this study, the researcher showed display ads to subjects with certain demographics, and FFO who saw the support information and the social workers in Florence were able to connect on the online communication platform (LINE), where they provided social work consultations. Because the support organization and the FFO were connected on LINE, if there was an event that needed to be discussed with a supporter, the user could talk to the social workers immediately. Midgley & Conley (2012) note that the “preventive function” of social work been given a lower priority in comparison with the “therapeutic function” of social work. The emphasis of professional intervention has been on “problem-solving” rather than “prevention,” that is, coping practice with individuals and families facing serious challenges. Furthermore, it is important to note that consultations on sensitive issues, such as residency status and living in poverty, often commence only after people have exhausted all other options and have no choice but to request support. This is often due to fear of stigma and other social pressures. This study demonstrates a novel preventive outreach practice by delivering support information to a wide population through display advertising and establishing connections with online social work support before the situation becomes more serious.

In contrast to conventional outreach to “visible clients” whose issues have already become apparent, outreach using online ads is an effort to connect “invisible clients” who may potentially have support needs with professional organizations, and can be described as “preventive” outreach in the broadest sense. As pointed out in previous studies, FFO raising children in Japan may have difficulty connecting with support systems due to various barriers, and there are limits to the mutual help provided by social networks within the migrant community. For such families, the use of online ads to connect them with specialized agencies before issues become apparent and establishing a situation in which they can immediately consult with such agencies when difficulties arise will “increase accessibility to support” (OVA, 2019) for the target population.

Conclusion

The present study has demonstrated that the outreach effort through online ads has made visible the potential clients who have been invisible to formal support providers such as the government. This effort has functioned as a mediator by connecting a local support organization with the populations who might have been neglected by formal assistance. Pawar (2014) points out some of the drawbacks of living in a modern pluralistic society, highlighting the exclusion of certain individuals from the

development of society who are unable to benefit from it. Pawar also notes that in a pluralistic society, top-down anti-discriminatory measures initiated by the state are not sufficient; community development at the local level plays an important role in addressing the challenges of inequality and imbalance within a pluralistic society. People who are excluded and marginalized in society and unable to benefit due to various barriers tend to be invisible in the community. The voices of such people are not easily heard, especially by public support agencies, who may not know where they are or understand the challenges they face. The dissemination of support information through online advertisements serves as an effective medium for establishing direct connections with individuals who encounter challenges in accessing formal support due to various barriers and living in isolation. This approach also aims to address the stigma associated with seeking professional consultations.

The main limitation of this study is that it focused solely on the analysis of outcomes related to the dissemination of support information through display advertising for a small-scale, time-limited online social work consultation project implemented by Florence. Given this constraint, future research should continue to explore and evaluate online outreach strategies and support information-dissemination methods targeting FFO, considering variations in language, advertising methods, geographic areas, and message/banner design. Such efforts should take into account the methodological limitations identified in this study. Nevertheless, this study represents an initial step in addressing a significant gap in the literature, as few existing studies have examined the effectiveness of web advertising in promoting support information for FFO in Japan.

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