

Optimizing Media Influence to Promote Business Growth

A project completed in collaboration with the American Chamber of Commerce in Romania

Report submitted to:

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WPI



Abstract

The American Chamber of Commerce's mission is to "ensure an optimum business, trade and investment climate for its members in Romania," by advocating for their members through various institutional and legislative developments to further economic growth. In collaboration with Mrs. Anca Harasim and Mr. Manuel Cazac, the AmCham IQP team worked to enhance the organization's influence through media to better advocate for business growth. The team used comparative analyses to analyze what information other AmChams in Europe provide for their members and through which means. A list of recommendations was then developed to help AmCham Romania further enhance its member communications. Moreover, a website was constructed containing pertinent information and resources for AmCham Romania members seeking to expand to the U.S. market.

Executive Summary

It is necessary for a country to have a strong economy to have influence and power in the world we live in today. One of the ways in which a country can grow and develop its economy is by creating ties with other countries. Organizations, such as the American Chamber of Commerce in Romania, or AmCham Romania, were created to stimulate these connections. AmCham Romania is a non-profit organization founded in 1993 to help business growth and trade in Romania (AmCham Romania). AmCham Romania is comprised of over 450 member companies that range from simple mom-and-pop shops to large international companies. The member companies supply over 250,000 jobs for Romanians (AmCham Romania, n.d.). The organization promotes better business practices that have led to more business transactions and investments, which has helped to increase the economic competitiveness of the country on a regional and European level. In 2011, AmCham Romania's members contributed to 11.2% of the country's overall GDP (AmCham Romania, n.d.).

AmCham Romania has been looking to address the challenges they face with their member communications. The organization has a website and a number of social media platforms. They wanted to ensure that their platforms were providing their members with relevant content through effective means. AmCham Romania was also trying to establish a road map for their members who wanted to expand into the U.S. market. In collaboration with AmCham Romania, the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) AmCham Interactive Qualifying Project (IQP) team worked to optimize their media influence to promote business growth.

Purpose

The IQP team proposed four objectives that would most likely accomplish that goal of increasing AmCham Romania's capabilities of stimulating local commerce and the Romanian-American economic relationship. These objectives are as follows:

1. Gather information relevant to members looking to expand into the U.S. market
2. Develop a strong relationship and communication between AmCham and its members using its website and social media
3. Recognize the role of a chamber of commerce in society
4. Understand the effectiveness of crisis communications through media

Methods

A comparative analysis between the American Chamber of Commerce in Romania (AmCham Romania) and five other European AmChams was undertaken by the IQP group to find out how AmCham Romania measured up to other AmChams with regards to their communication platforms. As a result, the team was able to establish strengths and weaknesses across the AmCham Romania website as well as provide recommendations in areas where other AmChams excelled.

To accomplish this task, the team did a case study involving five different AmChams (AmChams Germany, Bulgaria, Hungary, Sweden, and Poland). This case study explored the different communication platforms by dissecting relevant aspects of each platform. The team went through each

of the AmChams' websites, annual reports, social media, events, and added a section for crisis management due to the current circumstances created by COVID-19. Each one of the platforms had different subcategories by which they were analyzed. After going through each platform, the team took notes of their findings to compare the AmChams with each other. The team then opted for using a value analysis with a point evaluating system, where the AmChams would be ranked compared to AmCham Romania.

To provide a more objective view in comparing the websites, we decided to use Nielsen's heuristics to compare websites based upon usability, efficiency, and error prevention. Executing these heuristics further enhanced our recommendations and confirmed our case study findings with the standard method used by experts in the field of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI). This is a method that analyzes ten specific aspects of a system that are crucial to having a highly effective website. These heuristics were performed by all four members of the group on the six AmCham websites: Romania, Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland, and Sweden. To ensure that the Nielsen's Heuristics were done properly, each team member rated every category of all six sites individually. We then came together to discuss our individual findings and draw conclusions from them that led to recommendations.

Along with the comparative analysis, the team also performed interviews. The main objective of these interviews was to obtain information from local organizations in Massachusetts that could provide insight into the regional economy. The questions were constructed to acquire details regarding the process for companies coming to the U.S. and Massachusetts, resources for these companies, and learning the role of the chamber of commerce in society.

Another method the team explored was creating websites using Google Sites. This is a website creation tool that supports multiple editors working in collaboration to create a web page simultaneously. The purpose of this method was to look into ways that would best consolidate information for both AmCham and future IQP teams. This tool allows editors to easily transfer ownership and editing privileges. We used Google Sites to create two websites: a deliverable website and a project website. The deliverable website acts as a road map for Romanian companies that seek to expand into the U.S. market by providing rules, regulations, and resources for additional information. Meanwhile, the project website was presented as a sustainable plan that encompasses all the research and gathered information in one location for the staff of AmCham Romania and future IQPs.

Results

With our research, we produced three outcomes. These include the Comparative Analysis report, the *Rules, Regulations, and Other Resources* website, and our project website. The Comparative Analysis report consolidates all of our research methods and results from the case studies and Nielsen's heuristic evaluation on AmCham's media platforms. The *Rules, Regulations, and Other Resources* website is a deliverable made for AmCham to share with their members containing pertinent information relevant for those who are looking to expand their business into the U.S. market. Finally, our project website is a place where we consolidated all of our research processes and outcomes. The project website can be found here: <https://sites.google.com/view/amcham-iqp-2020/home>

From the case studies, one of the first findings was that the AmChams' events were similar. Each AmCham had a different type of event of their own, but they also had some main events that all AmChams would promote. The attendance varied according to the size of the AmCham and the event. For crisis management, all AmChams were on top of it and had something on their website related to the COVID-19 outbreak. Some went into great detail and provided maps and banners on their websites, while others simply mentioned it in a page and provided resources to keep the users informed.

From the value analysis, the team was able to reach conclusions about how AmChams can efficiently use their media platforms. For the websites, we noticed a big variety in layouts and styles; however, the general content of the website was consistent among all AmChams. Most websites were intuitive to use, but some had too much information on the same page, making them feel cluttered at times. In regards to annual reports, we detected a certain trend in how the Annual Reports normally were written and their content. All of the reports talked about AmChams' members and their events. Most also had a message from the CEO of their respective AmCham. The major difference we found between the annual reports was the way the information was presented. Some chose to use plain statistical data, while others decided to use graphs, tables, and charts. For Social Media, we observed that most AmChams made posts about their events, business meetings, and news articles. On average, every AmCham posted at least once per week, with some posting almost every day. The most used platforms were Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook. The final value analysis showed that AmCham Romania performs well compared to other AmChams. It also showed that the AmCham Bulgaria and AmCham Hungary lag behind the other AmChams analyzed by our team. AmChams Poland and Germany were comparable to AmCham Romania, and AmCham Sweden was a little ahead of the others.

The results from the heuristic evaluation are summarized in charts found in Appendix D. These charts visually displayed where the different AmCham's websites ranked in the various heuristics. AmCham Romania was highlighted to better understand where their website placed among their fellow AmChams in these categories. In general, AmCham Romania had a fairly effective and efficient website compared to others in this heuristic evaluation. In particular, AmCham Romania was very successful in matching conventions between the system and the real world as well as the overall website's flexibility and efficiency of use. Yet, there were some areas, such as in help and documentation, where AmCham Romania ranked lower than the other AmChams.

All in all, the case studies and heuristic evaluation combined provided a detailed foundation for recommendations and suggestions. The use of these methods resulted in better understanding where on the communication platforms there were rooms for improvement. Furthermore, by comparing AmCham Romania's website and social media platforms, we were also able to draw inspiration and find creative suggestions that became a part of our recommendations to AmCham Romania.

Interviews were done with three major organizations in Massachusetts and were helpful in our understanding of the process of entering the U.S. market as well as some of the top factors to consider and their relative importance. The findings from the interviews have helped to shape the resources that we provided on the deliverable website. In addition to the deliverable website, we created a project website that details all of the research and methods used throughout this project.

Recommendations

Ultimately, the team was able to consolidate several recommendations for AmCham Romania. From the comparative analysis, the team created a list of suggestions for the organization's website and social media that would make their media easier to navigate. These include clarifying links, optimizing the search tool, addressing website bugs, updating statistics, and increasing member interaction on social media.

We recommend that the organization look into continuing to develop the deliverable website with information for other states within the U.S. Another point that could be explored in the future is to research and implement the best social media practices. Furthermore, we suggest working on the customer relationship management (CRM) system that we previously started researching. Since we were unable to physically be in Romania, we were not granted access to study and improve the CRM.

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Even though we were not able to travel to Romania and complete the project on-site, the team had a great IQP experience. Throughout the 14 weeks, we learned about Romanian economic history and the important role it plays in global economics. With the help of our collaborators, we were able to connect with local Massachusetts business leaders and understand the importance of chambers of commerce. Even as we worked from home, we were able to appreciate the rich Romanian culture through weekly cultural panels. We learned everything from architecture to films to history through interactive and informative presentations. In the future, we hope to visit Romania and finally meet our collaborators in person, and maybe even visit some sites we learned about virtually.

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1. Introduction

Throughout history, transitions in political and economic states have often resulted in large uncertainty with regards to establishing a new stable political and economic model. This was observed across Eastern Europe after the fall of the Soviet Union. Like many other Eastern European countries, post-Soviet Romania strived to replicate the political, economic, and cultural models used by Western Europe (Bottoni & Lambert, 2017). Many of these countries also sought to join the European Union (EU) as they adapted to the free-market system. Becoming a member of the EU was of utmost importance as it was perceived to have the capability of projecting a country's economy forward. Foreign trade and investments brought about by their participation in the EU helped to alleviate economic strains. Along with joining the EU, many countries also wanted to incentivize and maintain international investments. Chambers of commerce came to play as networks of businesses worked to join the global economy.

In the case of Romania, the American Chamber of Commerce was founded in 1993 to create an economic connection between the United States and Romania. The goal of the American Chamber of Commerce in Romania, or AmCham Romania, is to promote better business practices so that the relationship between the United States and Romania can continue to flourish. Today, AmCham Romania has over 430 members who have created over 250,000 jobs and generated over 22 billion dollars in investments (AmCham Romania, n.d.). The organization provides its members with various resources such as networking events, publicity, and relevant business updates.

Looking into the history of Romania's economy and AmCham Romania ensured a solid understanding of the social and global aspects of the project. While Romania has faced obstacles that have hindered its economic growth in the years since its revolution, organizations like AmCham Romania have been advocating for business practices and policies that help the local Romanian economy. Currently, AmCham Romania has been having challenges with their media management and member services. The team approached these challenges by working with AmCham Romania to strengthen member relations through their website and social media. The team also helped to provide relevant information for AmCham Romania's members who are looking to expand into the U.S. market.

Once the context of the project had been established, we began to investigate the technical aspects of the project. Although there are many American Chambers of Commerce around the world, there appears to be a lack of uniformity among the European AmChams with regards to their communication platforms. To overcome this, the project team decided to explore what other chambers of commerce display as a means of communication with members. Using case studies, the team was able to analyze the websites, annual reports, and social media of other chambers of commerce to gain a better understanding of the best practices as well as compiled suggestions for AmCham Romania. The team also looked to conduct interviews with local organizations to acquire a better sense of what steps and considerations are needed for foreign companies to expand into the United States with minimal financial risk.

2. Background

With the globalization of the world, countries have strived to develop and improve their national economies by building upon their global economic relationships. Globalization is the development of an increasingly integrated global economy marked especially by free trade, free flow of capital, and the tapping of cheaper foreign labor markets (Merriam-Webster.com, 2020). Although it is known for connecting national economies across the globe and increasing international commerce, it has also been a source of disadvantages for some nations, which sparked the debate between free and fair trade. In many cases, nations are forced to change the structure of their society to adapt to the free trade, global economy. For instance, there are nations which have struggled to open up their markets and expand internationally. Some of these countries in Eastern Europe, such as Romania, experienced a difficult transition from communism to capitalism. Many organizations have been formed to aid those countries in their economic transition. The American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) opened a branch in Romania in 1993 with the mission of stimulating commercial relations between Romania and the United States.

Currently, AmCham Romania has been facing challenges with their member communication. Expansion of AmCham members to the United States has proved difficult without vital and relevant information regarding the state and federal laws and regulations. After exploring the historical context of Romania's economic circumstances, we looked into gathering the necessary information for international expansion to the U.S. as well as the best website and social media practices to better understand the problems faced by AmCham Romania.

2.1 Economic History

Romania's current economic situation has been heavily dictated by the circumstances which arose from being a post-communist nation in Eastern Europe and its long-lasting bilateral relationship with the United States. In this section we will discuss how the country's economy shifted from socialism to capitalism and how it shaped its position in the global economy. We will also dive into Romania's relations with the rest of Europe and the United States in their induction to both the European Union and NATO.

2.1.1 Post-Soviet Eastern Europe

After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, the countries of Eastern Europe strived to implement new political, economic, and cultural models that outwardly resembled that of the Western free-market liberal democracies, but the government was still inclined to social democratic ideals (Gallagher, 2005). Therefore, post-communist Eastern Europe became a dynamic region of reconstruction and nationalization while continually attempting to integrate into the rest of Europe (Bottoni & Lambert, 2017). One of the changes included joining the European Union (EU), which turned out to be more difficult for some countries than others. European countries like Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary were considered to be sufficiently developed and stable democratic institutions by the European Commission. Therefore, they were able to begin negotiations for EU membership relatively

earlier than other Eastern European countries. However, some countries in this area such as Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria were considered by the European Commission to have insufficiently developed democratic institutions and were told to implement further reforms before negotiating membership.

Joining the EU was of utmost importance to many Eastern European countries as it would allow the free flow of goods, capital, and labor within Europe. By having a non-restricted flow of goods, trade became faster and easier as goods did not have to be declared when travelling across borders within the EU. Therefore, transportation infrastructure is crucial for the economic development of the country itself and its neighbors. In spite of efforts at “forced-march” industrialization under Communism, many of these Eastern European countries had significantly underdeveloped regional transportation infrastructure that was crucial for globalizing industrial production (Bottoni & Lambert, 2017). Without well-developed infrastructure, there were major setbacks in investment and economic development. This is a problem that still affects countries like Romania. According to the World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report, Romanian roads rank at 128 out of 138 countries (Gillet, 2017). With such poor transportation infrastructure, it is hard to transport goods within the country let alone outside the country. All in all, poor transportation infrastructure can burden a country’s overall national commerce as well as its trade across its borders with other European nations.

2.1.2 Romanian Economy

With the fall of communism in 1989, Romania was faced with the challenge of transitioning to a capitalist economy. The following decade of the 1990s did not see a lot of economic progress, as the country fell into a serious transformation recession (Neef, 2002). The country struggled to privatize land and housing while many state-run industries and social services remained under government control until the end of the decade. Additionally, industrial decline resulted in shortages of services, trade, and production of consumer goods. Furthermore, imported goods were available, yet would only be able to cater to the needs of the more affluent Romanian population. All of these factors greatly hindered economic growth. In 1991, less than half of the Romanian population claimed to be able to live off their wages (Neef, 2002). The statistics only worsened by 1998 as the figures dropped to 16%.

Despite the slow start, Romania’s economy experienced major economic growth from the 2000s up until the global financial crisis of 2008, the Great Recession. Initially, between 2000 and 2006, most of the rapid growth was due to an increase in total factor productivity, which is a measure of a country’s ratio of total output to total input within its economy. Meanwhile, the growth in the following two years, 2007 and 2008, was supported by the capital stock, also known as long term investments in the economy (Armeanu, Crețan, Lache, & Mitroi, 2015). This growth expanded the demand for nonessential consumer goods and the increased presence of real estate investments in the region (Bottoni & Lambert, 2017). These economic developments during these two years were also in large part due to the sustained increase in direct investments by foreign credit. However, following the financial crisis of 2008, the steep decline in total factor productivity and increase of loan withdrawals caused an economic downturn in 2009 and 2010. Foreign investments in the Romanian economy drastically declined during this period. In reaction, local banks tightened their lending policies due to parent institutions also decreasing their funds. Consequently, there was a record number of small and medium businesses that went bankrupt and this led to a negative output gap. The capital stock also became obsolete as there

were significant delays in capital investment in the economy. Romania's growth potential became constrained by the worsening sustainability of public debt. As a result, the Romanian government adopted an inflation-targeting regime. The new policy led to overly restrictive measures during the recession, which ended up extending periods of negative output gaps. Nevertheless, as is evident in Figure 1, there was a significant increase in economic growth as Romania's Gross Domestic Output (GDP) exceeded 4% for the majority of the time between 2001 and 2009 (Armeanu et al., 2015). However, post-recession was a very slow recovery period barely exceeding 4% GDP in the seven years following the great recession.

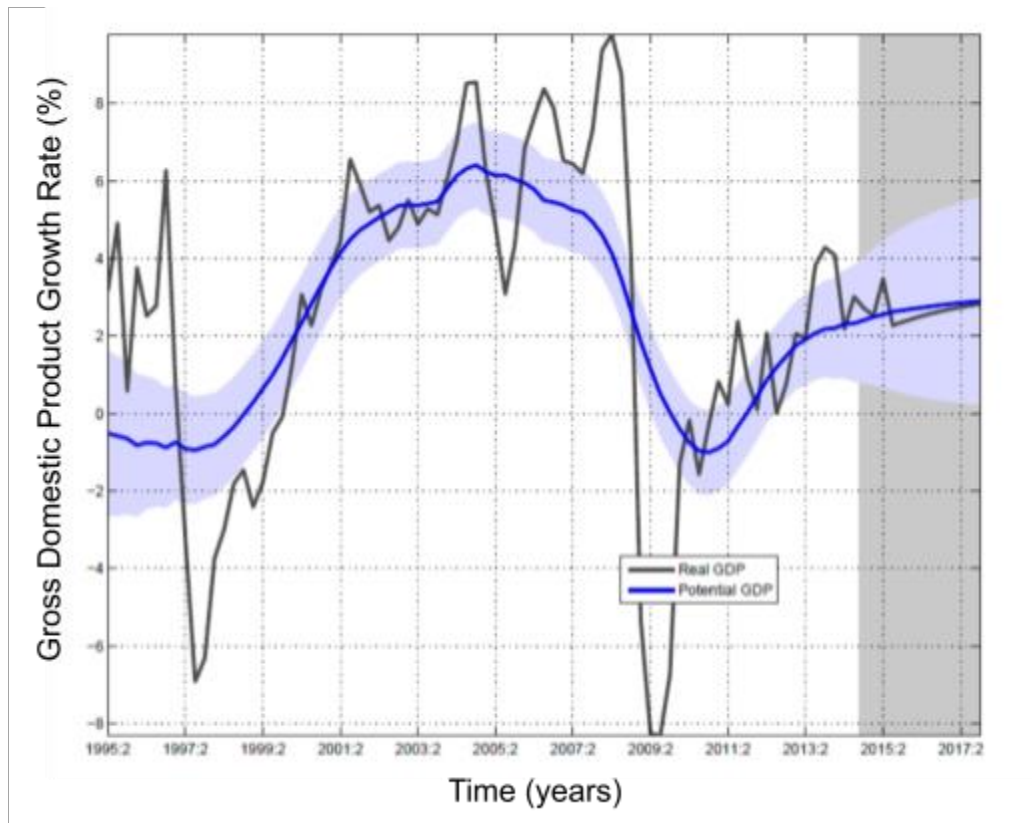


Figure 1: Evolution of Romania's Real GDP Growth and Potential GDP Growth Rates

Despite the slow recovery of the 2008 recession, Romania is still the second-largest country in the Central and Eastern Europe region with regards to its size and population, making it an ideal market for the sale of products manufactured in this area (Păun & Pînzaru, 2019). Increasing the number of foreign investments in Romania, back to the level before the recession, will help to stimulate the economy once again. Joining the EU in 2007 gave Romania many opportunities to gain foreign investments and expand its influence outside its borders. Additionally, membership in the EU helped Romania become a producer of sub-assemblies and components. However, high dependency on external factors and volatility from high competition resulted in numerous limitations and constraints. Cultivating economic relations with other nations as well as establishing their own economic model will allow Romania to improve foreign relations and increase foreign investments.

Romania's economic history has changed drastically in the years since 1989 with periods of rapid progress and a debilitating recession. Although slowly, Romania continues to grow economically following the recession and is further progressing with improved foreign relations and increased foreign investments.

2.1.3 American-Romanian Bilateral Relationship

The United States and Romania have enjoyed a bilateral relationship since formal diplomatic relations were established in 1880. The relationship began when Eugene Schuyler was appointed to be the first American diplomatic representative to Romania. He played a principal role in negotiating a bilateral commercial treaty between the two countries (American Cultural Center, Bucharest, Romania, 2006). The mutual relationship between the two countries continued to grow, encompassing military, political, economic, and cultural partnerships. This relationship further deepened after Romania embraced democracy in the 1990s, which helped to lead to Romania's entry into NATO with U.S. support. Together, the two countries have worked to build democracy, fight terrorism, as well as promote regional security and stability (American Cultural Center, Bucharest, Romania, 2006). The partnership between the U.S. and Romania started with a commercial treaty and the promotion of bilateral trade. Since then the commercial ties between the two countries have grown tremendously. Between 1891 and 1914 American exports into Romania increased twentyfold. However, there was a break in diplomatic relations for five years between 1941 to 1946. Despite Romania being under Soviet political pressure after World War II, the U.S. continued to provide support and financial assistance encouraging the country to be more independent of Moscow and promoting bilateral trade. The long-established history between the two countries allowed for future progress together in the current global marketplace.

2.1.4 Areas Crucial for Growth

Since joining the European Union, Romania has attempted to follow the European model of public spending allocations. Thus, Romania designated the majority of its public spending on social security, environment, and healthcare. Therefore, the allocations for defense and economic activities have shrunk. Romania also has the lowest share allocated for education in the entire EU, which correlates with Romania's lag in innovation, ranking behind many of the Eastern European states (Păun & Pînzaru, 2019). Innovation is a key factor in a country's development (Păun & Pînzaru, 2019). To truly cultivate innovation, there needs to be a high-quality education system. With the lowest share in the EU dedicated to education, Romania is hindering itself from reaching its economic pinnacle for development.

The Romanian political and economic history, from Soviet times and more recently the Great Recession, have left scars on the Romanian economy. Returning to the growth rates from the start of the twenty-first century in a sustainable manner will require structural reform as well as progress in various areas of the economy, including fiscal policy, foreign investment, entrepreneurship, and education (Armeanu et al., 2015). It will also be important for Romania to remember that although economic growth is important for economic development, it should not be a goal to be achieved at any cost or sacrifice. To truly enhance the country's economy, Romania needs to ensure the quality of public

investments as well as attract more European funds that will be used more efficiently. These decisions made by the government should not be based on the faith that markets and the financial systems are always going to be efficient, as pointed out by Dani Rodrik. Rodrik is a Harvard economist of Turkish descent who argues that democracies should have the freedom to impose regulations on nondemocracies to help make up for the fact that the latter doesn't have as many labor and environmental rules (Rodrik, 2017). Rodrik believes that those imposed regulations create fair trade. In his book, *Straight Talk on Trade*, he makes a distinction between fair trade and free trade, where fair trade has more regulations on globalizers but still combats protectionism (Rodrik, 2017).

2.2 Chambers of Commerce

Due to the transition from a socialist economy to a capitalist economy, many Eastern European countries wanted to help companies perform better business practices while also increasing foreign trade and investments. To assist in this endeavor, some countries began to incentivize the establishment of chambers of commerce. In a general sense, a "chamber of commerce" is "an association of business people to promote commercial and industrial interests in the community" (Merriam-Webster.com, 2020). These chambers hope to represent their members and the interests of their members to their respective authorities, policymakers, and regulators through advocacy, policies, and education of the matters at hand (Burton, 2017). Today, chambers of commerce can be found in countries all over the world on a state, county, national, and international level. They generally share a commitment to not only further their interest but also further the interests of their community, region, state, or nation by promoting commerce and industry through both direct and indirect action (Popescu, 2016). All chambers want to help their community, region, state, or nation sustain prosperity and grow by helping employers and businesses thrive in their environment (Burton, 2017). On the local level, these chambers want to not only publicize business but also work towards the betterment of the schools and community institutions (Burton, 2017). To accomplish these goals, some help their community's economic growth by nurturing and aiding small businesses, develop relevant and needed workforces, and connect new businesses to the rest of the established community. On a national level, chambers of commerce represent the business community as one unified voice to the government to help establish fair business regulations (Burton, 2017). For example, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce offers advice on regulations, helps to develop new markets, provide better jobs, build better cities, and keep organized business strong and effective among other goals. Lastly, on an international level, these chambers of commerce want to be the voice of businesses worldwide to help develop foreign trade and investments (Burton, 2017).

2.3 AmCham Romania

In 1993, Romania formed the American Chamber of Commerce of Romania (AmCham Romania) to help increase its economic growth opportunities. AmCham Romania is a non-profit organization comprised of over 450 member companies that range from simple mom-and-pop shops to large international companies (AmCham Romania, n.d.). They promote better business practices which have led to more business transactions and investments and have helped to increase the economic competitiveness of the country on a regional and European level. The goals of AmCham Romania are

similar to the goals of other chambers of commerce as they want to represent their members to the Romanian authorities while helping to improve business practices through advocacy, policies, and education (Burton, 2017). The organization also wants to “stimulate commerce between the U.S. and Romania and improve economic relations between the countries while maintaining an open dialogue with central authorities” (AmCham Romania, n.d.). In turn, AmCham Romania plays a lead role in helping grow and increase trade and investment ties between the U.S. and Romania to increase international competitiveness and global interdependence (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2010). To achieve these goals, AmCham Romania provides its members with different resources such as news about current economic events, publicity, networking opportunities, exposure opportunities, and many other benefits to help communicate with and educate its members (AmCham Romania, n.d.). AmCham Romania wants to help to improve the Romanian economy and ties between the U.S. and Romania by aiding member businesses in their practices and providing beneficial resources for them to aid in maintaining economic diplomacy and international trade and expansion.

2.4 Romanian Business Expansion to the U.S.

To better understand how AmCham Romania can help member businesses expand internationally to the United States, we did research on how businesses typically go through this venture and what the required steps are for a successful expansion. In addition to delving into how companies can expand, research was also done on specific rules and regulations put forth by both state and federal United States law since any business growing into the United States will be required to abide by those laws.

Possibly the most important step to any business expansion is initial market and location research. The information gathered on these topics can be highly variable between industry, business structure/size, and personal preference. Because of the required financial and temporal commitments of opening a new branch in a different country, typically at least \$20,000 and three months respectively, businesses have to ensure ideal conditions for success (Foothold America, n.d.). Foothold America is a company that specializes in helping foreign businesses expand to the United States. The first key consideration that Foothold America lists is to make sure that there is significant demand for a company’s product or service at a price that they can provide it while maintaining profits. Information regarding product demands will also help to identify competitors, which aids in developing ideas of how to best create a unique corporate image and experience. Next, Foothold America recommends assessing the present market circumstances by staying up to date on local and national economic and political situations. By evaluating the market they would be entering, businesses can identify whether the current timing would be optimal for a venture or if it might benefit them to wait. However, in order to comprehend the local environment, businesses have to first find a location. Pinpointing a location can be extremely variable between each business since prime location depends on many factors. As found by Foothold America, “proximity to your target market and suppliers, local infrastructure, geography, climate and tax rates” (Foothold America, n.d.) are all significant in determining optimal locations. Clayton and McKervey, a firm that aids international companies with global taxes and accounting services, mentions that another important factor is available incentives in considered locations (Clayton & McKervey, n.d.). Foothold America also mentions the importance of finding a U.S. attorney, international tax consultant, and accountant who understands U.S. taxation records. These consultants

or employees can provide valuable advice and work to complete the required paperwork for an expansion (Foothold America, n.d.).

Clayton & McKervey has some more specific fiscal advice on their website, going into more depth than Foothold America on how to plan for employment in the U.S. as an added cost. The article discusses entity structure, U.S. Tax Identification Number, and reporting requirements. Entity structure is vital since the choice of the structure determines how a company is taxed. A U.S. Tax Identification Number has to be gotten from the IRS before opening any bank accounts or setting up payrolls. Reporting requirements in the U.S. are relevant for any acquisitions, establishments, expansions, ownership, and payments the company may make. Also addressed are meeting registration requirements at the selected location for payroll and taxes, selecting an appropriate accounting system, payroll, and employee taxation, global transfer fair market value pricing and documentation, and seeking professional advice (Clayton & McKervey, n.d.). Before finally moving, the business still needs to obtain L1 Visas for any employees who are moving to the new branch (Niren, 2020).

To aid in this transition since it is a major development for any company requiring adjustment of practices, the information gleaned will be aggregated for the creation of a roadmap website outlining the vital steps any business or organization should take in their process of spreading overseas from Romania to the United States. It will also provide links to many beneficial resources that businesses may find useful.

2.4.1 Rules and Regulations

The scope of the project focuses on only the policies that would affect international businesses that are looking to expand into the United States, specifically into the Worcester and Boston areas. Worcester and Boston are the two largest cities in the New England region. Furthermore, both cities are listed within the top 150 places for business and careers in the United States (Forbes, 2019). Thus, these two cities in Massachusetts will provide plenty of opportunities for potential Romanian businesses looking to expand into the U.S. market.

When looking to expand foreign businesses into the United States, special attention is needed to understand the rules and policies of the U.S. federal, regional, and local policies as well as the rules and regulations of the home country of the business. In the case of a Romanian-based business looking to expand into the greater Boston and Worcester area of Massachusetts, we will need to understand the federal regulations of foreign businesses entering the U.S. market.

Businesses in the U.S. typically are principally found in the forms of corporations, limited liability companies (LLC), partnerships, limited partnerships, and branches (Clayton & McKervey, 2015). Depending on the type of business entering the market, there are various ownership rules, liability, taxes, and filing requirements. For instance, LLCs are businesses that have one or more owners and are not personally liable. On the other hand, partnerships share ownership among two or more people and can have unlimited personal liability. Furthermore, while LLCs are able to be filed as personal or corporate tax, partnerships are only filed as part of personal taxes.

In addition to the federal laws that pertain to the creation of new businesses, there are also rules and guidelines that must be abided by on a more local level. For instance, all states have their own

set of rules and regulations regarding business practices. For example, the state of Massachusetts has laws known as the Massachusetts Blue Laws that allow employees working through federal holidays and Sundays to be compensated. Meanwhile, there are no such federal guidelines regarding holiday pay as the U.S. government deems it as an agreement between the employer and employee.

2.5 Social Media Practices

In the past few years, there has been a huge increase in the use of social media platforms and web 2.0 technology. People are increasingly looking at social media as an important aspect of their lives, which makes it the perfect tool for companies to advertise themselves and reach out to the public. Promptly, businesses started to adapt to this new era and started to use these mechanisms to improve and develop their relationships with their customers (Alalwan, Rana, Dwivedi, & Algharabat, 2017).

The use of social media can have huge impacts on business performance, sales, and contacts with customers. In India, most of the small businesses that created and actively used social media saw improvements in their sales (Chatterjee & Kar, 2020). Companies can benefit in many other ways other than just an increase in sales. Some examples of that are maintaining persistent relationships with customers, knowing digital traces, improving network visualization, and establishing networks and communities (Kane, 2015).

Social media helps maintain a relationship with the customer by constantly providing news and information on what is going on with the company. Whenever the customer is receiving relevant news of the company they feel connected with it (and to some extent a “part of the company”). The connection to the company eventually becomes loyalty and that’s exactly what the companies want from their customers. To reach the desired loyalty level from the customer the business should make constant posts that are interesting for their target audience. Another aspect that relates to maintaining contact with customers is the digital trace. Many social media have features that allow them to record how long customers have been following their pages. Along with that, they can also trace which posts and features users use the most, allowing the businesses to adapt their accounts and post more content that is relevant for their customers.

Alongside the features mentioned above, social media also provides network visualization and allows for the creation of communities. Social media grants access for managers to look into how their network of interactions with other companies in their supply chain. By looking into their social media, companies can identify these interconnections and eventually fix their supply chains, improving aspects such as reducing unnecessary costs in their chain, increasing their turnover, and making better forecasts. Additionally, social media is a great way to find new partners, sponsors, suppliers, members, staff, and customers. Since social media is used online, they provide a fast and great alternative for finding and connecting to different people and businesses. This aspect makes it possible for managers to diversify and search for people that will effectively improve their businesses.

Apart from all the benefits, social media can play a major role in crisis communication. Social media has already been responsible for communication during disasters such as hurricane Sandy, which was mentioned in about 52.5 million tweets. In a study, it was shown that only a few specific accounts were able to get a lot of attention from the public. Some of the main factors that contribute for

notoriety were the frequency of posts, the number of followers/friends, bot score (whether a human or a machine manages it), and activity patterns (predictability of activity frequency) (Roy, Hasan, Sadri, & Cebrian, 2020). During the COVID-19 outbreak, there were many famous people, channels, and influencers that posted guidelines to stay safe during the outbreak and to raise awareness of the gravity of the situation. The efforts shown in social media end up influencing people to be more solidary and supportive of others as well as providing useful information for people who are suffering from the crisis.

2.6 Website Design Practices

With the sudden internet boom in the early 2000s, an increase in connectivity made many companies start creating their websites to increase their visibility. Nowadays, clients are used to visiting amazing websites, making it crucial to have a strong online presence. Good website design leads to better user performance and experience, creating a positive image of the company. With AmCham Romania, it is no different. They are looking for ways to improve their website to provide a better service for the current members and eventually attract new members.

The main reasons that users have bad experiences visiting websites include not finding what they want, having a difficult time using or navigating the website, and outdated or inconsistent information. The most important aspect to fix most of these problems is wayfinding (Tan & Wei, 2006). Wayfinding is a concept that encompasses all the ways people locate themselves physically and navigate from place to place. It can be used in a variety of areas, for example, city planning, libraries, and virtual environments. Many websites use virtual wayfinding features such as hyperlinks and navigation bars that help the user “jump” from one page of the website to another. Even though this feature makes going through the website faster it also makes it more difficult to use the website. Humans follow a predictive model of wayfinding that can be applied in intelligent browsing interfaces (West & Leskovec, 2012). Based on West and Leskovecs’ research on wayfinding, it was found that there are some key aspects such as cognitive mapping, decision generation, and decision execution that improve wayfinding while using a website.

Cognitive mapping has to do mainly with the environment the user finds himself at a specific time. It relates the layout of the site with the sensory activity of the user. For example, a site with a lot of ads makes the user uncomfortable and less likely to spend a lot of time on the site (Jankowski, Hamari, & Wątróbski, 2019). In general, there is a negative connotation regarding ads as it is typically associated with being a waste of time. Therefore, using ad-heavy websites decreases comfortability. On the other hand, if the site has a visually appealing display, the user immerses in the layout and relates the good layout with a good website. Another dimension of cognitive mapping is landmark knowledge. Landmark knowledge encompasses the idea that the user will see information on the website and know that it will take them to a different page. Usually, for good user experience, the website needs to satisfy the landmark knowledge of the user. However, if the website presents a lot of superfluous information the user might feel overwhelmed with the amount of information presented to him and might feel confused when trying to choose the best path to get to the information he is looking for.

The second key aspect of wayfinding is decision generation. This step is the part where the user generates a series of decisions that will complete his/her task. All of the decisions have two aspects to it: planned behavior and expected image. For instance, let’s say that the user has been browsing through

several pages and decides that he wants to go back to the home page. If he finds the word “Home” written on the website, he will automatically believe that by clicking on that word he will go back to the homepage of the website. The decision that he made on taking the fastest route by clicking the word “Home” is what is called planned behavior. The second he clicks the button, he expects to be redirected to the homepage of the website. The visualization in his mind of the website’s homepage is what is called the expected image.

The last aspect of wayfinding has to do with decision execution, which occurs right after the expected image comes to the users' minds. The decision execution compares the users' expected image with what actually appeared on his screen. If the actual image matches his expectations, he is satisfied with the result. If instead, something goes wrong during the process (ex: he is not redirected to the home page or the home word doesn’t contain a hyperlink), the user will feel lost and annoyed with the poor quality of the site and will leave him with a poor impression of the site.

To improve the users’ experience, it is crucial to improve the wayfinding. One of the most optimal ways to evaluate a user’s experience is through empirical experiments. An effective way would be timing how long it takes for the user to go through the whole wayfinding process and evaluating if the user was satisfied with the effectiveness of the website. Information was found on how we could use tools to help us effectively improve AmCham’s website. One of the most useful ones was the use of structured diagrams that allows us to see how the decision generation aspect works when searching for a piece of specific information. Below, Figure 2 shows an example of a structured diagram (Tan & Wei, 2006).

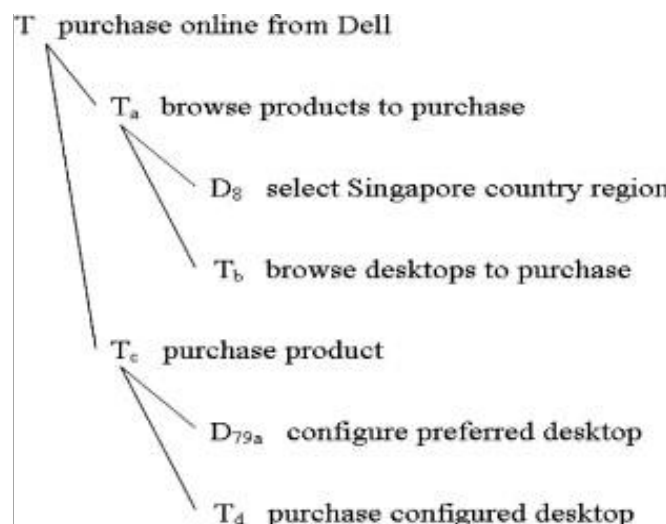


Figure 2: Structured Diagram of Wayfinding Process

As seen in the diagram above, it states the possible ideas and paths a user of the site might go through. The structured diagram will help to organize ideas on how to improve how the website designer might make it obvious for the user on how to get where he desires. One example seen in the image would be the select Singapore country region. The designer might decide that having a dropdown or a place where the user can type “Singapore” will aid the user to select the product of his choice.

One example of a website that had its design changed for the better was the 66rpg. This famous Chinese website had a group of digital media specialists analyze its website and find which sections attracted the most attention of users (Zhang, Chau, Xu, & Liu, 2019). They opted for using surveys and asking frequent users how they interacted with the website. They organized the data collected and presented them in pie charts similar to the one depicted in Figure 3 below.

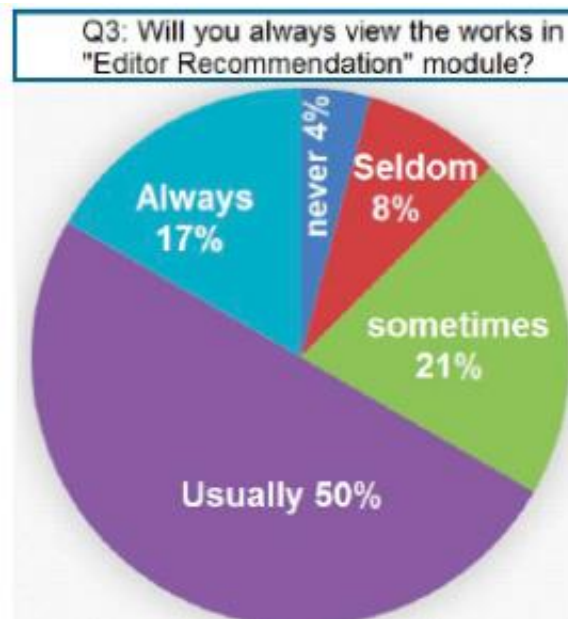


Figure 3: Example of Pie Chart Used to Analyze the 66rpg Website

After making the pie charts for different modules of the 66rpg website, they were able to visualize which sections were more interesting for the users. They determined that the top portion of the website attracted the most attention. After some adjustments, there was an increasing rate of views on the webpages, with some modules reaching rates of increase of more than 100% (Zhang et al., 2019).

2.7 Conclusion

To begin understanding AmCham Romania's current situation, one must understand the circumstances that Romania had to endure have shaped its current economic and political situation. Even though the transition from a communist country to a capitalist one has not been simple, there are still opportunities for free market growth in Romania. In general, globalization and joining the EU has positively led Romania to be more involved in the world market and take advantage of the new opportunities. However, it will be important for Romania to continue to preserve its national principles and economic well-being. AmCham Romania has been working hard to help local companies expand outside of their comfort zone and go abroad to become multinational and expand into the United States. To aid these efforts, they want to be able to give their members a concise guide on how to expand to the U.S. and improve media communications. Improving AmCham Romania's website and social media practices could go a long way in expanding Romania's economic initiatives.

3. Methodology

Our project had a five-phase plan. The first phase of the project consisted of creating case studies that related different AmChams' communication platforms, including their website, published annual reports, social media, and events. We examined these platforms of communication to gather what information was most valuable to AmCham as well as assessed the effectiveness of using media for crisis communication. Our second phase was executing an evaluation using Nielsen's Heuristics to compare the AmCham's websites and come up with recommendations. The third phase was conducting interviews to better understand how the local chambers of commerce can help foreign companies expand to the United States. The fourth phase involved creating a website for AmCham Romania's members. This will help the members understand how to expand their business into the U.S. market. The last phase of our project was to provide a sustainable plan for AmCham to continue improving and using our suggestions and recommendations for their website. The following methodology describes how we completed the project.

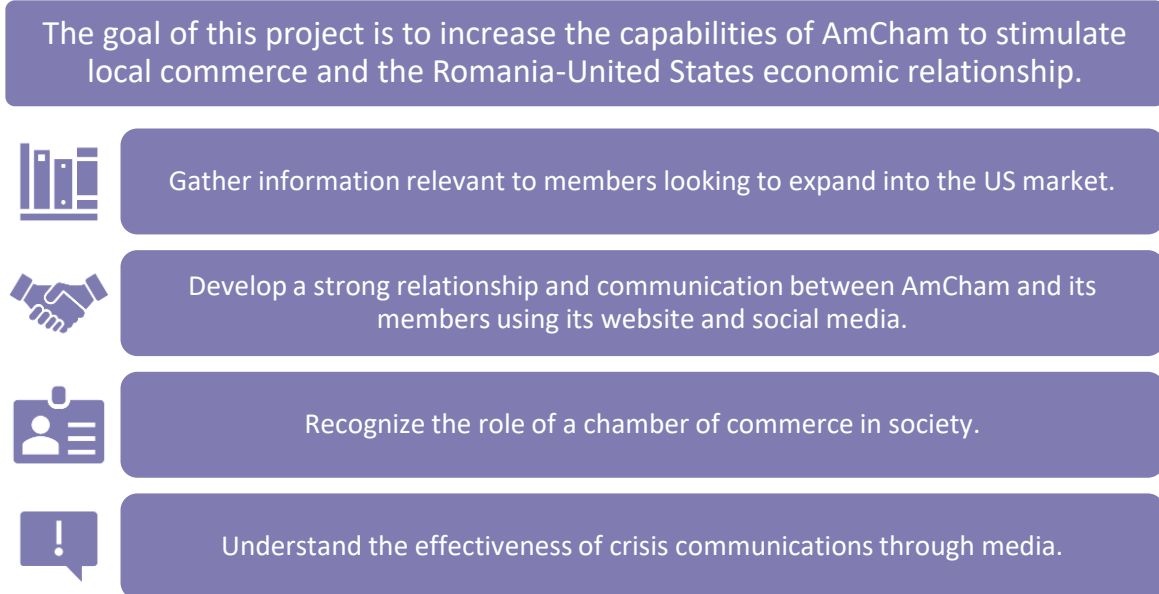


Figure 4: IQP Goals and Objectives

These five phases helped to address the overall goal and objectives for this project, which can be seen in Figure 4 above. By performing case studies and Nielsen's Heuristic evaluation on other AmChams, we gathered information about their website, social media, and crisis communication methods. The information gathered can then be compared to and in some cases applied to AmCham Romania's current practices. Thus, with case studies, we were able to accomplish our second and fourth objectives of developing a strong relationship and communication line between AmCham Romania and its members as well as establishing an effective method of crisis communication through media. In addition, we researched and identified the laws, regulations, and practices that must be followed to expand one's business into the United States. We then created a website that provided information to those looking to expand into the U.S. markets from the research we gathered. By gathering business

expansion information and creating the website for the members we have achieved our first goal of gathering information relevant to members looking to expand into the U.S. market. Lastly, through the interviews that were held with the staff members of local chambers of commerce, we were able to gain insight into how chambers of commerce work and function within society and the different roles they can fill therefore achieving our third project objective.

3.1 Case Studies on Other AmChams

Case studies are studies that focus on specific situations and are particularly helpful in testing theories and models in the real world (Shuttleworth, 2008). This was a crucial part of this project as it demanded understanding how chambers of commerce, particularly other American Chambers of Commerce, can support local economies. Since one of the objectives of this project was to develop a stronger relationship and communication between AmCham Romania and its members through media, it was important to recognize the key components of AmCham websites and existing social media accounts that encourage these connections. Gaining perspective on how other AmChams operate in the age of digital media and how utilizing certain methods to facilitate relationships between customer and organization helped us to further AmCham Romania's agenda.

For a successful website, there needs to be a solid grasp of what features are truly beneficial in media and how it directly contributes to the success of the organization. By finding parallels in the basic arrangement of websites of various successful establishments, we were able to determine practices that are most widely accepted. First, to determine which AmChams were appropriate to compare with AmCham Romania, we looked into whether the organization had a functioning website and social media platforms along with any documents and records they may have published, such as annual reports. Another important step that allowed us to justify the success of an organization's communication platform was to take into account whether their mediums of communication were up to date. For instance, we checked the latest posts and uploads to their website, and whether it was on their homepage or another easily navigable page on their website. Since it was relevant, we also looked into their different crisis communication methods. Furthermore, we checked for any disparities between pieces of information that were present on the website. We went through every webpage present and made sure that all data that showed up was in agreement with the factual data provided by each AmCham. Afterward, we organized the gathered data and provided a set of recommendations to the AmCham Romania staff on what they should alternatively display to upgrade their website.

To contextually find the best approach for AmCham Romania, we planned to study numerous AmChams across Europe. We examined AmChams in Western Europe as well as AmChams in Eastern Europe, many of which had also transitioned out of the communist system 30 years ago. It was important to look into chambers of commerce from different regions in Europe to take into account cultural differences and the importance of such organizations in their society. This was relevant because the economic influence of chambers of commerce in Eastern Europe may vary from the economic influence of the chambers of commerce in Western Europe.

We strategically selected to study the communication platforms of the AmChams in Germany, Sweden, Poland, Hungary, and Bulgaria. The case studies performed on these five country's communication platforms included analysis on the efficiency and usability of their websites and social

media, as well as the technology's influence on member communications (documented in Appendix A). The results of the case studies aided us in understanding how other AmChams use their website and social media platforms for member communication.

Once the case studies were completed, a value analysis was established to help determine how AmCham Romania's platform compared to other AmCham's platforms. The scoring system used three choices for each feature as shown in Table 1 below. By using this point system, we were able to visualize on a simple scale where AmCham Romania met or exceeded other AmChams platforms and where they didn't. Based on these different findings, the team consolidated the ideas from other AmChams to provide a comprehensive list of recommendations for AmCham Romania.

Table 1: Point System for Value Analysis

Points	Justification
1	The other AmCham's communication platform feature is better than that of AmCham Romania's
0	The other AmCham's communication platform feature is on par with that of AmCham Romania's
-1	The other AmCham's communication platform feature is worse than that of AmCham Romania's

3.2 Nielsen's Heuristics

To avoid our subjective judgements in our analysis, we used Nielsen's Heuristics. This method was suggested to the team by a subject matter expert on website design. Heuristics are defined as an aid to learning, discovery, or problem-solving by experimental and trial-and-error methods (Merriam-Webster.com, 2020). These heuristics are as followed (Nielsen, 1994):

- Visibility of System Status
- Match Between System & Real World
- User Control & Freedom
- Consistency & Standards
- Error Prevention
- Recognition Rather Than Recall
- Flexibility & Efficiency of Use
- Aesthetic & Minimalistic Design
- Help User Recognize, Diagnose, & Recover from Errors
- Help & Documentation

The "Visibility of system status" is designed to make sure the users are kept informed of the internal website processes and calculations that may not be seen while providing appropriate feedback for this within a reasonable time frame. For instance, when a page is loading, it may be helpful for the site to provide a loading signal to inform the user that the website is still processing a certain action. Taking into consideration the user's experience of a "Match between the system and real world" requires assessment of whether the system is using words, phrases, and concepts that are familiar to

the user, using real-world convention. Another heuristic is “User control and freedom.” This heuristic focuses on allowing the user to quickly and efficiently undo or redo an action, whether it’s accessing a page or using a filter. “Consistency and standards” is a rather straightforward heuristic that checks if information is presented in a uniform manner across a website. For instance, users should be able to assume that the same words, situations, and actions across a website mean the same thing. Meanwhile, the “Error prevention” heuristic reminds us that there are designs set in place like asterisks indicating necessary fields to prevent errors. Next, “Recognition rather than recall” is a heuristic that makes sure the website remembers information from one page to another. This would be important in a case where search filters are used. For instance, when the user is online shopping it will be easier for the website to remember the previously set filter after clicking on an item, rather than making the user recall the previously set filter. “Flexibility and efficiency of use” is another heuristic that makes the website easier to use and navigate with effective tabs and hyperlinks. Additionally, this evaluation prefers a website with simple “Aesthetics and minimalistic designs” that only contain relevant information presented in a clean and concise format. “Helping the user recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors” is an important heuristic for emphasizing that the website must present error messages in a way that is easy to understand and aids the user in recovery. However, if an error does occur, it is important to provide helpful documentation to the user so they can avoid all errors if possible, as outlined by the “Help and documentation” heuristic. Therefore, Nielsen’s heuristics will provide an objective way of evaluating the key principles of each website.

Using Nielsen’s heuristics, we created a list of essential features and characteristics that contribute to effective website design (Nielsen, n.d). This method was carried out by having each member of the project team individually analyze all six websites, that of AmCham Romania and those of the other European AmChams. As each member took notes on the various heuristics, as seen in Appendix C, they also ranked each heuristic on a scale of one to five, with one being poor and needing major improvements and five being excellent and needing no, or very minor, improvements. These rankings were then averaged among the four team members to determine where each AmCham website ranks on this scale. This helped us determine how AmCham Romania’s website compares to the others.

3.3 Interviews

To understand more about the Chambers of Commerce, and the U.S. market and its rules and regulations, we determined that one of our main ways to gather information would be to conduct interviews. We decided to interview staff members of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce due to the Chambers’ presence and location in Massachusetts. The Chamber of Commerce staff members were able to provide information about foreign trade and business expansion policies and regulations as well as the different resources that their Chamber may provide for international businesses. Along with the chambers of commerce, we interviewed another governmental organization in Massachusetts. However, due to legal reasons, the interviewee and organization asked for their identity to be kept confidential and we shall refer to them as Organization X. The answers and opinions gathered from these interviews allowed us to understand the process of expanding a business into a foreign market and where to find resources for international businesses.

We conducted the interviews over Zoom and phone, as this allowed us to talk directly with the staff members from the three organizations. The same set of questions was used for the chamber of commerce interviews and the topics centered around business expansion, the technology sector's requirements and opportunities, and resources that the Chamber may provide to new, foreign companies. For the interview with Organization X, the questions were centered around the process and considerations that need to be taken when a business wants to come to the U.S. and Massachusetts. These questions were open-ended to allow the interviewees to answer freely and provide as much information as desired. These questions can be found in Appendix E.

With the information provided from these sets of questions, we were able to understand the main issues and resources regarding business expansion into the U.S. market. These answers gave us insight into how a Romanian business can move to the US, sell their products in U.S. markets, and what resources may be provided to them. With the information from all of the interviewees, we were able to understand the path that businesses should follow to more easily expand into the US.

We coded each response based on different keywords and phrases within the statement. Coding is when different groups or labels are assigned to words or phrases as to separate them into different categories (Sarantakos, 2013). This process allowed us to analyze the responses to the interview questions as we were able to sort them into groups (axial coding). After each response was categorized, we were able to identify trends among the responses based upon the size of each category. For example, if the largest coding category contained responses focused on the presence of the tech sector in MA, then we knew to focus our research on the tech sector in MA. Trends identified from these coding categories helped us to further prioritize the information needed for the website.

While conducting any form of research involving interaction with other people, the team adhered to proper research ethics. The team ensured that all interviews were conducted voluntarily and that the interviewee was not being forced to answer any questions. A consent form was created and read to each person we interviewed so that they had full knowledge of what would be discussed and that they could end the interview at any point in time. Then, the interviewee would make an informed decision on whether they still wanted to be interviewed or not. Also, all identifying information was kept in a protected computer document where only the team members had access to it. After each interview, the team worked to create a transcript from either the Zoom or phone recording. Once transcripts with the interviewees names redacted were produced, they were then sent to the interviewee to be approved so that we could add them into our appendices. The transcripts can be found in Appendices F through H.

Along with the different ethical considerations, other additional issues needed to be addressed before conducting the interviews. One main issue was interviewer bias. This occurs when the interviewer's beliefs and opinions affect how the interview is conducted and the results received and interpreted (Trochim, 2020). To avoid interviewer bias, we structured the interview questions to be as open-ended as possible and to avoid a bias towards a specific answer. Along with this, each team member was actively open-minded during the interviews as to not bring their personal biases into the process. Another issue deals with the questions themselves. To elicit the types of answers that would aid us from the questions, we had to ensure that the questions were stated clearly (Purdue Online Writing Lab, n.d.). For that reason, the questions went through a couple of different drafts to be tailored

to be as explicit and specific as possible, so that a straightforward statement of belief was received from each interview. Also, the questions were sent to our collaborators in Romania to review and make suggestions as they saw fit.

3.4 Website for Business Expansion

To clearly and effectively communicate to AmCham Romania's members how to expand their business into the United States, we made a website. This website provided a centralized location where members could find resources regarding state and federal laws and regulations as well as connections to chambers of commerce in the U.S. Expanding a business into the U.S. requires following and understanding many different laws and regulations regarding issues such as labor, product quality, and financial issues. These laws and regulations differ between each state and may be different from the federal laws and those in Europe. Since there are so many different forms of legislation to follow, the creation of a website allows for all of the information to be in a centralized location and be presented in a way that is easy to comprehend and navigate.

To create this site, we decided to use Google Sites, a web page creation tool offered by Google that allows the user to create a website. Google Sites is a platform that allows multiple editors to work on the site simultaneously, making it a more efficient collaborative tool. Furthermore, the site provided a few templates and easy to understand documentation making it a simple website building experience.

The information within the site contains federal laws and regulations for companies that want to enter the U.S. market or sell their products or services in the US. However, since state rules and regulations regarding these activities differ across the United States, an area of the website was dedicated to state-specific rules and regulations. Since finding these documents and resources for all 50 states would not be feasible in seven weeks, the IQP team focused on just those provided by Massachusetts since we were able to get in contact with, and interview, staff members of Chambers of Commerce within the state. However, the website was structured to be flexible for the AmCham staff to be able to continue to add the rules and regulations for other states in the future.

Another main area of the website incorporates AmCham's goals for member expansion, details about U.S. sectors of industry, steps for both expanding and selling to U.S. markets, and details specific to start-ups/small businesses and the tech sector. At AmCham Romania, they want to be able to attract more small businesses and start-ups to their organization since the majority of their members are larger corporations and businesses. Therefore, by including information pertaining specifically to the smaller businesses and start-ups, they are hoping to be able to attract more of them to their organization. Along with this, we had chosen to primarily research the rules and regulations regarding the tech sector. The reason for this decision was that it would not be feasible to look into all of the different sectors of industry within the seven weeks of this project and that the tech sector is one of the larger industries in Romania.

An additional resource this website provided was the contact information for various chambers of commerce in the United States. On top of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and its regional offices, the website also provided a section for local chambers of commerce, found under each state.

3.5 Development of a Sustainable Plan

Multiple aspects of this project included recommendations to the AmCham Romania organization regarding their website and social media platforms. With that in mind, the team worked to create a project website using Google Sites which documents the journey of the team's progress in helping AmCham Romania. This project website serves as a centralized and easily accessible location for documentation of suggestions and potential changes to be made, which the AmCham staff members can easily access and use in the future.

Google Sites collaboration performs well enough that the whole team was able to work on different parts of the website at the same time. The process of creating the website was simple using Google Sites, however, it is limited in its customization options. We based the structure of the website on our proposal, starting with a home page which includes information on what an IQP is, the research and project process, project locations, and unfortunate COVID-19 circumstances. Then we created subsequent tabs for the background, methodology, results, and additional information. We had each tab drop down into the chapters of each section so that each page would be shorter and more readable as well as improving the navigability so that it is easy to find more specific sections of our work. When creating the website we attempted to condense the information provided in the paper into much more digestible portions while still getting all of the crucial points across. We also included visuals where appropriate to make the site more aesthetically pleasing as well as to supplement the information provided with pictures, flowcharts, and tables. In the 'Additional Information' section, we included the unabridged paper and appendix sections of the paper in case users are looking for more detailed information than is provided on the site.

3.6 Conclusion

Overall, the main methods by which we obtained information were through case studies, Nielsen's heuristics, and interviews. By performing case studies, we were able to determine how other AmChams in different areas operate and manage their communication platforms. Furthermore, Nielsen's heuristics provided more specific, objective details on how AmCham's website compared to that of other AmChams. After an analysis of the website was performed, we were able to determine the improvements the website needed to make the user experience better. Meanwhile, the interviews allowed us to learn more about the chambers of commerce and provided useful information for our deliverable website. This website contained resources regarding rules and regulations for companies planning to expand to the United States. Finally, we created a sustainable plan via the project website to ensure that once we leave, the staff at AmCham Romania can continue to reference our research with minimal problems.

4. Results

Using the methods described in the previous chapter, this research project produced outcomes in the form of a few deliverables that addresses the objectives of helping AmCham Romania build upon their member communications. The deliverables we were able to develop throughout the project were the Comparative Analysis Report, the *Rules, Regulations, and Other Resources* website, and the project website. Each of these deliverables helped us to achieve our four main objectives of the project.

The first deliverable we completed was the Comparative Analysis Report. This report summarized the qualitative and quantitative findings from the case studies and heuristic evaluation. The document also includes notes from the case studies, scores from the heuristic evaluation, and even the consolidated media recommendations. Meanwhile, the *Rules, Regulations, and Other Resources* deliverable website incorporated much of the information gathered from the interviews. This website consolidated many of the key points, suggestions, and resources from the interviews with local chambers of commerce and other government organizations. All of the information and results culminated in the creation of a project website that was used as our sustainable plan for both AmCham Romania and future IQPs. This project website was designed to include valuable resources to AmCham Romania such as recommendations for their website and social media.

4.1 Case Studies

The general findings from the case studies of the five different AmChams was that the AmChams' websites and social media vary in effectiveness and delivery of information. Although all the websites had relatively similar search and navigation tools, many of the sites differed in layout and design choices. For instance, AmCham Germany's website had a very boxed approach, where all its information was presented in concise paragraphs that were encased in a box-like figure. Meanwhile, others like AmCham Sweden had a much more free-flowing design. Yet, the content on all of the websites was relatively similar and generally included information regarding organizational statistics, events, resources, and membership. All of the websites were relatively simple and intuitive to navigate, but some, such as AmCham Bulgaria's website, were more cluttered with information while others, like AmCham Poland's website, remained concise.

Next, we looked into annual reports provided by the various AmChams. Some were easily accessible in the publications pages of the AmCham websites. However, others were significantly more difficult to find or were not publicly available in English. In terms of content, all of the AmChams mentioned their members in their report as well as member events by highlighting the larger events organized during the year. Most of the annual reports emphasized the diversity of their membership in terms of business sector and location. For example, AmChams Bulgaria and Germany both used large diagrams and pie-charts to depict their membership structure based upon membership type and business sector. In addition, several of the annual reports also included letters from top executives discussing the success of the year of both the AmCham and its members. Once again, the layout of this information was the major differentiator among the different AmChams. Some Chambers focused more

on the statistics with an abundance of charts and diagrams, even going as far as providing full income statements and balance sheets, while others focused more on aspects of their events.

The most commonly used social media platforms across these AmChams were Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Many of the AmChams post at least every week and a few were found to post almost everyday. For example, AmCham Germany posts at least every 1-2 business days on their Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn whereas AmCham Hungary tends to only post on their Facebook every 1-2 weeks. In general, the posts were about events, relevant news stories and articles, and business updates and reports. We also found that the Chambers tended not to tag or mention any of their members in their posts.

With regards to the AmCham events, they were typically advertised on the previously mentioned social media platforms as well as their websites. There were a variety of events across the board including business meetings, luncheons & dinners, round table discussions, awards ceremonies, and business summits with attendance ranging from 100 to 1000. Some AmChams also advertised more informal events such as holiday celebrations, movie premieres, superbowl parties, et cetera. Most of the AmChams studied attempted to hold an event every week or two.

For crisis communication, all AmChams communicated the effects of COVID-19 on their website. Many had links on their homepage to a page dedicated to the impacts of COVID-19 on their office operations. Some AmCham websites included more features, such as banners and even maps. Alongside that, many used social media to post additional information to update their members on the circumstances. The typical information would include the cancellation of events, closure of offices, articles relating to the economic effects of the pandemic, and travel bans.

Case Studies Value Analysis

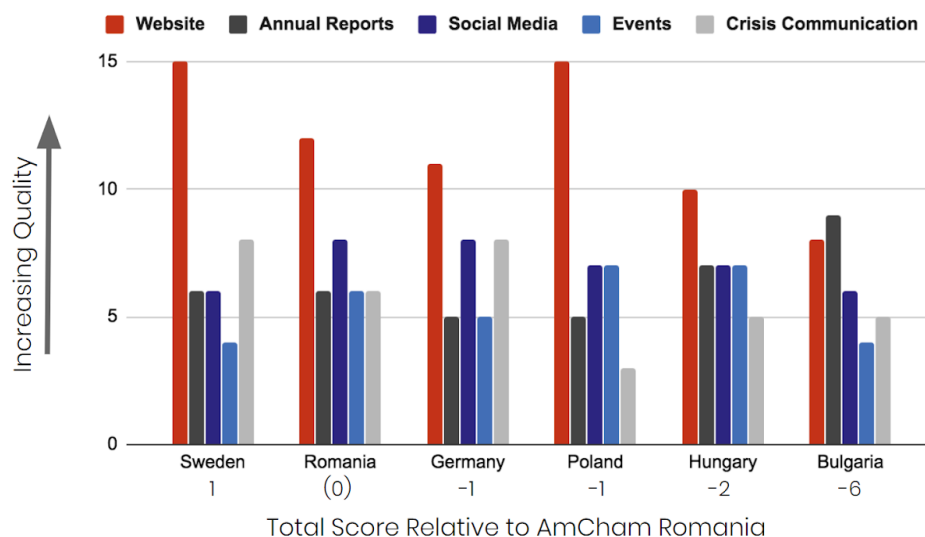


Figure 5: Case Studies Value Analysis Results Graph

The value analysis performed on the case studies, showed that AmCham Romania performed well when compared to other AmChams. The graph in Figure 5 was constructed to visualize how each AmCham did in every category. To come up with the bars, we first scored each category based on our gathered data. We also made a relative score of all AmChams compared to AmCham Romania (Hence why AmCham Romania is a neutral zero in the graph). The relative score would be the sum of all categories points minus the total points of AmCham Romania.

The results gathered found that out of the five AmChams compared to AmCham Romania in this analysis, AmCham Bulgaria (scoring -6) lagged behind primarily due to its lack of a strong and effective website. AmCham Bulgaria also fell short of meeting the standards of AmCham Romania's social media communication and event planning. AmCham Hungary (-2), similar to AmCham Bulgaria, also struggled with the effectiveness of their website, although it did provide more detailed statistics on their website than Romania. In addition, they did well in creating an annual report that contained relevant content in a professional layout. AmChams Germany (-1) and Poland (-1) were comparable to AmCham Romania with Poland's website performing very well, but their crisis communication was minimal at best. Finally, we found that AmCham Sweden (1) pulled ahead of AmCham Romania due to their clear and engaging website, comprehensive crisis communication, and detailed annual reports.

4.2 Nielsen's Heuristic Evaluation

In addition to the case studies, the heuristics provided another valuable tool for drawing comparisons between the different AmCham communication platforms. Overall, Romania had an above average heuristic score when evaluated against the chosen AmCham websites. Among the compared AmChams, Romania scored highest for "Visibility of system status." AmCham Romania's website performed with very fast response times and had minimal visibility issues. In the "Match between system and real-world" category, Romania also did well. The homepage had a logical flow of information with regards to its presentation and its tabs. Additionally, the calendar was a helpful tool to help keep track of when events were happening. However, there was an issue encountered where there were prices in different currencies in different places, making the website slightly inconsistent and confusing. For example, on the website, the price for membership is listed in Lei but income that each company must earn for the different membership levels is listed in USD.

It is imperative to allow the user control and freedom in navigating a website as it influences the user's perception of the website. Presumably if a website does not easily allow the user to access the previous page or homepage, the user would be frustrated and unsatisfied with the website experience (Tan & Wei, 2006). For "User control and freedom," Romania was scored second highest because the website was easy to navigate; however, the drop-down options would sometimes overlap, causing some confusion and making it slightly harder to navigate. Another minor issue we found is that the "Proiect România" link unexpectedly leads to an external site (all of the links in the same navigation bar lead internally to another page on the AmCham site) and opens in the same tab, meaning that the user has to inconveniently navigate back to the AmCham Romania site.

All the AmChams struggled in the "Consistency and standards" category, including AmCham Romania. Like many others, AmCham Romania had inconsistent statistics on its website. For example, both AmCham Romania and AmCham Hungary had different numbers between their homepages and

their “About” pages. An issue specific to AmCham Romania was that ad-blockers on the users computers unintentionally blocked information and restricted access to some of the content. Along with this, there were inconsistencies between their two different menus where the tabs on the side menu did not align with the tabs on the main menu. The twitter icon also disappeared on certain pages. Furthermore, some hyperlinks were confusing as they seemed to link to specific pages but would take the user to different/unrelated ones.

In the “Error prevention” category Romania’s score was average. This category of assessment was challenging to test as we could not log into the system, which would have allowed us to access all parts of the website. Ad-blockers continued to prevent some images from appearing. This was a problem because the user would only see blank spaces instead of the information provided, and had no indication that an issue was occurring. We were only able to determine this problem was caused by ad-blockers after half our IQP team, the ones with ad-blockers enabled, could not see the information on the screen, while the other half of the team could. Additionally, there were separate links on the AmCham Romania website that led to different membership applications which could be confusing for future members.

AmCham Romania generally scored well in categories involving the efficiency and structure of its website. For instance, for the “Recognition rather than recall” heuristic, AmCham Romania scored well, as their website had good “recognition”. Good “recognition” means the website has features or uses phrases that the user may be familiar with, and does not require extensive recollection from prior experiences with the website. The only feature that could be improved upon was the calendar, which highlights and keeps track of the event dates, but doesn’t specify what the events are. AmCham Romania also did well in “Flexibility and efficiency of use,” scoring the highest out of all the AmChams analyzed. The website was relatively easy to navigate with one minor issue regarding the mission page, as it is not accessible from the homepage. In the “Aesthetic and minimalist design” category, Romania was average. Several of the news articles had long titles which made the website feel cluttered in some areas. The website appeared to be unbalanced as some pages had a lot of information while other pages had very little. Furthermore, the homepage had a large banner, which detracts from the overall design and causes more unnecessary scrolling.

In regards to addressing errors on the website, AmCham Romania’s site was average when compared to the other AmChams’ sites. A heuristic that exemplified this was “Help the user recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors.” The website didn’t say anything on the homepage regarding the ad-blocker bug. Also, when using search filters where no results were found, the screen would remain blank with no additional indications of errors with the filter. On the other hand, Romania struggled in the “Help and documentation” heuristic. One of the main issues was the search bar was not as useful for navigating throughout the website. It seemed to search only for related articles as opposed to going through the different pages of the website.

4.3 Interview Findings

The interviews were exceptionally helpful in understanding how chambers of commerce operate in general to help promote economic growth and provide the best resources for foreign companies looking to expand into the U.S. market. The information obtained would be highly useful for Romanian

companies that want to establish an office in the United States. The team reached out to seven different organizations ranging from regional chambers of commerce to local businesses that have headquarters in England. In the end, we completed four interviews that covered six staff members of three different organizations. The detailed transcripts of our interviews with the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce and Greater Boston Chambers of Commerce can be found in Appendices F through H. Unfortunately, the transcript from our fourth interview could not be published for legal and confidentiality reasons.

In general, we found that currently it is difficult for any foreign business to enter the U.S. economy. In recent years, the circulating “America First” rhetoric has made the United States seem less approachable to foreign businesses looking to expand. Furthermore, many states in the U.S. are not willing to provide financial assistance and incentives for foreign companies to expand into their local economy. The lack of governmental financial incentives is especially true for start-ups as they are seen as too risky to invest taxpayer money into. They are seen as risky because most start-ups fail, and would, therefore, be an irresponsible investment by the state. In addition to the financial aspect of moving to the US, there are also many difficulties concerning legal factors. For instance, there are significant obstacles for foreign nationals seeking visas. The visa application fees can be costly depending on how many people will be moving with the expansion. Furthermore, visa applications can be a financial risk, as visas are not guaranteed to be granted.

In Massachusetts, the technology sector is one of the main industries that draw companies to the area. The state has over one hundred colleges and universities meaning that the education level of the workforce and student population is at a high level. Due to this, a significant portion of the working population is knowledgeable in the areas of technology, advanced manufacturing, robotics, AI, big data, and computer science. Along with this, one of the largest industries in Massachusetts is healthcare and pharmaceuticals. Massachusetts is one of the bio/pharma capitals of the world. Therefore, the state has a large life sciences, healthcare, pharmaceuticals, biotech, and medical devices industry. Other than these two fields, other industries and clusters include financial services, higher education, maritime activities & trade, clean energy, and sneakers.

From the Chambers of Commerce, we learned that some of them, such as the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce (WRCC), do directly support start-ups. The WRCC has a StartUp Worcester program designed to mentor and incentivize new businesses, specifically working with young entrepreneurs in Worcester. The WRCC also uses a Recruit, Retain, Incubate process. In this process, they attempt to recruit businesses, investors, and developers to come to central Massachusetts. Next, they try to retain those businesses by supporting policies that help them to grow. They also attempt to incubate and develop new start-ups by working with higher education and immigrant communities. However, some Chambers of Commerce don’t have programs in place for start-ups and business development such as the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce. Yet, they will often have network resources available and can acquire organizations that aid in business development. For example, the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce recently acquired the Massachusetts Innovation and Technology Exchange (MITX). MITX is a business trade association dedicated to businesses and start-ups in the technology sector. It helps companies and especially start-ups through networking events and summits on topics concerning the tech community. Start-ups will need to look for these opportunities when they are available due to the difficulty of finding investors and lack of financial support from state and local

governments. Because most start-ups do fail, around 75%, it would be fiscally irresponsible to put taxpayers' money toward supporting them directly. States typically wait until a business is financially stable before providing any direct investment.

Although Boston and Worcester are not that far apart and are the two major cities in Massachusetts, they provide rather different opportunities. Boston is the capital of the state of Massachusetts. It is also home to over 30 colleges, making it a destination with a great academic network, which in turn also attracts a lot of people with entrepreneurial mindsets. As a big city (with a population of about 700,000), there are also plenty of influential political and business figures in the area (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). Industries that are especially prominent in the city are bio/pharma and hospitality. However, this city is highly competitive, making it especially challenging for new businesses to enter. In addition, Boston's high cost of living and expensive real-estate has also driven people, including companies, workers, and investors, away. Meanwhile, Worcester is a smaller city (with a population of about 200,000) in Central Massachusetts (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). Worcester has had a thriving manufacturing industry for hundreds of years. With nine local colleges, Worcester has grown a smart workforce with many graduates remaining in the city to work.

When expanding into the U.S. market, some considerations need to be taken. One of the first things is that a company needs to determine where they want to be located. The main factors for this decision should be mostly based upon where the company's industry, customers, competitors, suppliers, and workforce are located as this would enable them to be as profitable as possible. Other considerations when deciding where to locate are real estate, culture, and financial incentives from the state. Also, expanding into the U.S. can be difficult and costly, therefore the company needs to consider the cost of expanding their company to the area to ensure that it can be done. Along with this, it is helpful for companies to come to the U.S. with a finance and marketing plan, or business plan, to show that they are serious about coming to the U.S. and understand what they are doing and what they will have to do to be successful. More useful considerations would be for the company to have a field employee that is able to meet in person with people in the U.S. to ease the process of hiring, to understand the legal system of the US, and to try to brand the company in a way that makes them stand out among the competition.

Besides these considerations, other challenges also need to be accounted for before deciding to expand to the U.S. market. As mentioned previously, such expansion can be a costly endeavor, especially being able to hire the necessary workers for the job. Depending on the industry the company is a part of and where the company wants to locate, it may be costly to hire the needed workers. For example, to hire workers in Massachusetts may be more expensive than hiring workers in Nebraska, either because of the general cost of living or because the workforce is primarily at a higher level of education and skills. Along with this, different states may give different financial incentives, which may be a factor in where the company decides to locate. Other challenges that may be faced are legal issues; finding investors; and differences in business practices, culture, and time zones.

A company must also adhere to different rules and regulations set by both federal and state governments, regardless of whether they are trying to open a business in the U.S. or just looking to sell their products to American distributors. Generally, there are regulations regarding issues such as business expansion, taxes, wages, labor, and safety that must be followed by all companies. Besides the

general regulations, there exist some that are more specific to the company's particular industry. For example, if the company is in the technology sector, their product will have to comply with regulations regarding electronics, privacy, and data collection. Another example would be that pharmaceutical companies have to comply with any regulations set out by the Federal Drug Administration (FDA). Along with the federal regulations, there may also be regulations that the company must comply with depending on the state they are located in. Along with federal regulations, companies should also abide by state regulations, which might be more specific.

To help make the transition into the U.S. market more efficient and straightforward, there are many different resources available to companies. In addition to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, many states also have chambers of commerce, which can help to provide networking opportunities as well as general information regarding business practices and industries in the area. With the opportunities they provide, these chambers of commerce are a good resource for helping new companies to begin building their presence within the local economy.

At the local level, many states also offer different resources that can help foreign businesses entering the U.S. market. For example, in Massachusetts, there is the Massachusetts Office of International Trade and Investment (MOITI), the Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD), the Office of Immigrant Affairs, Mass Development, and MassEcon. All of these organizations can help to guide foreign businesses through the obstacles of joining the U.S. market.

4.4 Deliverable Website

The *Rules, Regulations and Other Resources* website was a Google Sites we created for AmCham Romania's members who are looking to expand their businesses into the U.S. markets. The goal of this website was to create a centralized location for members to easily find and access helpful links to documents and contacts that would aid in their transition over to the U.S. marketplace, whether it be starting a new business or selling goods. The website includes sections dedicated to understanding the U.S. market, businesses seeking to establish an office in the US, businesses looking to sell goods to the U.S. market, and local chambers of commerce. This website can be currently found at:

<https://sites.google.com/view/amchamromaniaabroad/home>



Figure 6: Homepage of the 'Rules, Regulations and Other Resources' site

The 'Understanding the U.S. Market' section focuses on the federal rules and regulations pertaining to doing business in the United States as well as other information on the U.S. economy including prominent sectors of industries. The 'Rules and Regulations' page highlights the federal laws and guidelines that must be followed by both businesses based in the USA and businesses selling to the US. These legal guidelines will be important for companies to access as they will be entering a new market with new rules. Companies that have offices in the United States must follow labor and tax laws that are enforced by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and Internal Revenue Services (IRS). On the other hand, businesses looking only to sell goods in the U.S. must follow the guidelines set by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, which outlines the rules and regulations that deal with the importation of goods and protection of national borders. To further understand the U.S. marketplace, it would be important to note the sectors of industries to begin learning about the specific market's suppliers, consumers, and competition in the United States. After the 'Rules and Regulations' page is the 'Massachusetts' page which focuses specifically on businesses looking to sell to the Massachusetts markets, either by targeting this area with online products and marketing or expanding to the Massachusetts area. It provides information on business in Massachusetts, including Boston and Worcester, and goes into more detail on the tech sector in Massachusetts. This page provides information to companies looking to expand to Massachusetts as an initial stepping stone for their research into whether Massachusetts is the right location for them, and if so, where in Massachusetts specifically. Next, the 'Sectors of Industries' section features four sectors including tech, consumer goods, services, and tourism. Each sector on the page contains a brief description expanding upon its definition and presence in the U.S.

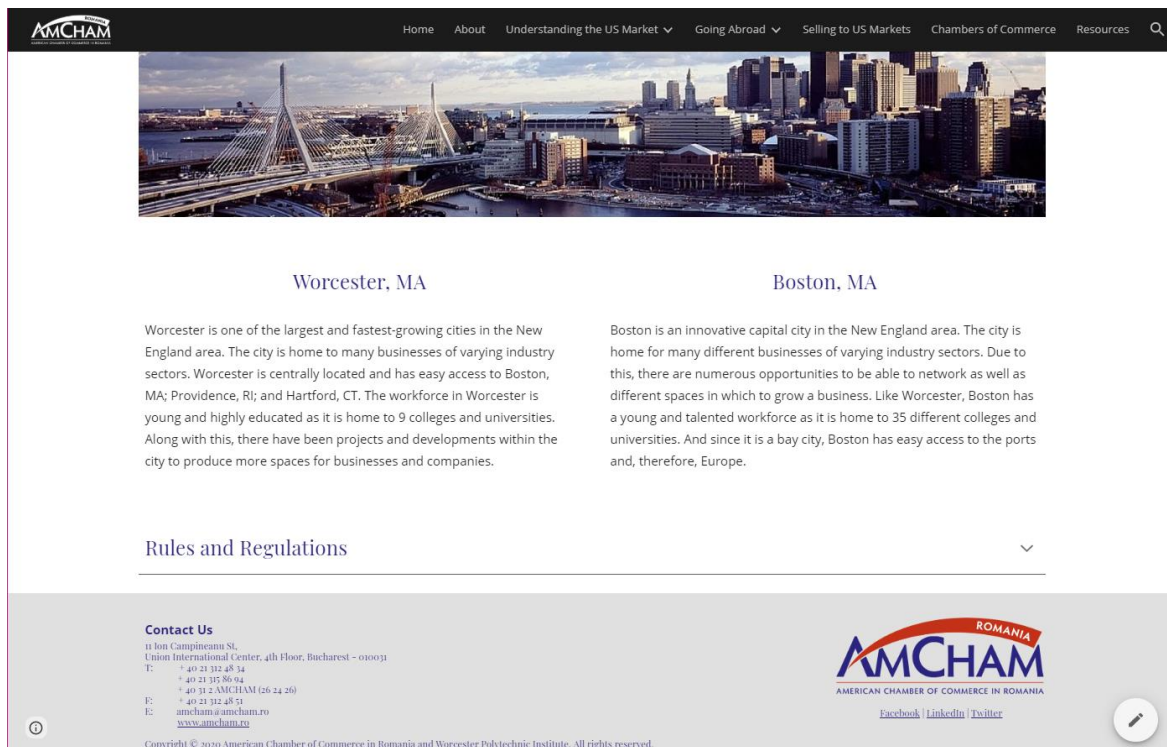


Figure 7: 'Massachusetts' page of the 'Rules, Regulations and Other Resources' site

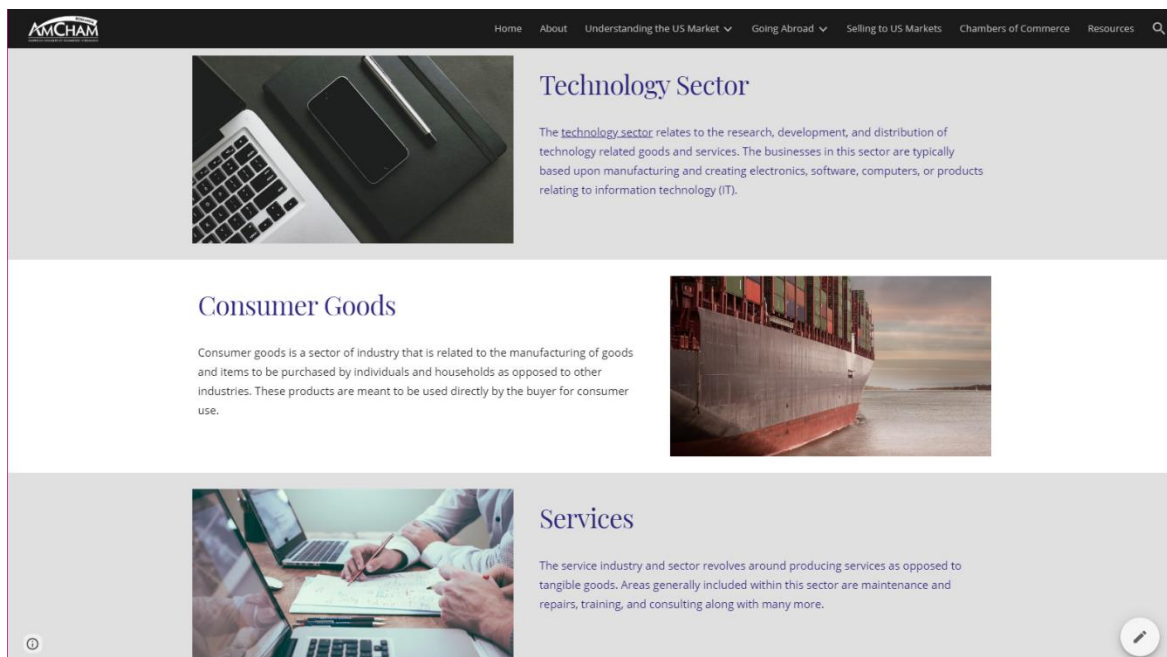


Figure 8: 'Sectors of Industry' page of the 'Rules, Regulations and Other Resources' site

Under the 'Going Abroad' section, there are two main pages, 'Startups/Small Businesses' and 'Technology Sector'. The 'Startups/Small Businesses' page primarily focuses on providing resources and information for small businesses and start-ups that are looking to expand into the U.S. market. Within the page, there are sections listing different resources such as federal agencies and programs for small businesses as well as accelerators and incubators for start-ups. Along with this, there are different guides and business associations listed as additional resources as they can also provide helpful information to these businesses. From this, start-ups and small businesses will be able to better understand the U.S. market and know if the market can benefit their business and help them grow. The 'Technology Sector' page mainly discusses the technology sector industry in the US. This page has two sections. The first section goes over the large presence of the tech sector in the U.S. while the second section lists the rules and regulations that companies must abide by when developing and selling their products. From the information on this page as a whole, companies will be able to gain more knowledge and insight into the tech sector presence in the U.S. and the rules and regulations within it. With this information, the companies and businesses can then make an informed decision regarding if the tech sector in the U.S. is the type of market they are looking for to help grow and expand their business.

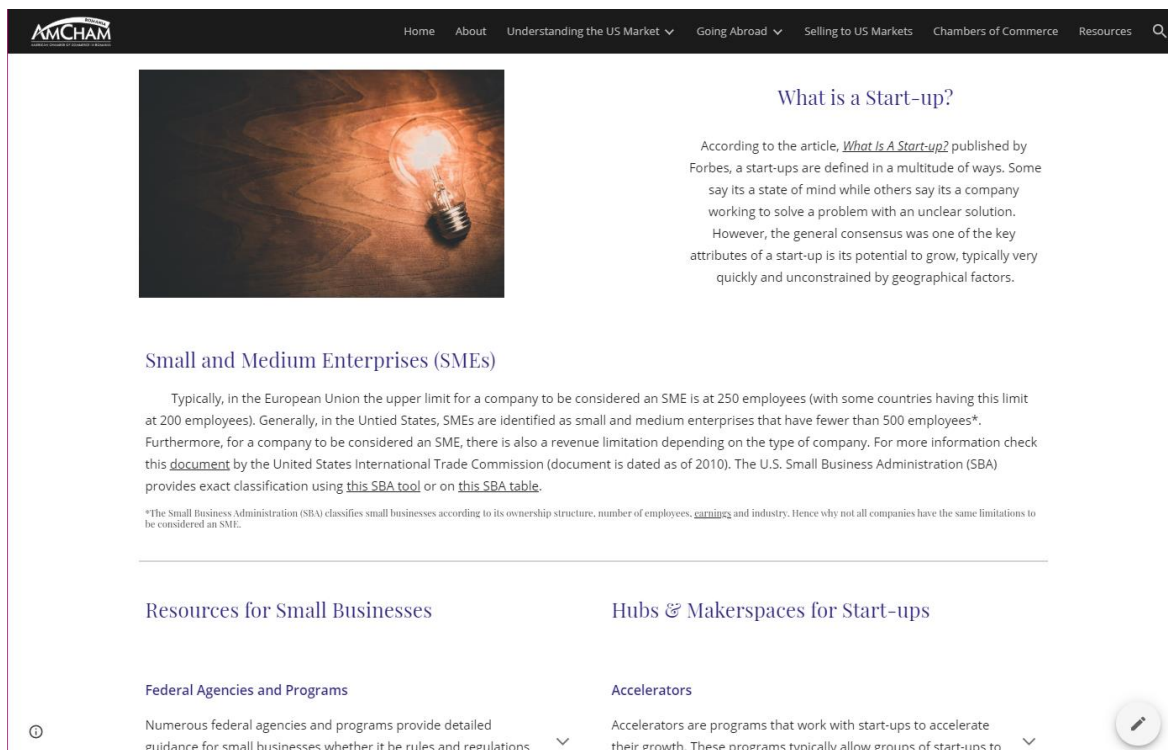


Figure 9: 'Startups/Small Businesses' page of the 'Rules, Regulations and Other Resources' site

The 'Selling to U.S. Markets' page focuses on providing helpful resources and information to businesses not looking to expand a branch to the United States, but still expand their products to U.S. markets through selling online. It first explains why selling online and not expanding would benefit a business through increased sales with less associated financial and temporal risk. Also included on this page are detailed steps for introducing a business to online sales and marketplaces. The steps in order

are: research, selecting products/services, creating your online platform or choosing an online marketplace, packaging and shipping, U.S. customs and regulations, customer service and contact, and online marketing. The goal of this page is to provide a rough roadmap of the first steps businesses should take, giving them some guidance as to the order of necessary actions and drawing attention to essential considerations they may have overlooked.

In the 'Chambers of Commerce' page it is possible to find the contact information of the main U.S. Chamber of Commerce and a variety of other regional chambers of commerce. On this page, we have also added a specific section for chambers of commerce in Massachusetts where we provide the contact information of the chambers of commerce that we contacted for our interviews. AmCham Romania will be able to continually update this page and add information for chambers of commerce from other U.S. states. With the contact information of the chambers of commerce, companies will be able to resolve any possible doubts they have and start building a connection with the United States.

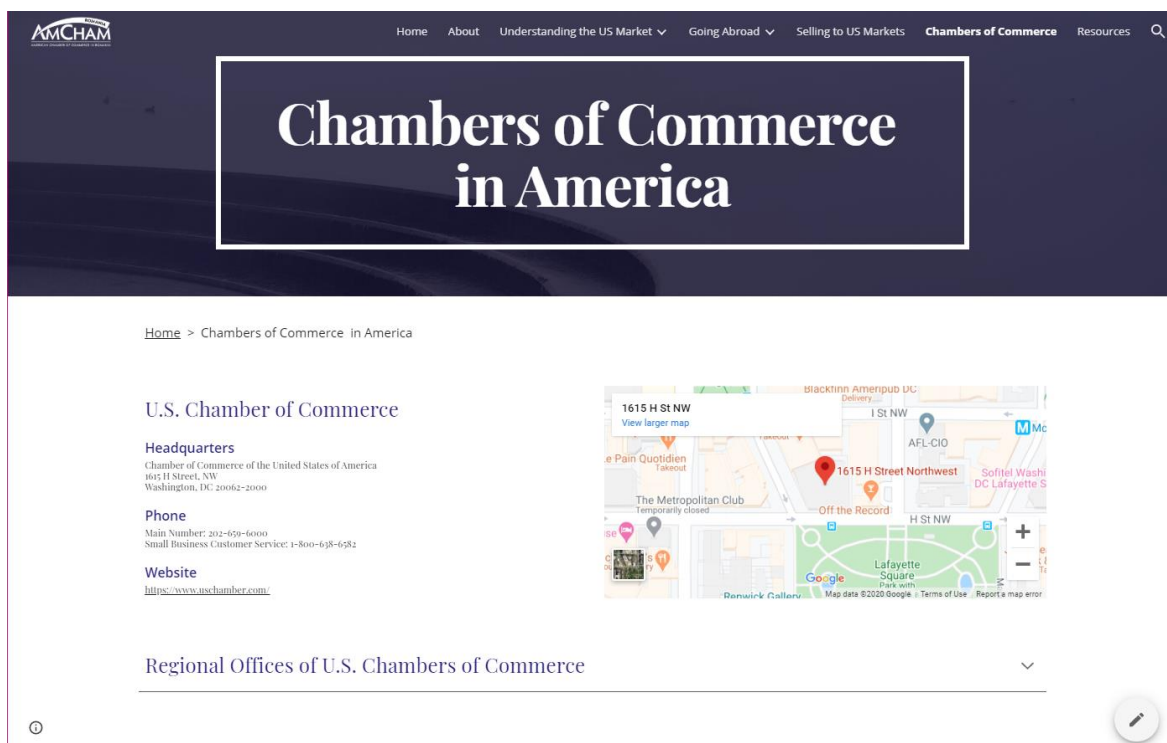


Figure 10: 'Chambers of Commerce' page of the 'Rules, Regulations and Other Resources' site

The last page in our website is the 'Resources' webpage. This page contains useful resources for any Romanian company that might want to expand their business to the United States to start developing a network. There are a variety of links to useful websites such as the SelectUSA website as well as websites of the Romanian embassy and Romanian general and honorary consulates in the United States. It also includes some resources specific to Massachusetts like MOITI and MOBD. Additionally, this page also includes a button that links to the 'References' section, containing a list of all the references we used to create this website. Having all these resources gathered in a single place allows member companies to quickly find the information they need by accessing one of the linked websites.

4.5 Project Website

The project website was another Google Sites website we developed and published at the end of our project. This website includes an overview of the entire project, serving as a helpful tool for future IQPs that may be working with AmCham Romania. The project website is essentially an information hub for all our research in a more digestible format as it highlights the key information we found during our background research, the main methods we used, and the overarching results. The purpose of this website is to provide information documenting our research in a more concise approach that can be accessed at any point in the future, whether it be by the AmCham staff or future IQP students. It also acts as a sustainable plan for AmCham Romania since it neatly compiles our results and recommendations to them somewhere other than just in our full report. It can be found at:

<https://sites.google.com/view/amcham-iqp-2020/home>

The website aims to establish an understanding of the problem we worked to solve and how we approached the problem. Starting with the background tab and its subpages, the website sought to create a foundation for comprehending the Romanian economic history and our sponsor's mission. Then, within the methodology section, our main goals and objectives are showcased before diving into each method we used in this research project. Next, the results area of the website placed a spotlight on the three major deliverables of the project: the *Rules, Regulations, and Other Resources* Website, the Comparative Analysis Report, and our project website. These three items are all useful for learning about the outcomes of our research as well as being a base for future work to stem from.

4.6 Recommendations for Future Changes

Once all of the results of the value analysis and heuristics were analyzed, we were able to develop recommendations for AmCham Romania to improve upon its current website and social media usage. Due to time constraints, we were not able to fully research social media practices. Therefore, there are only a few social media recommendations that are primarily based upon our case studies. These recommendations were delivered to AmCham Romania through our Comparative Analysis Report.

4.6.1 Website Recommendations

After reviewing and assessing our case studies and heuristic analysis of the AmCham websites, we came to the following suggestions for AmCham Romania's website:

1. On the calendar, create pop up windows showing events on the day as opposed to loading a new page (similar to AmCham Bulgaria's)
2. Don't have drop down tabs lock when clicked
3. Have links to external sites open in a new tab ("Proiect România")
4. Make sure that all pages, specifically the "About AmCham Romania" page (<https://www.amcham.ro/about-amcham-romania>) can be navigated to from the homepage of the website
5. Update statistics wherever they can be found, to be consistent across the website (Such as membership numbers).

6. Make all hyperlinks clear and easy to understand (possibly need to rename some of them)
7. Fix any glitches (disappearing icons and overlapping tabs)
8. Fix the top left corner menu tabs so that they are the same as the main menu tabs on the homepage
9. Clarify the membership links so that users know what form they will be opening when they click the link
10. Find a way to condense article titles to relieve the clutter on some of the pages but still get the main idea across to the user (AmCham Poland did this well)
11. Try to find a balance of information across the pages by distributing information better between longer and shorter pages
12. Shorten the head banner on the homepage so it doesn't take up the entire screen on the homepage
13. Fix the banner on the homepage so that any images on it can be visible even if a user has their ad-blocker enabled
14. If the ad-block issue is not fixable, add a message saying that the images can be viewed if ad-blocker is turned off
15. If no results are found for a search, have a message indicating there were no results
16. Have the search algorithm first search the website for related pages on the website before it begins searching for related news articles

4.6.2 Social Media Recommendations

After reviewing and assessing our case studies of the AmCham Social Media pages, we came to the following suggestions for AmCham Romania's Social Media:

1. Feature members on different social media posts
 - a. Can be broken up into featuring 10 companies/week or to feature them based upon industry
 - b. #MemberMondays, #FeatureFridays
2. Post about new members when they join
3. Make posts highlighting startup members
4. Post monthly recaps about what happened and/or what was accomplished during the past month
5. Gather quotes from the members about how AmCham Romania helped them or why they joined AmCham Romania to post

4.7 Conclusion

In general, the results we gathered from our research were insightful and informed the suggestions and recommendations provided to AmCham Romania. From the case studies and value analysis, we found that there were common trends relating to structure, data presentation, and wayfinding between AmCham Romania and other AmChams. Along with the case studies, the heuristic evaluation of all of the websites gave us a more complete look into the similarities and disparities of the AmChams' websites. With both the heuristic and value analysis results, we were able to produce a list of recommendations for AmCham Romania's social media and website, which were detailed in the Comparative Analysis Report. Then, by conducting interviews with local chambers of commerce and

other organizations, we were able to gain more knowledge about how businesses can expand effectively to the U.S. In turn, we then produced the *Rules, Regulations, and Other Resources* website for AmCham Romania's use to help give their members a more comprehensive compilation of information, resources, and U.S. rules and regulations. All of these results were then added into our project website which functions as our sustainable plan since it details all of the research, methods, and results gathered throughout the project.

5. Conclusion

This research project identified and addressed the challenges that AmCham Romania faced in terms of enhancing its member communications. To gain a better understanding of the problem and how it affects the Romanian economy on a larger scale, we studied the background of the Romanian economic history, the roles of chambers of commerce in society, and the best website practices. With an understanding of the general context, we researched the most accepted methods for evaluating websites and social media platforms. We implemented case studies, and Nielsen's heuristic evaluation to provide suggestions to improve their current media platforms. Furthermore, we performed interviews and researched U.S. rules and regulations to create a deliverable website.

The IQP team concluded the project with three main deliverables. One of the main deliverables to the American Chamber of Commerce in Romania is the deliverable website. The *Rules, Regulations, and Other Resources* website was made to provide resources in an easy to navigate website to AmCham members that are interested in joining the U.S. market. The website is currently geared more for those looking to join the Massachusetts marketplace. Given that the website is created using Google Sites, the site can be easily edited and allows for an unlimited number of collaborators. Thus, we recommended AmCham Romania look into adding tabs on the website for other states in the U.S., which would make the website a more comprehensive resource for both AmCham Romania and its members.

5.1 Future Work

Similar to our recommendation for AmCham Romania to add more states to their website, we would also like to encourage future projects to contribute to this initiative. Due to the seven-week time constraint as well as the time it took to develop the initial website, our project team was only able to focus on providing information specific to Massachusetts. We focused on the state of Massachusetts because of its strong technology sector. However, we would advise future IQP teams to research the rules and regulations of states that are strong in the other sectors of industry that are recommended by AmCham Romania. As highlighted on the website, these other sectors of industry include tourism, services, and goods. Making these changes will allow for a more balanced website without as much of a focus upon technology opportunities in Massachusetts. In addition, future teams may want to look into making the website more targeted for Romanian companies. For instance, they may want to help provide resources to laws and guidelines specific to the needs and requests of Romanian companies that want to expand internationally.

The team would also like to encourage future IQPs to continue to investigate the best practices for social media. This was briefly touched upon in this project, as we provided some preliminary data and observations that we found when analyzing all aspects of AmCham Romania's media. However, we were unable to provide a thorough examination of the most widely accepted practices and which methods would most effectively evaluate their current social media. Finding reliable methods that can systematically evaluate social media platforms, will help to reduce bias and legitimize findings. We believe further research into this would benefit AmCham Romania, by providing better member interactions and extending their recognition.

Furthermore, AmCham Romania and future IQP teams should continue to explore the idea of updating their database. Before the project term, the team had focused much of their research to understand the best practices and applications for customer relationship management (CRM) systems. Unfortunately, due to the ban on travel arising from the COVID-19 outbreak, the direction of the project was changed to exclude much of the research on CRM methods. Although we were unable to implement any of the original methods, the team had already researched and gathered relevant information for CRM methods and CRM systems, which can be found in Appendix J. The evaluation of AmCham Romania's CRM system could be done in a similar fashion to our comparative analysis of websites. For instance, AmCham Romania's current CRM could be compared to existing evaluations of CRM systems provided by third parties to identify areas for improvement. Some of these evaluations can be found on SelectHub. Comparing this way would be necessary since accessing other AmChams databases would be very unlikely. Furthermore, to continue improving upon their current system, the team could perform voluntary interviews with the AmCham Romania staff to better understand how the system is used and the current issues with it. In Appendix J, there are questions that we had originally intended on asking the staff.

5.2 Final Thoughts

At the completion of the project, the team was able to successfully help AmCham Romania optimize the use of their media to help the AmCham's members and improve overall member communications. Although a small step, this project helps AmCham Romania to further enhance the economic relationship between Romania and the United States. We hope this project will continue to inspire future generations of this IQP and help Romania to expand their international presence.

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***These sources were used for CRM research which can be found in Appendix J.

7. Appendix

Appendix A: Case Studies

Below is a table with our results from the case studies we performed for AmCham Germany, AmCham Hungary, AmCham Bulgaria, AmCham Poland, and AmCham Sweden. The first column lists the broad topic that was analyzed, such as the AmCham's website or social media. The second column lists the more specific details that were analyzed for each broad topic, such as format, data, and errors within the AmCham's website. And the last five columns list the results and notes regarding each of the analyzed details in the broad topics for each of the five AmChams.

Table 2: Case Studies of Other AmCham Communication Platforms

Platform	Specific details	Germany	Hungary	Bulgaria	Poland	Sweden
Website	Format/Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well organized into various sections Concise but important information included Visually appealing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aesthetically ok. Huge Drop Down tabs with hard to read text (too small and color doesn't help) A lot of text and few images in home page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lots of information towards the bottom of the homepage (begins to look a little cluttered) Drop down tabs Pretty good layout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visually pleasing Easy to read text and drop down tabs Header scrolls with eye catching pictures Twitter feed, news, and events schedule all on the home page Home page is not over crowded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic layout Text is easy to read Some tabs are drop down some aren't (these pages don't have multiple pages within them) Have upcoming events, news articles, and pictures on their homepage
	Data and Statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No statistics on home page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present Statistics in the home page Statistics are relevant and attract potential new members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No statistics on homepage No statistics anywhere on the website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has some statistics on their "About AmCham page" Some statistics at the bottom of the home page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only place with statistics is on the mission page
	Consistency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Had some consistency issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers in <i>home page</i> and <i>about us</i> section don't match 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Had some consistency issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statistics on the home page and the About AmCham page don't match 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Had some consistency issues
	Intuitivity/Ease of Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple and organized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is intuitive; however, since drop downs have a lot of information it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cluttered with lots of information under the become a member section 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple to use The drop down menu items have their 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pages are easy to navigate The word "events" is never used only

			becomes a little harder to use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tabs are easy to use and navigate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respective information under each tab • Easy to navigate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "upcoming" and "previous" • To get to a list of upcoming and previous events you have to go to the home page and scroll until you see upcoming and then click that link • OR you have to look under "calendar"
	Errors/Bugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No errors or bugs detected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are icons on the homepage for their social media pages, but the LinkedIn one and the one with the wifi icon don't work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You cannot just click on the publications tab, you have to click on a page within the tab for it to work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link to LinkedIn, but it doesn't work since there is no LinkedIn page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No errors or bugs detected
	Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediately the first thing that the viewer sees • Part of the header has a clickable button to well documented crisis page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has AmCham Coronavirus updates in the top of their home page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has some news articles related to the outbreak on the homepage towards the bottom • Only a couple of articles under the research and analysis section • Not much information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the home page they list the cancelled events • There is an article in community news that states that the office is closed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seems to be really on top of it • Has an interactive map of COVID-19 outbreak throughout the world
	Miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First section under the header is 3 articles on the newsboard <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Keeps members up to date without overwhelming • Homepage dedicated to the members and patrons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a mix of Hungarian and English in its home page • The same news feed is present in a variety of different tabs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of the community news and opportunities articles are in polish and some are in english 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn't have a clear Events section • On their "mission" page there is a scrolling header, which is the same as an infographic further down the page (not the most pleasing as it has text but you get frustrated since you can't read the text in the header)

Annual Reports		2018 Annual Report	2019 Annual Report	2016 Annual Report	2019 Annual Report	2017 Annual Report 2017 Management Report (Translated)
	Statistical Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A list outlining the diversity of the AmCham Germany network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership structure • AmCham expenditure structure • AmCham Revenue Structure • Profit and loss account • Balance sheet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership structure based on membership type → 52.63% are international and 36.84% are local • Membership structure based on Field of Business— the only sector to exceed more than 10% of total members is the information and communication technologies sector at 11.4% • Steady increase of membership and as of 11/30/16 had 342 members • Comparative analysis of budgets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have 1561 followers on our AmCham Facebook page, which means that we had an increase in followers of 41% in 2019, we also received 1455-page likes which is 44% increase from last year. • Our LinkedIn gained 805 more followers compared to last year and we have 1,579 followers on Twitter. • We had 200 mentions in traditional press, radio, and TV, most frequently in the Rzeczpospolita Daily. In digital media we had 2500 mentions. • In the year 2019, AmCham gained 44 corporate and 5 individual members and lost 31 corporate and 10 individual members, with a final total of 367 members. • Organized 111 events, attended by 3,457 people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed management report including income statement and balance sheet for 2017 and 2016 • Gained 33 members • Over 50 events • Represent over 300,000 employees in over 200 member companies and \$370 bn of revenue
	Data Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No charts or diagrams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of diagrams and charts for structure • Tables of financial related 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bar chart for numbers of members throughout time • Pie charts to show AmCham membership structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No charts or diagrams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No charts or diagrams

	Number of Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 3000 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11/30/16 had 342 members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 367 members (in 2019) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 200
	Miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter from the President and General Manager of AmCham Germany Lots of pictures Highlights member meetings, conferences, as well as regional and political events. Celebrates individual contributions through interviews, quotes and highlights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letters from the President and CEO of AmCham Hungary Includes a page of all the staff members Includes QR codes for more information Highlights current projects and news 30th Anniversary gala with lots of quotes Acknowledges all partners and sponsors as well as members Updates from committees and task forces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter from the President of AmCham Bulgaria Lists their 24 events Highlights certain events that were held including government meeting and charities Includes policy/advocacy report Includes Auditor's report 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A lot of information over different programs they organize in 2019 (ex: American Investor Desk and 30 under 30) In general, they had a big focus on events they did (most of the report consist of events) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter from the Managing Director of AmCham Sweden A lot of financial information Large focus on transatlantic trade int Link pilot stage - market-based supplier diversity program
Social Media	Which platforms?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook LinkedIn Twitter Instagram Youtube 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook LinkedIn Twitter Instagram Youtube (2 of them) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LinkedIn Twitter Youtube 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook Twitter Instagram LinkedIn (American Investor Desk) Youtube 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook LinkedIn Twitter Instagram
	Frequency of posts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook: Almost every business day LinkedIn: Very often (comparable to Facebook) Twitter: Almost every business day Instagram: 5 total from 2016 Basically when they make a post it goes onto their 3 main platforms Youtube: 66 videos and last video was 2 months ago 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook: At least one post every one to two weeks LinkedIn: The most recent post was on March 17 They don't update this platform that often (biweekly or monthly) Twitter: Last use was June 2017 Instagram: Last use was November 2019 Youtube: has two different channels / 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LinkedIn: Last post was October 2019 months ago Twitter: At least once or twice every 1-2 weeks Youtube: 5 videos, last one was 1 month ago 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook: Last post was March 9 (may be due to COVID-19) At least 1-2 posts every week Twitter: Last post was March 4 At least 1-2 posts a week Youtube: Last video was 3 months ago 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook: Last post was March 9 Not the most active on facebook in recent months Twitter: At least one (sometimes multiple) posts a day LinkedIn: The same as twitter (it seems that whatever is posted on twitter also gets posted to LinkedIn) Instagram: Only 10 posts from 2016 and one from 2017
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> last post 4 months ago Most used platform is Facebook 			
	Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pictures and videos of events Notes from their Organization President Updates on report statuses and publicity of them Business updates (ie link to Trump's state of the union address) both German and American Business facts (Germany is one of the biggest investors in the us) Event openings Job openings on LinkedIn Appropriate for each platform like Facebook has more official and informative things but twitter has more pictures and videos and such 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Posts about member events that happened Pictures of events Events for their community (went and talked to high school students) Committee meetings (pics and general updates) Business meetings Report updates (let people know when the new issue of "the journal" is out) Chamber updates More professional events and updates on LinkedIn Facebook has general events but also community events and fun ones (like superbowl watch party) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly updates Event dates Business updates Business events Meeting updates General assembly overview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events Event updates Meeting updates Event dates Outreach Pictures of events Event livestreams Had a year in review on YouTube 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crisis communication News that may affect businesses Articles for their members to read Event dates
	Member interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members are in the pictures of events and such Pictures of committees and business events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event pictures have members in them (no one tagged) Have been tagged in pictures on Instagram (members and other AmChams) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Posts for members such as weekly updates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members in posted pictures (no one tagged) Pictures of events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lots of news and articles posted for the members to read Event dates posted Pictures from events
	Miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook-1526 likes, 1742 follows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook- 2151 likes, 2301 follow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Twitter- 684 followers LinkedIn- 1481 followers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook - 1555 likes, 1684 follows Twitter - 1617 followers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook - 799 likes, 829 follows Twitter - 1564 followers

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LinkedIn - 4489 followers Twitter - 3378 followers (follow 2027) The Instagram says AmCham Germany but its 5 pics with no captions that have no business related content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LinkedIn- 665 followers Twitter- 617 followers Instagram- 225 followers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The most relevant platform seems to be Twitter LinkedIn only has 3 post and Youtube only 5 posts Has regular posts of AmCham Daily and AmCham Weekly 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LinkedIn - 1421 followers Instagram - 354 followers
Events	How are they advertised?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook Twitter LinkedIn Website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook LinkedIn Twitter Instagram Website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Twitter Website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook Twitter Youtube LinkedIn Website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LinkedIn Facebook
	Number of attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100-350 attendees per event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 47 major events with a total of 3400 participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bigger Events had 200 participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 53 committee meetings with 1000 participants over the year 2019 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not listed
	Type of events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panel Discussion New Year's Reception (multiple cities) Award Ceremonies Expert Briefings Business After Hours Business Conferences Business Luncheons Holiday Events (ex:Thanksgiving) Roundtable Discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Forums Anniversary Gala Flagship Events Leadership Masterclass Series Seminars Social Events Patron Dinners Events with Colleges Membership Events Job Fairs Conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conferences Roundtables Business Meeting Business Luncheons Social/Sport Events Networking Receptions International Cooperation Events/Projects Local Cooperation Events/Projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly Meetings Movie Premiere Meeting with US Senate Delegation Business Conferences Luncheon with US Secretary of commerce Award Ceremonies Super Bowl Party July 4th Picnic AmCham Diner Business Summits Business Mixers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment summits Leadership sessions Gand openings International Business forum Seminars Mentoring programs
	Frequency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every 1-2 weeks has an event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About 50 events per year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About 25 Events per year Every 1-2 weeks there's an event with some bigger breaks sometimes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A few events every month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1-2 events at least every other week
	Miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Big variety of events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The instagram account sometimes makes many posts of events, but doesn't post anything for long period of times Great coverage of events in annual report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main platform seems to be Twitter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically post about events after the fact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactive in posts that advertise upcoming events
Crisis	Platforms communicated on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website LinkedIn Twitter Facebook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website Facebook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website Facebook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website LinkedIn Twitter
	Pop-ups, banners, or other features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lots of details on the website homepage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes a link to a new page on their newsboard dedicated to the crisis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some details on the website homepage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leads to a new page dedicated to the COVID-19 outbreak 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some detail on Website homepage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A link from the homepage to a page with a message from AmCham Bulgaria Under member news mentions cancellation of certain events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal detail on Website homepage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A link from the homepage to a short message explaining the closure of the office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Banner <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Links to emergency information from Swedish authorities Lots of details on the website homepage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homepage links to legal advice, frequently asked questions, research articles and free resources that pertain to the crisis
	Type of Information Provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travel bans Health resources such as CDC and WHO Economic impact documents Guidance for businesses and employers on how to run successful virtual meetings Awareness of Solidarity Response Fund Encouraging messages from members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events and meetings policies Members' offers One Facebook post linking to their coronavirus page on their website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updates on upcoming events Cancellation of committee and board meetings Closure of AmCham Office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One Facebook post linking to their website with the description of the AmCham Poland office closing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interactive map with the map of COVID-19 cases around the world Reposting a lot of relevant articles on LinkedIn <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within 5 days there were 10 posts relating to COVID-19

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ With results posted in bar graph on linkedIn • Repost articles relating to COVID19 on LinkedIn, Twitter, facebook 				
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Appendix B: Value Analysis

Below is a table of our final value analysis between the AmChams of what we found during our case studies.

Table 3: Value Analysis of Other AmCham Communication Platforms

Platform	Specific details	Worse than AmCham Romania (-1)	On Par with AmCham Romania (+0)	Better than AmCham Romania (+1)
Website	Format/Visual	Bulgaria Hungary	Germany	Poland Sweden
	Data and Statistics	Bulgaria Germany	Poland	Hungary Sweden
	Consistency		Germany Hungary Bulgaria	Poland Sweden
	Intuitivity/Ease of Use	Bulgaria Hungary Sweden	Germany	Poland
	Errors/Bugs	Bulgaria Hungary	Sweden Germany	Poland
	Crisis	Poland	Germany Bulgaria Hungary	Sweden
Annual Reports	Statistical Content	Germany Hungary	Poland Sweden	Bulgaria
	Data Representation	Germany Poland Sweden		Hungary Bulgaria
	Number of Members		Poland	Sweden Germany Hungary Bulgaria
Social Media	Platforms	Bulgaria	Germany Hungary Poland Sweden	
	Frequency of posts	Bulgaria Hungary Poland	Germany Sweden	
	Content	Sweden	Bulgaria Germany Hungary Poland	

	Member interaction	Sweden	Bulgaria Germany Hungary Poland	
Events	Platforms for Advertising	Sweden Bulgaria	Germany Hungary	Poland
	Diversity of events	Sweden	Bulgaria Germany Hungary Poland	
	Frequency	Germany Bulgaria	Poland Sweden	Hungary
Crisis Communication	Platforms communicated on	Bulgaria Hungary Poland	Sweden	Germany
	Pop-ups, banners, or other features	Poland	Germany Hungary Bulgaria	Sweden
	Type of Information Provided	Poland	Hungary Bulgaria	Germany Sweden

Appendix C: Heuristic Evaluation

Below is a table with our results from the heuristic evaluations of the websites for AmCham Romania, AmCham Germany, AmCham Bulgaria, AmCham Hungary, AmCham Poland, and AmCham Sweden. The left columns list the heuristics analyzed, such as the website's user control and error prevention. Across the top is the list of the six AmCham website's being analyzed.

The first section of the chart summarizes all the individual evaluations by averaging the scores given by each team member. Each heuristic was rated on a scale of one to five with one representing a poor website that needs major improvements and five being an excellent website that needs little to no improvements.

Table 4: Heuristic Evaluation of AmCham Websites

RATE 1-5		1: Poor, Needs Major Improvements/Overhaul	2: Fair, Needs Improvements	3: Average, Improvements Recommended	4: Good, Small Improvements Possible	5: Excellent, None or Very Minor Improvements Possible
GROUP	AmChams Websites					
	Romania	Germany	Bulgaria	Hungary	Poland	Sweden
	Notes	Notes	Notes	Notes	Notes	Notes
Heuristics	Rating	Rating	Rating	Rating	Rating	Rating
H1	4.75	4.75	4	3	4.25	4
H2	4.25	4	3.75	3	4.25	4.75
H3	4	3	3.5	2.5	4.75	3.5
H4	3	3.5	3.75	3	4.5	4.5
H5	3.75	4	2.5	2.25	5	3.25
H6	4.25	4.75	4.5	4.5	4.75	4.75
H7	4.25	3.75	3	3.25	4	3.5
H8	3.5	4.75	2.5	2.5	5	4
H9	3	2.75	1.5	2.5	3.75	3.25
H10	2.5	3.5	2	3	3.5	3.25
Total	37.25	38.75	31	29.5	43.75	38.75

SELINA	AmChams Websites											
	Heuristics	Romania	Germany	Bulgaria	Hungary	Poland	Sweden					
		Notes	Rating	Notes	Rating	Notes	Rating	Notes	Rating	Notes	Rating	Notes
H1	Visibility of System Status	Setting filters in the events page took a bit of time and was hard to decipher if still loading or had no results	4	Simple and users were kept informed	4	Simple and users were kept informed	5	If the field for the login in the top left are invalid there is no indication	2	Had a loading circle when bringing up date for searches	5	Simple and users were kept informed
H2	Match b/w System & Real World	Everything seems to be in normal chronological or numerical order making the site intuitive and easy to navigate	5	There are no arrows on the calendar used for filtering events and the event is being held in the top right box leads to the next month and hidden top left box leads to previous month	3	Can interact with calendar and press on event days and quickly gather what event is being held and when; Hard to realize a lot of their features are clickable and lead to other pages but are unclear (become a member banner and header). Audit and financial reports are not in completely chronological order	2	Their membership directory with no filter is messed up and they only towards the bottom with X, Y, Z. The directory has lower and upper case letters used for quickly jumping to sections; The linkedIn page linked does not exist	3	All the committees are listed alphabetically on the committee page. The linkedIn page linked does not exist	4	Everything seems to be in normal chronological or numerical order making the site intuitive and easy to navigate
H3	User Control & Freedom	Able to redo and undo fairly easily; There is a bar across the top of the page that tracks its path from the home page; Issue with when clicking tab and moving the mouse over another tab, both drop downs would appear	3	Slightly confusing in understanding where the page stands in the path; For instance when going backwards using the bar across the top of the page, it links to pages that only have a title; Can't search for members in the member page	2	Cannot filter events in anyway; There is a calendar of events on the homepage but not on the events page; There is a bar across the top of the page that tracks its path from the home page;	3	Cannot undo filter option in membership directory, would have to manually reset the settings to "Please select". Availability of site map to where pages are	3	Needs a lot more scrolling and searching to find specific committees Since not accessible from the tabs	4	Not easily able to track the path of the page (undo);
H4	Consistency & Standards	There are inconsistencies in the tabs at the top of the page and in the header; There is also inconsistency with the twitter icon, it disappears out of top left corner when about to login to members section	3	Slight inconsistency in that the "join us now" button leads to the same page as the "become a member"	4	Consistent and similar layout on all pages	5	Half the site is written in english, other half in hungarian, hard to predict which tabs will be in which language because english tabs will lead to hungarian pages; The icons that lead to other social media appear at top right and bottom left corners, but missing youtube icon in bottom left; The drop down tabs follow different organizational conventions for different tabs	2	Simple and consistent layout throughout	5	All pages have similar layout and usually consistent throughout the entire website
H5	Error Prevention	When attempting to fill out the member form all there are asterisks indicating necessary fields	5	When attempting to login with blank field, the error is the username is empty even though the fields are email and password	4	If you fill in only one of the username/password fields, it won't log you in but also won't give you any errors	2	When attempting to fill out the login with empty fields flag indicating necessary to be filled	5	When attempting to fill out the login with empty fields flag indicating necessary to be filled	5	When attempting to fill out the login with empty fields flag indicating necessary to be filled
H6	Recognition Rather than Recall	Could not find any recognition problems	5	Could not find any recognition problems	5	Could not find any recognition problems	5	Could not find any recognition problems	5	Could not find any recognition problems	5	Could not find any recognition problems
H7	Flexibility & Efficiency of Use	Buttons in the banner quickly links to some informative pages that can also be accessed from longer tabs	5	There are a few buttons that lead to some quick useful pages such as the " join us now" which can also be accessed through members tab	4	There is a calendar of events on the homepage making it easier to see what events are coming up in a visual way and without having to search through the events page	4	The right side of the page always includes a "Related Resources" section that is helpful for quick information on related topics; Some links to other pages on the website will lead to opening the page in a different tab	3	The quick jump letters in the member directory doesn't actually work; Multiple easily identifiable quick links to useful pages	4	Includes a banner at the top that leads to important information regarding a message from the US ambassador; Cannot reach individual committees directly from the tabs; Not as efficient when trying to access certain commonly used areas like the login
H8	Aesthetic & Minimalist Design	The initial banner is quite large and results in a lot of empty space on some of the slides, especially the ones that don't have images; The titles of some articles are not very concise leading to a bit of cluttery feeling	4	Relatively simple and balanced design that communicates the messages effectively;	5	Very cluttered at the bottom of the homepage with lots of words	3	There is barely any empty space on the homepage; Very busy with all blocks of information almost on top of one another; The history page seems to be an image zooming in to see the small words make the words very pixelated	2	Well organized and balanced overall; The tweets are seen on the page only linked to the AmCham Poland page	5	Simple and pretty balanced; Was kind of hard to identify the social media links at the bottom of the page
H9	Help User Recognize, Diagnose, & Recover from Errors	Events and membership pages when using filters would come up with a blank screen rather than no results	3	Events page when using filters would come up with a blank screen rather than no results	3	When attempting to register, in the password and confirm passwords section, it says you only need to complete one of the field which would defeat the purpose of confirming password	2	If the field for the login in the top left are invalid there is no indication	2	Events and membership pages would come up with a blank screen rather than no results	3	Issues with links leading to nonexistent pages
H10	Help & Documentation	If type "contact" into search bar, never gets to contact page only events and articles	2	If type "contact" into search bar, gets to contact page within top few options	4	If type "contact" into search bar, gets to contact page within top few options	4	When reaching a 404 page there is documentation that helps to correct potential mistakes on behalf of the user; If type "contact" into search bar, never gets to contact page only events and articles	4	If type "contact" into search bar, gets to contact page within top few options	4	If type "contact" into search bar, gets to contact page within top few options

FAITH		AmChams Websites									
	Heuristics	Romania	Germany	Bulgaria	Hungary	Poland	Sweden				
H1	Visibility of System Status	Everything seemed to work well	5 Everything worked well, loading icon appeared when loading new pages	5 Users not really being kept informed especially with the forbidden issue	3 A lot of information on the pages; not informed when the website stops working/responding which is frustrating	3 When using anything with filters, a loading circle/icon appears to show that the page is loading	4 Everything worked well and everything was being loaded correctly	4			
H2	Match b/w System & Real World	Everything was pretty clearly stated; a couple of things were in English (also some prices were in USD and some were in lei)	4 Everything was clearly stated/explained but there was no translation in German and no translation option	4 Information was easy to understand it was all just very dense	4 Language inconsistencies make it difficult for any user to use; difficult to use and not consistent throughout the website; ordering of results is off	2 Everything seems to be in a clear order, all is easy to understand, no errors or inconsistencies. It has become a member one thing is unclear (states the company must have a "strong US presence" which doesn't explain that much); upcoming events year defaults to 2015-2016	5 Everything is easy to follow and follows normal convention	5			
H3	User Control & Freedom	Easy to navigate, different ways to backtrack and access different pages	5 Everything was pretty easy to navigate; some areas have links and some don't; some of the links are a little confusing as they don't lead to where they are expected to lead (see services overview); had an easy way to backtrack but some of the backtrack pages have no info	4 Provided a way to backtrack, top menu, and side menu; lots of different pages within pages making it easy to get lost in the website; side menu kept changing	3 No real back track option or menu making it difficult to get back to a previous page/see where you are; easy to get lost	3 Easy to use and navigate; allows for back tracking	5 Able to navigate through the menu and submenu; sometimes the submenu disappeared; no backtrack menu so no clear way to backtrack besides going through the menu or using the back button	3			
H4	Consistency & Standards	Pretty consistent across all of the pages, some places are blocked, some links seem to lead to the same thing but they don't	4 Mostly consistent but some of the menu options and drop down menus act differently	3 All of the information was worded the same way and was fairly consistent, some of the actions that needed to be taken	4 Language inconsistency makes it hard to find the information one waits	2 Everything was consistent across all of the pages, the actions didn't change from page to page	4 All was pretty consistent across all of the pages	5			
H5	Error Prevention	Only a few spots where error could occur, one page is not accessible from the main site; some inconsistencies between forms that were maybe supposed to be the same	3 No errors really, but one of the links to the gallery leads to a 404 error; glitch on the female founders page with the contact button	4 Lots of forbidden pages that seem as if everyone should be able to access them (nothing signaling that they are forbidden until you click them)	2 Not all of the filters and actions are the same, applies to language as well	3 Everything was easy to navigate and the pages were all ordered in a way that makes sense so one could not get lost, nothing was noticed that could lead to error	5 Pretty okay, but they must have changed their server because two of the pages don't work and the reason is that they may have changed the server but not the code used	3			
H6	Recognition Rather than Recall	Small errors detected but was easy to navigate anyway	4 Small errors detected	4 Only a few errors were encountered with this	4 Small errors detected	4 Some errors in this area were encountered but were not major and inhibited the use of the website	4 Small errors detected while trying to navigate the website (the errors cause a little confusion but one could easily figure it out)	4			
H7	Flexibility & Efficiency of Use	Generally have some hyperlinks to common things	4 Not a lot of hyperlinks to different and common pages so you have to keep navigating through the menu; something are hyperlinked and some aren't causing some pages to be inconsistent	3 Not many hyperlinks; had a side menu on all of the pages but they continually changed as you clicked on different items	2 Some hyperlinks and resources and links on the sides of all of the pages	4 Most things had links to other pages; in the about us page there were hyperlinks to the main pages	4 Decent amount of hyperlinks and general links; some things take you to a whole new website without any warning	4			
H8	Aesthetic & Minimalist Design	Some places have repetitive links/hyperlinks, some pages have lots of info and some have very little and not enough info; overall pretty good	4 Good, none of the pages are really crowded with info; on the services overview page some pictures are linked and some aren't	5 Many of the pages had lots of information that was dense and made the pages crowded	2 The pages are VERY overcrowded with information; hard to just skim through the website	2 Not too overcrowded; every thing was easy to read; nice pictures for everything; simple design' some pages had more information that desired	5 Pretty simple design; lots of infographics which was a nice change of pace from all of the text; the homepage was a little crowded with COVID-19 information	4			
H9	Help User Recognize, Diagnose, & Recover from Errors	Errors detected with images not showing up due to ad blocker being enabled. This was something the user had to figure out and was not explained to the website helping which was frustrating	4 One error was encountered and the only way to fix it was to go to the previous page; there was no guidance on how to fix it as it only stated the type of error	3 Ran into a lot of errors where a lot of the menu pages came up as forbidden and there was no reason saying why and the only way to exit was to hit the back button	2 Overall the website was glitchy and would just randomly stop working (would not let me select anything) to fix this I had to exit the website and reenter it	2 The member directory page would show it is loading but then not change to results for the applied filter url leaving you with a page with one company	3 Ran into two errors (same type) which states why it may have occurred and says that to fix it you have to cancel the registration to go back to the main page; you were you have to hit the back button a couple of times OR exit and go back to the homepage	3			
H10	Help & Documentation	The search tool doesn't search the entire website so you don't always get the results you want	3 The search tool searches for anything that contains the word/phrase so the results aren't the most tailored; no filters on the search tool	1 When the search button was clicked it came up as forbidden	1 Membership directory filters don't work that well and its difficult to get out of them; in the same directory you have to type a category name but theres nothing listing what the categories are	2 The search tool actually worked and searched the entire website (when I search staff the first result is the staff page on the website); some filters on other pages don't work super well (the category option in community news and opportunities being one of them); in upcoming events it defaults to 2015-2016 and is not clear what that means; some of the filters are not clear what they are selected to; the member directory filters don't really work	3 The search tool worked but it only gave results of parts of the webpage if you search the specific page name; some things (like the member directory) didn't have filters so you couldn't search for certain members at all	3			

MALEK		AmChams Websites									
	Heuristics	Romania	Germany	Bulgaria	Hungary	Poland	Sweden				
	Visibility of System Status	Notes	Rating	Notes	Rating	Notes	Rating				
H1		Good response time No clear issues	5	No feedback, good loading times	5	Page freezes with no indication Very good load times	3	Good loading times except member directory	4	Good loading times on most pages, some very slow (home page)	3
H2	Match b/w System & Real World	Calendar is helpful Users are inclined to follow, not natural or logical, goes from news to crisis information to upcoming events to members back to news etc.	3	Information is organized Home page is short and simple Events are hard to visualize without putting them on a calendar	4	Home page could be organized better, good flow to information though No calendar	3	Has a useful links page to other members Home page doesn't have section for current crisis Still has decent flow	4	Home page is logical and flows well Link to current crisis A lot about current crisis Has resources tab to aid members	5
H3	User Control & Freedom	No back button "Protect Romania" links to an external page with no indication	4	No back button Navigation bar is consistently on the top of the page to go back to Unusable pages on services page?	3	Blank pages Navigation bar is always the same & on top -> easy navigation	1	Navigation bar is always accessible All pages work as expected	5	Navigation bar is always accessible All pages work as expected Multiple pages open new tabs/redirect unexpectedly	4
H4	Consistency & Standards	Two different "About" Pages: "About" and "About AmCham Romania" Different numbers for the same statistics	2	Reuse same image multiple times Would benefit from displaying some statistics about the AmCham	3	Use a calendar for the home page, but not the events page Add statistics	4	Some useful statistics on home page All pages consistent with each other	4	Some useful statistics on about page No inconsistencies found	4
H5	Error Prevention	Some images don't work with AdBlock (no error message just blank) "About AmCham Romania" page unreachable	3	Appears to be links on services page but do nothing when clicked	3	MANY blank pages from committees dropdown "You have been locked out, error" from Publications	1	No errors encountered	5	Resources -> Membership Directory appears to be antiquated tabs (two lead to nowhere: "AmChams in Europe" and "US and other Chambers of Commerce")	2
H6	Recognition Rather than Recall	No blatant problems Some pages start with "similary" in reference to other pages	4	No clear problems with recognition	5	No clear problems with recognition	5	No clear problems with recognition	5	No clear problems with recognition	5
H7	Flexibility & Efficiency of Use	Experienced users will know where to find pages Can't get to mission through links Can use calendar to get to known events quickly No clear issues	4	"Quicklinks" at the bottom of every page Experienced users will know where to find pages	5	Experienced users will know where to find pages Blank pages interrupt Can use calendar to get to known events quickly No clear issues	4	Freezing interrupts Experienced users will know where to find pages No upcoming events/no calendar functionality	3	Navigation bar at top and bottom Experienced users will know where to find pages Not great sorting options in member directory	3
H8	Aesthetic & Minimalist Design	Good overall design, would benefit from compressing & removing elements Too many pages within pages	3	Similar design, slightly better Could still benefit from compressing elements	4	Similar design, dislike the dropdown aesthetic (no text, just icons) Could still benefit from compressing elements	3	Similar Design Could be a little more compact (use less space) Otherwise great design	5	Similar Design Could use more color (not just black and white) Overall good design	4
H9	Help User Recognize, Diagnose, & Recover from Errors	No error messages for the few errors experienced Can access "About AmCham Romania" page externally We had to figure out why images weren't showing up ourselves	2	No error messages/explanation for inactive links	2	No error message/explanation on blank pages (can assume in progress) No explanation for lockout	1	Error message from google maps only, not for freezing page	2	Some help from page redirected to see why the page isn't available No specific error message though	3
H10	Help & Documentation	No help or documentation page, only contact information Provide guidelines on members only section	2	No help or documentation page Email contact Has some helpful information when doing a member application Also have information to find parking	3	No help or documentation page, only contact information	2	"Search help" page Contact information	4	No help or documentation page Contact information Has some helpful information when doing a member application	3

Appendix D: Summarized Heuristic Graphs

Below are graphs that help to visualize the results of the heuristic evaluations. The scores for AmCham Romania are in red.

Visibility of System Status

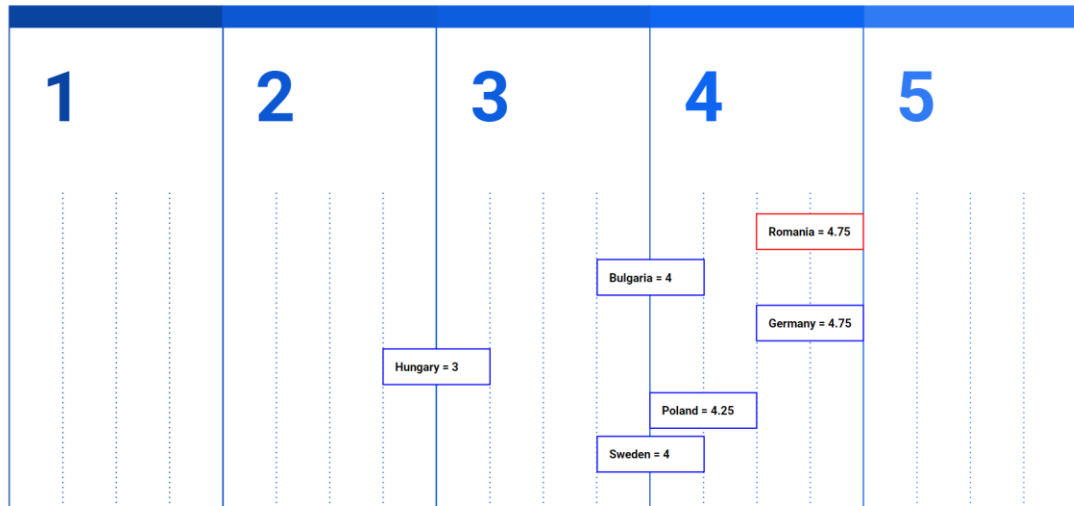


Figure 11: Visibility of System Status Heuristic Chart

Match Between System and Real World

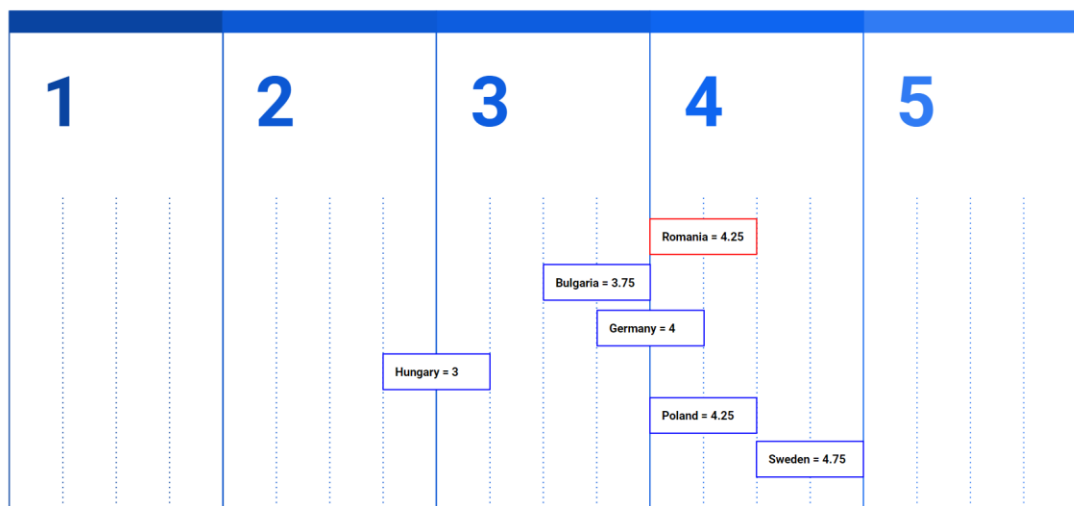


Figure 12: Match Between System and Real World Heuristic Chart

User Control and Freedom

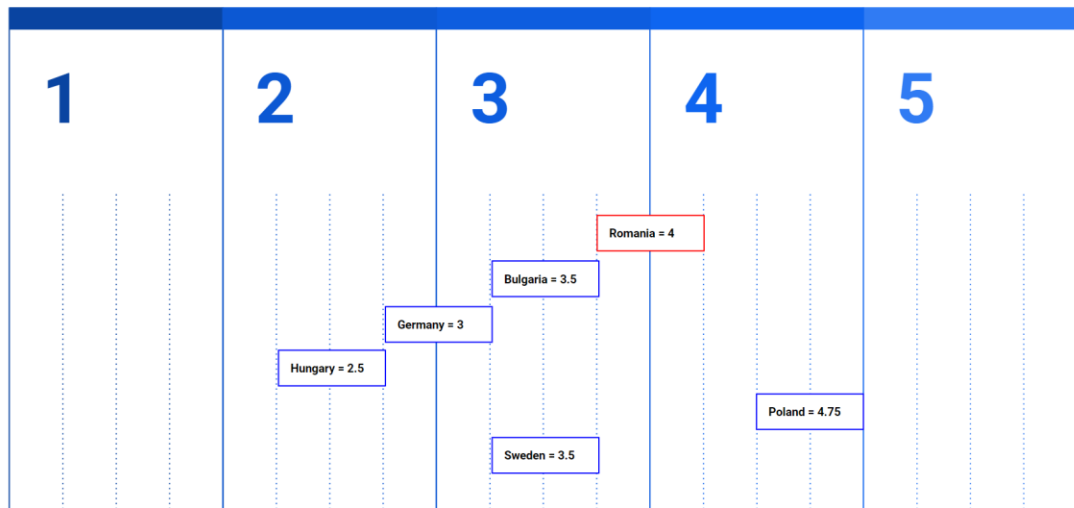


Figure 13: User Control and Freedom Heuristic Chart

Consistency and Standards

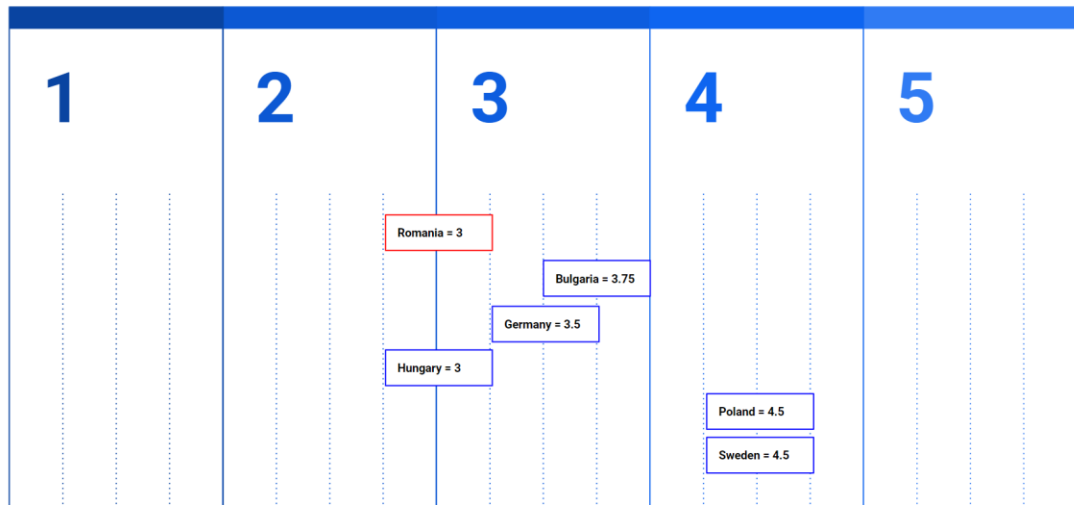


Figure 14: Consistency and Standards Heuristic Chart

Error Prevention

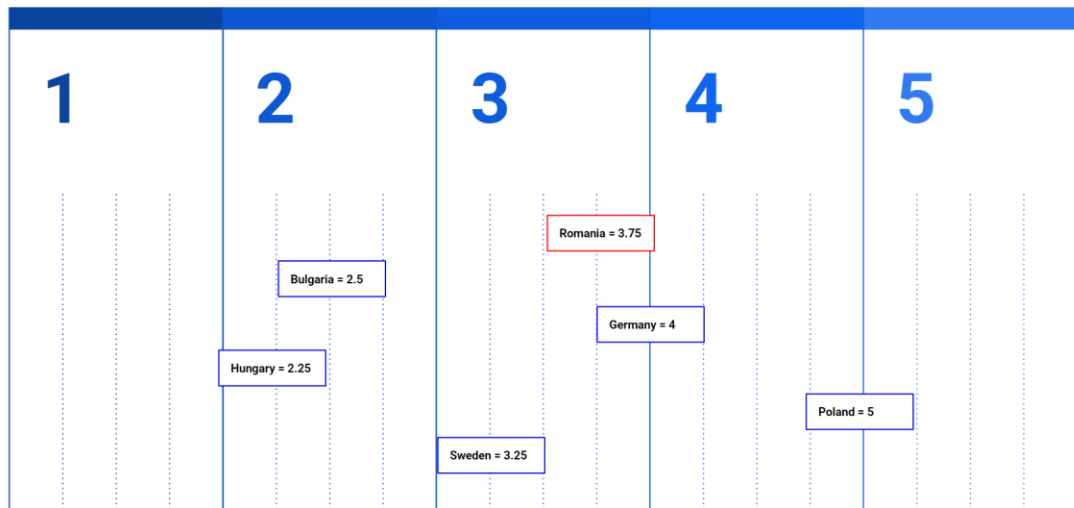


Figure 15: Error Prevention Heuristic Chart

Recognition Rather than Recall



Figure 16: Recognition Rather than Recall Heuristic Chart

Flexibility and Efficiency of Use



Figure 17: Flexibility and Efficiency of Use Heuristic Chart

Aesthetic and Minimalist Design

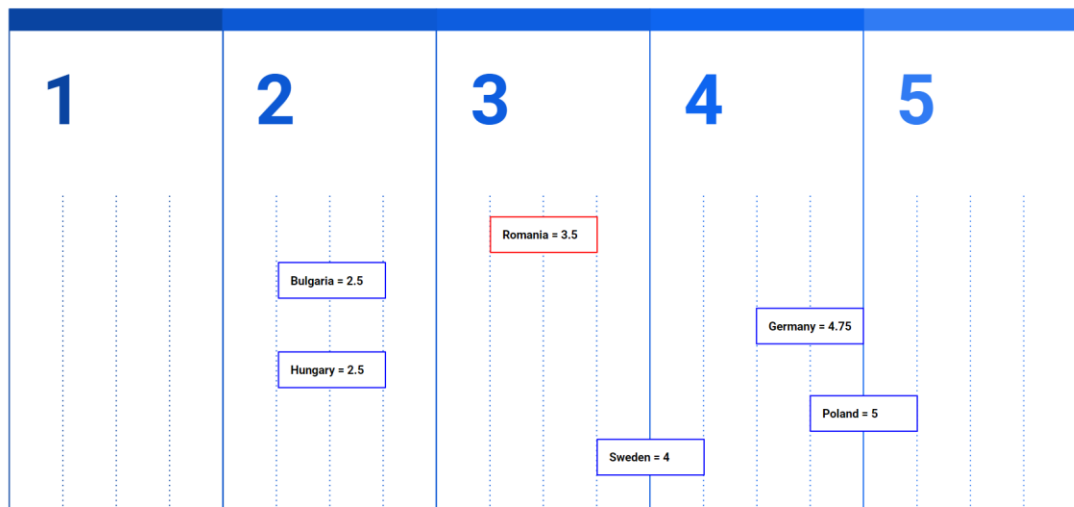


Figure 18: Aesthetic and Minimalist Design Heuristic Chart

Help users Recognize, Diagnose, and Recover from Errors

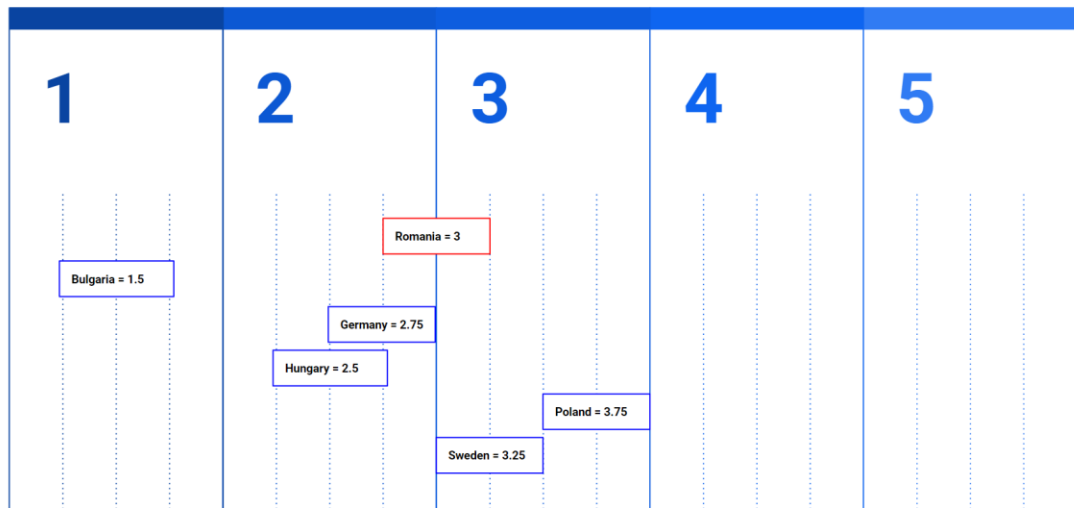


Figure 19: Help users Recognize, Diagnose, and Recover from Errors Heuristic Chart

Help and Documentation

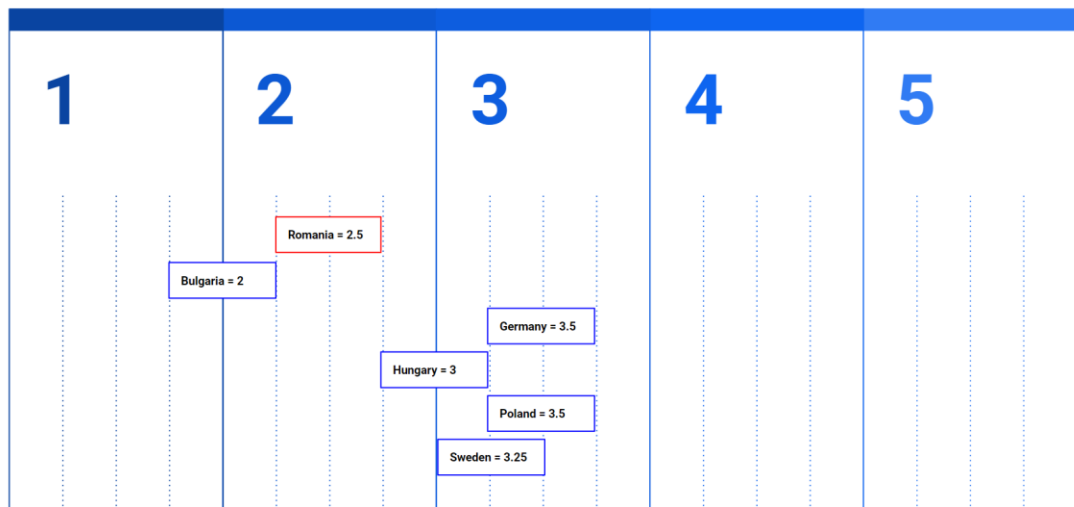


Figure 20: Help and Documentation Heuristic Chart

Appendix E: Interview Questions and Informed Consent Script

Here, the informed consent script and the interview questions to be used are listed. The informed consent script will be given at the beginning of each interview so that the interviewee will be properly informed on what the interview is about and to make sure that they participate voluntarily. Below the informed consent script are the interview questions that will be asked. These questions will be asked during each interview to gather more information and resources about the process of expanding into the U.S. and Massachusetts market.

Informed Consent Script

Hello, thank you for meeting with us! We are a group of students from WPI that is working to help the American Chamber of Commerce in Romania gather resources for their members that are looking to expand into the US market. The purpose of this interview is to find what information could be provided to businesses and start-ups wanting to expand into the US. In this interview, we will ask you questions about what resources your Chamber can provide to help these businesses and start-ups.

This interview will take approximately 15-30 minutes and we do not anticipate any risks associated with your participation in this interview. However, you have the right to stop or withdraw from this interview at any time. We appreciate the time you set aside for participating in this voluntary interview and reassure you that all information collected during this interview will be kept confidential. The interview will be recorded and a transcript of any responses will be produced. But, in order to maintain confidentiality, the recordings and transcripts will be kept in encrypted files that only we, the team, have access to. If we plan to use a direct or indirect quote from you that may break confidentiality, we will get in contact and gain your consent prior to displaying it in any of our work that will be eventually published through WPI. We will provide the specific quote we will be using in our final paper when we contact you.

Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?

If in the future you have any doubts or questions, feel free to contact us through the email:

gr-bucharest_amcham@wpi.edu.

With all that being said, are you comfortable participating in the interview?

Chambers of Commerce Questions

- What position do you currently hold in the Chamber of Commerce?
 - What responsibilities does your position entail?
- Do you work with Start-ups?
 - What do you provide to help them?
- Have there previously been foreign businesses that have looked into expanding into the area?
- What is the difficulty level for a foreign company to come to the United States (more specifically New England area)?
 - What are the most prominent industries in this area?
 - Are certain industries easier to join in this area?

- Is it easier for certain industries to expand to the U.S.?
 - If so, which industries?
- How often do you encounter foreign companies looking to expand into the region?
- What are the biggest challenges foreign businesses face when coming to the United States?
- How can your Chamber of Commerce provide help for international businesses entering the market?
- What other resources do you believe are useful for foreign companies?
- Is there a library of regulations and resources that we could look into?
- Are there any specific regulations for the tech sector?
 - If yes, where can we find it?
- Would your organization be interested in getting in contact with Chambers of Commerce in the EU (more specifically AmCham Romania)?
 - If yes, is there a point of contact that we could get in touch with?

Organization X Questions

- What position do you currently hold in Organization X?
 - What responsibilities does your position entail?
- Do you happen to have any prior experience with the American Chamber of Commerce in Romania (AmCham Romania)?
- How often do you encounter foreign companies looking to expand into the region?
- What is the difficulty level for a foreign company to come to the United States (more specifically New England area)?
 - What are the most prominent industries in this area?
 - Any notable industry clusters in Massachusetts?
- What is the general process that a foreign business must follow to enter the U.S. market?
- What are the biggest challenges foreign businesses face when coming to the United States?
- How can Organization X provide help for international businesses entering the market?
- Is it difficult for a foreign start-up to enter the U.S. market?
- What kind of financing is available for start-ups looking to enter the US market?
- Is there a library of regulations and resources that we could look into?
- Are there any specific regulations for the tech sector?
 - If yes, where can we find it?
- What other resources do you believe are useful for foreign companies?

Appendix F: Interview 1 Transcript

This appendix contains the transcript of our first interview with the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce. For courtesy reasons, the name and position of the interviewee will remain confidential. Before the interview took place, the consent script was read and verbal consent was gained for Subject 1.

Selina: So the first questions is, what position do you currently hold in the Chamber of Commerce?

Subject 1: I am the Vice President of Economic Growth at the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce.

Selina: And then, what responsibilities does your position entail?

Subject 1: I manage projects relating to economic development and growth. So, that includes attracting retaining talent to the area. Particularly young talent, so people in their 20s and 30s, people like yourself. Uh, initiatives focusing on racial equity in the private sector. Industry development, so how do you build super clusters of specific industries, whether it's robotics or AI or ... or FinTech or sports tech, you know how do you make Massachusetts a welcoming city for businesses of X sector. Um, and, I also handle our geographic partnerships.

Selina: Ok. Um, and do you work with start-ups?

Subject 1: We...I do, we casually do. It's not something we have a formal strategy around. Uh, we recently acquired another business trade association called MITX. M-I-T-X, the Massachusetts Innovation and Technology Exchange. So that they were uh, 2, 3, 4-person staffed, and we, and so they have a more dedicated focus on the technology sector. And we recently acquired them, uh, a month or so ago.

Selina: Um, and then what, so that's ... So the next question was, what do you do to provide help to them? I guess that was kind of...

Subject 1: To start ups?

Selina: Yeah.

Subject 1: You know, uh, you know we have our traditional... So broadly speaking, anyone can join the chamber and have access to our programming, which is 100+ events across the year. From big events to small, to small brown bags, our policy advocacy, um, and our leadership development programs. None of the programs are uniquely designed for startups. So any company or any subject can join and participate in the programming. Um, I'd assume now though, with MITX, that will be a new channel more dedicated for more start-up specific programming.

Selina: Ok. Um, have there previously been foreign businesses that have looked into expanding into the area?

Subject 1: Have there ever... sorry, what was the question?

Selina: Have there been...have there previously been foreign businesses that have looked into expanding into like the Boston area?

Subject 1: Yes

Selina: Like Chamber of Commerce, ok. Um, and then, what is the difficulty level for a foreign company to come to the US, more specifically the New England area?

Subject 1: Sorry, what'd you, what was the question?

Selina: Um, what is the difficulty level for a foreign company to come to the US, more specifically the New England area?

Subject 1: Umm, I don't know if there's any difficulty. I mean a lot of the conversations always stems to, you know what are the benefits of the Massachusetts economy, right? Um, typically Massachusetts isn't um, a fan of subsidies or any tax incentives for companies. Um, largely because we have a very strong, vibrant... and again this is a pre-COVID world. I mean, post-COVID I have no idea uh, what the world will look like in terms of economic development. Um, but rarely are we in a situation where we are, um, bending over backwards to provide X million dollar incentive packages, etcetera. GE was one of the rare cases. You know, Wayfair got some incentives to create some, uh, you know, satellite offices in Western Mass. But, because our economy is strong we don't...I would say we do that very little. Um, you know, part of the challenges are, are also our strengths. Like, you know, we have such a high, we are a talent magnet. So with our schools, etcetera, a lot of companies want to build companies here because of our pool of talent. Now, that works ironically to our disadvantage sometimes because if there's so many companies here trying to hire so much great talent, you know you have a low unemployment rate. So it's, what is that right balance? And uh, we have a very competitive hiring market, right now. Again, pre-COVID world. Um, the other consideration why companies want to move here is about real estate and getting good real estate deals. Um, Boston is one of the more expensive real estate markets. So again, it's a trade off. You get to be within, you know, the hub of all these great schools like WPI, and MIT, and Babson, and Harvard and then, you know, BC, BU, and Northeastern. But, you know, you might, one of the challenges might be you know, real estate. Um, so, um, yeah. So, like many other places, pros and cons and it really just becomes a question of what are you trying to get at and what type of employees are you trying to hire. Um, and yeah.

Selina: What are the most prominent industries in the area?

Subject 1: So, healthcare, obviously, and pharmaceuticals, life sciences, or hospital systems so that is just one big giant cluster. Obviously our higher education industry employs a lot of people. So having i don't know 40, 50 universities in a 10 mile radius, make sure to fact check me on all of this. Basically there are a lot of universities here so that's, you know, although it may not be for profit, it's a huge employer in the country or in the state. And then there's obviously different technology sectors, you're thinking about from robotics to cyber security. In the last couple of years, you know cyber security, fintech have been really major sorts of sectors that the state has been investing in. Healthtech. We are underrated, we are one of the biggest sneaker capitals of the world. So we have converse, reebok, new balance, puma, asics all have headquarters or large satellite offices here. And then we have a lot of traditional service industries here, lots of law firms, lots of banks, lots of accounting firms, consulting firms, etcetera.

Selina: What industries are the easiest to join?

Subject 1: What do you mean by easiest to join?

Selina: For like a foreign company in general, like are there any that are easier to join?

Subject 1: I'm trying to understand what you mean by joining an industry.

Selina: So say like is a tech industry....

Faith: There's a tech based company in Romania and they want to start like an office or sell their products in Massachusetts would it be easier for a tech company to do that or like a healthcare company to do that?

Subject 1: All of the above. We have so many knowledge economy workers, right, you know we have a very quote unquote highly educated population etcetera. So we're gonna be privy to scientists and data scientists and doctors and engineers and strategy. Like we're gonna have it all ... Again the irony is that our strength is our weakness because we have such talent you're gonna be playing in a pool of like you might be a small ... So the question is, especially for companies, is like what type of employees you're trying to look for. And again if you're going to hire an engineer here it's going to be much more expensive if you hire an engineer in let's say in Dallas, Texas. But again there's probably a lot less engineers in Dallas, Texas. So there's probably less engineering jobs in Dallas, Texas. So you just have to weigh those pros and cons when you're making that decision.

Selina: So the next question was is it easier for certain industries to expand into the US in general? So not just like the Boston area but like, do you know if it's easier just coming into the US if there's any industries that are easier?

Subject 1: I think it depends on the, the sector. I mean like if you're coming in from like a, a you know drug development/pharma company, you know there's just, you gotta think about just the regulatory issues, um of like any sort of approval processes. Um, again, also like regulatory like just, it really depends on just the sector and the regulations that go with it, so again, that's gonna really hit on pharmaceuticals. Um, um what else would it affect, um... in general obviously there's just always been, now especially, just visa issues, right? So that's just even more challenging in this, in this climate, uh so that could, that could pose a challenge, um, yeah. That's what I would say.

Selina: Okay, and then I think I'm good for my questions, Malek...

Malek: Um, so how often would you say that, that the uh Boston, Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce encounters uh foreign companies looking to expand into like the Greater Boston region?

Subject 1: You know, we don't have a, a specific service towards companies trying to expand here. I talk to a lot of companies just to give a landscape analysis,

Malek: Ok

Subject 1: But to this conversation, I would probably speak to a couple dozen a year, but that's not reflective of any means of like the number in terms of quantity. In terms of sort of like international expansion, all cities act differently, sometimes the chamber is the primary driver of sort of foreign direct investments or international business recruitment. Um, so sometimes the chamber is that, um like in Atlanta. The Atlanta chamber is like, the, the heavy hitter there. Uh in our city, in our region, the city has a dedicated office for this. So the city plays much bigger role than, um than we do, at least on the, on

the proactiveness and the, sort of the, as like a point person, and the state has a number of agencies that do this as well depending on the sector. Uh so the chamber, we're much more advisory and just helpful versus proactive and, um leading on the conversations.

Malek: Ok. So I guess, from your, somewhat limited experience with uh, foreign business expansion, uh, what are the biggest challenges you see them facing when they come to, Boston or the United States?

Subject 1: Similar just again, similar to Boston, like if you're gonna come here, there's a lot of bells and whistles but it's extremely competitive. So the question is do you wanna be (in) a big fish in a smaller pond, or a small fish in a big pond, right? And there's some pros and cons with both of those and it really just segments into your industry, your ability to pay, ability to pay different benefits. Um, so I think if you're coming to the Boston market, um, it's not, we're not this oasis of unlimited talent, right? It's just super competitive, you're gonna pay a premium, um so it just needs to make financial sense as well as capacity.

Malek: Ok. So, would you say that your Chamber of Commerce provides help for international businesses entering the market, the Boston market? Or is that more provided by the um, the city and the, the state?

Subject 1: City, the city plays a much more, yeah, city plays a much more active role. We will play a helpful role.

Malek: Ok, um, I guess what exactly, like what helpful role do you guys play?

Subject 1: Uh, we just play a role in terms of making introductions, or just give them an understanding of like, if they're wanting to know about a specific sector. I mean it's just sort of a, a welcome call, an introductory call just to have them understand the Boston landscape similar to this, giving them an understanding of, talent trends, policy trends, etc. Um, so very much advising versus hand-holding. Um and then if they do move here, then they can join as a chamber member and have access to the different benefits that exist for all member companies.

Malek: Ok. Hmm Do you know like what, what other resources would we say that you believe would be most useful to ah foreign company looking to expand into the Boston area?

Subject 1: Ahh the city, I mean the city and state have different agencies and departments so they are all, so they are really helpful in terms of that and there's also another organization called MassEcon which helps with site selections. So if you have real estate needs, MassEcon has a dedicated site selection, ahh team that will help you, ahh you know if you are looking to move here, like where to go to, ahh that would be the best bet.

Malek: Hmm And so they would have like ahh, they would probably have a library of regulations and resources to look into to help those foreign businesses, you think?

Subject 1: I don't know if they have regulations, they are a primary server; they probably have knowledge of it, and similarly we have knowledge of it too, but they have a sort of like a broo, a real state team to help them look for space.

Malek: Ok. Ahm That you know of are there like very specific regulations ahh regarding the tech sector in Boston?

Subject 1: Sorry, say that again.

Malek: Ahh Just are there any like specific regulations in Boston regarding ahh the tech sector?

Subject 1: Ahhm Not that I know of. I mean ahh we have different privacy rules, then America has different privacies state by state have different privacy rules versus Europe. So that is just different things to know and high trust tops, so there are just different regulatory stuff over that from Europe and America, and state by state.

Malek: And those are pretty public and easy to find, right?

Subject 1: Yeah

Malek: Alright ahm, would, so do you think in general the ahh Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce would be interested in getting to more contact with ahm Chambers of Commerce in the EU?

Subject 1: I am always happy to chat and then we talk to a lot of different ahh international chambers of commerce just to build that relationship and I walk with delegations all the time ahm. We don't have any formal partnerships though.

Malek: Ok. Would you be, would you guys be, I mean I don't know if this is a question that is directed towards you but, do you know if you guys are interested in that at all, or?

Subject 1: I think ahhh, probably not, I mean we just, when you study different Chambers they all act very differently. We are not ahh an economic development chamber, we are more of a policy and programming Chamber. So, the question is, the question for that is like whose the sometimes across the country in different cities Chamber is the Economic Development Corporation of that city or of that county or that region. Ahh We are not an economic development corporation, ahm the city and plays a much more active role. ahmm So, we are always open and interested, but I would say it is not our main function.

Malek: Ok. Ahh I think that is all the questions we had.

Selina: Yeah, thank you so much for ahm the time you spent like talking to us about all these questions.

Subject 1: Ahh thank you both, ahh thank the three of you. Ahm If you have any other questions, stay safe, and I hope you one day get to go to Romania.

Malek, Selina & Faith: Thank you.

Subject 1: Be well everyone, take care.

Malek, Selina & Faith: Bye.

Malek: Thank you.

Appendix G: Interview 2 Transcript

This appendix contains the transcript of our second interview with the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce. For courtesy reasons, the names and positions of the interviewees will remain confidential. Before the interview took place, the consent script was read and verbal consent was gained for Subjects 2, 3, and 4.

Faith: Alright, so our first question is just what position do you currently hold in the chamber of commerce and what responsibilities, and what responsibilities does the position entail?

Subject 2: So, my name is [Subject 2], [REDACTED]. Ahm basically, there, we run the economic opportunity department, ahm, within the Greater Boston Chamber. It's a new department aiming at ensuring economic equality and access, ahm, for all business within the Chamber, but also for, ahm, the people that we work with and engage with. We do this through two core programs. One of them is our Pacesetters minorities suppliers diversity, ahm, initiatives, and the other is called Skills First, which is an internship program for college graduates who choose ahm new identity-blind hiring practices to ensure, to remove bias from the hiring ahm process. So those are the two lines of business under the economic opportunities, but one of the things ahm our department involve, so working on and just making sure that equity and inclusion are innerwelling in all of the chambers activities and programming, ahm so that's something that I think [Subject 3] and I and [Subject 4] will be working on in the next few months, looking for ways to ensure that our work, ahm is well represented in all the areas of the chamber.

Subject 3: Hey everyone I'm on. I'm on the line.

Subject 2: Yaaay, Hi [Subject 3].

Subject 3: Hahaha, Hi I just didn't want to interrupt. Ahm But just wanted to let you know I was... ahm I am here.

Subject 2: Awesome, so ehh feel free to add anything to my short pitch.

Subject 3: Ahm, I thought that that pitch was perfect! Ahm, yeah I think that it, yeah speaks to what were the projects, the specific projects that we are working on, and then you know, the overall theme, ahm, you know, pushing the Chamber's overall work forward with the lense of equity for all business were all individuals can well, bring forth their voices to the table.

Subject 2: Awesome, awesome, awesome. [Subject 3], do you want to introduce yourself and your title and how you work within our department and then we'll ahm, follow [Subject 4] as well.

Subject 3: Sure ahm, This is [Subject 3] [REDACTED]. Ahmm I help with the initiative that [Subject 2] was speaking about, the economic opportunity initiative. Ahm as well as the, you know, work within the chamber ahm, to support businesses ahm, that are coming from a minority background or individuals with minority background. Is that, does that speak to all the different things I was supposed to cover?

Subject 2: Yeah yeah, sounds great. [Subject 4], you want to go ahead and introduce yourself?

Subject 4: Yeah sure. So, my name is [Subject 4], [REDACTED] so, I'm going to be with them for ahmm full time through June and then I'm actually going to stay on actually part time past that for another project but, so I work specifically ahm under [Subject 3] with the Skills First and Pacesetters, I sorta help maintain the high fund partner relationships so those are for ahm nonprofits and college career centers ahm. I work to connect them with the opportunities that are happening on Skills First, so they can connect their students with those opportunities. And then I also help [Subject 3], ahm maintain ahm, our platform that helps us track the MBD's that are working with our Pacesetters, ahm and help in that intake process.

Faith: Alright, awesome. So, that basically covers that question. So, the next will be Does your chamber work with Startups in the area?

Subject 3: Ahm This is [Subject 3], I can jump in for that question. Ahm, So our chamber is ahmm, I'd say [Subject 2] was speaking to you earlier in the call ahm, you know works with abroad membership base. Ahmm So business owners can, you know, often to join the chamber, so we, we do work with a variety of businesses ahm, we don't have a business line that specific to the startup community ahmm, and when I say specific I mean like, you know like very much, ahm, targeted for them. We do have ahmm, recently we acquired MITEX which is another membership organization that now living under the chamber ahmm. And that MITEX really look over the technology aspect of the business community ahm, looking at technology companies ahmm, and bringing forward conversations, and ahm, topics that might concern that community ahm, but beyond that ahm, I don't think the chamber has like a specific outreach to the ahmm, startup community. We invite, we invite everyone to be a part of a conversation.

Faith: Ok. And then, even though you just said that like there is no ahmm specific target or ahmm, you don't specifically target to the startups, you just kinda invite everyone to be members. Would there be anything that you will provide to help them startup like to become part of the chamber or anything that like will help, that will help them grow and become ahm bigger businesses?

Subject 3: Ahm, I'm happy to jump for that question, but ahm I also don't want to dominate the conversation

Subject 2: I think that's fine. I think you can go, that's fine.

Subject 3: Is that ok? Ok. Ahm So this is [Subject 3] again ahm. So, in regards to helping the businesses, so I'm not sure if this is what you have in mind with, when you sent over the questions I actually had a follow up question about this one in particular cause I wasn't sure what exactly you meant by it, but I will tell you what the chamber does broadly. Ahmm So, you know the chamber very much so wants to support all of its members in terms of being an advocate, right? An advocate for the business community ahmm, whether that spaced in policy, whether that's spaced in ahmm conversations about certain topics that might hit and ahmm affect certain industries and sectors and ahmm you know, sometimes these are closed doors conversations and topics where members gather together ahmm organized by the chamber to discuss how their ahmm adopting best practices with in their industry to propel their company forward, propel their ahm whatever service or product they are offering, to put that to the next level ahm, and then more broadly ahm the chamber, you know, we are very proud of the policy work that the chamber does ahm, advocating for each member in each sector in each industry. Ahm so, you know I, I use that as a very broad answer, to sorta have, you know have that technology company, technology startup that has chosen to be a member of the chamber ahh, we support them with those conversations and with those ahh policy initiatives. Does that make sense?

Faith: Yeah.

Subject 3: Ok.

Faith: Yeah, that's basically like in a nutshell, the information we're looking for just to understand like... if there's anything like that your chamber provides that might help the start-ups or do anything, like specific. But, since you just include everyone as a member, like the broad perspective, it's perfect.

Subject 3: Yeah, and then, I know that um, my... our colleague, [Subject 1] um told us that you chatted, I think you chatted with him yesterday?

Faith: Yeah.

Subject 3: Uhh... He also has another, you know he's working on very specific projects, um, so he might've spoken to technology in a... you know, with a different lens within the chamber. Um, so you know I also just, whatever he said, um, will also be a resource to you too. With understanding, um, the work that he's doing with the technology sector, because he has like a very specific, uh, lens on that.

Faith: Ok, awesome. Alright, and then the next is, have there previously been foreign businesses that have looked into expanding into the area? Or contacted your chamber about expanding into the Boston area?

Subject 3: Um, so... The Chamber does get, this is [Subject 3] again. Um, the Chamber, um, gets contacted quite a bit from a variety of different folks looking to come into the area, looking to... you know, expand their business. Um, but I don't have, and I'm not sure where that information is collected in terms of, you know, if it's an international company versus um, a United States company, or a company from someplace else. Um, I can tell you that even though I don't have access to um, that data, and that process, um I can tell you that the chamber does meet with delegates, international delegates with embassies that may be visiting to the Boston area. That's a very common practice of, uh, international representatives coming into the chamber office, um, obviously we're all working from home now, so, you know, not right now. But, um, in the past they have contacted the chamber as to sit down with, um, the leadership within the chamber to talk about the, um, different economies and talk about the different industries and sector, talk about, um, what's going well and what isn't going well. Um, this, you know, this I think relates to your question since that, while the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce might not have that specific, um, one-to-one conversation between the chamber and an international company coming in. The Chamber does talk with, um, one-to-one the Chamber and delegates or embassies, uh, that may be visiting the Boston area. To really speak at a more macro level, about, um, the various economies. Is that helpful?

Faith: Yes, very.

Subject 3: Ok.

Subject 2: Thank you so much [Subject 3]. As you all know I started this week, so I'm really, really, happy that [Subject 3] onboard with, um, taking the lead on our call. So, I appreciate you.

Subject 3: Oh my gosh, I appreciate you [Subject 2]! And I appreciate you [Subject 4]. Um, I am really, really excited that [Subject 2] is joining our team and, um, all week I've just been like telling, um, even non-chamber people like [Subject 2] joined our team. So, anyway, that's been very exciting.

Faith: Alright, and then, what is the difficulty level for a foreign company to come to the United States? And more specifically, the New England area.

Subject 2: I can share a little bit. It might not be like fully connected to the chamber. Um, this is [Subject 2]. I think right now, um, this is even coming from my personal anecdote, so just people within my social circle. It's very difficult, um, to get a visa. I mean, just in general, um whether you're coming to start a business or whether you're coming to start a new family, um, the U.S. has really closed off and tightened up restrictions, um, making, um, immigration a lot more difficult or pricier, I should say. We're still seeing an influx of immigrants coming in. Um, but, from much more developed countries, um, that might have more resources available. So, people who were already well established within their home nation and, um, just were looking for a new opportunity in the U.S. So, I think just even anecdotally, that's something that I can share, um, hearing from family and friends, um, and in the extended network of people who have either tried to come into the US in the last few years and haven't, or whose, whose plans have been delayed because employer visas are also less likely to be handed out in the same fashion that they were handed out before. Um, so in the same breath as that, I will share I have a friend that lives in Mexico City. We both went to grad school together here in Boston. We both graduated, um, with a Masters in city planning. Um, and soon after his graduation, his student visa was due to expire. And he wanted to stay in Boston and become an entrepreneur and he had a few business ideas, um, that seemed popular within, um, a couple of corporations, who were willing to sponsor him. Um, but it took over 9 months, um, for him to receive a sponsorship and even at that point, it wasn't for a full time work, or for him to be a partner in the structure. So he actually decided to return back to Mexico, where he _____. So, I think about those stories all the time, um, and I know the Chamber of Commerce has also looked into this quite, quite well. Where we're examining how the talent leak is happening in the city of Boston and where exactly it's happening. I would say it's definitely happening, happening with young people, but I would say, I would venture to say that the second half would most likely be those who are foreign born, who might not have, um, the flexibility of a permanent residence.

Faith: Yeah, definitely. That's definitely like a big issue that's actually considered when like looking to expand into the US. Um, sorry. And then, with that one, what are the most prominent industries in the area?

Subject 2: I'll let [Subject 3] or [Subject 4] take that one.

Subject 3: Um, this is [Subject 3]. I.. sure I'm happy to jump in for that. Um, the...I would say that we have, well you know, we're very fortunate that Boston has a lot of, um, interesting stuff going on. So I would highlight, um, oh gosh... our bio/pharma industry, I would highlight, um, our abroad visit, like the broader, um, hospitality industry, um, yeah. I think that those are as of right now, um, locally, really, um, doing a lot.

Faith: Alright, and then um, if an international company was looking to come and enter like the US market or the Massachusetts market, are certain, would certain industries be easier to expand into? Like, for example, if there's a tech company, would it be easier for a tech company to come into the area? Or would it be easier for a bio/pharma company to come into the area?

Subject 2: I will just say, this is [Subject 2], I don't think it's easy for any industry [laughs] um, but I mean I think that is a good question, but I would just say that Boston is a very competitive market and um I think in the last few years we've definitely aligned ourselves to be, um, you know, one of the top cities in the U.S. and I think that in and of itself is just gonna make it very hard for any new business to enter.

Um, however, I do also see that somehow, somehow, Boston has remained on the list of one of the top places for entrepreneurs um to live. However, I can see the city's cost are also starting to drive people up out of the cities borders.

Faith: Yeah, definitely. No that makes sense cause it's such a competitive market. And then would you say that that's true for like, the entire U.S. as well where it's just not really easy for any industry to enter?

Subject 2: Well if you, if, if we're talking about foreign, then I would say in that case, in some ways, yes, and it might change from industry to industry. But I think just, under the federal administration that we're currently under, it, it seems, it's a message that, that I think businesses outside of the U.S. are receiving is that they are not welcome. Um, I mean if you think about the rhetoric of "America First," um, and things like that, I think you're not hearing the same open receptility that once, we once used to have about ensuring that the U.S. is top in talent and exhibition of um, foreign talent. I just don't think that has been the case in the last two years.

Faith: Alright, definitely, um. Alright, so with that I'm going to turn it over to my other teammate, um, Enzo, to take over the next couple questions.

Enzo: Hello everyone, um, so, we know that it's hard for foreign companies to come to the United States, so how often do you guys encounter foreign companies looking to expand, specifically to this region?

[Pause]

Subject 2: I'm not sure if I can answer that question, [Subject 3] and [Subject 4], I'm not sure if you have any comments.

Subject 3: Um, could you ask that one more time? This is [Subject 3].

Enzo: Yeah, sure. Um, how often do you encounter like, foreign companies looking to expand to this region?

Subject 3: Oh, just, just broadly, like how, oh. Um, I think this, my response to this would be similar to earlier um, when I was talking about, I don't, I don't think that, you know, the Chamber gets um, reached out to quite a bit from foreign industries, but we don't collect the data on, sort of, who's trying to come in and um, you know, so we're not, we're not a gatekeeper in that way, does that make sense?

Enzo: Yeah it makes sense.

Subject 3: I just don't, yeah...

Enzo: Uh...

Subject 3: I don't, I don't think that we have that, that number, or that...

Enzo: Okay, um, that's fine. I know that you also like, talked about like, some challenges for foreign businesses, could you just say like, some, which ones do you think are like, the bigger challenges that they face when coming to the United States, when they are already here?

Subject 3: This is [Subject 3], um, I thought that [Subject 2]'s point and um, the anecdote that she shared was really poignant and right on the nose about um, the issues about immigration um, that we currently

have, I think that that's, you know, definitely paramount. I think too, you know, I, I, my brain keeps thinking about the scale of this company, this foreign company, that might be coming in, you know, a larger corporation, or um, a larger business that has um, the resources and the capability and the power to, join a new market, you know, is going to have a different experience of a smaller business, so I, I just wanna, you know, it's very obvious, I just want to throw it out there that um, you know, a larger foreign business would likely um, do some sort of merger and acquisition before coming into the United States, you know, if they have the, the extra resources, where um, they could place themselves in a more amenable uh, situation, especially with the immigration policy um, and the other policies the United States has in place, so. I, I think the challenge, I mean it's, it's very obvious, but the, the money and the capital that's needed um, for a transition like that is, is pretty paramount and large. I don't know. [Subject 2], [Subject 4], do you have anything that comes to mind?

Subject 2: Absolutely, I think we share that all the time, like capital, it um, it flows differently depending on who you are, what type of connections you're bringing, and what type of influence you might have already. I think um, that's actually something that we're doing within our own work, right? Is making sure that access is available to all. Um, So I think that that poses a significant risk um, for a new company coming in is are you able to raise the money that you need for your business or do you already have it. And are you um, are you putting that, your own personal expense on the line, um, because you're not able to raise um, additional capital.

Subject 3: Yeah, yeah. And I, and I'll quickly add that I, I heard um, entrepreneurs who were from um, outside of the country um, I'm thinking of one in particular, he shared his story of, of starting his company, and he was changing his last name because of the um, the personal prejudice that he was experiencing and he needed to find investors, right? And investors were not being as um, welcoming to him or were not even considering him and then when he changed his name, he had a completely different experience of um, raising capital and uh, having that influx of investors.

Subject 2: Yeah, yeah, and I totally, I, I can definitely see that being a real barrier to success and even just in any emerging market and trying to get in and um find a name for yourself, literally and figuratively um, becomes difficult depending on who you are, and especially what country you're coming from too, that's kind of like another underlying component is that... than people coming from european and asian markets might fare better off, might fare better than um, someone maybe coming from a latin american country, or an african nation.

Subject 3: Right, right.

Subject 4: Yeah, I was gonna say too the social capital aspect of it, the, and that's kind of exactly what you all are just talking about there, that like depending on where you come from and sort of the business culture also that exists where you're coming from, the meshing and how well you can sort of balance the Boston business culture itself so that people see you in a certain light, that plays a lot into just the relationships you can build and all that.

Enzo: That sounds great. Thank you for answering that question in such a complete way. Um, given these challenges, how do you believe that your chamber of commerce can provide help for international businesses entering the market?

Subject 3: This is [Subject 3]. Um. I'll quickly jump in that you know I, I think that the, our chamber, um, offers quite a bit of connections and convenings, um, you know ... oh go ahead [Subject 2], was that you?

Subject 2: Nope

Subject 3: Oh, I thought I heard someone trying to jump in. So you know going back to the, you know, what we're, what we've been alluding to during this call like with [Subject 4] used that term of the social capital, um the connections, that welcoming community, I think that that's something that, um, with convenings, and with introductions, and connections, um hopefully ideally that can be useful to, um, a company, especially a foreign company coming into a new market. Um, [Subject 2] already mentioned the two initiatives that we're working on as, you know, specific to our department, um, and I'm thinking about Pace setters in particular being one that, you know, might be helpful to a new business. Um, but, I'll, I'll stop there.

Subject 2: And I think that's the perfect answer. I think one of the things that the chamber can also offer is the network. I think, um, you can be at any one of our major events throughout the year; you can be in the room with that person that you were trying to get on the phone, or the CEO who you are hoping to connect with or whoever it might be. But, they might be in the room and just for you being part of our network you would have access to those types of people who are very influential not just in Boston but in the region.

Enzo: That sounds great. Um, given that what other resources do you believe are useful for foreign companies?

Subject 3: Um, this is [Subject 3] again. There are some really, I mean, you know beyond the professional services, right, I mean there are the obvious professional services that a foreign company will need to employ, lawyers and accountants and all that stuff, um beyond that I, I think that highlighting our non-profit community partners is so important. So many non-profit, um, really working at the frontlines of immigration issues and um entrepreneurship issues to support companies, minorities, and, um, individual business owners of, uh, foreign background I think is, is you know like great, incredible service.

Subject 2: That's a great point [Subject 3]. The one other thing I would add is, um, Boston is obviously the city with a great academic network. Um, and I think in terms of research, data, and also even just human capital I think that this is a great hub for intellect and innovation.

Enzo: That's great. Um, is there a library of regulations and resources that we could look into?

Subject 3: Um, do you mean, how do you, um, what do you mean by that?

Enzo: Like, a place where these regulations and resources for companies are all gathered to have access to?

Subject 4: Um, I would say... Hi this is [Subject 4]... I would say if you are looking for a set of sort of laws and such your best place to go would be directly to the city and state. Like Boston has an office of immigrant affairs. So I would recommend looking up, you know, the Boston office of immigrant affairs and it brings you to those websites and I would contact someone over there and ask where the best place to find that kind of information is because they'll likely have the most up to date and sort of on record information for that. And they actually send out a newsletter to local immigrant communities and they have a lot of just general information for immigrants in the area. So I think that they would have a list of those business best practices and business laws as well for foreign businesses looking to come into the area. Or at least they would know where the immigration laws stand in terms of that.

Enzo: Ok, thank you for... Oh go ahead

Subject 3: Oh, I was just going to say I agree with [Subject 4] that I think that that's a great resource. Um, I, I'll quickly plug our, our um our other, you know, public resources like don't forget about, like it seems basic and obvious but um the libraries in Boston are really amazing. If you're looking for like that research of like really diving into the books they'll have um the primary resources that you're looking for um and you know obviously with everything going on our libraries are closed but online I believe that they still have some access points.

Enzo: Ok, thank you for providing us with these libraries. Also, do you guys know of any specific regulations for the tech sector.

Subject 2: This is [Subject 2], I don't, not necessarily.

Subject 3: Um, yeah

Enzo: Ok, um, ok if there's nothing that's completely fine. Also, would your organization be interested in getting in contact with Chambers of Commerce in the EU, more specifically with AmCham Romania maybe, the American Chamber of Commerce in Romania?

Subject 2: What type of, uh, what do you mean in terms of us connecting with them you mean?

Enzo: Yeah, like, um during the interview yesterday with [Subject 1] he said that you guys aren't really close with like any other chambers of commerce, um because they all act in a different way. However, maybe like getting in contact and exchanging information how, I don't know, how do you like, I don't know, proceed with certain stuff?

Subject 2: I'm not really sure. I would just like venture to say like the chamber is always open to new relationships if the opportunity came then I don't see why we wouldn't be able to broker a conversation together.

Enzo: Alright, um sounds great and that was our last question. Do you have any other questions for us? Also thank you for participating in our interview.

Subject 3: Thank you

Subject 2: Absolutely, thank you for contacting us.

Appendix H: Interview 3 Transcript

This appendix contains the transcript of our third interview with the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce. For courtesy reasons, the name and position of the interviewee will remain confidential. Before the interview took place, the consent script was read and verbal consent was gained for Subject 5.

Enzo: Ok, so to start it, what position do you currently hold in the chamber of commerce and what responsibilities does your position entail?

Subject 5: Um, my title is the President and CEO of the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, uh, and in that regard, uh, I oversee a staff of about 12 people. Um, we provide, uh, you know member services and advocacy for nearly 2100 businesses in Central Mass and southern Worcester County. We put on programs and events, you know, that help, uh, them network, help, uh, get them timely information on ... government policies or, uh, law, changes in law. Um, we, you know, share with them best practices, and private sector, utilization of technology. We do nearly 200 program events a year and also work with industries by, uh, their particular sector or cluster as well. And that advocacy that we do on their behalf can be at city or town hall, at the state house, or in Washington DC. You know, so we also work with them often times with big utility companies or telecoms or gas, electric you know those types of things. So, you know, it's a wide range of things and you know advocating for our members and the broader business community as well.

Enzo: Sounds good, um. You were mentioning that you work with different types of companies, do you happen to work with startups as well?

Subject 5: We do. We have, um, three words we use to try to organize our work: recruit, retain, incubate. We try to recruit new businesses, investors, and developers into Central Mass and southern Worcester county. Um, we try to support and encourage policies that retain existing businesses and allow them to grow. And then incubate new businesses, startup businesses whether it be working with our colleges and universities, working with the immigrant communities that come to Worcester and the region. So, we run a program called Startup Worcester, we run, uh, a food hub, we run, um, a Worcester-preneurs conference, so we do a variety of different programming that's kinda meant to mentor and help businesses create and get going, you know.

Enzo: Yeah, uh, sounds good. Have there been foreign businesses that have looked to expand into the area?

Subject 5: I'm sorry can you say that again? Have there been...

Enzo: Have there been foreign businesses that have looked...

Subject 5: Foreign...Foreign businesses... uh yeah so, so, I'll give you an example of a project, uh, um, Wushi, which is a Chinese biomanufacturing company, um, is looking to grow and expand in Worcester's biotech park, it's also now called the reactory next to Abbvie over by UMass Memorial the medical

school. So that's, uh, a Chinese company that's, uh, coming to Worcester. Um, uh, so, I think that's a good example recently of a company that has picked Worcester to grow and expand.

Enzo: What would you say is the difficulty level for a foreign company like that to come to the United States, more specifically to the New England area?

Subject 5: Well you, you know I think if... you know, any company unless they've got you know real significant experience, and anytime you get there's any language issues, and cultural issues, and you know business practices, practice issues, time and distance, you know those are all challenges that, that one faces, you know currency, legal systems, you know. Um, so those are all can be, um, challenges, um, you know, anytime a company is looking to come to, um, you know, somewhere newer or different country. Um, you also have you know, some things like such as weather chan- you know weather challenges in New England, you know so those are some of the, the things that come up but um, you know, there's sometimes those negatives or some of those challenges, um, the positives outweigh them and then that, that ultimately you know makes its what a company decides to come. But there are, there are obviously some challenges, yes.

Enzo: So following up that question, what are the most prominent industries here in New England?

Subject 5: Um, well I can speak best to central Massachusetts. I mean, New England, you know generally, was manufacturing, um, you know a lot of the places around the country, a lot right around New England, some of the, the cities um that, that has changed dramatically over the last fifty years. Worcester, the same, the same way manufacturing carried the city for a hundred years. Um, but you know that started to change in the late sixties, early seventies so in Worcester, Central Mass., the biggest you know employer is healthcare, followed by higher ed., um which WPI is obviously a part of, financial services, and manufacturing. So, those are the four major sectors, you know, for our chamber service region.

Enzo: And, do you believe that certain industries are easier to join?

Subject 5: Um, hmm, certain industries, well I think you know industries like to be, a business likes to be around clusters. So, certainly there's a manufacturing culture and cluster here. Um, there is, um, you know a financial services cluster here, um there is a life sciences and biotech cluster here. There's a growing video and digital gaming cluster here and manufacturing. Um, so you know, those are things that I think that are you know, plusses for our region and with higher ed., you know, that often times companies want to be around innovation and smart people so you know kind of innovation sector companies um, you know, would have an interest in being you know in a place like Worcester and central Mass. where there's 35,000 you know college students.

Enzo: Ok, um, thank you for your answers. Um, I'm going to pass it over to Faith, another member of the group, so that she will continue with some more questions.

Subject 5: Ok.

Faith: Alright, so, following up with that last question, um, would it be easier for certain industries to expand to the U.S.?

Subject 5: Um, I think it kind of goes back to the cluster issue. Um, you know I think it's easier when there's people in the field on the ground that you can either hire or relate to or consult with who work with companies in that space. Um, you know there are some foreign countries, some countries, where language and time, time changes are not a challenge so that makes things a little bit easier. Um, you know so I think it depends a little bit on the sector and where you are coming from.

Faith: Alright, and then, how often would you say your Chamber encounters foreign companies looking to expand into the region?

Subject 5: Um hhh, you know I would probably say, you know, ten to twelve times a year we get inquiries and answer questions. You know, how often that actually leads to a company growing, expanding here maybe it's once a year. Um, but uh, you know, there are inquiries, uh, and we actively try to uh encourage you know um, companies to look into coming to Massachusetts so um, you know, and, and, and Boston uh, for the most part a number of countries have their uh, consul general's office that service New England, um, there's a couple in Providence and then there's some in New York City. So you know, we will reach out occasionally to you know, a dozen countries, um, just to let them know we're here, we've done tours with consul general's office because often times if a company is looking to grow and expand, through a certain, into a certain region, sometimes a conduit for them to kind of get intelligence and information about you know, state, and different regions is through their, um, consul general's office and that consul general's office often has an economic development staff or staff, staffer. So uh, you know that's one way we, we try to you know, let people know that you know, Massachusetts is more than just Boston. There are important cities like Haverhill and Worcester.

Faith: Definitely. Um, what would you say are the biggest challenges a foreign business faces when coming to the United States?

Subject 5: Ok I think that depends a little bit whether they've been here or not or operated in the United States before uh, when it comes down to some of the things that I mentioned, you know, either time changes, culture, legal negotiation, um, if they're here for the first time, do they have to acquire space, lease space, but the single biggest issue that our company, you know, I, I say this, I'm like a broken record, but, you know, it's, it's no different if it's a new company looking to come here or an existing company, the single biggest challenge that we have, or have had before COVID-19 hit, is you know, companies trying to find staff and workers, you know.

Faith: Yeah, that makes total sense. Um, and then how can your Chamber of Commerce provide help for international businesses entering the market?

Subject 5: Um, you know, how do we, how can we help them? Well I, I think um, you know, their, it's introductions right? So with, with WuXi and, and, and it's making sure that they, they're gonna have to negotiate with the city and the state uh, they're gonna have to hire people, making sure they understand who the decision-makers and people are, you know, WPI or Clark or Quinsigamond Community College or the UMass Medical School. Just kind of making those introductions and letting them know, you know, the state level, what programs they may be able to access, you know uh when, because they're creating new jobs, so it's really kind of being a resource, uh, an ambassador, a, you know, a facilitator, introducing um, so that's really, you know, where where we play a role.

Faith: Alright, and then, what other resources do you believe are useful for foreign companies?

Subject 5: Well you know, at the, it's state level, you know, and the offi- the executive office of housing and econno- economic development, they have a toolbox of programs. Some of those are, are, are programs that the executive office of housing and economic development are done in tandem with Mass Development, which is a quasi-governmental entity that helps, you know, that can sometimes be helpful to businesses uh, in terms of um, you know, loans or technical assistance or grants. Uh similarly, you know, depending on the municipality where the community business is gonna look to grow or expand or, or locate to, there may be programs at the municipal level, um, as well. So you know, those websites um, in particular of the state, you know, of, of Mass Development, of the city or town, could be helpful and generally, the programs that they have are kind of statutorily approved programs, so it's not an unlimited amount, there's a finite, you know, which anybody who's been kind of in the economic development space, would be familiar with here in the state. So they should have a list of some of those programs, you know, on those websites that they make available.

Faith: Alright, and then are uhmm would businesses ahm producing goods and services we understand that there is different regulations that they may have to follow, so we were wondering if you knew maybe of a library of regulations and resources or that we could look into uhm or where could find regulations and resources.

Subject 5: Uhmm, well like regulations uhm ... I mean I'm trying to, yeah, you know, yeah regulations ahm. You know you may want to talk with uhm, have you been talking or interviewing other people?

Faith: Yes

Subject 5: Yeah, it is like, I think maybe to give you a concrete example, but like if it was like scien... when you say tech, you know, you know uhm, ah clearly in science and medical devices like biotech, those types of things there is going to be a whole bunch of, you know public health, environmental regs, you know, things ahmm, health testing that type of stuff ahmm. So the department of public health could have stuff in that, in those areas. Ahm, you know, I would say the Department of Public Health could be a good area. They might have some stuff on their website, ahm. You know that's, you know if there's a lawyer maybe, maybe a law firm or a lawyer that does business, business law maybe he could give you, he or she could maybe give you more granular example of, you know ahm, like pharmacies making Xs, you know they got to make sure they are following federal FDA, state X, Y, Z regs, you know. So, I don't have the specific, but those might be some, some places you can look.

Faith: Yeah, we'll definitely look into those. And then, kinda building off of that answer, would you know possibly where we could find regulations for the tech sector? If you don't have an answer for this it's fine.

Subject 5: Yeahh, so I mentioned Mass Development is also kind of a quasi-governmental agency ah that kind of works with ahm, it's called Mass Tech Collaboratives. So, there's a woman named Caroline Kirk, who's the head of that. Ahm, so they might have some stuff tech collaborative, ahm you know that might be ahm an area to look.

Faith: Alright, we'll definitely look into those. And then would your organization be interested in getting in contact with Chambers of Commerce in the EU, and more specifically with the American Chamber of Commerce in Romania?

Subject 5: Yeah, we are happy to talk with them, I mean, you know, the staff of twelve we are limited, in terms of, you know, how much ahm aggressive outreach and international recruitment we can do, but are we willing to be a resource ahm, share information of, whether they may be opportunities.

Faith: Alright, and is there a point of contact we could get in touch with to possibly start this contact between the two chambers of commerce?

Subject 5: Yeah, you can let me know. I would just, you know, you got my email and I think Enzo can touch with Virginia so, so we'll start with, with me.

Faith: Alright awesome. Ahmm That was the last of the questions we had.

Subject 5: Alright, well good luck with everyone and glad to hear you are working hard and not standing back in out on campus. Well good luck. Stay safe, stay healthy.

Faith: We'll try! Thank you so much!

Enzo, Selina & Malek: Thank you!

Malek: You too!

Subject 5: Bye bye!

Appendix I: Detailed Sponsor Description

The American Chamber of Commerce in Romania, or AmCham Romania, is a non-profit organization founded in 1993 to help business growth and trade in Romania (AmCham Romania). AmCham Romania is comprised of over 450 member companies that range from simple mom-and-pop shops to large international companies. Since AmCham Romania has many business members, the organization has been able to help their members improve their business practices (AmCham Romania, n.d.). These better business practices have led to more business transactions and investments which has helped to increase the economic competitiveness of the country on a regional and European level. As of today, the organization has been helping its members for over 25 years and has helped to gain over 22 billion dollars in investments and create over 250,000 jobs for Romanians (AmCham Romania, n.d.).

The chamber began in 1993 after the fall of the communist party. The post-communist economy was in turmoil as it had to shift to a market and profit driven economy from a communist economy (Constantin, Goschin, & Danciu, 2011). During this period of economic turmoil, different subsidiaries of American blue-chip companies entered into the country in hopes of expanding and beginning trade relations (U.S. Department of State, 2019). Since these companies wanted to invest in Romania, the Romania-American Trade Agreement was signed which helped to officially establish AmCham Romania.

Yet, the chamber was having a hard time operating as there was a lack of consistency in the new legislative framework of the country (AmCham Romania, n.d.). Therefore, in April of the same year, 1993, a letter was sent to the Prime Minister to signal to the government the issues AmCham was facing. From this interaction, the first advocacy mission was created to establish laws and regulations which allowed for members to continue to join AmCham Romania and for AmCham to flourish into what it is today (AmCham Romania, n.d.).

The goals of AmCham Romania are similar to the goals of other chambers of commerce. In a general sense, a “chamber of commerce” is “an association of business people to promote commercial and industrial interests in the community” (Merriam-Webster.com, 2020). These chambers hope to represent their members and the interests of their members to their respective authorities, policymakers, and regulators through advocacy, policies, and education of the matters at hand (Burton, 2017). Chambers of Commerce can be found in countries all over the world on both a state or county, national, and international level. Yet, they all want to not only further their interest but also further the interests of their community, region, state, or nation by promoting commerce and industry through both direct and indirect action (Popescu, 2016). All chambers want to help their community, region, state, or nation sustain prosperity and grow by helping employers and businesses thrive in their environment (Burton, 2017). As these goals are those of chambers of commerce as a whole, the same goals can be said for AmCham Romania since they are an international chamber of commerce.

Aside from its general goals, AmCham Romania has other goals that are both specific to the chamber and the type of chamber of commerce. AmCham Romania wants to promote its member businesses’ best practices by helping to create an open dialogue between the members and the Romanian authorities to help keep business interactions transparent (AmCham Romania, n.d.). Along

with this, AmCham Romania advocates for prosperous business as a prosperous business helps to build prosperity for not only Romania but for Romanians as well.

In conjunction with these goals, there is one other main goal of AmCham Romania that is based upon the type of chamber of commerce. AmCham Romania is an American Chamber of Commerce. American Chambers of Commerce are chambers of commerce that are affiliated with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, n.d.). The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is the national chamber of commerce of the United States of America and it was founded in April of 1912 following a presidential address to Congress from President William Howard Taft in December of 1911 (Crawford, 2015). As of today, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is the world's largest business federation and represents more than 2 million businesses of varying sizes and regions. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is the voice and representation of its members in Washington D.C. when laws and regulations regarding trade and international business must be discussed (Trevino., 2012). Therefore, the same principles apply to American Chambers of Commerce as affiliates of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. American Chambers of Commerce, or AmChams, are the same as chambers of commerce but they also deal with international trade. AmChams help to advocate and lobby for business ties and trade on both national and international grounds (Trevino., 2012). Similar to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, AmChams are the voice of the businesses in their respective region in Washington D.C.

Since AmCham Romania is an officially recognized American Chamber of Commerce, one of the main goals is to help promote trade and economic relations between the U.S. and Romania. The mission of the organization is to "stimulate commerce between the U.S. and Romania and improve economic relations between the countries while maintaining an open dialogue with central authorities" (AmCham Romania, n.d.). Therefore, the organization plays a lead role in helping grow and increase trade and investment ties between the U.S. and Romania. Due to this, international competitiveness is strengthened to increase global interdependence to keep ongoing investment ties (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2010).

Currently, AmCham Romania provides many different services to its members as to be able to achieve its goals of helping to promote good business practices as well as trade and investments in Romania and with the U.S. AmCham Romania provides different membership levels for different business sizes, such as patron for smaller businesses and corporate for larger businesses (AmCham Romania, n.d.). For these memberships, the companies must pay a membership fee but once they become a member, the company can access the provided benefits. These benefits include different resources and news about current economic events, publicity on the website and at different member events, access to member-only events that can provide networking opportunities, exposure opportunities, and many other beneficial resources (AmCham Romania, n.d.). The provided benefits that come with membership help to incite companies to not only join AmCham Romania but to also remain a member. Therefore, AmCham Romania wants to help to improve the Romanian economy and ties between the U.S. and Romania by aiding businesses in their practices and providing beneficial resources for them to aid in maintaining economic diplomacy and international trade and investments.

Appendix J: Customer Relationship Management

This appendix encompasses all the research we have done regarding customer relationship management (CRM). This research was done in anticipation of working to help organize and update AmCham Romania's database, prior to the announcement of D term 2020 global IQP cancellations caused by the outbreak of COVID-19. Below, we highlight the best practices for CRMs and how to implement them. The sources are cited in the Bibliography chapter of this paper.

AmCham Customer Relationship Management

AmCham Romania uses CRM or Customer Relationship Management to support their relationships with members. A database is only an element of a CRM as a CRM also utilizes data analytics as well as other marketing, sales, and service applications ("A Brief History of Customer Relationship Management," 2013). It employs these components to help companies attempt to retain and gain new members. CRMs emerged in 1995 from earlier technologies called "Contact Management Software" and "Sales Force Automation" ("A Brief History of Customer Relationship Management," 2013). It developed widely in packaged services offered alongside the main CRM components in the next few years due to competition. The industry struggled during the burst of the dot com bubble but later recovered with the adoption of cloud services. Vendors continue to add features to increase the functionality of their CRMs and outperform competitors. Recent additions include customer service and social CRMs which integrate the use of social media. The CRM database includes contact and relationship data with customers, metadata, and any other necessary data. All of this helps companies to identify potential new customers and better predict customer opinion. This is meant to improve current business connections and prevent customer churn. Customer churn is simply the loss of customers and clients to other businesses.

As discussed in "CRM For Beginners - Customer Relationship Management Basics," CRM is simply a strategy rather than a platform by itself, "Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is the process of bringing the customer and the company closer together. The goal of CRM is to help a company maintain current customers, as well as gain new customers," ("CRM For Beginners - Customer Relationship Management Basics," 2020). Because of their goals, CRM fits well for the objectives of AmCham. There are many available CRM systems that are offered by different vendors. These are either web-based or integrated systems that allow for data entry and management. Other compatible functions are incorporated for better relationship maintenance as well. For example, Salesforce, one of the larger CRM vendors, has additional software to aid with email integration, workflows, marketing automation, dashboards and reports, and sales forecasting among others ("Customer Relationship Management," 2020).

One of AmCham Romania's largest benefits to members is relationship building and networking (AmCham, n.d.). Another benefit is providing valuable market and legal information to aid with member expansion and understanding consumer needs. This is especially helpful to smaller start-ups that do not have the manpower to spend on market research. Neither of these can be achieved without good communication with members. AmCham Romania has to know what its members need in terms of both networking opportunities and information. A CRM helps AmCham Romania provide better service to members in both of these ways by creating stronger business relations and communication channels

between AmCham Romania and its members. In creating these stronger connections and providing better benefits, AmCham Romania improves member sentiment and creates a better image for themselves. Improving in these areas is essential to attracting potential members since this is how they will form an initial opinion on AmCham Romania. A CRM also assists them in identifying current members' opinions and potential new members. As the largest goal of AmCham Romania is to expand to new members, they need to be able to predict customer churn. They also need to be able to recognize possible members and discover new business hubs.

All of these advantages of a CRM should easily correct issues that AmCham Romania presently faces. However, they have problems with their database which are hindering their ability to use their CRM to its full potential. They lack data that would be helpful to display to members and the public. They also lack data for finding metadata statistics about current and prospective members. Not only are they missing many pertinent data points, but the data that they have in the database is outdated. This makes creating statistics and communicating with members even more difficult since the data in the database may no longer be correct.

To fix the issues they face with their data, AmCham Romania may need better data management and continuous data feeds. Data management is important for both organization and metadata/statistics. AmCham Romania may need to transition to a more organized database to easily keep track of all member organizations. Furthermore, they could benefit from having more statistics to display on various media mediums to improve their general image and attract members. For these purposes, good data management is essential. Part of data management is knowing exactly what data is required and how to store and use it. For example, if personal or sensitive data is stored in the database, there must be precautionary measures such as encryption to make sure it is adequately protected. To provide necessary services and be responsible with data, AmCham Romania must use ideal data management practices and follow EU and Romanian regulations. As for continuous data feeds, they need both market data and member data. Market data could be automated, but member data would be much harder to automate. Some member data points may only be known by employees of the member company and will not be readily available. Market data could also easily be collected manually, so again the trouble comes to member data. Manually collecting all members' data would be tedious and time-consuming. If AmCham Romania had members send data at certain intervals, they would be able to efficiently gather all necessary data continuously without lag. This would be much more effective than attempting to reach out to every member. The issue with this plan is finding some incentive for the members that would consistently have them sending data back.

Creating a Centralized CRM System

Next, we will be looking into how to implement an effective CRM system. An optimal CRM system serves both the purposes of increasing member communication and relations as well as reaching prospective members through an enhanced public image. A CRM system could aid AmCham Romania with both of these issues which, as discussed in the background, are crucial to their future success. One of the potential areas for improvement mentioned to us by AmCham Romania included social media activity. This is yet another problem that could be solved by a CRM as there is a distinct type of CRM system that targets social media precisely, which is known as Social CRM.

Before any extensive research and development of the CRM system, we first need to ascertain a firm grasp on what AmCham Romania has now in terms of CRM. Whether they use CRM practices and methods or have an established CRM system will make a monumental difference to both our research into possible suggestions and to any technical development or refinement we perform in our work with AmCham Romania.

Once the current resources used for customer relationship management have been confirmed, we can begin an analysis of the CRM. To properly analyze the CRM, we will have to evaluate both what is available in the CRM system and employee opinions of the CRM. Whatever parts of the CRM system AmCham Romania is permitted to provide for us will have to be sufficient for our analysis. Due to the nature of what is stored in a CRM system, we may only be able to access some elements of the system and will have to infer from what we are given. The interviews with AmCham employees will give us some insight into the issues with the current CRM and which areas we should address most fervently. Between these two methods, we should be able to establish shortcomings of the system to pinpoint necessary research topics.

We will need to do substantial research into the best practices of CRM, more specifically CRM system implementation. Our case studies will hopefully reveal to us how other American Chambers of Commerce have implemented similar systems. Whether those chambers have since been successful should be an indicator of how that implementation performs. These implementations would be most valuable due to their relevance. A chamber of commerce operates significantly differently than a regular business and deals with membership instead of customers. Many of the best practices from other research will remain applicable, however, since communication and relationships with members are equally if not of higher importance as with customers or clients. So, through case studies of other AmChams and research into the accepted best practices, we should be able to build a vision of how an ideal CRM system would be structured.

In exploring options, we will have to consider the advantages and disadvantages of both developing an enterprise CRM system or subscribing to a third-party SaaS (Software as a Service) vendor to provide for CRM system needs. The minor differences between CRM systems offered by vendors must be exhaustively investigated to unearth all purposes of features and how they might apply in the context of AmCham Romania's work. This would give an understanding of which features would matter most and which would be irrelevant to AmCham. These could be evaluated qualitatively to find which vendor provides the ideal buffet of features for AmCham.

To evaluate the potential benefits to AmCham Romania's organizational needs of each feature offered, we will use SelectHub. SelectHub has a free software selection platform that could give ratings for each third-party vendor based on how well the selection of modules they offer would tailor to AmCham Romania's needs ("About selecthub," 2020). We could select which areas AmCham Romania is looking to prioritize in a CRM system based on our case studies and employee feedback from interviews. Once we select the most important dimensions for their CRM, SelectHub compares many vendors' ratings in the specified functions to discern the best options. Another alternative would be contacting and getting a consultation for AmCham Romania with SelectHub. This would allow for a much more personalized and specialized choice to make sure AmCham Romania can get the most from the system they choose. To do this, we would suggest that AmCham Romania reach out for a consultation on the

SelectHub website. This should be a simple process as SelectHub is very accessible. Following, we could get a clear idea of what AmCham Romania's ideal system would be early on in our work there and help to implement it with the rest of our available time.

Finally, within the CRM system, it is essential to make sure that data is stored and used appropriately. While a database is only one part of the CRM system, it holds all the information in it. When it is properly used and structured, statistics can be easily generated, there will be no conflicting data, and the data will be intuitively stored and secure. Essential to our suggestion and work on a CRM system will be a solid foundational database. We will hopefully be able to look at the structure of the database at the very least. This way we can make sure that the system is stable from the bottom up and that there is a minimal possibility for PII (Personally Identifiable Information) from getting into the wrong hands.

We should be able to form a concrete understanding of what the optimal implementation should be for AmCham Romania's CRM system through research of CRM system best practices and of other AmChams. Because of this, we can form suggestions based on differences in what we believe the ideal organization to look like and how it is currently built. If there is no CRM system in place at the time being or there are significant improvements to be made, we will also consider SaaS vendors as an alternative to just suggesting improvements. If using a SaaS vendor is seen as the preferable option, we will weigh the benefits of various prominent vendors to determine our first choice for AmCham Romania. Ideally, we will be able to aid in implementing some of the improvements during our time with AmCham Romania and will only have minor suggestions when we leave.

CRM Interview Informed Consent Script

Hello, thank you for meeting with us! We are a group of students from WPI that is working to help AmCham Romania optimize its media and database management and operations. The purpose of this interview is to find the opinion of AmCham's staff over some of the crucial technical parts that AmCham has. In this interview, we will ask you questions about your opinions of AmCham's Customer Relationship Management system and website

This interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes and we do not anticipate any risks associated with your participation in this interview. However, you have the right to stop or withdraw from this interview at any time. We appreciate the time you set aside for participating in this voluntary interview and reassure you that all information collected during this interview will be kept confidential. The interview will be recorded and a transcript of any responses will be produced. But, in order to maintain confidentiality, the recordings and transcripts will be kept in encrypted files that only we, the team, have access to. If we plan to use a direct or indirect quote from you that may break confidentiality, we will get in contact and gain your consent prior to displaying it in any of our work that will be eventually published through WPI. We will provide the specific quote we will be using in our final paper when we contact you.

Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?

If in the future you have any doubts or questions, feel free to contact us through the email:

gr-bucharest_amcham@wpi.edu.

With all that being said, are you comfortable participating in the interview?

CRM Interview Opening Questions

- What is your current position at AmCham?
- How long have you been with AmCham Romania?
- Have you ever worked with or currently work with the CRM?
 - Worked with:
 - Go into CRM Questions
 - Have not worked with:
 - Go into Website Questions

CRM Questions

- How often do you use the CRM?
- Can you walk us through your daily practices with the CRM?
- Can you show us the process of how you enter data into the system?
- Can you show us how you gather data from the CRM?
- What works best about the CRM?
- What is the ideal outcome of the CRM?
- What doesn't work about the CRM?
- If you could change one thing about the CRM, or the process of using it, what would that be?
- What do you use the data for? (statistics, communication, etc.)
- Do you use the database for communication with your members?
 - Does it work better for some members than others?
 - If so, why and how?

Website Questions

- Can you walk us through how you use the website?
- On a scale of 1 - 10 (1 being not useful and 10 being very useful), how useful do you find the website?
- Please explain why you gave this score (from previous question) to the website?
- Is the website fulfilling the current needs of your members?
- Do you know if members actively use the website?
- How do you determine what information to put on the website?
 - Who has the final say in what information is put on the website?
- What information do you think the members would be beneficial to have on the website?
- Have you performed any member surveys to determine if the members find the website beneficial?
 - If so, what were the results of these surveys?
- Is there any information in the database that would be useful to be on the website?
- What improvements do you think could be made to the website?