

Analysing Call-to-Action (CTA) Design in Sign Language Content on Social Media in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the effectiveness of Call to Action (CTA) design in Malaysian Sign Language (MSL) content on social media platforms, focusing on accessibility for the Deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) community. Many sign language campaigns in Malaysia still rely heavily on plain text-based CTAs, which limits their ability to engage DHH audiences effectively. In a digital era where social media plays a key role in education and public outreach, the absence of visually accessible CTAs presents a significant barrier to inclusion. To address this issue, this study employed a qualitative content analysis of ten purposively selected social media posts—five from TikTok and five from Instagram—featuring sign language content related to awareness and education. The analysis was guided by five core CTA principles: intuitiveness, aesthetic appeal, attention-grabbing features, low design friction, and clarity. The results revealed that posts with visually integrated CTAs, such as QR codes and direct phrases like “Register here” were more effective in prompting user action. TikTok posts demonstrated stronger engagement due to dynamic visual elements, while Instagram posts often lacked visual cues and emotional tone. Although most posts followed a clean visual structure, few utilized storytelling or motion graphics to improve clarity. The study concludes that incorporating intentional visual design in CTA elements can significantly enhance inclusivity and interaction, helping sign language content resonate more effectively with both DHH individuals and the public.

Keywords: Call-to-action, Sign language, Social Media Content.



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1 INTRODUCTION

Call-to-Action (CTA) design plays a crucial role in digital engagement, guiding users to take specific actions, whether signing up, sharing content, or exploring further. Traditionally, CTAs rely on buttons, links, or visual prompts, but their effectiveness hinges on thoughtful design. Mejtoft et al. (2021) emphasize that the most successful CTAs are intuitive, transparent, and visually appealing, reducing friction while building trust. Research suggests that CTAs can also inspire deeper user engagement by enhancing social interaction and community participation, especially when paired with visually appealing content (Oltra et al., 2021). However, a critical gap remains in how these design principles are implemented in Malaysian sign language content, often failing to meet the expectations of the DHH community. Many CTAs targeting Deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) audiences still default to text-heavy formats, overlooking the visual communication needs central to this community.

An effective CTA does more than prompt action; it creates a seamless, inclusive experience. Research highlights five key traits of successful CTAs: intuitiveness, aesthetic appeal, attention-grabbing design, low design friction, and high explainability and honesty (Mejtoft et al., 2021). When applied to sign language content, these traits can help transform static campaigns into interactive and inclusive platforms. However, sign language content in Malaysia still often lacks these features. Studies

show that many awareness efforts rely primarily on plain text, which limits their ability to engage and inform DHH audiences effectively (Ahmad Mustafa et al., 2023).

This challenge is further compounded by limited public understanding of Bahasa Isyarat Malaysia (BIM), the official sign language and natural means of communication for the Malaysian Deaf community (Sardi et al., 2022; Chong, 2018). In English-language contexts, BIM is often referred to as Malaysian Sign Language (MSL), both terms describe the same visual-gestural language and are used interchangeably in academic literature. Unlike spoken Malay, BIM/MSL has its own grammar, sentence structure, and linguistic rules, distinguishing it clearly from Kod Tangan Bahasa Malaysia (KTBM), which is a manually coded system created for classroom use (Chong, 2018). It follows the structure of the Malay language, using signs and fingerspelling to assist Deaf students in learning written Malay. However, KTBM lacks the natural fluency and expressive depth of BIM/MSL as used in everyday life (Sardi et al., 2022). Motion graphics and visual storytelling techniques have been shown to support comprehension among DHH learners (Musa, 2024), yet these strategies remain underutilized in CTA design. Without visually intuitive CTAs, social media campaigns risk alienating the very communities they aim to support. The deaf community's access to BIM in mass and social media remains limited, contributing to the lack of inclusive communication strategies (Chong, 2018).

In conclusion, rethinking CTA design through accessibility principles is vital for improving inclusion in sign language content on Malaysian social media. By adopting visually engaging, low-friction CTAs that align with the needs of DHH users, content creators can ensure that messages are not only seen but understood. To be truly effective, CTAs must be designed with the audience in mind, especially when that audience communicates visually.

2 LITERATURE REVIEWS

Call-to-Action (CTA) design plays a critical role in visual communication, especially on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. It helps guide users toward actions like engaging with content, following accounts, or accessing linked resources. For sign language content, however, CTA design often lacks the visual clarity and accessibility needed to effectively reach Deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) users. This gap in visual accessibility echoes findings in education, where DHH learners face similar barriers due to limited access to materials in BIM (Ismalyza et al., 2024). Research highlights the importance of visual communication for DHH individuals (Musa, 2024), yet many CTAs in Malaysian sign language content rely heavily on plain text. Text-heavy communication fails to support DHH learners' preferences for visual materials and BIM-based explanation (Ismalyza et al., 2024). This mismatch between the communication mode of the content and the design of its CTAs poses a significant barrier to inclusive engagement, creating missed opportunities for awareness and community participation (Ismalyza et al., 2024).

In response to this gap, this study conducted a qualitative content analysis of 10 samples, 5 from TikTok and 5 from Instagram, that feature Malaysian Sign Language (MSL) content. The samples were examined using CTA design criteria proposed by Mejtoft et al. (2021), including intuitiveness, honesty and clarity, aesthetic appeal, attention-grabbing features, and appropriate design friction. The analysis identified trends across platforms: Instagram CTAs were generally static and text-dependent, often placed in captions or hashtags without visual prompts. In contrast, TikTok content showed more experimentation, using motion graphics and gestures to guide user actions. However, even in TikTok samples, there was a lack of consistency in design, with visual CTAs often poorly placed or not clearly linked to the intended action.

A review of the literature reveals both potential and limitations in current approaches. For example, Setyawan et al. (2024) found that motion graphics can significantly enhance comprehension among DHH users in educational settings. Similarly, Sardi et al. (2022) noted that the general public's limited knowledge of MSL contributes to communication gaps, suggesting that better-designed CTAs could help bridge this divide. Despite growing recognition of the value of accessible design, many content

creators lack awareness or resources to implement inclusive CTA strategies effectively. A lack of formal training in sign language among educators reflects a broader gap in accessibility design; similarly, many digital content creators lack the resources or awareness to develop CTAs that accommodate DHH communication needs (Izuli et al., 2020, p. 21). This points to a broader challenge in digital inclusion: while some creators are beginning to adopt visual approaches, most still default to text-heavy methods, which fail to meet the needs of DHH audiences.

This study is grounded in visual communication theory and the CTA framework developed by Mejtoft et al. (2021), offering a structured lens through which to analyse digital sign language content. The qualitative method enables an in-depth exploration of how CTA elements are used, or neglected, on platforms that prioritize visual storytelling. By identifying design gaps and inconsistencies, the research aims to inform best practices that make CTAs more effective, intuitive, and inclusive for DHH users. This not only supports broader accessibility goals but also contributes to more engaging and equitable communication across Malaysian social media platforms.

2.1 Understanding Call-To-Action (CTA) Design

Call-to-Action (CTA) elements are strategic prompts used to guide user behaviour. They typically appear in the form of buttons, links, or visual cues and are used extensively in marketing, web interfaces, and multimedia communication. According to Mejtoft et al. (2021), effective CTAs share five main characteristics: intuitiveness, aesthetic appeal, attention-grabbing features, low design friction, and clarity. These components work in tandem to improve usability and encourage audience interaction without cognitive effort.

In digital media, particularly on social platforms, CTAs serve not only functional but also persuasive roles. They are crafted to trigger psychological responses such as curiosity or urgency. Despite these design strategies, CTAs in sign language content often remain text-heavy or poorly positioned, making them less effective for DHH users who rely on visual modes of communication. Clear CTA messages ensure that users understand the intended action and feel motivated to follow through, highlighting clarity as a key factor in conversion (Dindar, 2024). Although not focused on sign language, Ahmad Mustafa et al. (2023) emphasize that relying solely on text increases confusion and reduces clarity, highlighting the broader importance of integrating visual elements to improve communication effectiveness.

2.2 Understanding Call-To-Action (CTA) Design

Malaysian Sign Language (BIM/MSL) is the primary mode of communication within the Deaf community in Malaysia. Unlike written or spoken language, BIM/MSL is inherently visual and spatial, depending on hand shapes, movements, facial expressions, and body language. As such, the integration of text-based CTAs without visual synchronization often results in miscommunication or disengagement.

Studies have shown that sign language users process information differently compared to hearing individuals. Sardi et al. (2022) argue that limited public knowledge of BIM/MSL hinders the creation of inclusive content. Content creators unfamiliar with the visual-linguistic structure of BIM/MSL may overlook essential visual cues, leading to CTAs that are not aligned with the natural flow of sign language communication. Furthermore, the use of manually coded systems like KTBM in place of natural sign language can lead to confusion and reduce message clarity. These barriers not only affect comprehension but also diminish the effectiveness of outreach efforts and awareness campaigns.

2.3 Call-To-Action Implementation in Sign Language Content

One of the main challenges in designing CTAs for sign language media is the lack of integration between visual storytelling and interactive elements. While platforms like TikTok and Instagram have enabled broader access to sign language content, many CTAs are still placed in captions or end screens, separate from the main visual narrative. Ahmad Mustafa et al. (2023) noted that most content creators continue to use conventional CTA formats such as “link in bio” or plain text overlays, which may not be visually intuitive for BIM/MSL users focused on dynamic hand movements and expressions.

Furthermore, current design practices seldom include motion graphics or icons that are tailored to the visual processing styles of DHH audiences. This reflects broader findings that CTA elements with strong visuals and urgency can significantly increase impulsive interaction and click-through behaviour (Dindar, 2024). Mejtoft et al. (2021) suggest that for CTAs to be effective, they must minimize cognitive effort and enhance usability. However, in sign language videos, static or unsynchronized text CTAs can interrupt visual flow—especially when not designed to complement the signer’s movement or facial cues. This challenge is amplified when creators unknowingly treat BIM/MSL and KTBM as interchangeable systems, overlooking the need for fluid, visually engaging communication in Deaf-centred media.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To explore the effectiveness of Call-to-Action (CTA) design in Malaysian sign language content, this study adopts a qualitative content analysis approach. Content analysis is well-suited for examining visual and communicative patterns within digital media, particularly when assessing user engagement and design features (Mejtoft et al., 2021). A total of 10 social media postings were purposively selected—five from TikTok and five from Instagram—reflecting their popularity among Malaysian users and their frequent use for public awareness and community outreach. The selected postings feature content presented in Malaysian Sign Language (BIM/MSL), covering themes such as education, health messaging, and social inclusion. Each sample was analysed using the CTA framework developed by Mejtoft et al. (2021), which includes five core design principles: intuitiveness, aesthetic appeal, attention-grabbing features, low design friction, and high explainability and honesty. These elements were chosen because they provide a comprehensive lens for evaluating both functional clarity and user-centred design. Postings were examined for how these elements were visually integrated, whether through text overlays, icons, motion graphics, or signer gestures, and how effectively they guided viewer attention and action. Special attention was given to the alignment between the signer’s visual cues and the placement of CTA elements, as misalignment may lead to confusion or disengagement, particularly for Deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) audiences. This method enables a detailed, contextualized understanding of how CTA strategies perform in real-world sign language content, highlighting both best practices and common shortcomings. By focusing on actual social media posts, this study not only addresses a critical gap in accessibility design but also aims to provide actionable insights for content creators seeking to improve inclusive engagement in Malaysia’s digital landscape.

4 RESEARCH DESIGN

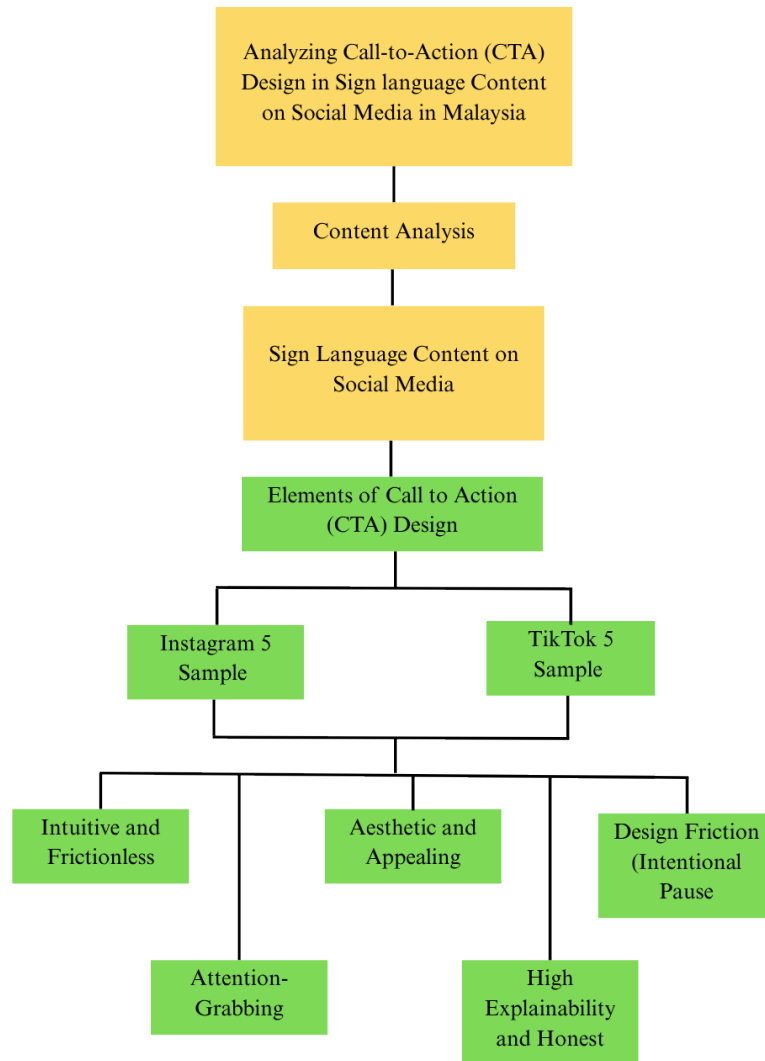








Figure 1 Research Process (Source: Mejtoft et al., 2021)

5 SELECTION OF SAMPLES

Ten social media posts from 2020 to 2025 were selected from Instagram and TikTok, focusing on Malaysian Sign Language awareness. Each was analysed for its call-to-action (CTA) effectiveness in promoting inclusive communication through visual design and engagement strategies.

Table 1 TikTok and Instagram Sampling Details

No	Post Title	Date Posted
1	 <p>Post Owner: Pusat Aspirasi Anak Perak (PASAK)</p>	14 November 2024
2	 <p>Post Owner: amarupnm</p>	30 April 2024
3	 <p>Post Owner: Pusat Aspirasi Anak Perak (PASAK)</p>	14 November 2024
4	 <p>Post Owner: ivsa.kelantan</p>	29 April 2024
5	 <p>Post Owner: bimmfd</p>	9 January 2024
6	 <p>Post Owner: bp_sydney</p>	19 June 2023

No	Post Title	Date Posted
7	<p>Kelas Asas Bahasa Isyarat Malaysia (BIM) PERCUMA!</p> <p>#SIGNON #Malaysian Sign Language - Bahasa Isyarat Malaysia</p> <p>22 FEB 2025 10 AM - 1PM</p> <p>Lokasi: Metro Driving Academy (Puchong), Lot 8578 Jln. Akademi, Puchong, Selangor</p> <p>Anggaran:   </p>	3 May 2025
8	<p>Post Owner: signon</p> <p>Deaf Awareness & Sign Language Workshop</p> <p>01 - DEAF AWARENESS & SIGN LANGUAGE WORKSHOP (VIRTUAL) Date/Time: 19th October 2023 (Sat), 10am - 12pm @ Venue: METRO DRIVING ACADEMY (Puchong, Selangor)</p> <p>02 - DEAF AWARENESS WORKSHOP (VIRTUAL) Date/Time: 20th October 2023 (Sun), 10am - 12pm @ Venue: 22nd Floor</p> <p>Price: [Early Bird only, Online] Fee: RM 100 (RM 50 for Metro Driving Academy Staff) - Non-Staff (RM 100) [Free for Deaf, Deafblind, Signer]</p> <p>JOIN US </p> <p>Post Owner: psychdept.help</p>	17 October 2023
9	<p>BAHASA ISYARAT MALAYSIA Untuk Komunikasi Fleksibel</p> <p>27 SEPTEMBER 2024 (JUMAAT) 9:30 - 11:30 PAGI</p> <p>SEKOLAH DILAWAN TALKUM Surjeji Mohd Shuhair (Ketua Bahagian, Bahagian Pendidikan)</p> <p>Post Owner: Ikbs.bpkb</p>	16 January 2024
10	<p>Malaysian Sign Language for Beginners</p> <p>10 weeks sign to sign</p> <p>From 0900 300 3435 (Dial 1) or 030 212 8800 27000018@quest.edu.my 27000018@quest.edu.my</p> <p>Post Owner: Ques:internationaluniversity</p>	30 October 2020

6 DATA ANALYSIS

Elements of Call-to-Action (CTA) Design (Mejtoft et al., 2021)

No	Instagram/ TikTok Sample	Intuitive and Frictionless	Aesthetic and Appealing	Design Friction (Intentional Pause)	Attention - Grabbing	High Explainability and Honest
1	 <p>Sign language Jom join kelas bahasa isyarat PERCUMA! Scan QR Code dan Daftar sekarang di aplikasi TalentaPerak! #fyp #foryou #education #signlanguage #talentperak #talenta #pasak #gipoh #talentperak #talenta</p> <p>Post Owner: Pusat Aspirasi Anak Perak (PASAK)</p>	<p>The poster itself lacks direct instruction; users may not immediately know what to do just by viewing the visual. The caption (not shown here) provides direction.</p> <p>The visual includes clear headings and the phrase “Let’s Learn Malaysian Sign Language,” which gives a good hint of purpose. However, no clear instruction is visible on how to participate (e.g., no link, QR code, or action phrase). This limits its intuitiveness and ease of action.</p>	<p>Cartoon visuals and soft colours make the design friendly and culturally inclusive.</p> <p>The design uses professional visuals with good colour contrast and a modern layout. It looks credible and culturally relevant, which enhances its visual appeal.</p>	<p>Moderate. Users may feel uncertain unless they read additional text, as there’s no visible QR code or clickable element in the visual.</p> <p>Medium to high. Users are not told exactly what step to take next, which creates hesitation. Lack of direct CTA button or words (“Join Now”) that introduces friction.</p>	<p>Strong. Bold red “FREE!!!” text draws attention quickly, especially effective on TikTok’s fast-paced environment.</p> <p>Moderate. The layout is clean, and the use of bold headers helps, but the post does not feature high-contrast CTA words (“FREE,” “Join Now”) that strongly pop out.</p>	<p>Relatively clear about what’s being offered (a free class), but the absence of full action steps in the image reduces transparency.</p> <p>The goal of the program is stated, but there is little detail about what the user needs to do or what will happen if they take action. This limits its transparency.</p>
2	 <p>Post Owner: amarupnm</p>	<p>The poster itself lacks direct instruction; users may not immediately know what to do just by viewing the visual. The caption (not shown here) provides direction.</p> <p>The visual includes clear headings and the phrase “Let’s Learn Malaysian Sign Language,” which gives a good hint of purpose. However, no clear instruction is visible on how to participate (e.g., no link, QR code, or action phrase). This limits its intuitiveness and ease of action.</p>	<p>Cartoon visuals and soft colours make the design friendly and culturally inclusive.</p> <p>The design uses professional visuals with good colour contrast and a modern layout. It looks credible and culturally relevant, which enhances its visual appeal.</p>	<p>Moderate. Users may feel uncertain unless they read additional text, as there’s no visible QR code or clickable element in the visual.</p> <p>Medium to high. Users are not told exactly what step to take next, which creates hesitation. Lack of direct CTA button or words (“Join Now”) that introduces friction.</p>	<p>Strong. Bold red “FREE!!!” text draws attention quickly, especially effective on TikTok’s fast-paced environment.</p> <p>Moderate. The layout is clean, and the use of bold headers helps, but the post does not feature high-contrast CTA words (“FREE,” “Join Now”) that strongly pop out.</p>	<p>Relatively clear about what’s being offered (a free class), but the absence of full action steps in the image reduces transparency.</p> <p>The goal of the program is stated, but there is little detail about what the user needs to do or what will happen if they take action. This limits its transparency.</p>

Elements of Call-to-Action (CTA) Design (Mejtoft et al., 2021)

No	Instagram/ TikTok Sample	Intuitive and Frictionless	Aesthetic and Appealing	Design Friction (Intentional Pause)	Attention - Grabbing	High Explainability and Honest
3	 <p>Post Owner: Pusat Aspirasi Anak Perak (PASAK)</p>	<p>The post mentions the program name and a registration deadline (“Tarikh tutup pendaftaran: 15 September”) which provides some directional clarity. However, it does not tell users <i>how</i> or <i>where</i> to register, which weakens the intuitiveness and ease of action. The poster includes clear event details (title, date, time) and has the instruction “Register Here” placed directly above a QR code. This makes the action easy to understand and frictionless, users know exactly what to do and where to do it.</p>	<p>The design is neat and uses neutral colour tones with formal typography. It appears professional but lacks elements that might emotionally engage younger audiences.</p>	<p>High friction. Users are likely left unsure of the next step — no QR code, no visible link, and no action word (e.g., “Register Now”) means extra effort is needed.</p>	<p>Low to moderate. The header is informative but not bold or colourful enough to stop users while scrolling. There is no striking design feature that draws instant focus.</p>	<p>The post is honest in stating the course name and deadline. However, due to the lack of “what to do next,” it falls short of full explainability.</p>
4	 <p>Post Owner: ivsa.kelantan</p>	<p>The layout is clean, with a structured hierarchy, consistent fonts, and calm colour tones. While not bold or playful, it looks professional and reliable.</p>	<p>The inclusion of “Register Here” and a clearly placed QR code minimizes hesitation. The user doesn’t need to search or think, the action is clear and direct.</p>	<p>Moderate. The main text is bold and visible, but the overall design lacks high contrast or colour pops that might attract fast-scrolling users on platforms like TikTok.</p>	<p>The post transparently explains what the event is and when it happens. It avoids exaggerated claims. However, it could be more specific about the benefits of attending.</p>	

Elements of Call-to-Action (CTA) Design (Mejtoft et al., 2021)

No	Instagram/ TikTok Sample	Intuitive and Frictionless	Aesthetic and Appealing	Design Friction (Intentional Pause)	Attention - Grabbing	High Explainability and Honest
5	 <p>Post Owner: bimmfd</p>	<p>The poster provides a contact number but does not explicitly state what action the user should take (“Call to register” or “WhatsApp for info”). Without that cue, the post is less intuitive and may leave users uncertain about what’s expected.</p>	<p>The design is clean and organized but quite formal and text heavy. It does not use colour, icons, or visuals that would enhance aesthetic appeal or emotional connection.</p>	<p>Moderate to high. Although a phone number is provided, the user must decide on their own how to interact (call, text, WhatsApp?) and what to say, this creates hesitation.</p>	<p>Low. The title is in bold, but there are no vivid colours, CTA phrases, or visual elements to catch the eye quickly in a social media context.</p>	<p>Moderate. The course name and contact number are honest, but the lack of clear instructions (“What do I do with this number?”) reduces overall explainability.</p>
6	 <p>Post Owner: bp_sydney</p>	<p>The poster contains full event details, but there is no clear instruction on what users should do next (register, contact). This reduces intuitiveness.</p>	<p>lean and balanced layout, but lacks colourful visuals or engaging elements. More formal than inviting.</p>	<p>Without a QR code, clickable link, or contact direction, users are left guessing what action to take, which increases friction</p>	<p>Moderate. The use of uppercase and bold fonts helps a little, but no standout visual or emotional trigger to stop scrolling.</p>	<p>The event is described accurately and honestly, but it lacks explanation of how to join or what to expect, so transparency is limited.</p>
7	 <p>Post Owner: #signon</p>	<p>The poster provides clear event details including venue address, which signals a face-to-face class. While no action is stated, the location info improves intuitiveness.</p>	<p>Clean and formal design, but text heavy. It communicates seriousness yet lacks warmth or engaging visuals.</p>	<p>Moderate. Users must likely reach out separately to register or confirm attendance, but knowing the location helps reduce some uncertainty.</p>	<p>Low to moderate. The header is bold, but no standout colours or phrases like “Join Us” or “Free Class” are used to grab attention.</p>	<p>High. The information is honest and specific, users know it’s a physical class and where it will be held, which adds clarity.</p>

Elements of Call-to-Action (CTA) Design (Mejtoft et al., 2021)

No	Instagram/ TikTok Sample	Intuitive and Frictionless	Aesthetic and Appealing	Design Friction (Intentional Pause)	Attention - Grabbing	High Explainability and Honest
8	 <p>Post Owner: psyhdept.help</p>	<p>The presence of a QR code and the phrase “Join us” clearly guide the user toward action. This makes the post intuitive and relatively easy to engage with.</p>	<p>Clean layout with good use of spacing and alignment. While not vibrant, the minimalism gives it a professional and trustworthy tone.</p>	<p>The QR code allows users to act immediately, reducing the number of steps and avoiding confusion about what to do next.</p>	<p>Moderate. The phrase “Join us” acts as a light emotional hook, though the overall colour scheme is subtle and may not fully capture fast-scrolling attention.</p>	<p>Good. The purpose (a workshop), CTA (“Join us”), and registration method (QR code) are all visible. However, it could be clearer on what users receive after joining.</p>
9	 <p>Post Owner: Ilkbs.bpkb</p>	<p>The poster includes a visible QR code, which gives users a clear method to take action. This improves intuitiveness and ease of access significantly.</p>	<p>The design is clean with good font choice and alignment. It presents a professional and neutral tone, though not particularly visually striking.</p>	<p>There's QR code provided, and users can scan and proceed directly. No extra searching or manual steps are needed.</p>	<p>Moderate. The main text is bold, and the title is specific, but there is no strong emotional or colour-based hook to fully grab attention.</p>	<p>Clear and honest. The post shows what the course is about, and how to access it. Could be improved by explaining benefits (e.g., certificate, skills gained).</p>
10	 <p>Post Owner: Ques:internationaluniversity</p>	<p>The inclusion of a QR code provides a clear action pathway. The user can scan and proceed without needing further instruction, making it intuitive.</p>	<p>The design is clean and visually balanced. It uses a modern layout that appears friendly and informative, although not particularly colourful or emotional.</p>	<p>The QR code eliminates unnecessary steps and supports smooth user engagement.</p>	<p>Moderate. The title is clear and specific but lacks bright colours or powerful words like “Free” or “Join Now” to immediately grab attention.</p>	<p>The post accurately presents what the course is and how to access it, though it could benefit from briefly stating what learners will gain or receive.</p>

7 RESULTS

A total of ten social media posts were analysed—five from TikTok and five from Instagram—focusing on sign language promotion in Malaysia. Each post was examined through five core CTA design elements identified by Mejtoft et al. (2021): intuitiveness & frictionless interaction, aesthetic appeal, attention-grabbing design, design friction, and explainability & honesty.

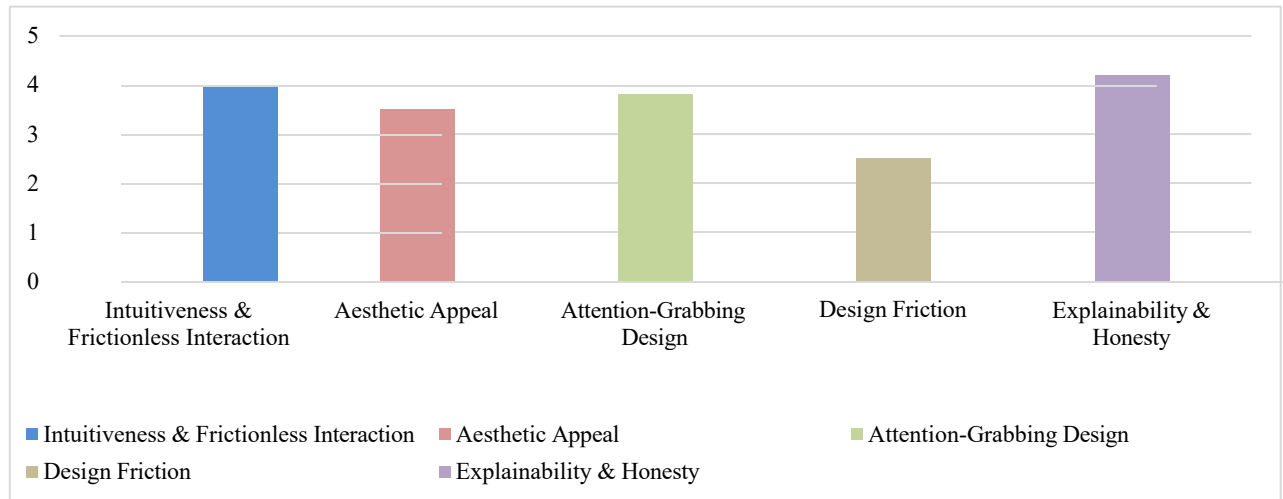


Figure 2 Result of Call-to-Action (CTA) Design Elements in Sign Language Social Media Content

7.1. Intuitiveness And Frictionless Design

Posts that included clear actions, such as QR codes accompanied by phrases like “Register Here” or “Join us,” scored highest in intuitiveness. This was especially seen in Sample 4 (TikTok) and Samples 8–10 (Instagram), where users could immediately identify how to take action. In contrast, posts that only listed event details or contact numbers without instruction (e.g., Samples 5 and 7) were less intuitive, often leaving users unsure of what steps to take.

A recurring weakness was missing or vague next-step instructions, even when a QR code was present. For example, some posts included QR codes but lacked a direct phrase like “Scan to register,” reducing clarity for less digitally literate users.

7.2. Aesthetic And Appealing Design

Most posts adopted clean, structured layouts with professional fonts and logical alignment. However, few employed strong colour contrast, character illustrations, or emotionally engaging visuals. TikTok posts tended to be more visually engaging (e.g., Sample 1 with cartoon characters), while Instagram posts leaned toward formal, text-based designs (e.g., Sample 7).

While the visual neatness generally aligned with good design standards, the lack of emotionally resonant or culturally vibrant elements reduced aesthetic impact.

7.3. Design Friction

Design friction was lowest in posts with QR codes and clear action phrases, such as Sample 4 (“Register Here”) and Sample 8 (“Join us” + QR code). In contrast, posts that only included a contact number (e.g., Sample 5) or lacked any call-to-action language (e.g., Sample 6) created higher friction, requiring users to pause and figure out what to do next.

Interestingly, several posters displayed dates and event titles prominently but failed to connect those elements to actionable instructions—an overlooked source of friction across both platforms.

7.4. Attention-Grabbing Design

Only a few posts demonstrated strong attention-grabbing design. Sample 1 (TikTok) stood out for using bold text, red colour, and the word “FREE!!!”, immediately capturing user attention. Most other posts relied on formal titles and neutral colours, which—while clear—did not strongly compete in fast- scrolling environments like TikTok or Instagram.

Overall, the use of bold fonts alone was insufficient in grabbing attention without colour contrast, icons, or emotionally charged language.

7.5. High Explainability and Honesty

Posts that stated the nature of the course, level (e.g., "Beginner" or "Tahap 1"), and the action required were rated high in honesty and explainability. However, some posts (Samples 2, 3, and 6) did not explain what the user would gain (e.g., certificate, learning outcomes), which left their value proposition unclear.

All posts avoided misleading claims, but the absence of benefits or outcomes slightly weakened the trust-building potential of several CTAs.

8 FINDINGS

This study analysed five TikTok and five Instagram posts related to sign language awareness campaigns in Malaysia. The goal was to assess how effectively each post applied five core call-to-action (CTA) design elements as proposed by Mejtoft et al. (2021): intuitiveness and frictionless design, aesthetic appeal, attention-grabbing design, design friction, and explainability and honesty.

Intuitiveness and Frictionless Design was most evident in posts that included QR codes alongside clear prompts like “Register Here” or “Join us.” In contrast, posts that lacked action cues or only provided contact numbers caused uncertainty about the next steps.

Aesthetic Appeal was generally consistent, with most posts using clean layouts and professional formatting. However, few posts included visual storytelling or emotionally engaging graphics. TikTok content tended to be slightly more creative and friendly in tone compared to Instagram content, which leaned toward formal informational posters.

Design Friction was lowest in posts that made it easy for users to act (e.g., scan a QR code). Posts without any CTA components or instructions introduced unnecessary friction and could discourage engagement.

Attention-Grabbing Design was underutilized. Only a few TikTok posts used bold colour, emotional words like “FREE!!!”, or dynamic layout choices to stand out in the fast-paced scrolling environment of social media.

Explainability and Honesty were relatively well maintained. Most posts clearly stated what the event was about, but some failed to communicate what users would gain from joining — such as whether a certificate would be given or what learning outcomes to expect.

9 CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to evaluate how sign language awareness posts on TikTok and Instagram apply key Call-to-Action (CTA) design principles, based on the framework by Mejtoft et al. (2021). Through a qualitative content analysis of 10 social media samples, it became evident that while most posts demonstrated a solid grasp of visual organization, they often fell short in prompting user action effectively.

Posts that integrated clear CTA components—such as QR codes and direct instructions—were more intuitive and user-friendly. In contrast, posts that lacked actionable language or offered minimal engagement pathways created unnecessary friction. Aesthetic appeal was generally present, but attention-grabbing elements like colour contrast, emotionally resonant language, or urgency were underutilized, particularly on Instagram.

TikTok posts showed greater strength in combining visual clarity with emotional tone, aligning better with the platform's interactive nature. These findings underscore the importance of tailoring CTA design not only to visual standards but also to platform-specific user behaviours.

Ultimately, to successfully promote sign language content and foster broader engagement, designers and content creators should prioritize clarity, simplicity, and emotional relevance in their CTA strategies. Doing so can help bridge the gap between awareness and action—especially in inclusive, educational campaigns that rely on social participation.

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All authors played equal contributions towards the production of this paper.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article

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