A Small Business Expansion and Sustainability Plan

An Interactive Qualifying Project Report Submitted to the Faculty of the

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Abstract

The internet has dictated the way our society interacts, it has allowed information to be transported in various forms which were unimaginable at the beginning of the 21st century. Globalization is inevitable as people and organizations effortlessly utilize it to expand their horizons, whereas internet networks exist. It is up to every one of us to keep informing as well as modernizing ourselves with the digital age's dynamism. It is crucial for organizations, public and private, to revamp and streamline their business processes in the context of marketing. The growth of the internet has enabled various business implementations that organizations now notice of the scalable potential. Many have embraced into their daily operations, which equally prioritize in conjunction with their main goods or services, such as online advertising and social marketing. These relatively new practices drive businesses to compete with industry leaders. The project was developed to update social media strategies to improve business operations of the higher education consulting firm, Success 4 Higher Education LLC (S4HE). The project deliverables included recommendations by researching demographics, advertising tools and methods, social media platforms, and strategies used in the market. The goal of this project was centered on the analyses of current and innovative trends of the social media and online advertising industry, along with trends in the consulting industry. The exploratory nature of the project made it possible to evaluate strong recommendations for ideas and practices that would augment S4HE's online presence and lead attainment.

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible if it were not for the guidance, patience, and encouragement provided by Professor Karen Oates, Ph.D. As my advisor, she provided quality suggestions for the project to improve. The meetings often ended with profound conversations about our backgrounds and shared interests. I did, however, do myself disfavor for not having proper communication and was not timely with my work.

I want to thank the project sponsor, Amy Shachter, for designing and updating the website. Her work supplied the project with an abundance of first-hand information regarding their business practice and values. The site was used to understand more of the work done at Success 4 Higher Education.

I am grateful for Ruth McKeogh from the Interdisciplinary & Global Studies Office for giving me her time to go over research policies and survey guidelines. She was very kind to set aside what she was doing to assist this project.

I want to show my gratitude by recognizing Professor Elanor Loicano, Ph.D. I was able to apply concepts learned from her Telecommunications class into this IQP. This project uses the second lab, "How to check for cookies," to explore business applications enabled by incorporating cookies in online marketing. I would also like to acknowledge WebQual, an instrument developed by Professor Loiacono, Richard T. Watson, and Dale Goodhue. WebQual helps research similar to mine by measuring and analyzing a website's consumer's interaction, usability information, accessibility, user's trust, and perception.

Executive Summary

Introduction

The goal of the project was to provide recommendations based on the survey research along with further findings from reports and statistics databases. The recommendations addressed possible growth and sustainability impediments S4HE face in online advertising and social media platforms. The study included custom survey questions, report analysis, competitor's online practices, and digital trends that would benefit S4HE. As of the moment, their business model revolves around workshops and consultation, either given in workshops or locally.

The project uncovered relevant challenges in the market that S4HE faces to penetrate its industry to attain new customers. Success 4 Higher Education (S4HE) has a low online presence and not many followers, which complicates gaining traction for growth. The project explored tools like Facebook Pixel, Google Trends & Analytics, and UbberSuggest, which provides metrics to evaluate and measure through time.

Methodology

The project started by investing in the foundation's understanding of online marketing and social media strategies by examining credible websites and competitor firms. The project also aimed to identify its own brand identity to facilitate goal settings and post activities, so by reviewing aspiring competitors, S4HE could gain more perspective. The three leading higher education consulting firms served as a model to guide the research, highlighting what a successful firm looks like and what do they do (McClure, 2019). The project dissected the three leading firm's websites based on web development insights, type of content, and social media reach. Furthermore, research was done on the WPI Library Databases to seek ideas that could additionally solidify the foundation stage. The websites most used were Statista, Gartner, and IBISWorld, along with primary and secondary documents that could develop an understanding of online marketing and social media strategy.

As the project gained a solid foundation, a prognosis regarding market demands and demographics enabled the creation of the project's survey. The groundwork helped come up with a client-oriented study that would provide a further understanding of who the ideal audience for the firm should be. The questions intended to understand patterns between social media platforms, age groups, gender, and online advertising perceptions to yield the perfect model for a better return on investments. The goal was to survey 50 people, and thankfully with the help of the project advisor and S4HE partner, Karen Oates, the survey was completed by 126 people. Having a high number of surveys submitted allowed the project to have a better understanding of the micro-level so it could compare to later research findings.

After identifying the audience, along with the firm's brand identity, the project started to develop a social media strategy based on the research done online and through primary and secondary sources. The project browsed online marketing from a small and medium enterprise (SME) perspective as they faced similar problems like a barrier of entry. The strategy would encompass goal setting, posts & activities scheduling, and content creation planning is serving to be scalable yet concise to operate.

Results and Analysis

The acumen gained from the study will genuinely help Success 4 Higher Education launch its advertising campaigns and strive to achieve sustainable growth with an online presence. It was concluded that Facebook is the leading platform for online marketing as it contains various tools and subset social media platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Oculus, and Instagram.

Advertising on LinkedIn will only be beneficial as the campaigns focus on gaining business customers. Business names and positions could be used to generate lead, whereas it is not possible on Facebook. However, LinkedIn is the leading place to target B2B clients, yet the cost per click (CPC) is the priciest amongst other platforms (Search Engine Journal, 2019). In the beginning, S4He will have to focus solely on Facebook as the research found that work-centric people are proportionally found on both platforms.

The social media strategy will focus on content creation and Facebook advertising. Because the founders collectively have forty years plus of experience, they have experience and industry insights needed to create content repetitively. The project concluded that e-mail and Facebook are the platforms most accessed by any user. Additionally, online advertising can prosper using Facebook Pixel, Google Trends, Google Analytics, Google Search Console, and Ubersuggest. The above tools will assist S4HE in generating blog posts and social media pages, hosting a micro-hub of professionals in the higher education industry.

Recommendations & Conclusion

Several recommendations designed to promote the online presence of S4HE, allowing them to attain more clients as their reach increases. However, Facebook marketing stood as the best option to reach greater audiences, which the project backs by data. The Facebook campaigns will allow the firm to have a vast audience reach while being cost-effective relative to LinkedIn. Facebook will also empower the S4HE's website to collect customers' interaction and engagement as they access the website. Intuition provided by the Facebook Pixel, Ubersuggest, and Google Tools will help the firm understand precisely what kind of content and information their customers want. Along with optimizing targeting advertisement campaigns, S4He can also enhance their website by adding content as well as eliminating wasteful content that slows down the servers.

The objective of the project genuinely provides a guideline that the founders, Karen Oates and Amy Shachter, could easily apply to their growing firm. The firm's growth will only be attainable as the business plan incorporates consistent strategies where online marketing focusses on data gathering, tools, and content marketing. By using the social media strategy provided, they can expand their reach, thus educating a higher number of people that were impossible before. For this reason, Success 4 Higher Education will have a nation-wide footprint responsible for the advancements of higher education while at the same time supporting micro-level work environments and the skills necessary to thrive as an organization.

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Introduction

Obtaining a higher education degree has become imperative in today's job market, that colleges and universities have to compete to recruit talent into their schools. The aggregate world's need for higher education will increase exponentially in the coming years as technology has restructured industries to create 4.1 billion new jobs by 2020 (Gartner, 2019). While it is necessary to provide modern facilities with industry-leading equipment, organizations have to prioritize their education goals by investing in their most valuable resources, the faculty. Investments could come in the form of higher salaries to compete with private-sector salaries, but how will increasing facility expenditure and salaries affect tuition costs? According to the *Institute for College Access & Success*, the average cost of attending university per year has almost doubled since 2000/2001, and the steady increase in cost trajectory has no signs of slowing down (Statista, 2019).

The internet is not what it was ten, nor fives years ago, but instead, it has developed to a multi-trillion dollar revenue industry. According to a report from Statista.com, since 2005, the internet has grown its users by nearly 25%, (ITU, 2018). Internet access has grown over the years, enabling more people to have a digital presence; in other words, the penetration rate has not been higher. These penetration rates also apply to businesses, and through social media marketing, companies like Success 4 Higher Education will have better opportunities to create an online presence and generate revenue streams.

1.1 Rising Demands for Higher Education

The increasing number of students, faculty, and staff salaries become increasingly competitive since the nineties, and the focus to acquire the best talents has fallen to eye-catching facilities and dining halls prominence (Aldrich, 2017). Recently, college tuition and student debt have been a hot topic where Colleges and Universities are being pressed to lower tuition costs by social activists and presidential candidates, notably Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders (The New York Times, 2019). It is their goal to lower education costs to give everyone a level opportunity of obtaining high education. Colleges need to stand out against their competitors by the investments and salaries stated above, though ideally, it sounds like a good plan, colleges will not comply due to their competitive nature. How can higher education organizations best serve their stakeholders while backing up their increasing prices?

Higher education has had a pivotal role in moving our nation forward, especially when it comes to technology innovation and population studies. As much progressive impact college and university bring to our country, there are various discrepancies in their differences. The goal of this IQP project research and analyze the impacts of social media on higher education consulting firms and how to utilize technology advancements to move the company forward. The project focused on how an online presence can help the firm can adapt to higher education increasing demands to offer a quality environment and inspiring leaders.

1.2 Success 4 Higher Education as a Business

Figure 1: S4HE Workshop- Karen Oates and her company frequently hold private workshops for prospect clients, this is part of their business model to attract new clients.

Success 4 Higher Education, or S4HE, is a private higher education consulting firm dedicated to creating inclusive environments, mentoring staff, and elevating leadership skills of higher education organizations. In their website, S4HE stated their main purpose, "Our goal is to help you create the environment that maximizes the skills of your community and allows you and your community to achieve success," the film elaborates actions steps in the 'Scope of Services' tab. Karen Oates, Ph.D., a WPI Biology & Biotechnology Professor, incorporated the firm in Delaware on June 6th, 2018 (Deleware.gov: Division of Corporations, 2019). She embarked on a new challenge with her co-founder, Amy Shacter, Ph.D., Senior Associate Provost at Santa Clara University, of educating and improving higher education organizations. The firm has built rapport through their previous clients, including Syracuse University, Harvey Mudd College, and Broward College, albeit being a young firm. As the education industry's competitiveness increases, colleges and universities often lean to firms for guidance and mentoring.

S4HE empowers its clients to improve workplace culture, identify key opportunities in their organization, lead staff towards institutional goals, and much more through workshops, strategic initiatives, and coaching. S4HE's business model encompasses strategic initiatives, seminars, and consulting & coaching. The provided services focus on faculty development, work environments, course development, assessments, and accreditation. It is the firm's goal to provide transformative assistance to the client faculty and organizations.

Aside from its website, the young company currently has little to no online presence. The goal of the site is to hold services and contact information a potential client could utilize to form their judgment to employ or not the firm's services. There are no blogs, videos, nor social media plug-in that could potentially attract new leads. Not to be critical, but the aesthetics of the website require updating as blocky and clunky defined the user's interface, and this could impede acquiring new clients.

1.2 Project Goals

This project aspired to lay an online foundation for Success 4 Higher Education that will sustain business growth as the brand entity and client base gain upwards traction. The project investigates the firm's current activities and confides on research to provide recommendations that contribute to S4HE's online advancements. The project researched leading consulting firm's practices, advertising tools, online marketing strategies, and tools, by conducting a survey and utilizing WPI's reports and studies databases.

The project has three central core objectives that address sustainability plans and the expansion of a small business achieve an online presence to obtain their goals:

1) **Determine Objectives & Intended Audience**
   a) **Identify S4HE Online Objectives**
   b) **Database Research**
   c) **Survey**
   d) **Data Cleaning**
2) **Develop an Effective and Modern Social Media Strategy**
   a) **Determine Social Media Platform**
   b) **Analyze SH4E's Competitors**
   c) **Define Valuable Metrics**
   d) **Content Planning Creation**
   e) **Omnichannel Marketing**
3) **Evaluating Metrics & Performance**
   a) **Awareness Metrics**
   b) **Engagement Metrics**
   c) **Conversion Metrics**
   d) **Client Metrics**

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Background

The escalation of management consulting services has been on the rise since 2011 as professionals are striving to remain competitive with new advances coming along. It is estimated that the consulting industry revenue will increase by 8%, which equates to approximately 18.3 billion dollars (Gartner, 2019). The industry revenue growth proves that Success 4 Higher Education LLC is in a growing industry will be able to penetrate, especially by innovative approaches.

The Success 4 Higher Education (S4HE) has built credibility and rapport over the years as the founders accumulated decades' worth of experience through their profession as higher education administrators and faculty (S4HE,2019). Thus, the S4HE partners can understand the client more than the average consultant. According to industry research conducted by Vault.com, with industry holding percentage and firm score McKinsey & Company (8.98%, 8,984), Bain and Company (8.74%, 8,738), and Boston Consulting Group (8.6%, 8,600) are the top three leading consulting firms. (Vault, 2019). Because they incorporate higher education consulting sectors, it was appropriate to analyze the firms as there is an abundance to learn from their work.

2.1 S4HE as a Consulting Firm

Success 4 Higher Education or S4HE is a private consulting firm dedicated to developing, mentoring, and nurturing leadership development in higher education. Consulting firms like S4HE provide well-educated professionals from colleges and universities across the nation. S4HE aims to provide the best guidance for an organization to maintain improvement upwards. S4HE empowers its clients to improve workplace culture, identify key opportunities in their organization, lead staff towards institutional goals, and much more through workshops, strategic initiatives, and coaching (S4HE, 2019).

Success 4 Higher Education articulately provides explanations of all the different types of offered services on their website. Essentially, the company's overarching mission is to help establish an influential culture amongst higher education faculty in the workplace. The firm focuses on transitioning periods from the faculty and administrators' level. S4HE aims to offer the most value on their website (Created on Wix) by giving a detailed scope of their services, which broken-down explores areas of focus; Leadership for Change, Leadership for Development, Assessment and Accreditation, The Workplace (Environment & Culture), Sponsored Research, Succession Planning, and Faculty Development. The firm's website describes each of these categories concisely. The "What We Do" diagram further explains each

area from the click of a button the main areas of service focus; Workshops, Consulting & Coaching, and Strategic Initiatives (S4HE, 2019).

The rising costs of colleges will pressure the institutions to keep innovating and investing in their organization. Possible investments may include higher education consultants, as they have a transformative role in helping organizations succeed. The above diagram of 'Business Coaching in the US', helps to visualize what forces are driving and acting on the industry. Upstream industries such as Book Publishers, Computer Leasing, Technology Innovations, and Office Supplies will help the industry to grow; Downstream buyers will come from the Colleges & Universities, Professional Organizations, Public Administration, and For-Profit Organizations that depend on the Business Coaching industry as they provide the buying power. Firms
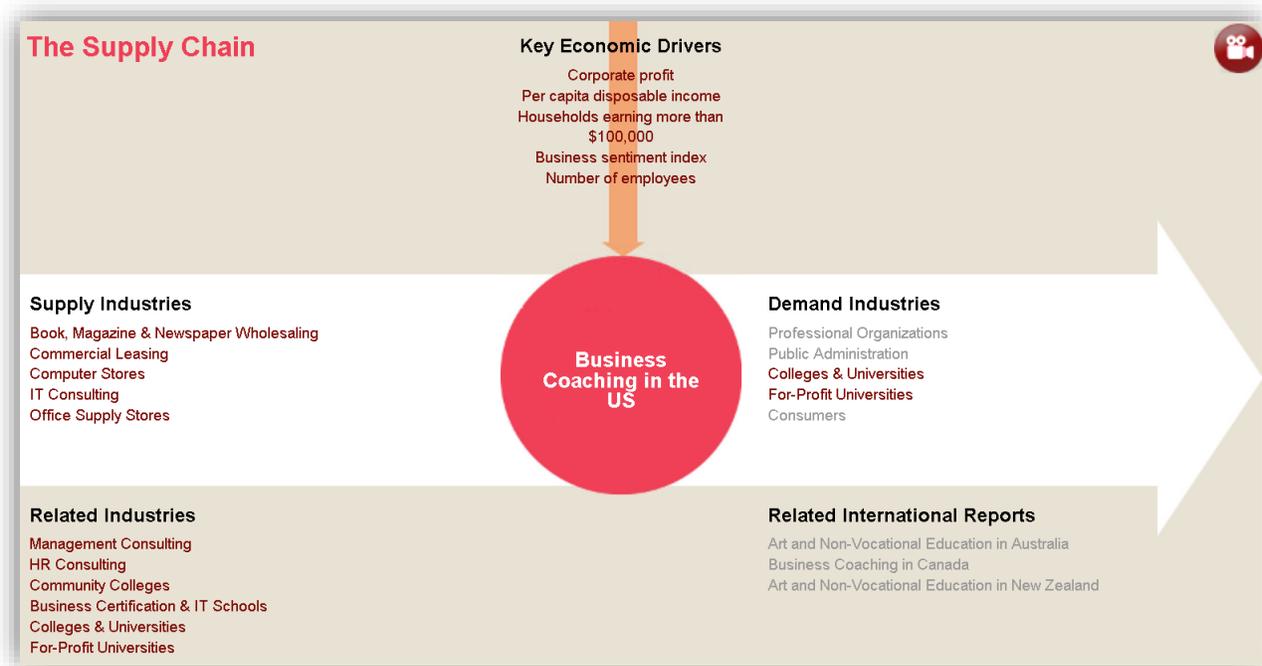

Figure 2 - Business Coaching Industry in the US (IBISWorld, 2019)

operating in the Business Coaching industry, like S4He, will offer growth methods for the downstream sector. The growth methods will consider: blended learning, an approach of online and traditional instruction; change management services, the process to empower employees to embrace and adapt to changes to the workplace; distance education, the education delivered in a non-physical and non-traditional manner that reaches worldwide; Lastly, webinars, were similar to distance education, webinars provide distance opportunities to join a presentation, lecture, workshop or seminar that is transmitted over the internet (IBISWorld, 2019).

The internet heavily impacted industries challenging organizations to adapt and alter current practices. Organizations ought to reacquaint themselves with the latest technologies and business practices to stay compatible (U.S. News, 2019). Consulting firms come into play by developing several sectors of expertise to meet desired results. The dynamic educational niche enables S4HE to focus on thousands of small to medium organizations to build relationships and rapport.

Education consulting firms, such as S4HE and Bain, are made up of professionals geared to developing higher education management. However, there is no easy path to become a consulting giant. There are many institutions, like the University of Michigan, Cornell University, and the University of Texas at Austin, that have publicly backlashed consulting firm, which brings me to this next question, why are public colleges and universities paying firms millions of dollars for their management ideas?, stated in article from the Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management (Watson College for Education, 2017). The opposition challenges these firms' credibility and efficiency of high education development, and it is a goal of this project to convey the real value of its implementation.

2.2 Higher Education Consulting Aspiring Competitors

The consulting/coaching is an uprising market as organizations across the world aim to enhance their employees' skills and work culture while improving client satisfaction and employee retention. This project analyzes three leading players in the market; McKinsey & Company, Bain and Company, and Boston Consulting Group, as they are the leading consulting firms in the United States (Statista, 2019). Each description begins with their opening statements on their landing page, and this is important to notice as the landing page provides the hook factor to increase website traffic and retention (HubSpot, 2019).

2.2.1 McKinsey & Company

McKinsey opens up their website by stating that if the Midwest were a country, it would have the world's fourth-highest GDP. 1This tactical maneuvering to appeal to the Midwest highlights the value they give to their roots, to the origins of James Kinsey founding the company back in 1926. While focusing in the Midwest, the consulting firm also state their involvement with a mix of companies and different sectors, such as healthcare, accounting, entrepreneurship, and education. Unlike other firms, McKinsey makes the extra effort to announce their civic duties as they help leaders on economic growth, job creation, and urban renewal (McKinsey, 2019). Regarding their educational sector, McKinsey focuses on enhancing the client experience by developing its tools and benchmarks, thus giving their clients a personalized experience to diagnose problems and generate solutions based on 600+ cases. The company has provided higher education consultations to more than 20 institutions, which has impacted 1.6 million students (McKinsey, 2019).

2.2.2 Bain and Company

As the industry leader across 32 sectors in 37 countries, Bain and Company have gained worldwide recognition. Omar Abbosh, CEO of Accenture, highly praised the company for its distinctive execution, "That combination of (our) huge investment in innovation capability and execution discipline makes us stand out from the rest." Throughout their existence, Bain and Company have built rapport among its clients, and just like Abbosh, they have been delighted with their investments.
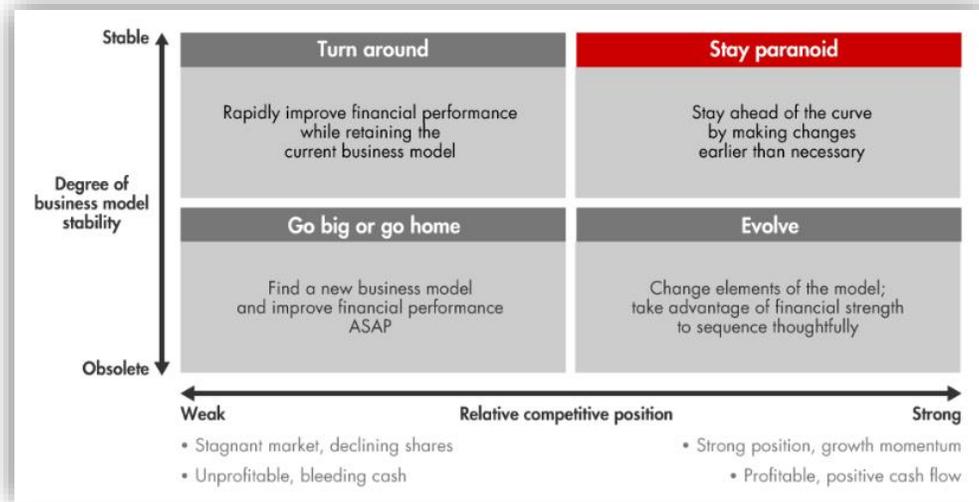

Figure 3- Baine and Company Business Model (Baine, 2019)

The above diagram shows where the firm sees its business model compared to its aspiring competitors, and we can resume that along with their innovations, Bain & Co takes risks before necessary with the goal to stay ahead in the market.

Bain and Company can be found across all social media platforms, and it even has its App. The website also provides ways the company could learn from their potential clients through short "quizzes" made up of two questions to identify why the audience landed on their business page. Their higher education sector places focus on the institution's core mission by redesigning the university model, examining operations, and analyzing organization governance (Bain, 2019).

2.2.3 Boston Consulting Group

Boston Consulting Group takes a similar approach compared to Bain and McKinsey as it spreads its focus on many sectors. However, they are a focus on the technology advancements of their consulting groups. The firm deems crucial that digital technologies are transforming every aspect of a business, so in order to keep pace, they offer various solutions to compete in each niche market. (DigitalBCG, 2019) The firm offers the latest digital technology and analytics to rewire organizations' environment and business operations; Personalization and Digital

Marketing, Next-Generation Sales, Industry 4.0, Digital Supply Chain, End-to-End Customer Journeys, and Digital Support Functions.

2.2.4 Industry Insights

Based on the ideas and experiences collected from these three industry giants, it is safe to say that they all have different tactics to face different customers that arrive with their unique problems. Nevertheless, there is an overall similarity they all share, which is digital innovation. These higher education and managerial firms dedicate outstanding work to thousands of clients from diverse backgrounds. To remain focus on productive activities, they need to allocate individual efforts that could either be automated or assisted by the computer. The firms share comparable approaches to collect data, such as tracking cookies, offering free PDFs, and collecting insights provided by how users interacted with the ChatBot. For a better understanding of the different sectors, these aspiring competitors have, please look at the Appendix section of this paper.

2.3 Social Media Marketing

Social Media Marketing is when businesses attempt to gain online recognition while generating new leads through paid and organic posts, blog content, videos, and more. By interacting with possible future clients, companies hope to capitalize on products or services. An estimate of 2.82 billion social network users with constant growth leading to a forecast of 3.09 billion by 2021 (Statista - eMarketer, 2019). Social media is an intriguing growing industry with continuous changes. However, there are downsides to consider; advertisement costs rise as competition grows from the increase in advertising agencies. Becoming mindful of the necessity to extend advertising budgets can prolong campaigns while increasing returns on investments.
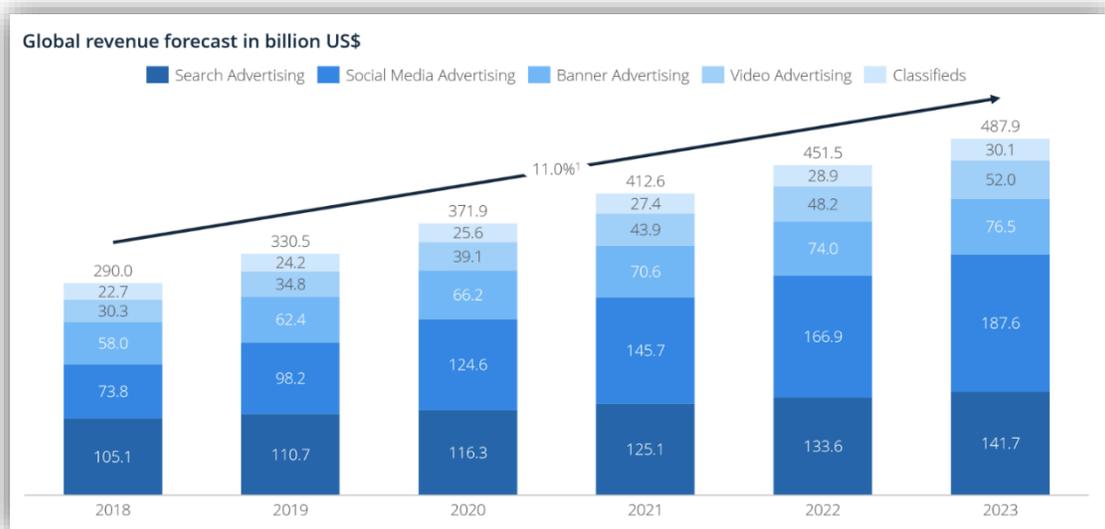

Figure 4- Global Increase of Digital Marketing Revenue in Categories (Statista, 2019)

The global revenue of online advertising is estimated to surpass by 400 billion dollars by 2021 and reach nearly 500 billion dollars by 2013. That is a total increase of 11%. Search advertising comes in various ways, as shown above. However, the most profitable yet growing sector is Social Media Advertising (Statista, 2019).

2.3.1 Social Media Marketing Platforms

Advertising has evolved tremendously. Going from the standard shipping out flyers through the postal office to individually marketing customized ads on social platforms where thousands of data points have been gathered on each user. Social media platforms are apps or websites that unites people and entities to connect in order to communicate online. These platforms could carry advertisements on websites, on photo-sharing applications, blog posts, video streams, and even email. Although the IQP focused primarily on the two social media advertising platforms professionals are most likely to use, as suggested by the advisor to explore LinkedIn and Facebook, other well-known platforms were also be mentioned, including Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, and Twiter. Although e-mail was mentioned, the project focused solely on social media platforms.

In 2003, Reid Hoffman launched today's trailblazer of professional social media, LinkedIn. In 2016, the popular website hosted about 467 million users, which grew to today's 630 million users – that is an increase of nearly 35% in the three years. LinkedIn is the hub where most professionals meet, socialize, and network to find new jobs (LinkedIn, 2019).

As Hoffman embarked on his entrepreneurial journey, young Mark Zuckerberg had just launched FaceMash, a web app where college students could rate each other. The application would compare to today's Tinder and Hot or Not. After a year gone by, and with the help of a few colleagues who would later plan to sue the billionaire, Zuckerberg created Facebook. From what started as a way for students to get connected and communicate, Facebook now connects billions of people and businesses in a single platform (Laco, 2010).

The use of the two platforms for online advertising can drastically change business, yet both come with its advantages and disadvantages. The project goes into detail in the recommendation section of what should be considered for S4HE business' practice, but it is essential to gain a previous understanding. Facebook offers numerous ways such as groups, markets, pages, pixel, and more than a business could thrive attaining leads. While LinkedIn offers some of these similar methods, it is not as effective as people have accepted Facebook as their hub as the Omni-channel for their digital lives. LinkedIn, however, is the center for all professionals, so it is essential to analyze how Facebook competes with a platform where marketers can easily find leads (Omnicore, 2019).
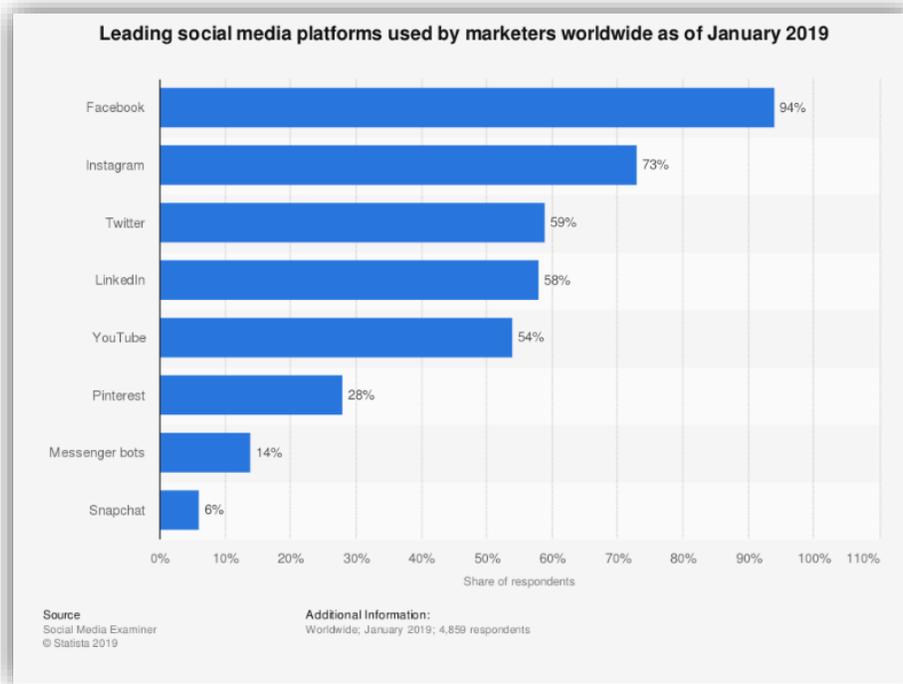
Figure 5- Social Media Platforms used by Marketers

A study held by Social Media Examiner found that Facebook is used by 94% of marketers as of January 2019. When compared to LinkedIn, that is a 36% difference (Statista, 2019). Facebook is the most popular interface marketers, and people of targeted backgrounds utilize. However saturated online advertisements are Facebook still holds the most users at any platform (Audience Project, 2019).

2.3.2 Search Engine Optimization

SEO is an ongoing process where search engines daily update page ranking. Each platform has different algorithms that rank websites according to keywords activity, traffic/demand, and relevancy. The algorithm considers the right keywords when ranking the page; in other words, it scrapes data from a website's database to obtain information such as title, header, content, and backlinks to inform the search engine how relevant ranking should be for the user. The example below shows the top three searches when "Higher consulting firms" were looked upon Google; the Header, URL, backlinks, and content wording are essential to analyze for SEO.

Nowadays, amateur content writers often over-optimize content by writing repetitive keywords saturating their blogs. They do this hoping to hack the SEO algorithm, leaving their blogs robotic and meaningless to the readers. This type of blog could potentially hurt as user traffic also play a part in the algorithm, and if users are turned off by the robotic content, then traffic would decrease.

Good content writers as the algorithm look for specific keywords when ranking the URLs so the search engine could help people find what they are looking for. An excellent website to use for keyword generation is Google Search Console, as it measures the user's website content. Google validates the user's ownership, so only website owners can have access.
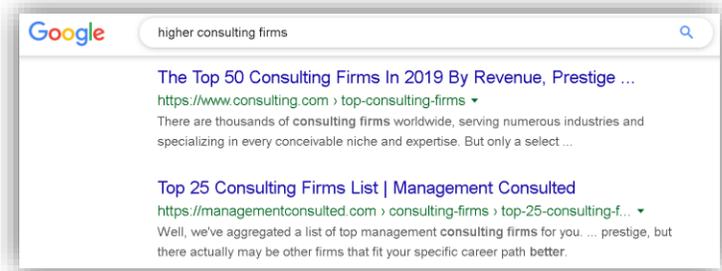

Figure 6: How SEO works to rank your page

2.3.3 Content Marketing & Engagements

According to a study done on 4,859 marketers, the top five leading benefits of using social media, in the percentage of answers, for marketing purposes are:

1) Increase Exposure (93%)
2) Increase Traffic (87%)
3) Generate Leads (74%)
4) Improve Sales (72%)
5) Develop Loyal Fans (71%)

Content marketing allows a business to expand its exposure, increase website traffic, generate leads, improve sales conversions, and develop an audience (Smith, 2019). Content marketing can be done through the means of posting articles regularly, either daily or weekly, has found keep customers and prospective clients coming back. Another version of content marketing would be posting videos to either a streaming site like YouTube or its website; these videos could be tutorials, live events, and other forms of giving value to the prospective client.

Marketers use engagements as the standard metric to measure the performance of an advertising campaign. Social media engagements are the likes received on a photo, comments left by a follower, and shared posts. The engagement interactions determine the firm's online traction in the market. As the company gains followers, organic engagement will support cost-effective lead generation.

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2.4 Marketing Tools

Numerous web third-party tools are eagerly waiting to be downloaded into computers with promises to deliver positive results, thus leaving a positive perception. However, many of these tools could be harmful to one identities and data privacy, "Of the 25 companies examined, only six have consumer services. Therefore, for the majority of third-party data collectors, there is virtually no chance users will have an awareness of data collection practices due to prior interaction with a service." (Libert, 2018). This project decided it was the best course of action to select renowned tools from well-known companies.

2.4.1 Google Analytics

A web analytics service offered by Google allowing business owners, website developers, and anyone willing to understand data collection, to further their business aspirations by making data-based decisions through advertising. According to Maram Naficy, Founder and CEO of Minted, the platform has optimized her art gallery marketplace resulting in a 400% revenue growth (Naficy, 2019).

2.4.2 Google Search Console

A search console website provided by Google that produces reports to measure data and traffic performance. Google Search Console analyzes search queries that bring users to the website along with user clicks and mouse positions. The tool also alerts the website owner of any issues so they can quickly fix them related to their content (Google Search Console, 2019).
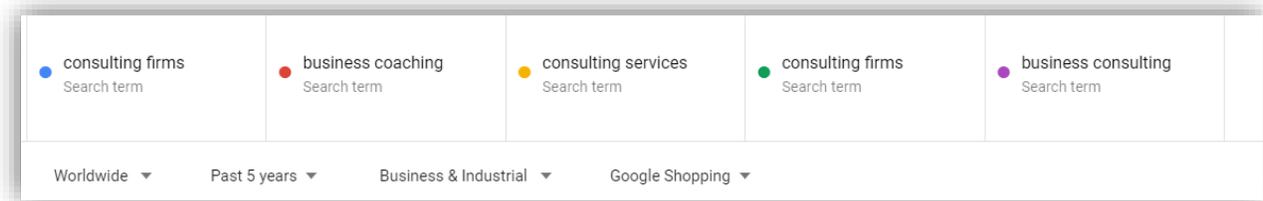
2.4.3 Google Trends

Figure 7: Google Trends allows comparisons between multiple keywords

A website hosted by Google that allows anyone to analyze the popularity of any keyword. The user can analyze up to five keywords are a time; this would enable them to make comparisons amongst them.
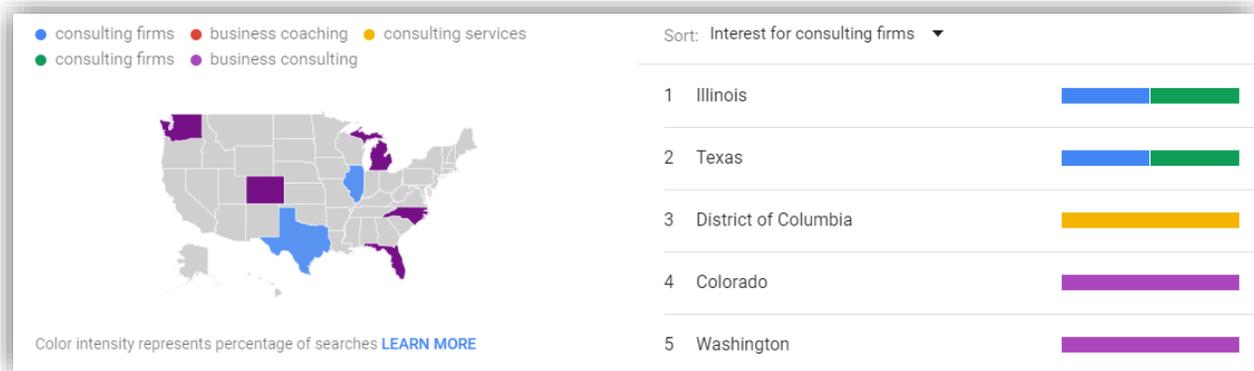
(This space is intentionally left blank)

Figure 8: Google Trends exploring national keyword use by state

Users can gain a broad view of the location (Country, State, and Cities) where the searched keywords are actively being used. The user can filter their search according to the worldwide search or nation-specific, time range, categories, and web-specific search (YouTube, Google, Image, and News). Google Trends also elaborates on sub-region, metro, or city-regions keyword performance. This tool could be handy to find what keywords are trending and where.

2.4.4 Ubersuggest

Ubersuggest is a tool created by Neil Patel, a renowned influencer in the SEO and online marketing community, which has over one million subscribers on YouTube. The engine uses the same technology driving GoogleAnalytics technology to scrape data found on websites. There are key sections the research utilizes; Overview, Content Ideas, and Keyword Ideas.

2.4.5 Cookies

Internet Cookies are codes stored inside a computer and browser engine that stores strings of information used for marketing and user security purposes, along with other reasons. Websites can learn from their users from a macro perspective. For example, the website can analyze all men, in the 46-60 age range, that clicked on the "Baby Clothing" section under "Categories." Cookies, in essence, are voluntarily user-accepted identification cards that lead to the customized website experience. All websites that incorporate cookie tracking are required to inform that cookies are being used so the user has the opportunity to reject their cookie policy. By rejecting the notice, the user may lose permission of navigating said website (Day, 2019)

Online cookies are stored in specific servers that computers and browsers request access in order appear locally. Cookies and privacy go hand to hand, so if a company would like to store cookies in a computer or browser, they will have to ask for permission (Federal Trade Commission, 2019).

2.4.6 Facebook Pixel

Facebook Pixel works hand in hand with internet cookies. Facebook inserts a code on the desired website to interact with the browser's cookies to attain the potential client's data. With Facebook Pixel, it is possible to target the prospect's IP address to pass on ads on Facebook's platform.

Since the prospective client visited the website by their desire, they are considered hot leads. Rather than having to acquire new "cold" leads, which could be costly, it is predominantly easier to convert a hot point into a client. Facebook Pixel is a powerful yet fascinating way to optimize budgeted marketing campaigns while maximizing conversion (Facebook, 2019).

2.4.7 Facebook Pixel Helper

Facebook offers a Chrome Extension to analyze any website to see if they use Facebook Pixels. This tool can be useful to identify what Facebook Pixel is collecting from the user's data and alternative accounts.
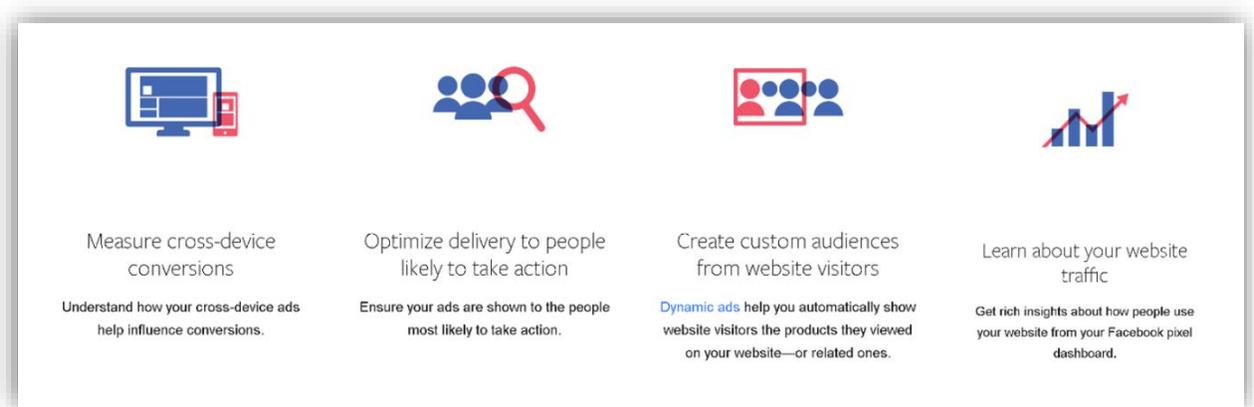

Figure 9 – The Scope of services Facebook Pixel Provides (Facebook, 2019)

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There are two ways for Facebook Pixel to collect data:

1) Custom events programed by a web developer.
2) Predetermined events set by Facebook

- Purchase
- Lead
- Complete a Registration
- Add Payment Information
- Add Item to Cart
- Add to Wishlist
- Initiate Checkout
- Search
- View Content

- Contact
- Customize Product
- Donate
- Find Location
- Schedule
- Start Trial
- Submit Application
- Subscribe

The predetermined events would help small businesses as they do not have to invest in any programmer nor expensive software. The pixel would collect thousands of data points so businesses can optimize their content even further. The data points would provide valuable insights to generate retargeting advertising campaigns that would drive higher conversion rates (Newberry, 2019).

2.4.8 SimilarWeb

SimilarWeb analyzes web traffic and key metrics for any website, including engagement and keyword usage. From website visits breakdown, geography performance, and incoming sources insights, it facilitates unattainable insights. With a single click, the competitor's websites could be completely revealed to analyze trends, performance, and much more data (Chrome Store, 2019).

2.4.9 WhatRuns

The tool allows users to 'Unravel' any website to see what features and tools they employ on websites. Using the tool, researching websites to see Facebook Pixel, Google Analytics, WordPress plugins, and others currently being used. WhatRuns helped the research analyze what tools are being used by any top competitors.

2.5 Social Media Strategy Risk Assessment

With data privacy awareness reaching its peak, governments are pushing back tech giants. Facebook and Google are infamous for mishandling private data, yet they are in an on-going battle with governments. The goal of these companies is to block all ad preventing software that constantly jeopardizes advertisement revenues. As mentioned by an e-Marketer, Paul Verna. "Ad blocking is a detriment to the entire advertising ecosystem… The best way for the industry to tackle this problem is to deliver compelling ad experiences that consumers will not want to block."(New York Times, 2019). Meanwhile, people are also installing these ad preventing programs to stop the distracting popups.

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Methodology

The project aims to explore the main aspects of how social media marketing can advance S4HE as a higher education consulting firm by researching social media platforms along with campaigns and tools used in the industry. The research started by gathering industry insights from aspiring competitors by collecting relevant ideas that would benefit S4HE. When we build the foundation, the study continued by analyzing reports and statistics found on the WPI Library Databases, which provided macro-level understandings. Then data was collected, cleaned, and interpreted to form recommendations. It is important to note the project focused on LinkedIn and Facebook platforms, aiming to define the most significant advertising campaign platform. Other social media platforms, like Twitter, Email, and YouTube, were discussed to support the recommended strategies. The survey reviewed usage patterns of how Facebook and LinkedIn interact amongst other platforms, different age groups, and genders collected from the questionnaire. Once the consulting firms and S4HE's brand identity are formed, then the development of the social media marketing strategy began. The goal of the project was to develop a social media advertising strategy for long term sustainability. The business model will only be sustainable when it collects, analyzes, evaluates, and make improvements plans based on the performance of the campaign.

3.1 Method One: To Determine Brand Identity and Intended Audience

The project identified the firm's audience by sending out a survey with questions seeking to compare the demographics found on reports and studies. Secondly, the project explored what platforms offered the best chance to expand the reach and increase brand equity based on research and survey data.

3.1.1 Identify S4HE's Online Objectives by Analyzing Aspiring Competitors Websites

The project examined websites belonging to the three leading competitor consulting firms. In the sites, the project dissected the top strategies and relevant content used to acquire new leads. The project used SimilarWeb and WhatRuns to analyze various website metrics to understand the competitor's firm's strengths and weaknesses based on online performance.

3.1.2 Database Research

Because Success 4 Higher Education operated solely on American grounds, foreign data from the research was irrelevant; thus, the project did not consider to form recommendations. As the online marketing industry evolves so rapidly, any statistical data before 2015 was considered outdated. However, older concepts and vocabulary found on secondary and primary sources did help further understanding of the advancements of the industry.

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3.1.3 The Survey

The survey questions target to collect patterns social media users have in their platforms according to their age groups and gender. The survey asks to identify gender as advertisement campaigns rely slowly on gender orientation, depending on what their goal is. The survey's overall intention is to determine who is the essential audience S4HE should target for rewarding advertising campaigns. This survey supplemented the research from databases to comprehend users at a deeper level.

Figure 11 - List of Survey Questions

Figure 10 - Project Survey

The questionnaire above reflected a similar structure as advertisement campaigns, both Facebook and Linkedin. The survey intends to analyze and obtain conclusions from a micro-level and macro-level standpoint. The micro-level conclusions would help select leads in a specific niche, for example, full time or part-time staff. On the other hand, macro-level conclusions would identify near to perfect models of demographics to use as a reference. An example would be advertising to men that use social media for shopping on Facebook.

The goal of the survey was to collect data anonymously to keep this a low-risk study, names and emails were not. The data the project seeks mirrors the standard social media advertising credentials, such as age range, identified gender, Interests, and Occupation. It is important to note, the reason the survey confined with to binary identifying genders was to reflect the advertising campaigns that heuristically provide detailed reports.

3.1.4 Data Cleaning

Conclusions were reached through careful analysis of the questionnaire. The project structure ensured consistency by cleaning any nonconforming data. This was done by formatting pivot tables, color coding, and sorting out the most relevant data gathered.

The survey intentionally asked, "What do you mostly use social media for?" in a short response format as there are various reasons to use social media. Then to clean the data, keywords and phrases were used to form categories; for example, 'Chatting,' 'Keeping in Contact,' 'Talking to friends and family' would be categorized as 'Socialize.'.

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Data cleaning included exporting the survey data into an excel file to transform into pivot tables, allowing the creation of pivot charts. Pivot charts are extremely informative as it encompasses all the data points into one visual. The pivot charts explored the relationship between the three top social media platforms and uses, age groups, and advertisements ratings. Any information that did not enhance understandings of the said relationship was scrapped.

3.2 Objective Two: Develop a Social Media Strategy

The Project determined five key points to implement in online marketing as well as into social media accounts. Research through database, survey, and websites provided clear direction towards what S4HE needs to do.

3.2.1 Determine Social Media Platform

The S4HE was analyzed through the survey and the database research to determine which targeted audience favorites social media platforms. The project evaluates the platform by comparing and contrasting the results.

3.2.2 Define Valuable Measurements

Social media advertising is dependent on various types of data collected from user interactions, which measure performance, such as engagement and brand equity. The project utilized research on the leading metrics used by marketers to analyze the online presence and advertising conversion rates. The metrics used were ongoing analytics, and campaign focused metrics on meeting S4HE's goals, such as client awareness, engagement, website traffic, and user preference.

3.2.3 Social Media Strategy

The projects used database research and content provided by social media expert websites to identify and monitor benchmarks. Including the best day of the week to post along with the best time. Insights were found through analyzing sectors of close competitors' sites, surveys, and database research. The project used the tools mentioned in the 'Market Tools' section, such as Google Trends and Ubersuggest, to find the best strategies and content S4HE could implement.

3.3 Objective Three: Evaluating Metrics and Performance

Measuring online performance is essential for a business' presence growth. It delivers a course with a vision where the firm utilizes to attain an online presence while improving its business model. The project will examine current metrics used by known websites, advertising leaders, social media influencers, and businesses that deal directly with online advertising. Metrics enable businesses to plan for sustainability practices and to create a continuous action plan to ensure scaling progress. The project explored different metrics found on various websites that helped determine calculated metrics. These methods can be found in the recommendation section.

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Results & Analysis

4.1 Determining Success 4 Higher Education's Online Objectives

The project aimed to analyze the competitor's business model but understand what is presently used, what is working, and how they are applying to the S4HE business model. The three leading firms in higher education firms dedicate outstanding work to thousands of clients from diverse backgrounds. Based on the ideas and practices collected from these three consulting firms' websites, it is safe to say that they all have differences and similarities.

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4.1.1 Bain & Company has brought 731.04 thousand visitors in the last six months, 32.36% being from the United States. The average duration of visitation was 4 minutes and 13 seconds as the user netted 4.16 pages per visit with a bounce rate of 50.89%. Their website brings 3.92% of its traffic through referrals, from websites like Handshake and News. Out of the 2.41% traffic coming from social media, 31.88% come from LinkedIn, 24.05% come from Facebook, 13.07% come from Twitter, 12.39% come from YouTube, and 5.76% come from VKontakte.

- Blog Content
- Client Results with Performance Indicators
- Contact Us Button
- Free Reports & Studies
- "Red Folder" – user-owned folder to store readings and reports for later use

- Share Button – Share through email or social media
- No Facebook Pixel, but found Cookies
- Customer Service Bot – To help customers find what they are looking for without needing to hire additional customer service employees.

Figure 13- Traffic Sources of Bain and Company
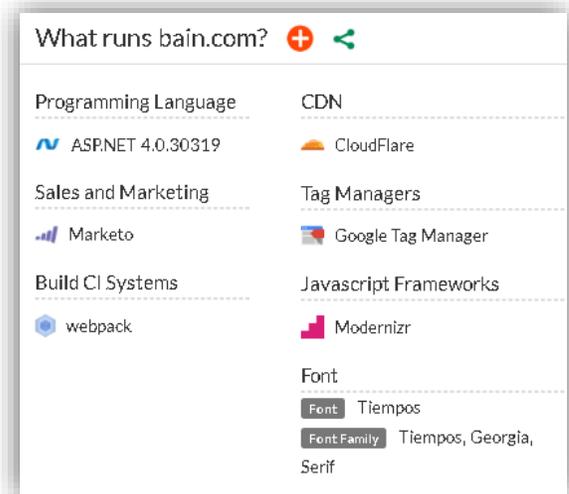
Figure 12- WhatRuns: Bain.com

4.1.2 McKinsey & Company has brought 4.01 million visitors in the last six months, 36.08% being from the United States. The average duration of visitation was 4 minutes and 34 seconds as the user netted 4.17 pages per visit with a bounce rate of 53.26%. Their website brings 7.75% of its traffic through referrals, from websites like Handshake and Ynews. Out of the 4.1% traffic coming from social media, 53.35% come from LinkedIn, 23.96% come from Facebook, 7.54% come from YouTube, 6.22% comes from Twitter, and 3.3% come from WhatsApp.

- Blog Content (Own Website, Forbes, World Economic Forum)
- Client Results with Performance Indicators
- Contact Us Button
- Cookies

- Free Reports
- Follow Us Button
- Facebook Pixel
- Search Bar

Figure 15-Traffic Sources of McKinsey and Company
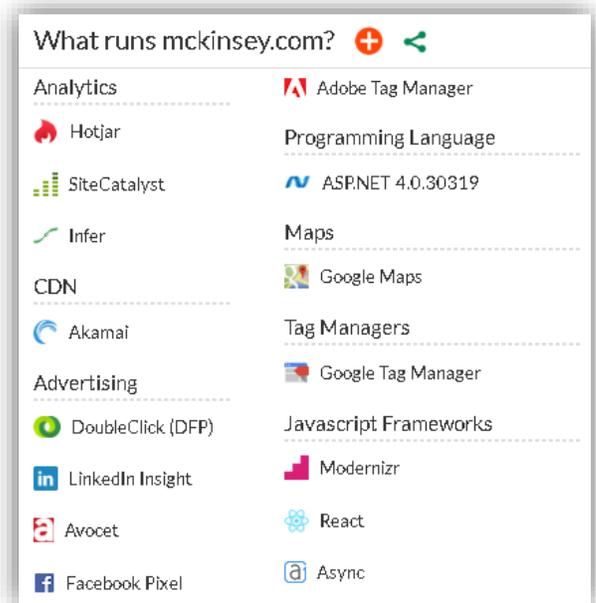
Figure 14- WhatRuns: McKinseyand Company

4.1.3 Boston Consulting Group has brought 1.36 million visitors in the last six months, 25.74% being from the United States. The average duration of visitation was 4 minutes and 48 seconds as the user netted 4.93 pages per visit with a bounce rate of 44.81%. Their website brings 11.28% of its traffic through referrals, from websites like Brightnetwork and GlassDoor. Out of the 4.2% traffic coming from social media, 41.58% come from LinkedIn, 32.37% come from Facebook, 8.61% come from YouTube, 4.93% come from WhatApp, and 4.60% come from Twitter.

- Blog Content
- Reports & Studies
- Login Page

- Facebook Pixel
- Search Bar
- Cookies

Figure 17- Traffic Sources: BCG.com
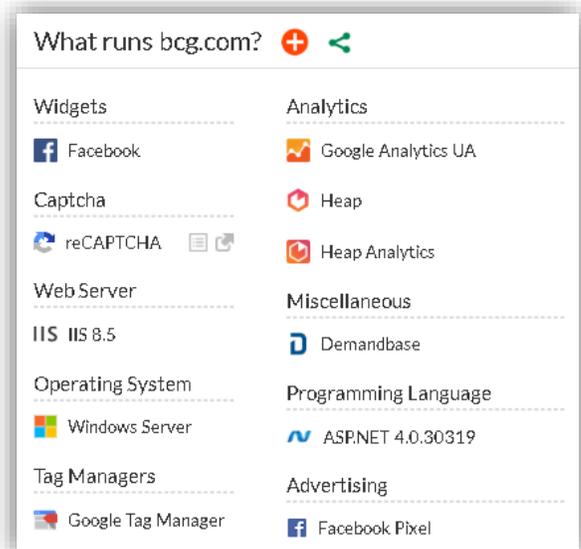
Figure 16- WhatRuns: BCG.com

4.2 Classifying Audience

To consider online advertising impact on gender, the project asked social media users to identify their thoughts regarding online advertisements. With a total of 126 responses, it was determined that 58.9% were Female, 39.5% and 1.6% preferred not to say.
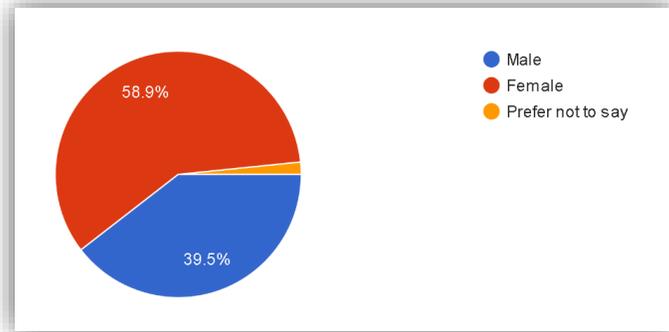
Figure 18- Gender Graph

The survey asked the survey taker to rate the helpfulness of online advertisements from 1 to 5, as one being the least and five being the most helpful. An average of all the answers concluded that women, more than men, are more likely to accept online advertisements.
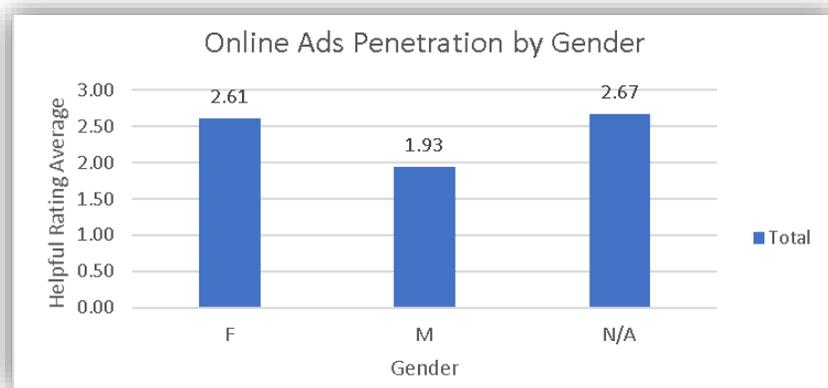
Figure 19- Online Ads Penetration Graph
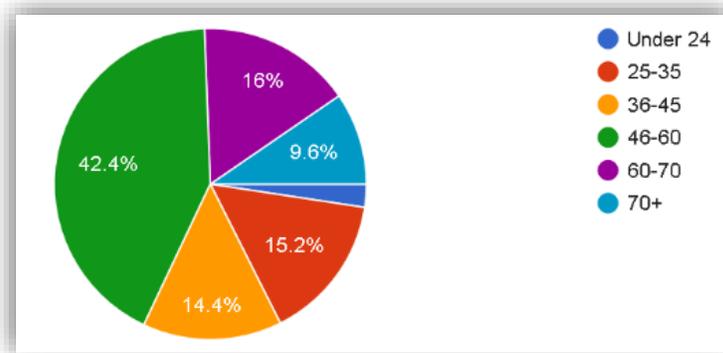
Figure 20- Age Groups

According to the survey, the target audience ranges from all ages, yet the group with the highest count was aged 46-60. This was no groundbreaking conclusion as people in higher education are more like to older according to ranking and experience.

4.3 Identifying the Preferred Platform

The survey conducted concluded that email was the account mostly reported by the users, yet Facebook is the prominent 'Social Media' platform used by our targeted audience. The survey found that the most active accounts held by the people surveyed in higher education were Email (103), Facebook (83), and LinkedIn (64).
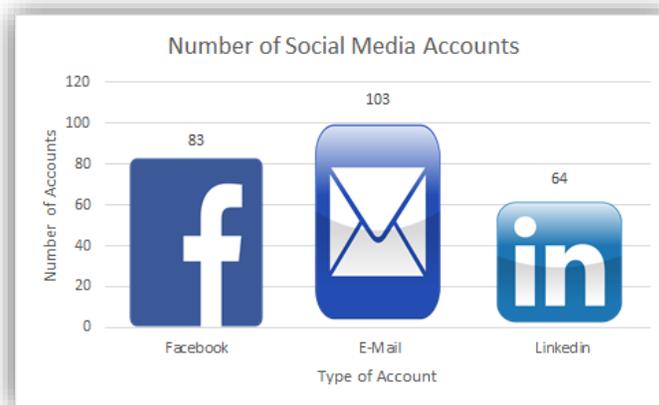
Figure 21 - Number of Social Media Accounts
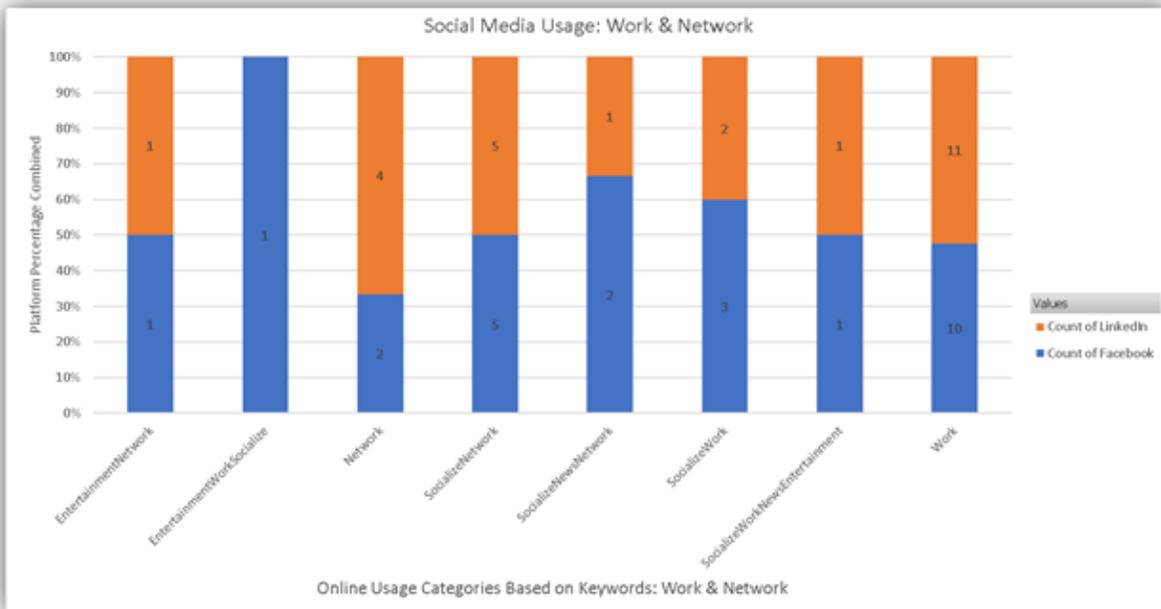
Figure 22- Social Media Usage by "Work" & "Network"

The survey provided insights, shown in the above-stacked pivot chart, between the relationship of Facebook (blue) and LinkedIn's (orange) professional minded. The survey question, "What do you use social media for?" unveiled that Facebook and LinkedIn users who answered "Network" and "Work" at finding at similar rates (Facebook 24, LinkedIn 25). When comparing only people that use social media for "Network", the results were even (Facebook 10, Linkedin 10). Lastly, people who use social media for "Work" are found at similar rates again (Facebook 15, LinkedIn 14). This chart concluded that Facebook and LinkedIn could be interchangeably used for advertisements to people who professionally use social media.

The graph reveals that Facebook users have similar rates of LinkedIn, Email, and Instagram accounts between 15-25%. Also, from the people in the age-targeted age group of 46-60, 25% of Facebook of them mentioned Email as a favorite platform. Across all ages, 18% of Facebook users mentioned E-mail as a preferred platform.
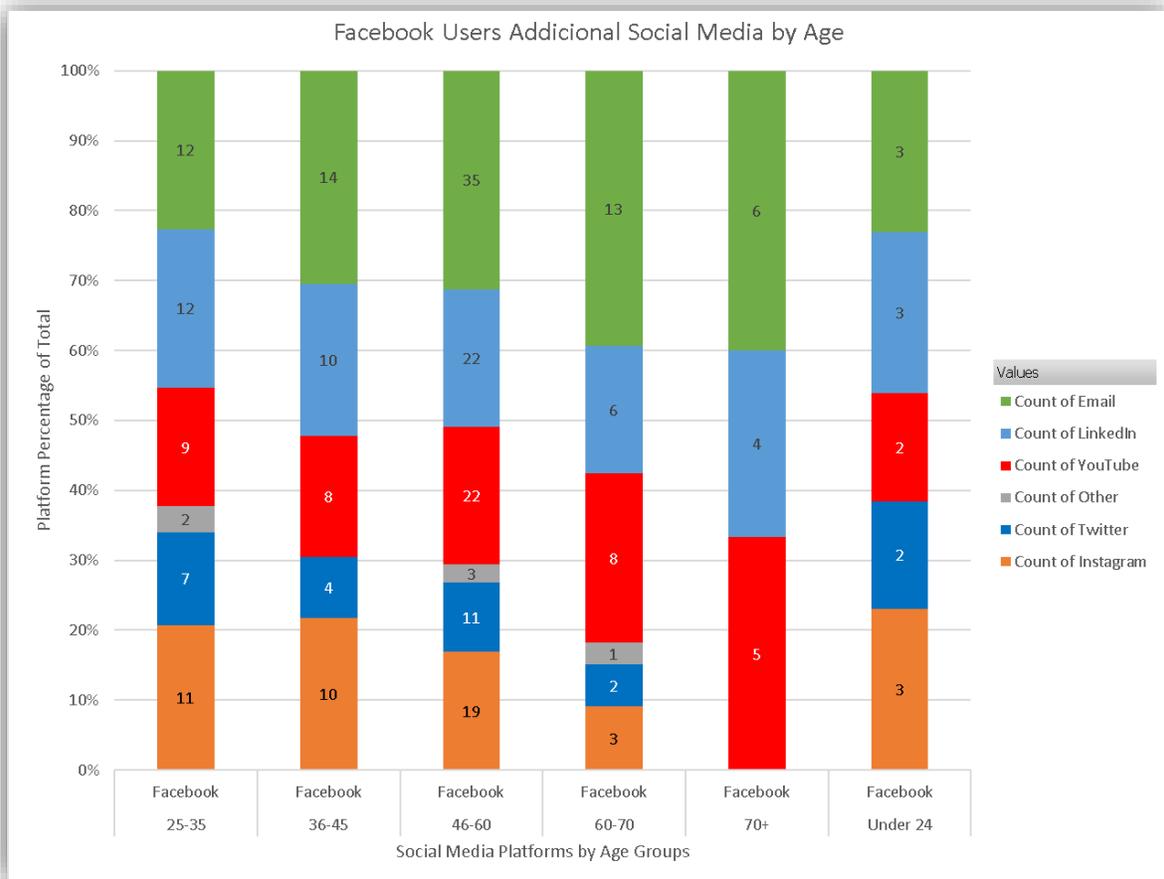

Figure 23 - Facebook Users Addicional Social Media by Age

4.4 Social Media Strategy Business Model

The project thoroughly research tactics used in the industry along with an extensive examination of online trends. The best five strategies the project came up with regarding social media marketing are the following:

4.3.1 Scheduled Postings

Consistency is the key to a sustainable business. While in the growing phases, people will need to hear and recognize the brand. Using online tools, the project found the best posting times to be the following:
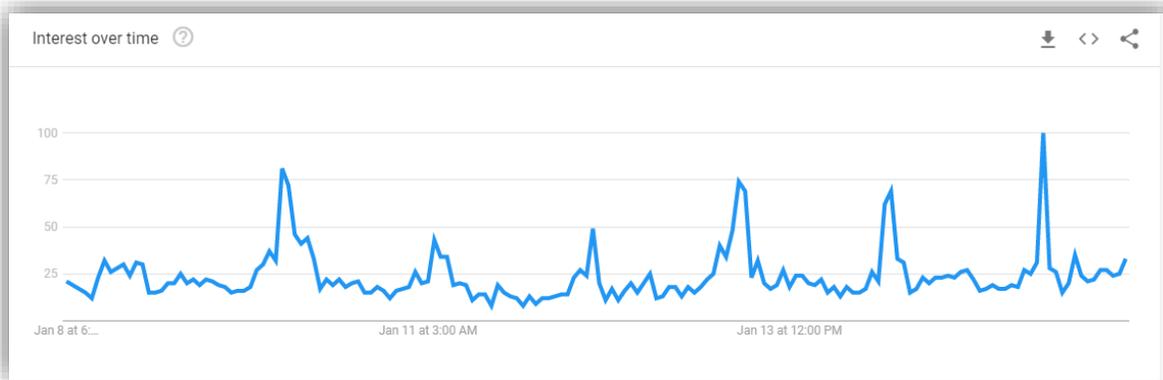
Figure 25- Between 4-5 PM, Google Trends, 2020
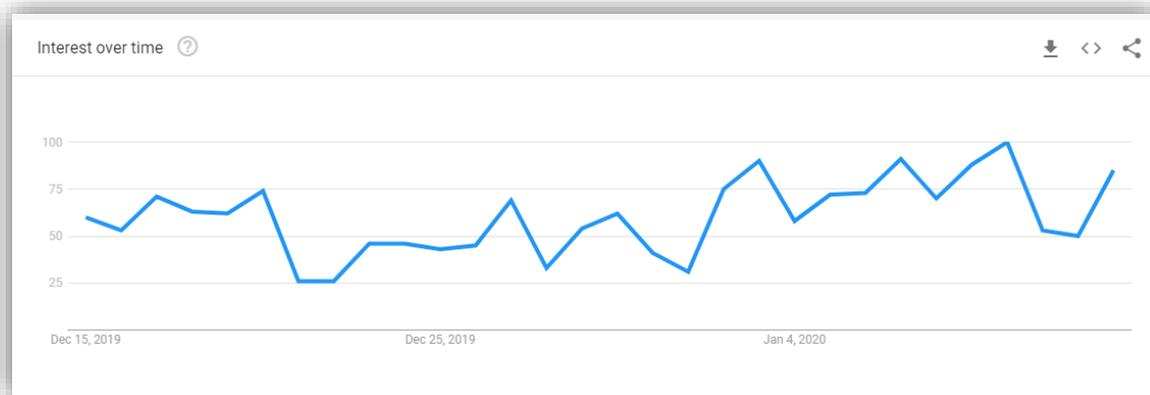
Figure 24- Mondays and Fridays, Google Trends, 2019

4.4.2 Listen to the Audience

Essential to monitor social media channels and see what the public's perception is, and this way, a business can gain key insights for a campaign. Impressions and engagement were found to be the most appropriate metric to use for expansion vigilance, as they are use to understand the audience.

4.4.3 Shout-Outs/Reach

Because certain online influencers already have an established relation with the audience, it is easier to user their platform while the organization's page islow on the radar.Getting shout-outs from recognized industry leaders could boost perceived credibility and encourage a growing audience to interact and trust the content.

4.4.4 Create Content

Create intriguing content, such as videos and webinars, or even free PDFs and even discounts for a product/service. The content can be generated by using trending keywords that reveal relevant keywords found by the audience. The project found to be the following keywords as the most used by the competitors under their higher education pages.
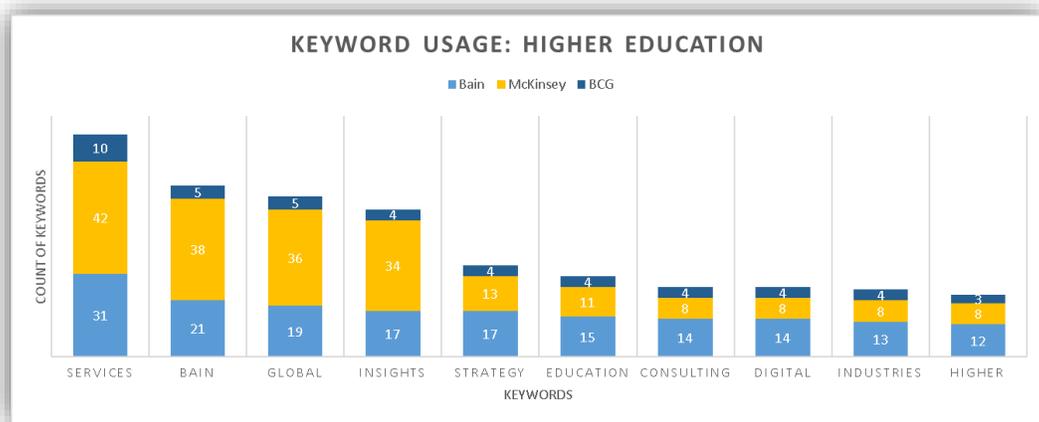

Figure 26 - Keyword Results

4.5 Sustainability & Growth Metrics

The result of browsing the web for the leading metrics used to measure performance online are stated below. The following were the spotted trends identified in every website, which after consideration of usefulness and relevancy, will be the metrics to recommend S4HE. Growth Rate, Average Engagement Rate, Reach, Cost-per-Click, and Cost-per-Impressions.

SalesForce – Leading Customer Retail Management (SalesForce.com)

- Brand Recognition and Lift
- Impressions and Web Traffic
- Customer Lifetime Value
- CPM (Cost Per Thousand Impressions)
- Spent
- Unique Impressions
- Unique Clicks
- Unique CTR
- New Leads
- New Customers

Neil Patel – Social Media Influencer, YouTuber (NeilPatel.com)

- Total number of Conversion rates
- Frequency
- Spend and ROAS
- Cost per Click (CPC)
- Click Through Rate (CTR)

Forbes – Popular Business & FIanace Maganize (Forbes.com)

- Reach
- New Followers
- Active Followers
- Likes
- Shares
- Comments
- Traffic
- Time
- Tools
- Ads
- Conversions

SproutSocial – Social Media Software Website (SproutSocial.com)

- Engagement
- Reach
- Impressions
- Facebook Referral Traffic
- Page Likes & Follows
- Video Retention
- Video Engagement
- Facebook Ad Metrics
- Click-Through Rate
- Cost per Click (CPC)
- Click per impression (CPM)
- Click per action
- Ad Frequency

HubSpot (HubSpot.com)

- Impressions
- Social Impressions
- Social %
- Clicks
- Social Clicks
- CTR (Click-Through-Rate)
- Social CTR
- Actions
- Action Rate
- Conversions
- Cost-Per-Conversion
- CPC (Cost-Per-Click)

Recommendations

Success 4 Higher Education will meet their business objectives once the firm implements the findings of this paper. Essentially, the firm ought to implement online tools along with an elaborate online penetration strategy to gain traction to compete with their aspiring competitors. The following recommendations would prompt S4HE to change their business model to acclimate to the fast-growing industry. It may seem unreasonable to think S4HE will compete with Bain Co. and McKinsey, but by using social media platforms and online strategies, their success is imminent.

- S4HE should host a webinar for their online followers that could not make it. Maybe access is granted to premium account holders.

- Increase web traffic by writing different blog posts weekly on:
    - Developing Culture
    - Faculty Development
    - Succession Management
    - Leadership Training

- Prepare a landing page to maximize client perception by using Facebook Pixel and marketing tools

- Increase/exceed session duration that reflects industry

- Gain 100 followers within the month of implementation, to exceed 10K followers yearly aggregate.

- Obtain membership in a crediting organization, like the Higher Education Consultants Association, HECA. The association helps small firms grow will sharing relatable values and morals to S4HE, "Guided by the core values of sound advice, integrity, respect, and confidentiality, HECA members pledge to act in accordance with the following Principles and Standards" (HECAonline, 2019).

- Use Facebook Marketing. Even though LinkedIn seems like the appropriate platform to use, it is a mere misconception. Professional users similarly found on both platforms, usage wise, but not in volume. Facebook still contains the most users on any platform.

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5.1 Facebook Marketing

Facebook Marketing could be easily set up with the surveyed data and tools we previously mentioned. The platform collects powerful data so we can use the recommended evaluating metrics to measure the campaign performance. The project recommends S4HE to implement a Facebook Marketing strategy by implementing the next few steps:

Figure 27- Deciding on an objective for Facebook Marketing
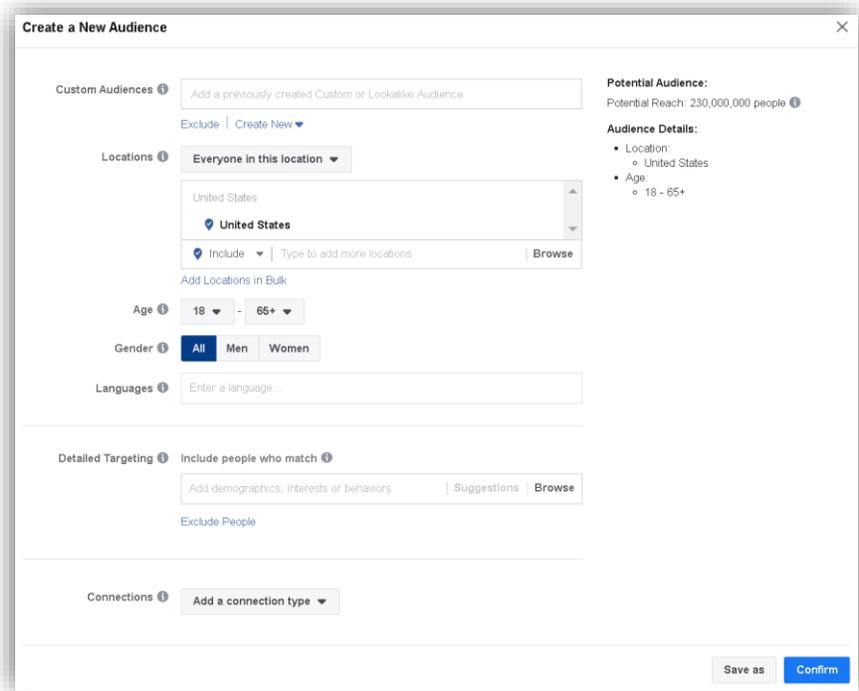
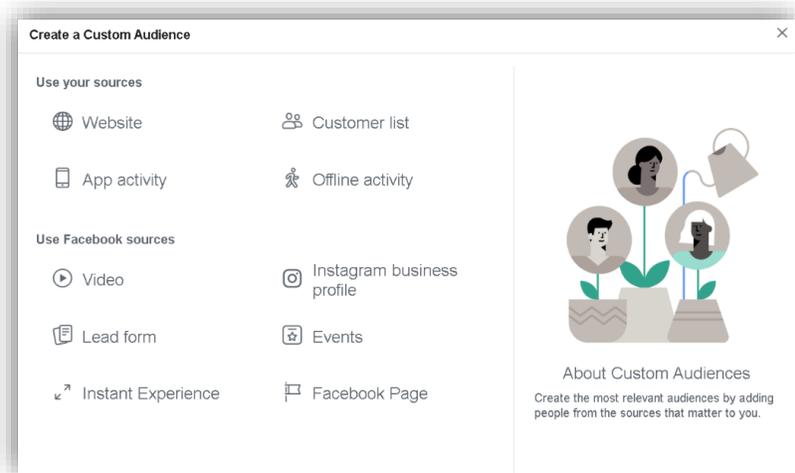*Figure 28- Create an Audience with the results gained from the survey*

Figure 29 - Deciding where to generate audience from, select pixel by entering your website

5.2 Evaluating Metrics

- Cost of Impressions

Total Dollars Spent on Advertisement / Total Ad Impressions	X	1000	Cost of Impressions per Thousand

The amount paid per 1000 impressions, or how much paid when people look at your post.

- Engagement Rate

Total Likes, Comments, & Shares / Total Followers	=	Avg. Engangement Rate

The rate of having people interact with your post, such as liking, commenting, and sharing. From this metric, we can conclude if people are accepting or rejecting your content.

- Cost per Click

Total Dollars Spent on Advertisement / Total Clicks	=	CPC

The most mentioned metric, CPC, or cost per click allows marketers to see how much it costs for one person to click on your ad.

- Reach

Total Number of Shares	X	Number of Followers of that Account	=	Reach

Brand recognition and reach were also mentioned numerous times on the findings, it serves to understand how many people are potentially listening to what you have to say.
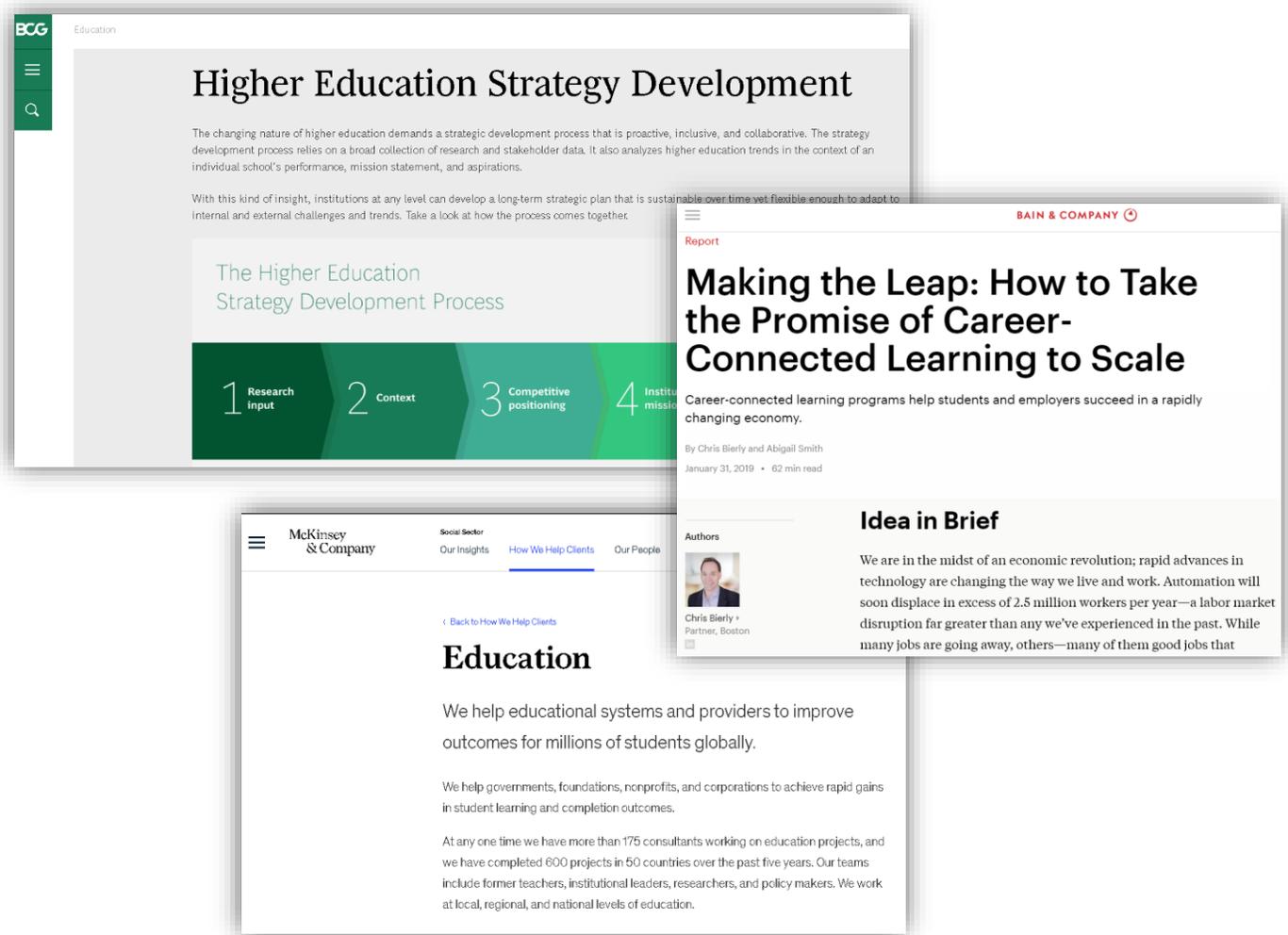
5.3 Content Creation

Figure 30- Content Creation: Blogs

As mentioned before, creating blogs as a form of content creation will allow S4HE to expand their audience to reach new clients and improve its brand equity. It is highly suggested to use the mentioned marketing tools to generate relevant keywords to rank up articles online.

Conclusion

Online marketing surely is not made for everyone. Only the dedicated and committed marketers will prevail in an era where millions are trying the industry as a get rich quick scheme, however, they are not ready for the exertion and complexities of running a successful business. Success 4 Higher Education LLC will conquer online marketing in the consulting industry by not competing with giants, but by creating a specific niche where it specializes the many years of experience. This project was an eye-opening experience that discovered how the average user is not aware of every detail that goes into their online experience.

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Appendix

Boston Consulting Group Sectors
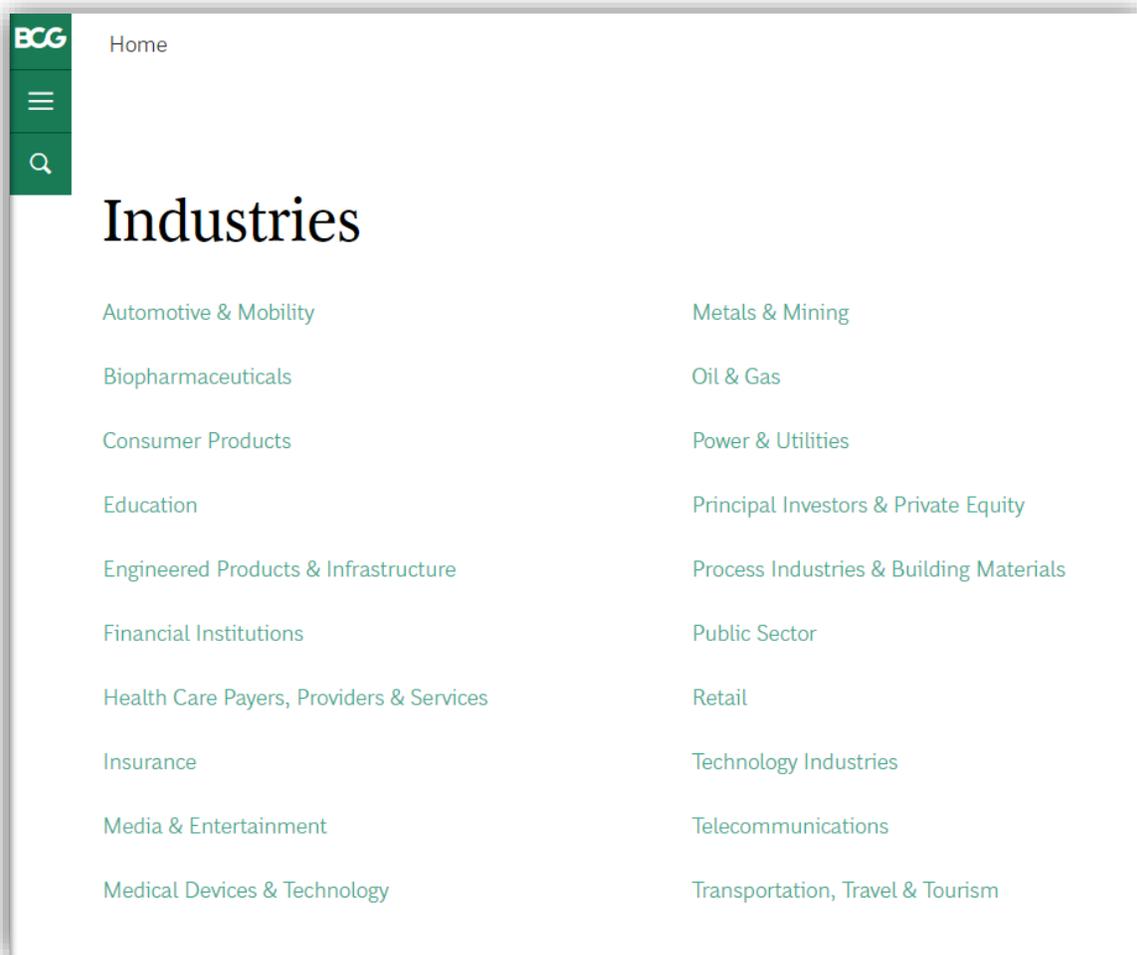
McKinsey & Company Sectors

Bain & Company Sectors