IHS Online Expansion in the Latin American Market

Final paper on placement assignment at IHS (Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies of Erasmus University Rotterdam)

European Studies

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Executive Summary

This final paper analyzes the reasons why the client, IHS, The Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies of Erasmus University Rotterdam, faced decreasing numbers in the Latin American students in the past few years. The scope of the research is to determine the internal and external factors causing this problem and to find the right path that the client needs to take in order to overcome this issue.

From the beginning of the research the cause has been concluded: the low visibility on the online marketing platforms in Latin America of IHS. The target has been clearly established as well: the post graduate Latin American students with an urban or architectural background.

As the overall internal analysis shows, IHS is actively making use of several popular online marketing channels and platforms, being present on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Study Portals, Blogs, websites, but promoting the general international context of IHS in the same manner to all the undifferentiated target groups, rather than focusing on each segment.

Moreover, the external analysis and interviews show how favorable the international study environment is for the Latin American students. There is an expanded demand coming from the target area to follow studies abroad. Moreover, there are a number of available funds and scholarships given over to Latin Americans, as well as governmental support for international co-operation. In addition, the technological developments are also in favor of digitalization. Therefore it is a flourishing marketing, advertising and promotional activity in the online sphere that has been developed by the recruiting marketers.

Online promotion in the Latin American market is seen as a very successful strategy, social media being the best channel to promote a study programme, develop customer relationships and attract Latin American students. Their interest is directed towards Facebook, Lifestyle Blogs and Articles, Scholarship informative websites and, because they favor personal contact, there is a high interest in Webinars, which offer the particular individual needs via the internet.

Therefore the comprehensive analysis demonstrates that the lack of applied marketing methods to the specific segment is the main reason why there has been lower amount of students coming from the target market as well as a lower online presence of IHS in the Latin American market.

Overall it was concluded that in order for my client to increase its online visibility in the target market and further on to reach the desired goal of having more Latin American presence among students coming at IHS, a number of online marketing strategies should be implemented. These consist of two Facebook campaigns, designed with Spanish content marketing, the implementation of Webinars and Facebook Live Streaming videos, the application of the remarketing strategy in the target market and the publication of blogs and articles focusing on different lifestyle themes describing life in The Netherlands.

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# Glossary of key terms

**Alumni** – IHS graduate students of the Master programme and short courses

**EUR**- Erasmus University Rotterdam

**EP Nuffic** - The organization for internationalization in education

**ELM-** Elaboration likelihood model

**IHS** - Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies of Erasmus University Rotterdam

**ISS**- Institute od Social Sudies of Erasmus University Rotterdam

**IMC**- Integrated Mareketing Communications

**LA**- Latin America/ Latin American(s)

**LA Market** – Latin American market

**NFP** – The Netherlands Fellowship Programme

**Self-Payers** – Students who pay the tuition fees by themselves, without any scholarship

**UMD** – Master programme in Urban Managemnt and Development

# Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to introducing the topic of the thesis, as well as the client, alongside with the brief, describing the problem the client is facing. Furthermore, the main research question will be presented alongside the sub-questions designed to solve the issue. Last but not least, the research objectives will be outlined.

## The brief

The client of the final project is IHS, the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam. IHS, as the name already points out, is the Institute which is specialized in the Urban Studies, dedicated to post-graduate students. The Institute offers a main Master Programme and several short courses, as well as specialized trainings and applied expertise in The Netherlands and abroad. Their goal is to “*improve the quality of life in cities”* (IHS, 2016) and to spread knowledge regarding urbanization, urban issues, like water management, slums or land management, which are just a very few examples of what their work spreads to.

Therefore, their purpose is to find the right students who can come and participate to the courses offered by them. In order to reach their prospect students, the Marketing Department is in charge with the recruitment methods and promotional activities. Even though most of their target countries are successfully reached, there are still a few areas where IHS’s presence can be improved. The problem that the client wishes to resolve is the effective recruitment of more Latin American students, especially self-payers, which in the recent years was not so successful, “*the number of Latin American students decreasing significantly”*. (Yordanova, 2016)

## The problem and advice question

After the preliminary research that was done, after discussing the problem with the client, as well as after refereeing to some research that myself, as a previous intern for my client, already conducted, the main issue was defined: the insufficient presence of IHS on the Latin American market and the small visibility of the client on the online platforms in the same market area. Therefore, the main goal of the project is to find out a good strategy in order for the client to increase its online presence in the market. Moreover, different ways of creating a bond with the Latin American Market should be developed, in order to raise awareness about IHS in the wished market, so they can start attracting and recruiting more and more Latin American students. After concluding all the above mentioned, the advice question from the client was: how can IHS Erasmus University Rotterdam become more present on the Latin American market, specifically in the online area and how can they attract more LA post graduate students, especially self-financed students.

## Research questions

After the discussion session with the client and after defining the problem, the main research question and sub-questions were designed, in order to proceed with the natural going of the research, in an organized and coherent manner.

Therefore, the main research question of the project is:

* How can IHS Erasmus University Rotterdam improve its online presence to increase the enrolment and recruitment for self-financed students from Latin America?

After designing the main question, a number of sub-questions emerged from it, in order to get more in-depth about the topic and separate all the different stages of the research into a coordinated manner. These are:

1. What is IHS and what is the current situation of the company?
2. What is the target market of IHS Erasmus University Rotterdam?
3. What are the current marketing channels that IHS is using to recruit self-financed students and which of them are the most accessible and reliable channels?
4. What is the current online reputation of IHS regarding marketing recruitment channels?
5. How can IHS become more attractive for the Latin American market?

## Research objectives

The main objective of the final project is to find a proper and feasible solution for the client, which would come in the form of a marketing strategy that would hopefully have a positive impact on the growth of the Latin American students at IHS. Moreover another huge objective is to reach towards obtaining the desired outcome regarding the expansion of IHS’s presence on the online platforms from the Latin American Market and the success of their promotional tools regarding the recruitment of LA post graduate students.

## Research limitations

During this project I encountered several limitations. First of all, the biggest limitation was not having enough time in order to cover as many areas which needed to be researched as I wished in the beginning. Therefore, the time dedicated to shaping this project was quite short, starting the official research on the 3rd of April 2016, after the subject being approved by Final Project/Dissertation Committee and having as a deadline 26th of May 2016. However, before starting this project, I was already familiar with the environment at IHS, by working there as an intern for six months. Perhaps if the time would have been longer, I would have gained even more in-depth information about my client’s problem and arise with even more detailed implementation strategy. Secondly, the number of IHS alumni and students that I reached could have been higher, but, again, because of the short timeframe I had to balance the field research with the desk research, in order to combine the right amount of information found in both sides. In addition, other limitations were having a narrow focus on the target market, which is Latin America, as well as focusing striclty on the improvement of the online presence of my client. Moreover, the target was also limited to attracting more self-payer students. Last but not least there was no vacant budget for my research, therefore I had to reduce the amount of travelling, especially for meetings with the client, phone calls and other research tools, due to cost limitations.

# Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

In order to understand the conceptual dimension of my client’s problem and to arise with valuable strategies to overcome the current issues, a number of strategies, theoretical models and concepts were analysed. Before shaping the situation of my client and finding solutions towards the existing problems, these theories were needed, in furtherance of having an overview of the theoretical background appointing possible answers, current trends regarding the management of my clients issue, conceptual aspects and theories beneficial to understand and overcome the current situation of IHS’s designated problem.

* 1. Integrated Marketing Communications

According to the BusinessDictionary.com the IMC or the integrated marketing communications are “an approach to achieving the objectives of a marketing campaign, through a well coordinated use of different promotional methods that are intended to reinforce each other”. (Business Dictionary) Therefore, the marketing communications represent a crucial concept in the marketing field. Moreover, the marketing communications concept aims at providing the right information to the customers and raise awareness among them, convincing and developing desire for the products at some extent, and emphasize on the products over and over again. (Copely, 2004) Furthermore, Copley argues that while mass-communications usually reach a high number of people, they might not always be as efficient as wanted. Here we can recall the online promotional activities and campaigns which reach huge audiences, but sometimes do not receive the interest wanted from the marketers, as well as the message sometimes is misunderstood or unclear. However, Copely states that a better strategy can be the “personal communication” which disregarding the higher costs, have “*the opportunity to better get the message across”* (Copely, Marketing Communications Management, 2004) In addition, by using the personal approach, there is a better chance of “*a dialogue with fast and accurate feedback and...a move towards ‘narrowcasting’ rather than ‘broadcasting’ in all media forms”* (Copely, Marketing Communications Management, 2004).

Furthering the research, another important aspect of the IMC concept is learning the customer’s preferences regarding the ways of communication. By knowing how they like to be approached, would make it easier for the marketers to communicate to them in a more effective manner. Therefore, regarding the customers, *“it has to be ensured that they receive the appropriate news and information via their preferred channels”* (Sheth, 2012)*.*

Moreover, in order to provide the right promotion and to send an accurate message about your products, an important aspect for the marketer should be *“market segmentation*” (Dahl, 2015) Therefore, by segmenting and targeting, the marketers have the opportunity to send the exact marketing information, dedicated to a specific, differentiated target group. Argued by Copely, another tool, not to be underestimated, should be the “*word-of-mouth*” (Copely, Marketing Communications Management, 2004) strategy, which could be integrated in the information to be sent out to each segmented target group.

## Relationship Marketing Theory

The relationship marketing theory, as the name states, refers to the establishment, development and the preservation of relationships between companies and their customers. According to Robert Palmatier “*sellers and customers are becoming more interested in conducting business transactions embedded within relationships*” (Palmatier, 2008). Moreover, there is a clear view in the professional environments that trustworthy relationships between parties are always more beneficial and productive for both sellers or marketers and for the customers. Thus, the customer relationships are very closely maintained by the marketing departments nowadays. Moreover, according to Sheth, Parvatiyar and Sinha “*the use of relationship marketing tactics can ensure developing and maintaining strong, lasting relationships*” (Sheth, 2012) between consumers and organizations.

Moreover, another important tactic in the relationship marketing theory is understanding the customer. (Palmatier, 2008) With other words, it is very important that the firms and organizations research their target market carefully, in order to get a better insight into their customer’s needs and wants. By doing so, they can apply successful strategies, which would create the wanted customer relationship. In addition, Morgan and Hunt affirm that “*presence of relationship commitment and trust is central to successful relationship marketing, not power*.” (Hunt, 2012) Therefore, having the focus on building strong relationships with the customers can only be a beneficial action.

Furthermore, according to Palmatier “*interpersonal relationships have a stronger effect on customer behavior and financial performance than do interfirm relationships*” (Palmatier, 2008). On the other hand, there are a number of affirmations that argue with the precise application of this theory. For example, according to Sheth, Parvatiyar and Sinha “*the conceptual foundations of relationship marketing are not fully developed, and it cannot be regarded as a separate discipline”* (Sheth, 2012). Moreover, by referring to such a personal matter, building relationships, the theory offers space for interpretation and freedom to each marketers own personal professional action styles. Last but not least, among other disadvantages of relationship marketing, the fact that there is no common foundation of the theory, as stated by Hougaard and Bjerre, can influence the application of it in a negative way. (Hougaard, 2004)

## Social media Marketing

There are many theories arising regarding the social media marketing and online marketing. These are specifically targeting the millennials, but not only, who are now in touch with all the new technologies and who have access to information 24/7. Therefore, the increased preference of marketers towards this type of promotion are quite obvious. Among the most important strategies and theories found about online marketing, we can name the Network Theory, Collective Intelligence, Generational Theory, Frequency Illusion, Paradox Of Choice and the Information-Gap Theory.

* **Network Theory**

This theory analyses different types of network connections and social networks, which are seen as a tool in order to discover patterns which evolve inside these networks and their influence on the social behaviours of the people connected to these networks. According to Daria Kelly Uhlig “*digital marketing channels such as Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare and Groupon are useful in this regard, as they allow marketers to listen to what consumers are saying, and they allow marketers to leverage the power of influential users to spread messages throughout their networks”* (Uhlig)

* **Collective Intelligence**

This theory suggests that groups of people are more powerful, work smarter and are more productive as a whole rather than as acting separately or on an individual basis. Moreover, Uhlig affirms that “*the Internet phenomenon known as crowdsourcing, in which projects are broken down into small, individual tasks that are distributed to a large number of individuals for completion, has collective intelligence at its roots”* (Uhlig)There is an increasing trend nowadays among marketers to involve the customers into their campaigns and therefore, to create some sort of special relationships with them, by making their customers feel as a part of the marketing processes. Moreover, the CEO of the crowdsourcing company Zooppa, Wil Merritt suggests how important it is that “*marketers keep their crowdsourced campaigns simple and very specific, as things can spin out of control quickly once the campaign goes viral”* (Wasserman, 2011)

* **Generational Theory**

The generational marketing theory describes how consumers coming from the same generations are likely to share similar attitudes and behaviours, because of the age association, which represents the fact that a certain, same-aged group of people have lived common situations during childhood and which afterwards affected their views and beliefs of the world. This theory relates strongly to the digital marketing. It is very relevant to see how a certain generation acts online, what pages they visit, and how can marketers reach to them. According to Uhlig, there were plenty of studies done regarding the online behaviour of different generations. One of these studies was executed by Pew Internet, who reported that “*millennials, who are 18 to 33 years old, are most likely to access the Internet wirelessly*” (Uhlig) while “*generation X, on the other hand, who are ages 34 to 45, are more active than millennials in such activities as researching financial information*” (Uhlig). Therefore, by applying this theory, marketers can differentiate their targets and promote their products effectively to different groups by using different tools.

* **Frequency Illusion**

The frequency illusion, also know as Baader-Meinhof Phenomenon, is the concept of smartly promoting a new product by showing it once to the customers and then influencing its appearance to the market repeatedly, using different tools and online platforms. According to fatmedia.co.uk “*when developing a content marketing strategy, you should aim to create integrated campaigns*” (fatmedia, 2015) With other words, when establishing a product or a service, a marketer should always multiply the content throughout other websites and platforms, in order for the customers to feel the frequency illusion.

* **Paradox of choice**

In the marketing world, offering your customers the freedom to choose is an encouraged strategy, because of the fact that the customers will feel respected and will believe that they have full power over their decisions towards a product or a service. According to Barry Schwarz, during one of his speeches on TED Talk, he suggested that “*providing consumers with a limited range of choices has psychological benefits because it reduces anxiety for shoppers*” (Schwarz, 2005) Therefore, it is smart to offer a limited amount of choices or information to the customers, in order not to overwhelm them and to persuade them in consuming your offerings.

* **Information-Gap Theory**

In 1994 George Loewenstein created the information-gap theory. This theory represents the actual information that a person has combined with the desired information that the same person is missing. Therefore, gap is created. The marketers can use this as a strategy in order to create interest among their customers, by designing interesting headlines, which would captivate the attention and leave the customers wanting to learn more about products, services, ideas etc. Moreover, according to Loewenstein “*curiosity reflects a desire to close information gaps”* (Loewenstein, 1994)*,* which only states that creating curiosity among customers can only be a beneficial strategy for the marketers.

* **Persuasion Theory**

According to Simons persuasion is the “*human communication that is designed to influence others by modifying their beliefs, values, or attitudes*” (Simons, 1976) The marketing environment, thus marketers, make use of this practice in order to achieve their goals and attract their desired targets. The messages sent are therefore designed to modify, shape and impact the minds of the target groups to think how the marketers wish them to think.

Among the most outstanding theories that relates to persuasion is the likelihood model. According to sagepub.com, “*the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) views persuasion primarily as a cognitive event, meaning that the targets of persuasive messages use mental processes of motivation and reasoning”* (sagepub)Therefore, these theories regarding persuasion are actively influencing the marketers to adopt and implement marketing strategies based also on persuasive content and materials.

## Infomercials and advertorials

The infomercials and advertorials have gained terrain in the past few years, becoming a very popular promotional marketing tool. According to the businessdictionary.com, the infomercials are basically promotional programmes offering information regarding products. The “*feature-program length (usually 15 to 30 minutes duration) commercial presented more as a talk show than a promotion. Aired normally at fringe times (late night to early morning), infomercials aim at building awareness of a product or service by demonstrating its use and benefits*.” (businessdictionary) The advertorials, have the same aim as the infomercials, just that instead of being a promotional programme, these are printed-materials, such as flyers or brochures. This forms of advertising seem to raise awareness and capture interest, which is why there are among the most used marketing and promotional tools.

# Chapter 3: Methodology

In order to advance with the project and to progress towards the designed goal the research methods were established from the start. The preliminary methods were set firstly. The first method selected was the desk research. This method consisted firstly, of analysing documents and reports provided by the client, in order to understand the current situation of the company and to get more in-depth information about the current campaigns and promotional activities that IHS applies for different markets. Secondly, further desk research regarding IHS’s online reputation was conducted, in order to understand the strong and weak points of the client’s online presence. Thirdly, several other reports of the Nuffic Nesso offices are analysed in the report for my client. Last but not least in order to provide good answers to the questions formulated and to develop a valuable marketing strategy for the online presence of IHS in Latin America, a series of theories were followed. The theoretical basis was actually a very important part of the research and of the project, because it broadened the perspective of the different marketing terms and strategies existent, creating a ground for the expertise that can be applied in the particular case of my client.

Furthermore, in order to obtain more qualitative results, field research was required to be conducted. The field research was a vast experience, being the support in getting very specific information about the existing issue, the current situation of the company, the methods used by the client in order to reach its target market and what sort of resources do they have for the promotional tools for their desired outcomes. Therefore the first field research method applied was conducting interviews with professionals in the field. Four interviews were conducted throughout the research process, first with Marcela Chavez, Nuffic Neso officer in charge of the online promotion of “Study in Holland” program to the Latin American market, the second interview with Desislava Yordanova, marketing officer at IHS Erasmus University Rotterdam, the third interview with Monserrat Budding-Polo, IHS representative for the Mexican Market and the fourth interview with Darren Baradhan, current marketing officer at ISS, one of IHS’s competitors. The findings acquired during the interviews were afterwards combined with the findings that I already acquired during my internship of six months at IHS, time during which I was able to observe and gain plenty of insight into the actual matters and concerns of my client, especially regarding the actual research topic. Moreover the content coming from a focus group that I together with a colleague conducted during my internship is also used in the report. Moreover, information that I received during several unofficial discussions with my supervisor, Sarah Steendam, the head of the Marketing Department at IHS, made it possible for me to follow up with other valuable information and leads to follow in order to reach the goal of the project.

However, because of too many methods selected in the beginning, some of them proved to be unnecessary. Therefore the idea of designing a questionnaire was removed. Moreover by not having access to previous questionnaires, forced me to renounce to this method . Moreover, also the idea of conducting a new focus group with the IHS current students was declined, due to the overwhelming schedule of the students. However, having access to the previous focus group regarding my topic, mentioned above, which I took part in during my internship, having as attendants the IHS Ambassadors, who are current students of the Master Programme, as well as, most of them being self-payers, was more than enough in terms of gathering the necessary information.

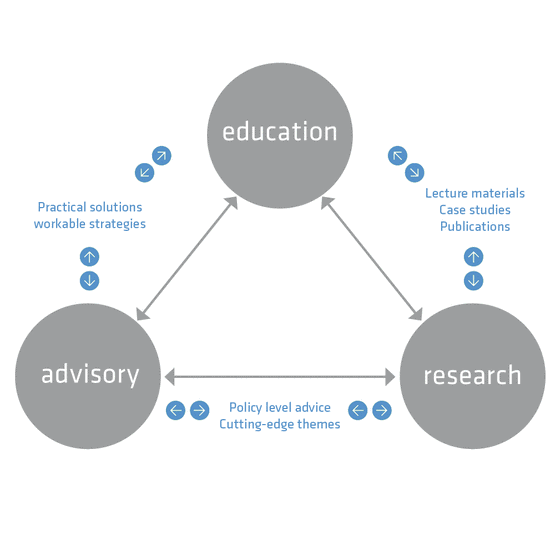
# Chapter 4: Situation Analysis

This chapter will contain relevant information regarding the context of the previously established problem of the client. In order to understand the reasons of the problem and to start designing solutions, an analysis of the client’s environment will also be provided.

* 1. Micro environment

In the micro environment the corporate identity ,as an organization, of my client is researched.

IHS Erasmus University Rotterdam is, as stated in the brief the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies, dedicated for more than 55 years to bettering the life in the cities and mentor urban professionals to accomplish this goal. According to my client, IHS, their “*mission is to develop human and institutional capacities to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life in cities”* (IHS, 2016)*.* Their approach is offering post-graduate studies and programmes to the interested young professionals. Therefore, besides offering a Master Programme in Urban Management, they also offer short courses and other trainings, as well as a PhD programme. Moreover, they also provide advisory services, worldwide, having as a focus, the underdeveloped countries, such as African countries, Indonesian, Indian and so on.



**Figure 1**

(IHS, IHS to the core)

Moreover according to my client, “*IHS education, advisory services and research all revolve around six main thematic areas*” which can be seen in the graphic below:

http://www.ihs.nl/uploads/RTEmagicC_mfui_02.jpg.jpg

http://www.ihs.nl/uploads/RTEmagicC_uhl_02.jpg.jpg

http://www.ihs.nl/uploads/RTEmagicC_uecc_02.jpg.jpg

http://www.ihs.nl/uploads/RTEmagicC_usp_02.jpg.jpg

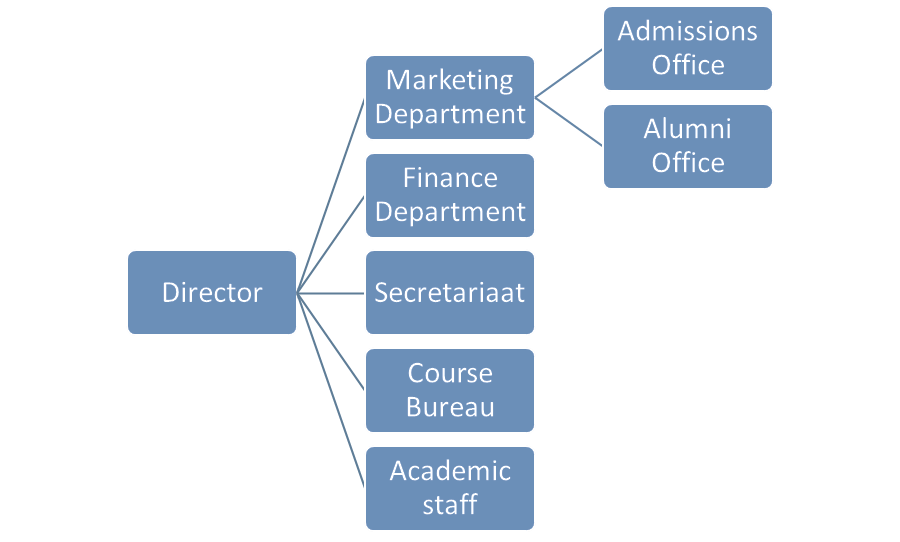
http://www.ihs.nl/uploads/RTEmagicC_uld_02.jpg.jpg

http://www.ihs.nl/uploads/RTEmagicC_ucr_04.jpg.jpg (IHS, About IHS, 2016)

### The organisational structure of IHS

IHS was founded in Rotterdam, in 1948, being a small centre of excellence, having the mission to “*develop methodologies and technologies to foster fast production of affordable and adequate housing and to think about innovative approaches to give responses to severe housing shortage experienced by the Netherlands*” (IHS, IHS history) as well as to be a part of the recreation of the city of Rotterdam, which was critically damaged during the World War II.

Nowadays, after joining the Erasmus University, because of the high international demand for their services and courses, the institute expanded and it is organized into eight different departments, which constantly assure the well functioning of the organization. Below, can be seen an organizational chart of IHS, designed by myself, while working there as an intern.



* IHS Organizational Chart

Figure 2

The department which constantly works with recruiting students, is the Marketing Department, where I used to work as well, which has as a mission the promotion of the Institute, therefore they are in charge of the management of the online and offline recruitment channels, the internal and external communications of IHS’s network and the promotional activities of IHS. The marketing department is strongly connected to the Admissions Office and the Alumni Office, managing the student’s applications, as well as contacting prospect students and leads, that might have interest in IHS’s offer. Therefore, in order to come up with feasible solutions to overcome my client’s problem, permanent contact with the marketing department was maintained.

The marketing department, receives full support and financial contribution for all the necessary activities regarding promotion, recruitment, partnerships and other resources and services that would increase IHS’s visibility on the market and would maintain a neat and adequate reputation.

Moreover, being part of The Erasmus University and being associated with Erasmus University is also a beneficial aspect regarding promotion and recruitment. Because of the recognized name and the good position of the University in the international rankings, many post-graduate students choose IHS also because of this merge, even though IHS is not directly related to The Erasmus University. IHS has only a partnership, but is not part of the Erasmus University Rotterdam.

### Current marketing recruitment channels used by IHS

At the moment, IHS is generally involved in many types of promotional activities and they are using a wide variety of marketing tools. According to one of IHS’s marketing officers, Desislava Yordanova, IHS uses the *“social media, social media advertising, education fairs, lead capture forms, the website of course, gigantic tool, the alumni network, the academic staff, so literally everything that Ihs is pointing towards lead”* (Yordanova, Marketing and communication Officer at IHS, 2016)*.* Moreover, for the Latin American market, specifically, IHS has partnerships with a number of universities in Mexico, which are advertising the programmes offered by the Institute. Furthermore, a recent partnership with Vivo Mundo, a very active education profiler, makes it possible for IHS to advertise its programmes there.

Last but not least, IHS already started to participate in fairs in Latin America, one of them being the PRONABEC fair, in Peru, which according to Desislava, “*is supported by the Government*” (Yordanova, Marketing and communication Officer at IHS, 2016) and encourages young professionals to study abroad by offering them different loans or scholarships.

In terms of online promotion, most students who come to IHS find the programmes online, following specific websites, where IHS is present, as well as consult the main website, the Facebook pages and the Erasmus University page. On Facebook, IHS is very active, having two main pages, one Student page and one corporate page, both of them being involved with keeping connected to the students and maintaining a good customer relationship. In the chart below, can be observed the most used online marketing channels by prospect and current students at the institute.

Figure 3

Moreover, IHS is also present on Mailchimp and it has its specific newsletters, which are regularly sent to the institute’s network.

### Target market of the company

IHS’s target market are urban professionals entitled to follow a master programme in Urban Management or other post graduate courses. The age limitations that IHS’s targets, are basically people starting from 24 years old, recently graduated and above. Moreover, there is a specific preference that goes to women, coming from underdeveloped countries, who wish to follow urban post graduate education. The reason behind is the fact that many of the students studying at IHS are receiving scholarships and these scholarships are mostly offered to women. Additionally, the main focus goes towards areas like Africa, Asia, The USA, Canada and Latin America, with less focus on Europe. However, the prime target of IHS are the self-payers, due to the fact that my client does not offer any type of scholarship and thus it is easier to attract and recruit students who can afford the costs of the programmes by themselves.

Currently IHS has more than 40 nationalities attending the Master programme. The majority of students participating in the current UMD programme are African, Chinese and Indonesians, followed by Europeans and Latin Americans. However, the number of Latin Americans is not as high as expected and wished, which is why this whole research paper is conducted, as mentioned in the brief. There has been a serious instability in the number of Latin American students, which according to Hanna Schultz, the senior marketing communications officer at IHS, explains that the decrease “*goes way back in time, the decrease starting even before the 2000s”* (Schultz, 2016)*.*

There is also a strong relationship with the Alumni. IHS has an active Alumni Association, the graduates being also involved with promoting IHS in their own countries and being ambassadors for the Institute.

### Overview of the presence of Latin American students at IHS in the past years

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the concern of my client is not being able to attract and maintain a stable number of Latin American students. Furthermore, over the last decades the number of LA students seems to have been decreasing rather than increasing or at least have a stable percentage. In the chart below the situation overview regarding the presence of LA students who participated in the master programme at IHS, in the past 12 years, is listed.

Table 1

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Academic Year | Latin American presence (%) |
| 2004-2005 | 9,2% |
| 2005-2006 | 0% |
| 2006-2007 | 7% |
| 2007-2008 | 4,2% |
| 2008-2009 | 1,4% |
| 2010-2011 | 3,1% |
| 2011-2012 | 8,7% |
| 2012-2013 | 6% |
| 2013-2014 | 8,16% |
| 2015-2016 | 6,5% |

The percentages were deducted from the lists of Alumni of each year, by myself, since there were no available statistics provided my client. Therefore, in order to understand the development over these years, the Secretary offered me the lists beginning from the year 2004 until present, consisting of a clear overview upon the nationalities of the alumni. What can be observed is that, overall, the number of Latin American students have decreased over years, some years however still managing to have quite a high amount of students from the targeted region. The overall decrease and the instability in numbers, made my client decide to take measures for better outcomes in the future.

### Internal economy. Budgeting. Expenses

IHS is dedicated to bring the most qualitative materials, supported by well-established staff members, to its current students and participants to the courses, trainings and study programmes. In order to provide this services, the marketing department is in charge with attracting these clients through promotional activities, events, promotional materials etc. Even though, there was no overview available for me of the whole expenses of IHS, I got access to the Marketing department’s estimated budget dedicated to promotion and recruitment. Therefore, there is no clearly divided budget between the marketing costs and the recruitment costs, so according to the Head of the Marketing Department, Sarah Steendam, “*adding the expenses coming from the fairs, staff travels, marketing materials, plus the commissions and payments to all the partners involved, the estimated budget is €260.000*” (Steendam, 2016).

## Meso environment

### Stakeholder analysis

This section of the chapter focuses on the several stakeholders that are directly related to the main issue, as well as are deliberated as being the most influential with regards to IHS’s partnerships and so on.

* Students are the main consumers of IHS, therefore they play the biggest role in making IHS successful as an institute. They are regarded as the main target group of IHS, with particular focus now on Latin American students. Moreover, they are the among the ones who have the ability to promote IHS’s programmes and to attract more students, by spreading the word and creating curiosity to other prospect students. For example, according to one Guatemalan current participant in the Master programme, “*after talking to some friends in Guatemala, there was already interest into studying at IHS and following the Master programme, here, in Rotterdam*”. (Student IHS, 2015)
* IHS’s Marketing Department is the most influential stakeholder with regards to the recruitment methods, promotional activities, external and internal communications, event organizer and main stop for students to get in touch with IHS. With other words, the department is in charge with the publicity of IHS, but also with maintaining and creating new partnerships with online study platforms, sponsors, other universities and so on. Moreover, because all the communications are mostly going through the department, the marketing team is not only making sure that IHS is seen in the right way in the external environment, but also they are in charge of keeping all the other departments in good functioning by handling all different types of internal requests, events and other communications.
* IHS Recruitment office is in charge only with the recruitment of prospect students. According to Desislava, marketing officer at IHS, “*when a lead becomes and applicant or is in the process of becoming one we connect it to our managers”* (Yordanova, Marketing and communication Officer at IHS, 2016)*.* After getting in contact with the managers, the recruitment officers are in charge of accepting or declining th*e* applications. Therefore, there is a strong connection between the Marketing Department and the Recruitment office.
* IHS Alumni Office and IHS Alumni Network are also stakeholders that can positively influence the publicity of IHS and therefore the growth in number of students willing to follow an IHS education. Moreover, regarding the issue of IHS, there are some very significant alumni who are working now in Latin America, promoting the institute. They are as well IHS’s contact persons for the Latin American market, which gives IHS more visibility and beneficial publicity in the wanted area.
* Strictly regarding the problem of my client, we can name the two partner universities in Mexico, University of Sinaloa (Universidad Autonoma de Sinaloa) and University of Colima (Universidad de Colima), which according to Monserrat Budding-Polo, Expert, Urban Competitiveness and Resilience (IHS, IHS Academic Staff), “*was a process of one year*” to get an official agreement between IHS and them. Moreover, according to her “*reaching the Mexican market is possible, but it takes time because of the bureaucratic processes*” (Budding-Polo, 2016)
* Nuffic/Neso Latin America is another important stakeholder because of the intensive promotion of Dutch Education and the dedication to attract students coming from Latin America to The Netherlands. Moreover, there is an existent partnership between IHS and the Nuffic/Neso organization, which means that continuous communications are held between the two parties.
* Studyportals.com, Masterportal.eu and other online study platforms where IHS is present, being promoted and listed among other similar institutes, through which students can contact and apply for a master program.
* IHS staff members, which are actively involved in promoting IHS, during conferences, events, travels and official meetings and gatherings. According to Desislava, IHS recently “*did something in Peru, it was a Pronabec fair, Pronabec is the National Funding and Loan Organization sponsored by the Government*” (Yordanova, Marketing and communication Officer at IHS, 2016)
* Erasmus University Rotterdam is also part of the stakeholders, being quite an attraction for students because of the neat reputation. Therefore being part of the Erasmus University, is very beneficial, and according to the focus group answers, many of the ambassadors also stressed the importance of this association between the two Institutions.

### Competitors analysis

There are plenty of organizations that can be considered direct competitors to IHS. Therefore after researching more than 200 post-graduate institutions, a list of the main competitors of IHS was established, the assessment consisting of comparing the offer, the price, the targeted markets of each of the other institutes.

First of all, the **University of Kent-Paris Campus** offers a master in Architecture and Urban design, with focus on the combination of historic and modern cities. The price for the programme is €16.498 and they target young professionals with a background of architecture and urban planning. (MasterPortal)

Secondly, the **University of Westminster** also offers an interesting master in Architecture and Environmental Design, targeting more or less the same group as the previous University. The price for this programme is €13.429, the location of the University being London, United Kingdom. (MasterPortal)

Thirdly, another quite similar offer coming from one of IHS’s competitors is master in Urban Environmental Management of **Wageningen University**, in The Netherlands. Having the same target market and a similar curriculum, they offer their master for a duration of two years, the price per year being €2.000, therefore the whole amount after the two years being €4.000. (MasterPortal)

Fourthly, another very interesting offer comes from **Aalborg University**, in Denmark. They offer a Master in Urban Planning and Management, for the same target group. What makes it a quite unique offer, is the fact that for the two years Master there is no tuition fee charged, which makes it hard to refuse. (MasterPortal)

Fifthly, UCL, **University College London**, offers a master in Smart Cities and Urban Analytics, which makes it very similar to IHS focus on Smart Cities. The programme is offered for a fee of €14.068 for the one year master. (MasterPortal)

Sixthly, the **KTH Royal Institute of Technology** based in Stockholm, Sweden, is also offering a Master in Urbanism Studies and, as Aalborg University, is charging no tuition fee whatsoever. (MasterPortal)

However, the main threat comes from the first country of choice of Latin American students coming to study in Europe, which is Spain. Not only that the universities with most applications from Latin Americans offer interesting Master programmes in the urban field, with similar prices as the above mentioned competitors, they also have as main bonus point the Spanish language. Therefore, Latin American students present a high interest in these institutions. Among the main competitors from Spain, the most powerful are “*Universidad Europea de Madrid*” (**The European University of Madrid**) (Masterstudies), “*Universidad Politecnica de Madrid*” (**Polytechnic University of Madrid**), “*Universidad Internacional de Catalunya*” (**International University of Catalunya**) and “*Universidad de Girona*” (**Univeristy of Girona**) (Mastersportal).

Of course , the list can continue, since there is a total of “*255 Master’s Degree”* programmes, as listed on MasterPortal.eu, offered worldwide, but after careful considerations, the masters mentioned above are the most direct competitors of IHS.

### Trends in the recruitment process in the higher education institutions in The Netherlands and in Latin America

There is a fact that higher education has become more and more important over the years, nowadays being almost a must to follow a post-graduate study in order to get a more in-depth specialization and therefore to have better opportunities for the future careers. According to Andree Sursock from the European University Association “*Over the past 15 years, major reforms have been undertaken across Europe as part of the Bologna Process”* (Sursock, 2015) Moreover, with the continuous globalization, there is a clear internationalization of the European Higher Education Institutions, as well as the worldwide trend for internationalization. According to Sursock “*The new economic reality – the economic crisis, youth unemployment, the requirements of the knowledge society, globalization – has led to renewed emphasis on increasing student enrolments at the European and national levels*” (Sursock, 2015). He goes on explaining that “*the composition of the student body is changing as a result of specific institutional strategies, and in particular due to the major efforts undertaken to recruit international students from both EU and non-EU countries”* (Sursock, 2015) Therefore, the European Institutions are working on implementing the new Bologna regulations in order to improve the quality of studies. Furthermore, according to Hans de Wit, from NVAO (Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie) “*The international dimension and the position of higher education in the global arena are given greater emphasis in international, national and institutional documents and mission statements than ever before”* (Wit, 2010)

Moreover in terms of teaching and learning, because of the high mobility there is a strong improvement in the quality of the methods and there is also a clear improvement of the ICT skills, due to all the technological developments.

In terms of recruitment, the importance given to the promotion and marketing has risen. According to Sursock, “*More visible forms of marketization include the acquisition of vulnerable public and private higher education institutions by for-profit companies; and the recent growth in the number of online providers, which is likely to open up a broader range of opportunities for collaboration with private companies and non-commercial entities*” (Sursock, 2015) In addition, when looking closely to the meanings of the internationalization of higher education, we can see how Europe, but other continents as well, responded to recruiting international students. There were many organizations that emerged out of this situation, and among them we can name “*The Spanish Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación (ANECA)”* in Latin America*,* *“The Centre for Higher Education Development (CHE)”, “The Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education (Nuffic)”* in The Netherlands*, “The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU)”* in the UK *and “The Association of International Educators NAFSA”.* (Wit, 2010)in the USA.

Moreover, according to Nuffic Neso, “*Two main types of funding programs have been around for quite a number of years: a) programs which fund collaborative projects between organizations in developing countries and higher education and research organizations in the North, and b) fellowship/scholarship programs that enable candidates from developing countries to obtain a diploma or degree abroad*”. (Boeren, 2012) Therefore, there is an increasing support from the study agencies towards Latin America, which implement programmes, scholarships and events that are designed to help LA students to participate in order to have a better chance to follow courses abroad. Moreover, because many LA students seek studies abroad, the international institutions are focused on the online marketing, which reaches a high amount pf people faster and more effective, since travels and fairs are only scheduled from time to time. Even though the economical crisis had its impact also upon higher institutions in Europe, the most affected are reported to be the ones in Eastern and Southern Europe, and the least in the North of Europe. This is why there are still a lot of investments and funds that are being active in countries such as The Netherlands, Denmark, The UK etc. Moreover, among the target markets of these countries, Latin America plays an important role, because of the high interest coming from this area and because of the potential of te students coming from there. This is the reason why there are so many fairs and events targeting and taking place in Latin American countries, such as Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Guatemala, as Marcela Chavez from EP Nuffic was also mentioning during her interview.

In addition, the demand of Latin American students to continue a higher education abroad are expected to rise in the upcoming years, as stated by ICEF Monitor. (Monitor, 2014) Therefore, in order to attract as many Latin American students as desired, there are a few methods that are trending right now in that area. According to The Higher Education Marketing website, among these recruitment methods there can be a specific few selected as successful: “*Focus on STEM Subjects”* (Marketing, 2016), which are *“College and university degree programs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics* “ (Best value schools), “*Promote Your Resources for English Language Learning”, “Target Latin American Students at American Community Colleges”, “Spanish Content Marketing”, “Bridge the Gap with Latin American Student Ambassadors”* (Marketing, 2016)*.*

### IHS’s recruitment methods analysis

After conducting the desk research and the interviews I got a clear view of all the tools used by IHS for the successful recruitment of students. Therefore, below is a list of all the methods currently managed by my client:

1. The social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Blogger, and Twitter, makes it easier for the interaction with the public, as well as it is a modern, dynamic way to promote IHS.
2. Social media advertising- used for promotional activities and campaigns
3. Education fairs- a great method of creating the personal contact with the prospect students.
4. Lead capture forms- designed for IHS to have an overview of people who download the brochures posted on the website, and who might be therefore interested in IHS
5. The website-which is a gigantic tool, for promotion, for giving precise information about the content of the institute and so on.
6. The alumni network- which are a very active source of promotion, because after graduating many of the Alumni are still actively involved in supporting and advertising IHS in their home countries.
7. The academic staff- advertising the content of IHS through their travels, missions, events and congresses
8. The Spanish Facebook page- which is updated daily by Monserrat Budding-Polo, the Expert, Urban Competitiveness and Resilience
9. The MOU’s- the “Memorandums of Understanding” or the partnerships between IHS and the two Mexican Universities mentioned before, also managed by Monserrat, which are also a promotional tool in Mexico
10. The online study platforms-"Studyportlas", "Masterstudies", "Masterportals", which offer IHS more visibility among other
11. Erasmus University website- which features a page about IHS and its Master Programme

## Macro environment

### Economy

As mentioned before, even though the financial crisis that struck the world in the past few years affected the education system in a large extent, Northern Europe is still coping well in taking measures against it and continuing investing in the lower and higher education. Moreover, in order to attract students from less developed or hardly affected countries, a number of scholarships and funding programmes have been implemented. These actions have influenced a high number of foreign students from continents such as Africa or Latin America to come and pursue a higher education programme in countries like Denmark, The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany or The United Kingdom. According to Sursock “*The deepening economic crisis has had a negative impact on the newly gained institutional autonomy and on institutional budgets, particularly in the southern, eastern and central parts of Europe”* (Sursock, 2015)*.* However, he goes on explaining that *“the increase in youth unemployment in many parts of Europe have prompted many governments, the European Commission and the OECD to emphasize the necessity for higher education to respond to economic and social needs, enhance the employability of graduates, including via a stronger focus on entrepreneurship and innovation and on strengthening university-business partnerships”.* (Sursock, 2015)With other words, there is a high willingness from the state officials to keep implementing and offer a close attention to the sector of education, which means that there is a willingness for financial support as well.

When it comes to Latin America in particular, the situation nowadays regarding education is still questionable. There is indeed a growth in the number of people wanting to follow a higher education, however the financial resources are limited and the support from the government is also still low. Moreover, the higher education, as mentioned also by Marcela Chavez from Nuffic, “*usually targets a different sector of the population, with more resources, especially if you promote in English*” (Chavez, 2016). Therefore, it is a higher possibility to reach self financed students, who can afford an education abroad. However, there is a higher demand for studying abroad, seen in the recent years, thus collaborations among foreign universities and local universities have been enforced. Because of this high demand of Latin Americans wishing to study abroad, there is a strong promotional activity taking place in the Latin American market, regarding international higher education, so there is a movement towards internationalization in that area as well. According to a document posted by The World bank “*Countries in Latin America are becoming players in the global market for talent and higher education services*” (Worldbank, 2005)

### Technology

It is a fact that the last decade brought a technological explosion, making us witnesses of a fast-developing technological society. The information is now easily sent out, as well as it is easily absorbed by the population. In terms of marketing and promotions, the situation is advantageous for the marketers and recruiters, in this particular case, who can now promote their materials and services not only through physical materials, but also online. The growing popularity of the online platforms, for example the study platforms, followed by the Social Media platforms, like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, are strongly exploited by the marketers, becoming marketing tools, due to the fast and easy way to reach a wide number of people, as well as to create, to some extent, a bond or a closer relationship with their target market. The impact of technology on marketing and promotion, goes even further than the online platforms available now to support promotional activities, but being supported by all the technological devices, like tablets, mobile phones, available to a wide market, which makes it even easier to reach the desired target. Moreover, “*many consumers and business professionals seek information and connect with other people and businesses from their computers and phones. With access to many sources of information and an interest in interactive media, consumers may collect more product information on their own.”* (Boundless, 2015)

In addition, it is the millennials who are spending most of their times online, connected overall, to all the information. Therefore, strategies such as Integrated Marketing Communications are becoming more and more popular. According to Steve Olenski, contributor for Forbes, the millennials *“are arguably the most-digitally savvy demographic on the planet and as such they consume massive amounts of content via their smartphone, tablet, PC and so on.”* (Olenski, 2013)

Furthermore, in Latin America, more than 3oo million internet users were reported, according to the EP Nuffic year congress. Among these, more than half are active on social media, especially on Facebook, therefore social media marketing strategies are able to reach a huge amount of Latin American population nowadays. These strategies, can go own combining more social media platforms, like Facebook and Blogs, both very popular in the LA market.

### Social/cultural factors

If before the Higher Education was only available for a very small number of persons, mostly highly educated and affording such a study, nowadays there is a significant change in this scenery. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development is dedicated in offering the chance of higher education to a wider amount of people, therefore according to OECD, “*Several contextual developments challenge this model, forcing HEIs to redefine their interests and to reposition themselves in a changing environment*” (OECD, 2011). Among these requirements that were brought to the HEI’s were specifically the “massification”, with other words the acceptance of a wider number of people willing to follow a higher education institute and “globalization”, which aims to provide education at an international level, offering the possibility to adhere to a master programme for example, on a local, national or international level, bringing therefore more possibilities and opportunities towards international co-operation and networking. (OECD, 2011)

In addition, the environment in Latin America, a still developing area, favours international educational co-operation and encourages young professionals and students to follow higher education programmes abroad. There are many NGO’s and other agencies in favour of social development, due to ongoing harsh situations happening in the area. For example the Forum on Education and Human Development Initiative Nicaragua, FEDH-IPN, is just one of the many organizations in Latin America focused on developing and implementing programmes to enforce the right to education. (FEDH-IPN)

Furthermore, according to the World Bank, “*despite impressive social gains achieved between 2003-2012, Latin America and the Caribbean remains a highly unequal region, with some 82 million people living on less than $2.50 per day*” (WorldBank, 2016) The rate of unemployment is also still quite high in the region and also “*bottlenecks include high-cost logistics, inadequate infrastructure, and low quality education*” (WorldBank, 2016) creating dissatisfaction in the societies, especially among young students or young professionals. With hopes of receiving a better education, more and more Latin Americans are eager to leave their countries and study abroad.

### Judicial/political factors

The Netherlands, alongside other European countries, was solidly shaped by the Bologna Process related policies. (Kolster, 2012) According to Nuffic, there is an agenda adopted by the Dutch Ministry of Education and Science, regarding the international recruitment. The agenda focuses mostly on the high quality of standards of programmes, the improvement of the Dutch higher education, to become one of the best systems worldwide, to keep being internationally competitive, education wise and work wise, and to provide the right work environment, for international students who want to keep offering their skills in The Netherlands. Moreover, a striking and important policy was “*to help strengthen the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) as a means to promote Dutch higher education both within and outside of Europe”* (Kolster, 2012). In addition, for a good-functioning of the Dutch higher education system, the individual institutions have plenty of freedom from the Government, to develop their own particular strategies, policies and concepts.

As for Latin America, there is a focus on Mexico in particular, coming from The Dutch higher institutions, Mexico being one of the target countries also defined by the Dutch Government. Moreover, the National Sectorial Programme for Education, the Secretary of Education (SEP) in Mexico, has many policies encouraging international educational co-operation and a strong will for internationalization in the education sector, which creates

opportunities for the Dutch higher education institutions to recruit students from this market, and also to collaborate with Mexican institution and offer them international programmes which would lead to the international recognition further on, which stands among the desired outcomes of the Mexican Government. (Kolster, 2012)

# Chapter5: Interviews and focus group analysis

* Interviews

This chapter will reveal detailed information received during the interviews which were conducted. Because of time limitations, there is a number of only four interviews, which however, contain valuable information about online recruitment strategies, online promotion and information about the relationship between the Latin American Market and The Netherlands.

The first conducted interview took place on the 4th of April 2016, via Skype. The interviewee was Marcela Chavez, Latin America online promotion officer working for Nuffic | Neso Latin America. The findings during the interview were quite impressive, Ms. Chavez offering me very important insights, regarding online promotion in the Latin American market, as well as she revealed many successful strategies that Nuffic Neso applies in the region.

According to her, “*the internet users in Latin America is growing*” (Chavez, 2016), there is an increased interest in studying in The Netherlands and “*the online presence is worth it, because it is the best way of reaching students”* (Chavez, 2016)*.* After discussing with her, she explained which are the most used and most successful online promotion tools, among which we can name Facebook, Webinars and specific related topic campaigns. The presentation held during the EP-Nuffic Year Congress, shows exactly how the internet is beginning to be extensively used by Latin American students, as well as which social media tools are the most successful. Moreover in the graphics below, the progress since 2013 and the expectations towards 2019 are clearly displayed.



Figure 4

(EP-Nuffic Year Congress)

In the graphic above the social media pages that Nuffic Neso uses in Latin America can be seen, as well as, the target countries of the organization. Besides the countries presented, Mexico is also a priority for the organization, however there is an existing office in Mexico City, where people can make appointments or phone calls for more information, in comparison to the countries above, which have no existing office.

In 2015 there were already 327.8 million internet users and the expectations regarding the growth of the internet users in the region is projected to 375.1 million in 2018. (EP-Nuffic Year Congress, Latin America: A region with opportunities for student recruitment and institutional cooperation, 2016)

As a strategy Nuffic Neso approaches different topics in order to attract a high number of students. Online promotion is among their most important strategies for reaching the wide public. In the chart below, their strategy and information they offer can be visualized.

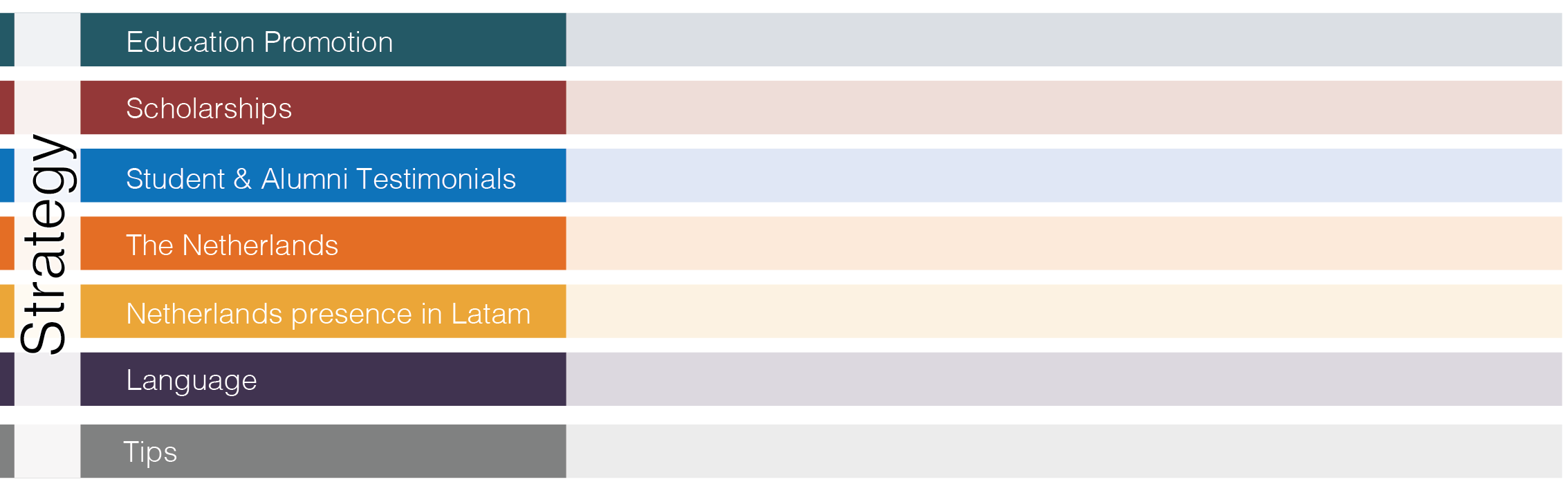


Figure 5

(EP-Nuffic Year Congress, Latin America: A region with opportunities for student recruitment and institutional cooperation, 2016)

Moreover, for each of their social media and online promotion tools, they have specific information ready to be delivered to the students. Therefore, the images below show how they use their information and through which tools they share it to the students.

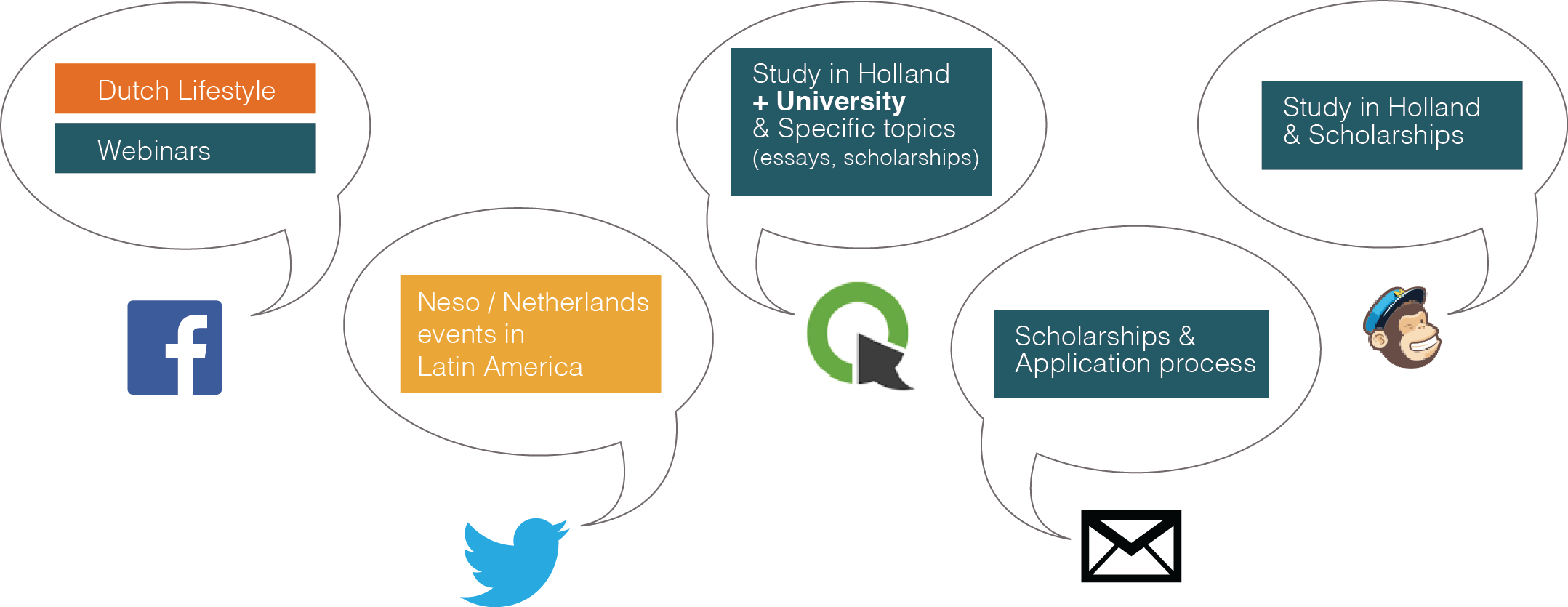


Figure 6

(EP-Nuffic Year Congress, Latin America: A region with opportunities for student recruitment and institutional cooperation)

Furthermore, Marcela also stressed upon the importance of the social media in the market, especially Facebook. Facebook is one of the most important tools, of online promotion, of communication and as a mean of information for prospect students from there who wish to study abroad. Among the most successful campaigns that Nuffic Neso organized, there were a few who became very popular for the people visiting their page. One of them was the campaign dedicated to deliver information about the Study in Holland programme together with scholarships offered. Moreover, Facebook is the perfect tool for brief posts regarding study programmes, information about different universities and other specific information, like announcements of registrations or invitations to different cultural events or fairs regarding studying in The Netherlands. In the chart below, the usage of Facebook can be clearly seen.

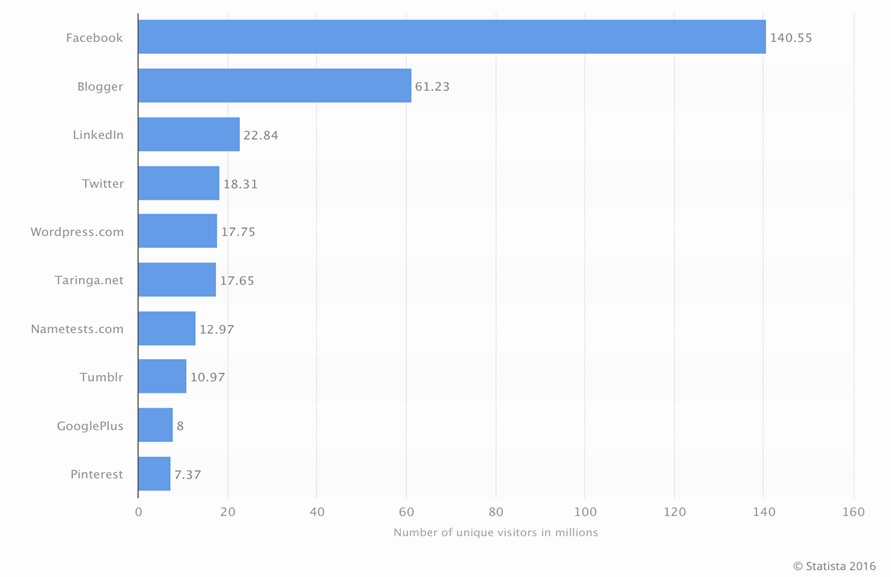


Figure 7

(EP-Nuffic Year Congress, Latin America: A region with opportunities for student recruitment and institutional cooperation)

Secondly, another very powerful tool for attracting Latin American students online is Webinars. Having a webinar combines the modern strategy of online promotion, but it also gives a personal touch to the process, because during a webinar there is personal contact between the marketer and the prospect student. Because of the high importance that Latin American students give to having personal contact with their future university, makes the webinar always successful. Moreover, according to Marcela “*the webinar makes the difference between choosing you and choosing another university”* (Chavez, 2016)*.*

 (Neso)

Another active accounts that Nuffic posses' are the Twitter and the Instagram account, the second one being more successful than the first one. Moreover, one of the most important aspects to be known when being in contact with prospect students form Latin America, is always replying fast to the emails and queries they have. Being at such a big distance can sometimes be stressful for them, especially when not receiving any feedback towards their questions or applications.

Last but not least, when talking about students coming to The Netherlands with a scholarship and self-payer students, who can afford the costs of living and studying abroad, Marcela states that there “*are a lot of social inequalities in the region, so if you make education promotion in English you are already reaching a target that has more economic resources to go abroad, because not many people in the region are able to afford the universities or know how to speak English”* (Chavez, 2016)Therefore, the online promotion strategy of Nuffic Neso Latin America, is applied in the same manner to every student, disregarding their methods of payment.

Another very interesting interview I had was with Desislava Yordanova, Marketing and Communications officer at IHS. The interview took place in Rotterdam, at IHS Erasmus University on the 12th of April 2016.

What stroked me the most when talking to Desislava, was the fact that IHS has no precise strategy regarding the Latin American market. Therefore, they only use the general online promotion tools, which sometimes might not even reach their desired market. However, as mentioned before IHS has a wide range of strategies used in order to attract it’s students, such as their main website, the Facebook pages or newsletters, which are sometimes translated and sent in Spanish to Latin America. However, according to Desislava, the online promotion targeting Latin America “*is more of a brainstorm rather than a strategy at the moment*” (Yordanova, Marketing and communication Officer at IHS, 2016), due to the lack of time and resources so far.

Because of the lack of applied strategy in the region, there has been a decrease in the number of Latin American students at IHS in the past three years. Moreover, Desislava thinks that there is also another reason of why students from Latin America choose other Institutes, and that is because in the previous years IHS was only offering short trainings, which had less academic requirements. (Yordanova, Marketing and communication Officer at IHS, 2016)

When getting more in-depth with the interview, we approached the online campaigns subject, According to her the Marketing department of IHS organizes “*campaigns throughout the entire year”* having for example *“the social media campaign, we had one dedicated to informing students that applications are open, and it was another one which was more content based, where we used our specializations and we had weekly topics to create some content to attract students, where we, well, you wrote blogs, and we published the blogs*” (Yordanova, Marketing and communication Officer at IHS, 2016).

Therefore, even though IHS is still working on a specific Latin American strategy, they still focus on attracting the students from their desired area via other interesting and engaging campaigns and materials, which they hope will reach the Latin American market.

The third interview, also took place at IHS, at Erasmus University Rotterdam, on the 12th of April 2016, having as an interviewee Monserrat Budding-Polo, Expert, Urban Competitiveness and Resilience (IHS, IHS Academic Staff).

Because it was a short, straight to the point interview, I focused on the information that I was still missing. Among the most important findings, was the fact, that even though Nuffic is in charge of promoting Dutch Universities, they focus more on other Universities like “*University of Amsterdam or InHolland University”* (Budding-Polo, 2016). Moreover, when they promote IHS they use general information, lacking of relevant promotional marketing materials.

Another surprising finding was to become aware of the Spanish IHS Facebook page, targeting mostly the Mexican Market, but receiving interest from other Latin American countries as well. Having a page where promotion is done mostly in Spanish can become a major tool for attracting and recruiting Latin American students.

Last but not least, I discussed with Monserrat about the MoU’s, largely explained, the Memorandum of Understanding, which are collaborative contracts between IHS and Latin American Universities. These documents entitle the willing LA universities to promote IHS, by sharing brochures received from my client among the Latin American students, as well as practicing word-to-mouth marketing, promoting IHS in the area. However, in order to finalize these contracts, the normal amount of time is around six months to one year, therefore according to Monserrat “*so reaching the Mexican market it’s possible, but it takes time because of all the bureaucratic processes between Mexico and here*” (Budding-Polo, 2016).

The last interview I held featured Darren Baradhan, the current Marketing officer of ISS, Erasmus University Rotterdam. However, the interview took place in The Hague, at the headquarters of ISS, on the 13th of May 2016. Because Darren used to work in the Marketing Department of IHS, in the past couple of years, he first explained to me what are his current duties as a Marketing Officer at his new workplace.

After that, our discussion went towards finding answers to my last questions regarding promotional activities and the relationship between Dutch universities and Latin America. I firstly wanted to conduct this interview, because of my firm belief that IHS, my client and ISS are direct competitors. However, before we even started the interview, Darren was kind enough to explain that there is no direct competition between the two institutes, due to the different programmes and approaches of both parties.

A striking finding of the interview, was to find out that not only most of the students attending ISS have some kind of scholarship, “*around 95%”* (Baradhan, 2016)but ISS itself offers scholarships to very talented students.

Moreover, it was quite interesting to find out that ISS is actively promoting itself in Latin America, with the help of Nuffic, with the help of Latin American alumni representing the Institute, but also they have staff travels that actively participate in events and get in touch directly with the students in the area, who according to Darren “*they prefer to meet people in their country*” (Barradan, 2016).

Last but not least, a tool that IHS lacks in, are the Webinars targeting the Latin American countries, used by ISS. This is a huge tool, very popular among Latin Americans, because they are known to prefer personal contact, so through the Webinars they can directly communicate with the staff from ISS.

* Focus group

This focus group was held during my previous internship at IHS, on the 3rd of December 2015. The organization and the speakers during this focus group included myself, and two other colleagues. Our respondents consisted of the current Ambassadors of IHS, who are all current students of the Master Programme UMD.

The discussions took place for more than two hours, giving us useful information about the perception of IHS’s current online channels and Platforms, as well as shaping the reputation that IHS has online.

The main and most important findings can be seen below:

* Among their motivations to come to IHS were the good rankings of the University, the offer in the courses, as well as the fact that The Netherlands, specifically Rotterdam, are very urban and fit their work fields
* Before applying, but also after they were accepted, they got in contact with people from the Marketing Department, mostly through Facebook, WhatsApp and phone calls
* When discussing about the website, some of them had difficulties in understanding the structure of the courses. Moreover, many of them did not understand the affiliation with Erasmus University, and found the information on the website a bit disorganized and overwhelming
* Some of them suggested during the discussion that perhaps IHS can promote itself by showing also photos and aspects of the lifestyle in Rotterdam and what it is like to be a student in Rotterdam
* Also, some of them pointed out that the direct link that IHS has to Erasmus University made them choose to come to Rotterdam, because of the good ranking of Erasmus, and were quite confused when joining IHS by the fact that actually my client is not officially part of EUR
* Many of them also found that the estimated living costs, which appear online, are not matching the real costs
* Last but not least, when asked how did they find IHS online, most of them told us that they just typed on Google their field of interest and were redirected to online platforms where IHS was present, or the IHS page appeared directly, moreover after accessing the website for the first time, the IHS page started to pop-up on Facebook, in the advertisements section quite often.

# Chapter 6: SWOT analysis

In order to get an overview of the organizational situation of the marketing and promotional recruitment activities of IHS, and the immediate business environment, a summarized SWOT analysis have been created. The main findings of the general situation analysis regarding IHS and the gatherings from the interviews can be seen in the matrix below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Strengths**  Micro environment   * Latin American students attending or graduated, who are promoting IHS in the target market * IHS’s active presence on the social media pages (Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook) * Existing relationship with the target market (Latin America) * Presence of IHS on the online Study portals * Partnerships with Mexican Universities * Partnerships with Nuffic/Neso Latin America * Association of the Institute with Erasmus University * Quality of the study programmes * Staff travels to Latin America * IHS has the status of an international centre of excellence * IHS current staff members include a number of Latin American employees, therefore Spanish speakers * High budget allocated for Marketing and Promotions | **Weaknesses**  Micro environment   * Limited experience with promoting IHS to LA market * Lack of enough market penetration * Priority offered to other countries and markets * Not enough online presence * No differentiated strategies for approaching the wished target market * Less Latin American students in past few years * Lack of substantial strategies for attracting the desired target market |
| **Opportunities**  Meso environment   * Willingness of Alumni to promote IHS in their own countries * The promotional activities organized by stakeholders like Nuffic Neso and Study portals * Fairs and study campaigns taking place in Latin America * Popularity of Social Media platforms in LA * High number of internet users in LA   Macro environment:   * Increased number of LA students in Europe * Digital tools and channels provide many ways to promote a company * Increased number of people following a higher-education * Freedom to strategize different recruitment methods * Latin American market’s willingness to become international in the study field and to co-operate with international study institutions * Growing popularity in Latin America of the online social media usage and of the internet users * Increasing interest in LA to study abroad | **Threats**  Meso environment   * Stronger competitors * The expensive costs of the programmes * Lack of applied strategies for the recruitment in the LA market * Lack of scholarships offered by the Institute   Macro environment:   * Preference of the Latin American market towards Spanish speaking countries or for the USA * Preference of students towards choosing the University with the fastest positive response, rather than the better University. |

After analysing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, coming from the micro, meso and macro environment, we can already understand the reason behind the main issues of IHS. There is a lack of consistency in attracting the Latin American market separately from the other markets. Therefore there is no particular strategy which targets only the desired market. Moreover, another step backwards is the lack of enough experience with the LA market, added with the low presence my client online, and in the area, for example at local education fairs or events.

Furthermore, the strong competitors and the lack of scholarships offered by my client, can be seen as a negative influence upon recruiting students in Latin America. However, there are many positive aspects that can positively influence the attendance of LA students at IHS, such as the Spanish speaking staff, who are also current alumni of IHS, their travels in the area, with promotional scopes, as well as, the Alumni who are still promoting my client in their countries.

In addition, because of IHS’s reputation and of the encouraging movement towards the willingness of the LA students of attending a higher-education abroad, creates many expansion opportunities for my client. There are plenty of tools and strategies that can be used in order to recruit students from the desired market. Moreover, the freedom that the marketing department of IHS has in organizing promotional activities online, can easily increase their presence in Latin America.

# Chapter 7: In-depth Research Analysis and Results

In this chapter the results of the desk research and the field research will be closely analysed. Specifically, the most important findings of the above mentioned analyses that took place in the previous months will be scanned and supported by other important external results, in order to have a clear overview upon the whole research. Moreover the scope of this chapter is also to lead the research towards obtaining valuable conclusions, which would further on be of use in designing the necessary recommendations.

To begin with, the scope of this project is mainly understanding and resolving my clients problem regarding its insufficient online presence in Latin America and therefore the decrease in the number of LA students at IHS in the recent years. The main findings relevant to getting an in-depth overview about the environment, internal and external, in order to solve the main issue are strongly related and interconnected.

Firstly, the most important aspect of this project is solving my client’s main problem: the insufficient online presence and promotion in Latin America and therefore the aim of increasing the number of Latin American students coming annually to study at IHS. Thus, focusing only on the online marketing, a number of valuable findings was established during the research. The past few years showed a fluctuation in the number of LA students attending IHS, having a serious decrease in percentages. If in the academic year 2013-2014 the percentage of Latin Americans was reaching 8, 16% of the majority of students of IHS, the last year, 2015-2016 shows that only 6.5% of the current students come from Latin America.

Therefore, in order to reach the goal of the research, a number of valuable findings resulted. Among the most important findings, is the fact that Social Media plays a humongous role in marketing and advertising, being a tool used on a regular basis by marketers who want to attract or penetrate the Latin American market, and not only. The theoretical studies show that there are so many arising theories and concepts, dedicated to this type of promotion, which represents a positive aspect for my client, who is therefore capable of using these methods in order to attract its target market. Amid the most used social media platforms, we can name Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram or Blogs. IHS is already present on most of these platforms, except Instagram. However, IHS has a strong presence on platforms like Facebook or LinkedIn, having multiple pages with different scopes. For instance, on LinkedIn IHS has three pages, the corporate page, the university page and the business page, each sharing different content, with regards to each page’s specialization. In addition, among the Facebook pages IHS is managing, one is specifically dedicated to the Spanish market. It is also stressed in the previous chapter how important it is to have Spanish content marketing and promotion. However, there is not much importance given to it currently, IHS being more dedicated into promoting and creating customer relationships on the main official page, rather than generating new content in order to reach its the main goal.

Moreover, the presence of IHS on social media is indeed used as a marketing tool to promote the content and offer of my client. In addition, the possibility created by these platforms to establish relationships with the prospect students are added values of social media. Furthermore, as theories show, social media marketing is arising, because of the number of people using these platforms and therefore the chance of high visibility of the messages and advertisements. Moreover, these messages can be optimized to reach as many views as possible, by creating original marketing promotional advertisements and campaigns. In addition these communication can be shaped into persuasive messages, especially when knowing the segments of people targeted, as well as the generations coming from. A conclusion would be to establish customer relationship with the LA market by creating some content dedicated to their wants and interests, as well as have some promotional materials designed in Spanish.

Social media marketing, can furthermore be integrated with the relationship marketing, by keeping the contact with the prospect students, and the ease of communication via chats and applications dedicated to personal contact, in this case between IHS and the Latin American students. Therefore, a some sort of commitment to mix social media marketing and personal contact via the internet can be more beneficial than expected, and thus reach more students. Also by applying this method, my client can improve its online reputation among its targeted group, which further on can raise awareness among the same group we are speaking about.

Another important tool that IHS is now using are the blogs, which were recently launched by my client. The topics used, however, tend to be general, therefore they do not specifically address to the LA target group. However, most of the articles seem to follow the Information-gap theory, by using catchy titles, in order to increase the levels of curiosity for the readers, and thus increase the views and raise awareness about IHS. According to Stefana Cozan, Marketing and communications officer at IHS, an estimated amount of views for a blog article can reach up to “ *400 views*”. (Cozan, 2016) during a month.

Moreover, the Technology analysis, conducted in the Macro Environment also emphasises on the developments of this sector, stressing the popularity of social media, but also the technological boom regarding the devices available among the target group, like tablets, mobile phones, laptops. According to Andrew Whalley, when discussing about the power of online marketing, and the existence of so many devices and platforms suggests that ”*messages can reach you at any time and place. This means that marketing pervades society not on a daily basis but on a second by second basis.”*(Whalley, 2010)

However, even though IHS is active on many of these social media platforms and promotes actively the Institute, there is still a question of why is there still so few responses coming from the LA market? After a close analysis, the conclusion is that the content presented might be too vague or not directly referring to the wants of Latin American students. On the other hand, IHS has a “*Spanish Facebook page*” (Budding-Polo, 2016), managed by Monserrat Budding-Polo, where she usually translates the main materials from the official page for the Spanish speaking students. The problem here is represented by the lack of commitment coming from the marketing department. However, by having this source can be an opportunity for my client to approach it with the right advertising methods.

Secondly, while researching IHS’s website, there is a lot of corporate and educational information, but judging by the preferences of Latin Americans, according to EP Nuffic, many of them are highly interested in the lifestyle of a certain country as well. Moreover, during the focus group, we came across a lot of suggestions to include more information about life in Rotterdam and to be more creative when it comes to artistic content, rather than using too many bureaucratic materials. Moreover, strategically speaking, my client should stress on the association with Erasmus University Rotterdam, which is positively ranked in the university rankings. According to QS World University Rankings, “*Erasmus University Rotterdam holds a consistent top 100 position in influential rankings such as Times Higher Education, National Taiwan University, and Center for World University Rankings”* (QS World Rankings)

Thirdly, in terms of promotional tools, IHS uses quite a wide range of advertising methods. From Facebook advertising campaigns, to sending newsletters and being present on an important number of study platforms, IHS has quite some visibility in the field of education. However, one of the major setbacks, which can result in less Latin American students is not having Webinars in the LA market. The use of Webinars is a very popular tool, especially in regions like Latin America. This is because, as resulted as a major finding, Latin American students prefer having personal contact. Therefore, the Webinar is a tool that provides the opportunity of having live stream sessions with prospect students, online. Therefore, even tough the connection is done via internet, the students can still directly interact with you and have a face to face conversation in real time.

Another setback is not offering scholarships to the prospect students coming from the targeted region. Because of financial issues that Latin America is still facing, there are not that many students who can afford to study abroad. However, my client, IHS, does not offer any type of scholarship, making it difficult for a LA prospect student to afford the costs. However, IHS focuses mostly on recruiting self-financed students from Latin America. As it resulted in the interview with Marcela Chavez from Nuffic Latin America, when promoting a programme in English already targets a different group, with more financial possibilities. Moreover, this fact is enforced also by the social/cultural findings, one of the most important being the fact that many young professionals, who are already trained at some level, are seeking to further their education abroad in order to overcome the possibilities of unemployment that they face in their own countries. On the other hand according to Darren Baradhan, Marketing officer at ISS, they usually “*invite people to apply for all the scholarships available on the market, and not wait for the students to apply or find them*” (Baradhan, 2016) Therefore, IHS can follow the same structure, which would only increase their chances to receive more Latin Americans.

However, another setback from the above mentioned situation is the fact that many of them choose countries like Spain for studies, because of the language issues. Therefore, it is a tough competition for my client, which has to prove how the quality of the studies at IHS is also at their wished level. Fortunately, the economic situation in the past few years, as study shows, favours the countries situated in The North of Europe, while the South and East of Europe being severely damaged by difficult financial situations. (Sursock, 2015) Moreover, having Spanish content marketing also expands the chances to be chosen by a Latin American student.

There are plenty other competitors that can seem more interesting than IHS, especially online. Therefore, the advertising in this area should focus not only on the existent courses and programmes but also be strengthened by examples of the outcome of following a higher education programme at IHS specifically. For example, it is suggested earlier in the research to connect Latin American Ambassador students or Alumni to their success afterwards. Thus if the art of persuasion is applied correctly, then more Latin American students would choose to come to IHS. Moreover, as stated before during the research it is recommended that in order to be successful in the LA market a foreign university should have a focus on STEM subjects (Marketing, 2016), which represent “*College and university degree programs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics* “ (Best value schools). Therefore, IHS’s focus on urbanization, architecture, engineering and sustainable technological management can easily attract prospect students from the area.

Moreover, in order to gain more visibility on the online Latin American market, a number of strategies should be implemented. As it results from the research, IHS already has enough means, represented by all the marketing tools and campaigns they are focusing on. However, because there are different needs coming from the Latin American prospect students, the advertisements should be shaped according to these needs. Moreover, in the recent years “*recruiting talented international postgraduates has become a strategic priority for institutions and governments globally*” (britishcouncil, 2014). Thus in order for IHS to reach its goal, it is a priority to implement a strategy targeting Latin America as a separate market.

Last but not least it is important to mention that the Latin American governments are seeking partnerships with foreign universities in order to implement the international co-operation. IHS has already signed such agreements with Universities in Mexico, partnerships that can benefit my client by having more Mexican students in the future years attending the programmes. Moreover, it is safe to assume that the number of LA students studying abroad, will only increase, as the EP Nuffic graphics showed also, the Latin American market being open towards international education. Moreover, by the field of study offered makes IHS popular among the higher education international institutes, due to the fact that urban and architectural studies are still quite popular in the target market.

# Chapter 8: Conclusions

After conducting the desk research comprising mostly of the situation analysis and theoretical framework and being followed of the field research, comprising in the interviews, focus group and travels to my client’s office, a SWOT Analysis was completed. Subsequently, examination of the obtained information and data was made, followed by an in-depth research analysis, from which various conclusions can be drawn.

In the beginning, it was essential to understand precisely who my client is and what is their main target, in order to explain and comprehend the nature of their problem. Therefore, IHS Erasmus University Rotterdam, the centre of excellence for Urban Management studies, has a rich history in their field of expertise, offering trainings, short courses, advisory services and a one year master programme. They are targeting post graduate students, aged mostly between 24 and 40, being, thus, part of the millennials. Every year IHS is home to more than 40 nationalities, among which Latin Americans, who lately are decreasing in numbers, which is the main problem of my client. This is how the entire research began, my client being interested in implementing the online presence in Latin America.

Secondly, because my clients focus was how can they improve their online marketing presence it theoretical knowledge was necessary before even starting analysing the environments. Therefore, after the theoretical framework was researched, a number of theories able to solve and understand the issue of my client were deducted. These were the integrated marketing communications, the relationship marketing theory, the social-media marketing and the use of advertorials and infomercials.

Afterwards, it was crucial to find out precisely which marketing channels are they in possession of and how do this channels preform. Understanding this would make it possible afterwards to come up with the right conclusions when it comes to their application in Latin America. Before analysing the content of the marketing channels , a detailed overview about the current trends in the recruitment systems in both The Netherlands and Latin America were necessary. Among the most important findings, that affect my client in a positive way we can remind:

* The growing importance of higher education in the past decade
* The worldwide trend for internationalization in the sector of education
* The importance given to marketing strategies in term of recruitment are arising
* The online marketing has gained ground and is strongly influencing the choices of the students
* There are many funds and scholarships offered to students who wish to follow a higher education, but who can not afford it
* The number of Latin American students wanting to follow a higher education abroad has risen and there is a boost in the LA students coming each year to Europe to follow an education
* Online promotion of International institution is highly successful, because of the high speed of sharing information and the higher speed of receiving it, Latin Americans having lots of access to the online markets

Therefore after comprising these gatherings it was clear already that there is a ongoing demand among the Latin American students to study abroad and the most importance is directed towards their searches online for higher education institutions. Following this information, a detailed analysis of IHS’s current marketing channels was conducted, with the findings coming mostly from the desk research, but from some of the interviews as well. It was very comforting to see that IHS is already actively involved with many promotional online activities and the marketing department is focused on being present with the most up to date materials on several online channels and platforms. Among the most successful and reliable online channels can be named:

1. The social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Blogger, and Twitter, accessed by a wide range of people and also popular among the target group
2. The lead capture forms- available on the website, representing the overview of people who download the brochure available on the website
3. The main website
4. The online Alumni network, very influent for prospect students
5. The Spanish Facebook page-dedicate for Spanish speaking people, because of its use of Spanish content marketing
6. The online study platforms- Studyportals, Masterstudies, Masterportals, where IHS is present
7. The Erasmus University Website, which also has a page dedicated to IHS.

It is very clear to see how my client is very active on many trusted sources, which can further on attract more an more Latin Students as well, if the right strategies and content are published on some of these platforms.

After finalizing this analysis, the attention moved to the macro environment, being important to see how the external situation may influence my clients desire to grow the popularity of the Institute, in the online area, as well as in the targeted area. Between the findings it is good to recall the fact that even tough economical crisis affected countries such as Italy, Spain, Portugal, decreasing the quality of studies, countries like The Netherlands are still stable, reason why the attention of international student goes these countries. Moreover, the technological development makes it easier to send the message across to a wide public and the fact that millennials are the group of people using the most these new technologies, means that the online information reaches them extremely fast. It is also important to know the fact that in Latin America Facebook is among the most use online platform, therefore the chances are high to reach the target group there.

Moreover, after the analysis of the interviews and the in-depth, plenty of qualitative answers were found regarding the preferences of Latin Americans coming to study to The Netherlands specifically. Most of them are interested in scholarships, because of the high expenses they encounter in The Netherlands. There is however a number of LA students who can afford the costs and therefore are more interested in the lifestyles of the country, of the leisure activities, of the campus life. Already if the promotion is done in English targets a more privileged group of Latin Americans, however using Spanish content marketing positions a certain institution higher in the eyes of the Latin Americans. The use of webinars, is also plus, because Latin Americans are favouring personal contact, and obtaining that contact online is a great way of promotion.

Therefore, the current reputation among the Latin American students still needs to improve. However, generally speaking IHS receives a lot of support and is very respected by the students and prospect students. Being present on many platforms and receiving plenty of positive reviews, regarding the marketing channels and not only, IHS has a trustworthy image, which positons the Institute high among the other Institutions in the field of Urban Management.

However, in order to better their image among the Latin American target group, IHS should implement a number of strategies which would win the target market over. Therefore, a series of strategies were elaborated and can be seen below, in the recommendations section of the report.

All in all, gathering all the necessary information, during the past few months gives a clear overview about the situation that my client is facing and the path that needs to be taken in order to overcome the obstacles. With just a few steps, the online presence in Latin America should increase significantly.

# Chapter 9: Recommendations

This chapter is dedicated to offering valuable marketing advise to my client, IHS, in order to ensure that they reach their goals, of becoming more visible on the Latin American market and to increase the number of Latin American students coming to IHS.

Therefore, after conducting the desk and field research and drawing the conclusions, a number of strategies were constituted.

1. **Story of the Month- Facebook campaign**

Having the necessary platform, the Spanish Facebook page and having plenty of successful IHS alumni, but not enough visibility on the Latin American market can result into a very productive strategy.

The idea is to organize a Facebook marketing campaign with social and emotional impact for the target group. This storytelling campaign should write about current notable and influential LA alumni, with the scope of persuading the target group, through presenting the life before and after IHS, of the alumni. This campaign should be executed by posting every month the powerful story of different Alumni accompanied, of course by a photo, which would create the visual effect. The message of the campaign should reach to the target group as a statement reasoning “*I was in the place you are now and I took the chance!*”, encouraging the target group to join IHS and, therefore, promoting the opportunities that students have after studying here. Moreover, this campaign should emphasize on the friendliness of IHS, showing how personal relationships with the students are highly valued, IHS embracing their customers as part of the IHS family. The campaign can be easily managed by any of the Marketing Officers from IHS, who can further on integrate this campaign, as promotional tool on their main website as well as on the other social media channels. The implementation of the content on the Spanish Facebook page, however, should be done by a Spanish speaker. The length of this campaign should not be overwhelmingly long, but it should last long enough in order to create a psychological impact among the target audience. Moreover the costs of developing the campaign will be non-existent, the only materials required being internet access, the existing Facebook page and testimonials and photos of the featured alumni. Furthermore, by the nature of the campaign, there is no static required space to establish the work, therefore the publishing can be done from any available computer at IHS’s headquarters.

If there is a real interest in the campaign and a real success, measuring is also quite recommended, then similar campaigns can be implanted in the future. Moreover, by the popularity rates of Facebook in the Latin American market and the interest of the students to come study abroad, this type of campaign should be intriguing enough in order to raise awareness and send the message my client wants to send.

1. **Inaugurate a “Year in Review” online campaign**

By launching such a campaign would create the advantage to create a collective campaign, promoting the lifestyle, study content, agenda presentation etc. to the target market, making it possible for them to see what a year at IHS looks like. Because of the fact that Latin Americans are known for their curiosity in lifestyle of a country before choosing it,

comes as an opportunity to my client, to promote the fun, engaging environment at IHS. Therefore implementing a “Year in Review” campaign, can result in having many implementation methods. Firstly, it would be a one time per year activity, therefore promotional messages announcing it should be posted two, three weeks in advance. In order to raise the curiosity, then, reminders should be scheduled, with a deadline of one day in advance to the campaign launch. The campaign itself, should contain a set amount of posts featuring the top three or top five best moments of the year, followed by a short descriptive movie, of these moments, plus others. By featuring these moments, the marketing team could create therefore a collective campaign, by including students offering their opinions about IHS. Therefore, a strategical move would be to include in the material, students or staff members from Latin America as well, so that the target can understand that also Latin Americans play an important role for my client.

Moreover, by including students, would stress on the importance that IHS gives to the opinions and desires of its students, emphasizing on the strong bond that my client has with its network.

1. **Webinars**

Among the findings of the research, one of the most important tool, that can make a difference when recruiting in Latin America are the Webinars. This online live seminars/sessions are becoming the most trendy marketing promotional method. On top of that, Webinars seem to offer all the comfort Latin Americans are seeking when looking for personal contact before deciding to move abroad. By being able to communicate in real time, even tough online, replaces the traditional face to face contact, but offers the same value.

However, IHS is currently not making use of this incredible tool, and, as seen in the previous pages, this fact can be one of their major setbacks, especially when trying to penetrate more the LA market. The good news for my client is that by having access to a considerable budget, dedicated for marketing activities and promotion, coming in possession with this tool might actually be a huge step-forward for IHS in order to increase their presence and boost the level of credibility among their target market.

There are many ways to implement this strategy, but the costs are quite high as well. In order to be able to hold a Webinar, special technological devices are required, which influence the quality of the transmission. There are specialized firms that IHS can collaborate with in order to make the existence of Webinars possible. The costs usually depend on the frequency of the Webinars, the amount of time of each webinar and so on. Moreover, there is always the option of having more webinars in a years, which can lower the prices of the materials needed. An estimated amount for one webinar, can for example cost from 100 EUR to 2000 EUR.

There is an alternative method to having webinars in case of limited budget. Because of the strong will of Latin American students to have personal contact with officials from their university of interest, then Skype can be used as a marketing tool to offer the prospect students the information they desire. However, in comparison to having webinars, which are clearly structured, having skype calls and conferences as a tool can be quite difficult to organize. Therefore my client would have full freedom to set up skype meetings with students from Latin America.

Another possibility in this situation is that my client could create a collaboration with the current partner universities in Mexico and have a presentation about IHS over skype, on a set date, in the Auditoriums of each university. Therefore, the possibility of raising awareness and increase its presence there, and also the chance of being promoted by the word of mouth practice, there in the market, can provide a similar response to what a webinar could provide.

However the strong recommendation, is still organizing Webinars throughout the academic year, to establish the desired relationship with the target group, and share the precise information in the same time.

1. **Create Frequency Illusion**

My clients main issue is the low amount of visibility in the Latin American market. However, IHS’s strong points are the clear structured website, as well as the good reputation coming from its history in the domain of urban management, but most of all because of the affiliation with Erasmus University, known for the high international rankings. The logo of IHS is also strongly bound to the Erasmus University and to the city of Rotterdam. Therefore, a smart strategy would be create the frequency illusion. This means that when IHS promotes the website on Google, they should make use of the remarketing strategy, meaning that the use of remarketing codes is highly recommended, because it would make the website appear on other pages such as Facebook, later on and therefore increase the visibility. These ad-words should be placed strategically, on Latin American online platforms, where IHS wishes to develop. The costs of this strategy also depends on the decisions of the marketing department of IHS. Therefore, the costs proportionate with the size of the remarketing campaign or campaigns.

1. **Facebook Live streams**

Last but not least, most of the target group that IHS wants to reach is represented by millennials. As stated before in the report, they are the part of population aged between 15 to 35 years old. The strong point that millennials have in common is the openness towards new concepts, technologies, online applications or innovative ideas. Most of the millennials are highly active on the social media pages, especially on Facebook, especially Latin Americans.

When choosing an university abroad, the target group of my client is interested mostly in the lifestyle of the country and in the life on campus at their desired universities. Besides writing and publishing blogs and articles, IHS has now the opportunity of applying a very modern and unique method, that is beginning to be used as a marketing tool by many other marketers.

IHS can start using Facebook live, a very popular and fresh marketing tool, through which they can show fragments of the life in the campus as well as outside the campus, in the city of Rotterdam. Again the platform used would be Facebook, therefore it would reach the desired target group, giving a fresh, young outlook on the image of IHS. Moreover, these tool could also focus on the personal contact aspect, by offering the target group access to live short sessions, showing real life scenes directly from the campus.

1. **Lifestyle Blogs and Articles**

Last but not least, IHS is already involved in the creation of different blog and articles regarding urbanization, urban management issues and other applied subjects, which are all very interesting in showing the active presence of IHS in the Urban world. However, because many prospect students are searching for validation reasons to come live in a city and a country as well, among which the Latin Americans, it would be a positive strategy that at least once a month, a lifestyle regarded article or blog should be posted. Subjects such as “How to integrate faster in the Dutch culture”, “Learn to ride a bike if moving to The Netherlands”, “Things to see when living in Rotterdam”, “Life on a Dutch campus” can raise awareness of the culture and lifestyle and also show how coming here can positively impact their lives. The costs of such publications should be also limited, therefore are recommended to be implemented.

Last but not least, even though IHS does not offer any type of scholarships, it is strongly recommended to always announce the fact that people can obtain other scholarships from the exterior environment. The NFP Scholarship for example, is mostly announced and reinforced after a student is accepted. However, even if students are not yet enrolled they should always be announced of all type of funding possibilities that exist, in order to encourage them to apply. However, these are just a few of the strategies that can be implemented in order to obtain the desired outcome.

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# Appendices

## Interviews

### Marcela Chavez- Latin America online promotion officer / Nuffic | Neso Latin America (Skype Interview)

Me: Good afternoon! First of all, I am Casandra, as we discussed in the emails, and now I am doing my final paper for my university and I am writing about how can IHS improve its online presence in the Latin American market and, I talked to my supervisor, Ms. Sarah Steendam, and she actually sent me to you, she told me that perhaps you would be available to help me and here we are. I already did some preliminary research while i was an intern at IHS and what stroked me because i am actually very interested in the online promotion, is that the American market prefers a lot the personal contact and the fairs and lets say agencies, so that's why i wanted to talk to you because I know that you are an online promotion officer, so could you tell me more about the work that you are doing, what is your experience so far in the field of online promotion for the Latin American market?

M.: Ok. Well I’m doing as you said online promotion for Latin America we focus on four countries, we focus on Argentina, Colombia Chile and Ecuador, and Peru, sorry five countries. So at present we’ve developed for more or less a year in LA our main social media or the main social media in the region is Facebook, so Facebook is still really important and is the main contact with them. Also we have twitter, but twitter has, well, after an analysis, we found out that many people are following from the Netherlands but actually none of them, or not many students following us in our twitter account so really we decided to give more general topics on twitter and when we have presence in LA well that’s really important for Dutch universities, but really it was first of all addressed to LA students but we realized that it was working better for Dutch institutions so now we refocused our Twitter. We also have skype calls, we use skype because, as you said, many people are interested in talking with us or in solving particular topics, we also have Webinars, that have been very successful, we introduced them last year then people showed a lot of interest, obviously the time of the webinar is an issue because if we want to invite a Dutch university well its a particular time so you know its different from LA so that can be challenging but we also receive many students on our webinars, and we also do emails, like for instance if people have a particular question, we can discus it by email, that's more or less what we are using in the region. What we found out was that in different social media people were interested in talking about different things. For example on Facebook is a tool that people want to know more about the living style like Dutch lifestyle is really important for them, because they want to be convinced that they are choosing the right country, because now they have so many options, they don’t know whether to go to The USA or to choose Spain because of the language. So one of our most successful organic topics was when we wrote a post about “Why Dutch are the happiest people on earth?” so that was even more successful than scholarship programmes or things like that you know. And every time we talk about lifestyle they are really impressed on Facebook. Obviously the second topic would be scholarships, because they want to know options, but really you have to convince people that the country is a good choice. Afterwards, come the scholarships, because there are many people who have resources to go abroad, but Latin Americans in general need more support from universities, so if you announce a scholarship that covers tuition and it gives you some money to live abroad, then is very successful. If you announce a scholarship which only covers tuition it wouldn't be so interesting for the. So on Facebook you can talk about those topics, also we have students who give testimonials, because Latin Americans need a person that tells them “i was in the same situation as you are and I could do it” so it counts. That is really the message they want to hear.

Me: And you talked about campaigns on Facebook and on social media, but are there any special promotional campaign or event that you managed and you saw a huge success or a lot of responses from students?

M.: Yeah. We have several campaigns. We have one paid campaign talking about general topics so they are interested on Facebook, on generic study in Holland promotion. SO that was really successful to talk about the programmes and the scholarships at the same time. If you only talk about scholarships, you will have less participation. We had as well another topic about Dutch cities that wasn’t that successful as the others. So the most successful campaign, i think, it was the one talking about study in Holland plus the scholarships. That is not the case when it comes to newsletters. We also have newsletters, where people want to learn more information, you have to convince them about the country, but you also have to show them that what you have its interesting enough.

Me: And have you seen or do you know if there are any weaknesses between the Latin American market and the use of online promotional channels or perhaps some channels did not work the way you wanted them to work?

M.: Well, actually, online presence in Latin America is growing, if you see some statistics, I have that statistic, let me look in my computer because I need to find the presentation about that ...

* ...looking at the annual congress presentation

M.: so I will show you because this will help you a lot. Let me see if I can share it with you (the slides). Wait a minute. I will share some documents with you. Ok. Can you see my PowerPoint?

Me: Yes! I can see it.

M.: Ok as you can see the internet users in LA is growing. These graphics are from 2013 and go to 2015 so obviously is projected that users in LA will grow. And here is another graphic that says how many users are on Facebook. So you can see that Facebook has a lot of influence. Here we have blogger, but blogger we are not using, because for instance in Mexico, blogger is not used so much, so we decided not to use it. LinkedIn we could use it, but it doesn't have a huge presence, such as Facebook. We are using LinkedIn for alumni, but really not for education promotion. We have an alumni group, but that’s all. And then we have Twitter. So we focus on twitter, we also have an Instagram group, but here Instagram doesn’t appear, but we do have one. Well as you can see i think that the online presence is worth it, because it is the best way of reaching students, and here you can see our strategy for the online promotion. And we have particular topics, and that is a bit of what i was telling you. That we talk about education promotions, scholarships, The Netherlands, the Netherlands presence in Latin America, language and tips. And more or less these are channels, Facebook, Twitter, Webinars, Newsletter, and here are the topics that have been more successful according to our Analytics: Dutch lifestyle, also we do a lot of Webinar promotion, and we don’t give them information about our programs, of course we give information, but not so specific information. So in Twitter you i you want to know more, it’s our Dutch events in LA, in Webinars they want to know about study in Holland, in their emails they are always asking for scholarships and application process, and in mailchimp, our newsletter, they click more on study in Holland and scholarship related topics.

Me: And we were talking a lot about the scholarships and about appealing programs that offer scholarships and grants, but how about the self payers, the students who can afford to pay by themselves, do they also get the same tools?

M.: Yes pretty much, pretty much!

Me: Ok so it’s the same strategy and promotion for every student.

M.: Yeah, you see, there’s are a lot of social inequalities in the region, so if you make education promotion in English you are already reaching a target that has more economic resources to go abroad, because not many people in the region are able to afford the universities or know how to speak English. So when you promote in English you are already reaching a different target.

Me: Ok. I understand. And we were talking about the five countries, but how about Mexico, do you also do the promotional activities for Mexico?

M.: Yes, of course, we do online promotion for Mexico, but we have the Neso Office in Mexico that does that promotion. I focus on the LA countries that don’t have a Neso office in their country. In Mexico City, we do the same it’s like the same strategy and we are reaching students also, mainly by Facebook, and there people can also come to our office, and there are more or less 10 people reaching the offices, to ask questions, we have a line, they can call us by phone, and more or less we have 12 people calling the office per week, and of course there are times that we have more and there are times that we have less. And we also have a lot of presence in fairs. We go to different fairs during the year.

Me: And because you just showed me that PowerPoint, I hope it won’t be to much to ask, and if I’m pushing a button just stop me, but perhaps could you send it to me via email and could i use those graphics in my report. Would that be ok?

M.: Yes of course! I’ll share to you this, actually this presentation was for the year congress, so if you want to make a citation or you need to make a citation you can say that it was the presentation for the year congress, I’ll write you the name, the name of the section and you can use it!

Me: thank you very much! This is very helpful! And just to wrap up because I already have more information than I was expecting, if you were to offer a tip for a Dutch University in order to promote themselves more in the Latin American market what would that be?

M.: Uhm, I think that having a webinar helps a lot! Like people want to know more, so you have to pick up the write medium to send your message, if you choose Facebook it has to be brief, if you want to reach the student you have to give more information throughout a webinar. I think that the webinar makes the difference between choosing you and choosing another university. Because people will pick up the country first throughout social media, and maybe then they will pick the university, so a webinar will help a lot and answering fast! Because people get desperate, when they apply for a university they get really desperate, and if they will have one answer they will go for it

Me: Ok. I can totally understand. It was the same for me when I first came here. Well, thank you very much for the interview, it was very, very helpful, and I hope I didn’t take too much of your time!

M.: Ok! I hope that you can use this information and I hope that it is useful for your research.

Me: Yes, for sure! Thank you very much!

M.: You’re welcome!

Me: Have a nice day!

M.: You too! Bye !

### Desislava Yordanova- Marketing and communications officer at IHS

Me: Hi Desi! You don’t mind if I am recording the interview right?

D: No Casandra, I don’t mind!

Me: Ok! So as I already told you about my thesis I am focusing on the LA market and on the online promotion in LA and I already had some interviews and I have some background information so I only have a couple of questions, therefore it’s going to be, I hope, a short interview. My first question would be what is your experience so far with the online promotion the LA market?

D: Honestly, is not so big, because we are just starting, we had our eyes on LA for quite a while but we didn’t really have the capacity to work with it and for a few months now we have started to put together some actions on what’s possible. It is more of a brainstorm rather than a strategy at the moment, but this is where we are going. So we have talked to the person responsible in Nuffic, to Sander, responsible for Mexico and Latin America, and we have met with Ana Maria and Marcela, Ana Maria is responsible for the whole Latin America except Mexico, and Marcela for Mexico, and we have some interesting insights from them. And they are going to help us see if we can organize some back to back fair in LA. SO we are more or less trying to see what’s going on in Nufic and see what promotion Nuffic is already doing. We haven’t done anything online yet, explicitly, so we are looking in the webinar that Nuffic is doing, and then I found a few education profilers, for example Vivo Mundo, it’s one of the biggest ones in LA, so it is possible for us to advertise the programmes there and basically trying to comply similar portals.

Me: But you already have a couple of LA students studying here and you also had in the previous years right?

D: Uhm, yes! So we had before a lot of LA students, but actually in the last years the number dropped and we think that it’s because in the past there were mainly trainings offered in LA and not so much academic requirements were being looked at. And after this also from the NFP, more attention was payed to the African countries and not that much on Latin America.

Me: And did you by any chance talk to any of the current or previous students did you see any preference or did they raise awareness of some programs that perhaps they would have been interested in and IHS wasn’t present?

D: No we haven’t really done, because doing the strategy would require a lot of power and time and we are actually now in the middle of the recruitment season so we don’t have much time to really strategize but we really have to implement. But there are some things and we actually did talk to Sander, as I said, and he gave us some really good advice and he said that there is a really growing interest among the LA students to look for education online, so that is there, the Facebook is more preferred than twitter or LinkedIn and he also did mention that they do prefer personal contact, so a webinar would be a really good tool to use because they want to see your face and they want to know who they are talking to rather than online only.

Me: And talking about the recruitment and the recruiting strategies, what are the general strategies that IHS is using?

D: It’s a really comprehensive combination of a lot of things, starting with the lead generation channels which you have the online profilers, do you want me to list them, or just general?

Me: No just general.

D: Alright, we have the social media, social media advertising, education fairs, lead capture forms, the website of course, gigantic tool, the alumni network, the academic staff, so literally everything that IHS is pointing towards leads. And then when a lead becomes and applicant or is in the process of becoming one we connect it to our managers , we have account managers for different regions, so if someone is coming from LA then he will come to me and then I will guide them through the application process, assist them with all their questions and everything. Then, if they apply they are still with me so after they are admitted I would call them and give them a congratulations call and see if I can help them with other questions, remind them about the admission acceptance form, remind them about the payment and our strategy here is to be friendly, not to be authoritative in our style of talking, but to be friendly. We call them on WhatsApp or they can text us on WhatsApp and they can email us in a very friendly way , so we want to be very personal with these people, we don’t want them to feel that we are addressing them in an administrative liability, but we want them in. And we follow up with them until they pay, or we help them with the scholarship, we give them tips, things like this.

Me: And is there any difference between the normal people who come here with scholarships and the self-payers? Do they have a special treatment?

D: There is a different procedure, for example there is divided between the NFP and the non NFP, because NFP have a really different procedure, so they have to apply with us, they have to be accepted, then they have to apply for the NFP and then we have to make a selection and send it to the embassies, the embassies have to make a pre-screening then they have to make the final eliminations. So this is a really lenghted process, and not as much in our hands as we want it to be, so actually the embassies make the final call. So our strategy is more direct to the people that we connect with., so the other students.

Me: And in terms of promotional activities can you name a few or maybe IHS had campaigns , i don’t know, Facebook campaigns?

D: Yeah, we have campaigns throughout the entire year, we have for example the social media campaign, we had one dedicated to informing students that applications are open, and it was another one which was more content based, where we used our specializations and we had weekly topics to create some content to attract students, where we, well, you wrote blogs, and we published the blogs.

Me: Yes, i did!

D: Yes. So a campaign with us it’s a bit more. I think it’s kind of difficult to put your finger in it, because we recruit on a year rolling basis is not four months in a year that you can specify, but there are things happening all the time, people are travelling, we get involved in events, for example we did three events this year in Indonesia, we were just in Vietnam and now we are going to do South Korea, Sarah was in Turkey, I will go back to Turkey, Indonesia is coming up again, this fall. So really it’s all back to back events, we did something in Peru, it was a Pronabec fair, Pronabec is the National Funding and Loan Organization sponsored by the Government, so what we found out is that there are a lot of initiatives by the Ministry of Education, to find funds for students to study abroad, so there were quite a lot in Colombia, Ecuador, Chile, they have the national Becas, and they also have student loans and 100% giveable loans if you get Suma cum laude, so there are quite a lot of things to look into and actually I made an overview of this, if you want I can send it to you.

Me: Definitely, it would be very helpful!

Me: Ok. So I think I have all the information I need for now, so thank you for the interview!

D: You’re welcome Casandra!

### Monserrat Budding Polo- Expert, Urban Competitiveness and Resilience, IHS

Me: Thank you Monse for offering me this interview! I just have a couple of question because I already discussed with Desi and with Marcela from Nuffic, so I already have a lot of information, but, as i already told you I do have some specific questions, what I would really like to know is what is your strategy towards the Mexican market, because I know you are working with Mexico and you are collaborating with Mexico?

M: Yeah, well when I started working at IHS I also had a contract as IHS Mexican representative. So that means that I am in charge of contacting Mexican candidates or Mexican Universities or organizations that can help us to recruit more students to IHS. So first of all I have to make a business plan or a business strategy to marketing, so what were my channels , the universities that I wanted to approach, the Dutch-Mexican organizations that were useful for me to contact first and of course once I contacted the Nuffic Mexico, for example, they uploaded a final blog that I wrote for them , about me as a Mexican alumni, and then they gave me the opportunity to write the blog and explain more about studying in Holland in general, and then a little bit focusing on IHS. Somehow I think that Nuffic doesn’t promote directly IHS, but in general Dutch Universities, which sometimes is quite difficult, because they give more promotion to others, like Amsterdam University, InHolland, these kind of universities and when I see it in their website or Facebook or social media it’s very, very little on IHS. Maybe only once when they launched they launched their OTS information, then IHS is there, but further they don’t try to promote it more, so also one of my tasks was to have more contact with them , and with Sander from Nuffic Mexico, to make this promotions more often let’s say in the social media, but he also asked me material from the marketing department, like videos, or one person that is directly working with blogs, so they need material in order to promote. So that’s something that maybe can be useful to really be active in bringing these materials to them. Maybe that was it. And once my information was on IHS website and in Nuffic website I also opened a Facebook page where I started also to promote myself , specially for Mexicans and Latin Americans, about what to do, what were the deadlines for admissions, the tuition fees, tips to come to The Netherlands, and to IHS and I tried to also promote a lot of information from IHS social media, so whatever they publish I also translate it into Spanish and sell it to the Spanish market.

Me: So there is such a Facebook page for Mexico?

M: Yeah!

Me: Ok. That’s good to know! And when you were talking to the prospect students did you see any interest towards some activities or would they like to see something specific?

M: Well fortunately everything is on the website, so if they have questions I can either send them a link or answer directly. The other thing is also that Nuffic invites us very often to these student fairs and in Mexico fortunately there is a little budget for me to go, and also people from marketing going to Mexico, yeah, it’s quite difficult.

Me: And when you were collaborating and sending brochures to the Mexican Universities, did you have a lot of replies or did you see any interest in IHS?

M: Well, first I think it’s a lot of administrative procedures and bureaucratic things because, first you have to contact the universities, once you have contact with them you go maybe to the student mobility department, or international fairs, and if they are interested then, ok, I make the bridge between me and Sarah, and then Sarah kind of explains them what do we do, and what kind of institute and education we are offering, once that it’s done then we start working on the Memorandum of Understanding. Once the MoU is signed, which takes around six months to one year, then we can start sending the brochures to the university.

Me: Ok. So it’s quite some time.

M: Yes. So what you did last year, helping me with those brochures, it was a process of one or two years ago. So it’s quite long.

Me: Ok. Yes. Interesting to know.

M: Yeah so reaching the Mexican market it’s possible, but it takes time because of all the bureaucratic processes between Mexico and here. On the other hand once they have our brochures, it’s my responsibility to keep tracking that they receive the information, that they keep promoting there and also one of the strategies that we spoke with Desi a long time ago and I don’t know if they follow up, honestly I haven’t also followed up, was to mention in the website which Mexican University we have MoU’s. We have like four universities now.

Me: Well I think I know everything I need to know for now. Thank you for the interview!

M: Ok. You’re welcome and good luck!

Me: Thank you!

### Darren Baradhan- Marketing Officer, ISS Erasmus University Rotterdam

Me: Hi Darren! Thank you for accepting the Interview!

D: No problem!

Me: As I told you, my research is about how can IHS improve its online presence in Latin America so they can get more students from that area, and I know that you were also working at IHS before, so you know a little bit the process and now you are working for ISS, can you tell me a little bit more about what you are doing now here?

D: Well, I am responsible for the whole Marketing and Recruitment of students of ISS, particularly for the Ma programme and my big role is to ensure that the admissions and the marketing team are jailed up together, because at it is at the moment, it is not, and to ensure more quality lead management we need to integrate marketing and admission together so that is part of my duty and it’s so far so good, but there will be more improvement coming. So that is my main responsibility at ISS.

Me: Ok. And how about the students that you have at ISS. Do you have a lot of Latin Americans?

D: Yes! We have a lot of Latin Americans, as a matter of fact our target countries, one of them are from Colombia, actually there’s two, and Mexico also. So yes, we have a lot of Latin American students at ISS.

Me: Ok. And what is your normal approach into getting to them and into recruiting them here?

D: Yeah. So, students who come to ISS they rely a lot on scholarship, not like IHS where, self-financed students are more easily attainable, but from the students that ISS targets, they are more likely to use scholarship as a funding source. So I would say 95% of the students that come to ISS have some sort of loan or a scholarship. And for Latin America per say, I think all of them have come via some kind of scholarship. ISS also has scholarship, give out scholarship, so we have the excellence student scholarship, and the hot ship scholarship for excellent students, so a lot of them are given to students and Latin American students are some of them.

Me: And in terms of promotional activities how do you promote ISS?

D: In Latin America?

Me: Yes, in Latin America.

D: Yeah. So normally we attend events there, but not in marketing team per say, but we send alumni to represent us and we also use the Nuffic agent who is based in Colombia or Mexico I think, either one, and he will help us with all the promotion and things like that. And we also have our Webinar, that we target Latin America, so we create a video, a live stream Webinar, particularly for Latin American students, and they can come and listen and also ask questions. And on top of that we also use, we invite them to apply for scholarship. We don’t wait for them to apply but we rigorously send them information they need in order to apply for scholarship.

Me: Ok. And so far this collaboration with Latin America and the Latin American students did you see any particular preference of them, or for example what online platforms are you using, do you see more on Facebook per say?

D: Yeah. They use a lot of Facebook, also use emails, but I know they prefer to meet people in their country, so recently one of our lecturers he went to Bogota, Colombia, and I invited all our prospective students and around 45 turned out and that was quite a number, so a lot of people turned out because they are very interested to come. So I would say face-to-face has a bigger impact but of course we can not yet measure, until September, October, then we can measure how many actually came from that event.

Me: Ok. And except Facebook, what other online, platforms is ISS using?

D: We have on social media, Flickr, we have Instagram, we have Twitter, we have LinkedIn, so we have quite a few, and YouTube.

Me: Ok. Quite interesting. Thank you! Those were my questions! As I told you it was a very short interview because I already had other interviews and these were my questions. So thank you!

D: No problem

## Focus group answers

Q: What motivated you?

: couldn’t find the right scholarship, also accepted in UK, Netherlands was wildly known for urban, because of the scholarship comes here

: Change of field, chose urban management, professor sent it to him

: Change of career as architect, Delft or here, Delft is more design, here is different from other, talked to Neso and previous ambassadors

: In Brazil scholarship, wanted to study abroad, chose a country and then choose programme, wanted to find something different and something related to architecture, looking at rankings and websites, discussed with brazil and here

Lot talked to ambassadors after, one before

Ricc: Daniel Lorenzo (found on website) – gave him advise about motivation letter, he was useful – studied business, found urban development online

Michael: after graduation was teaching, US, Canada, ranking globally was 79, discussed his background, applied, kept calling, discount of fee – talked to UMD11 about money, sent them to verify account, made payment right away,

: Was urban planner, simply interested in urban infrastructure, googled, UCT, MIT and HIS came up, didn’t want to go back, applied UCT and didn’t work out, went on website, needed to go out of small town, also interested in urban management, charm started calling so she had talks with her, she gave me a lot of information, applied too late for scholarship, Charm was asking how she could help

Q: who talked to?

Sherif: Charm received hundred mails from me, she replied, I was nervous, never was out of country,

Nobody used website to contact

: Used WhatsApp, talked to somebody from India

Q: Did it help to talk to people?

: Akravi was lovely, it was nice over WhatsApp, administrative messages

: I was sending lot of email to Charmae, she always responds, she went to the details, followed up with a phone call, even if other replied I always cc her

: Desi helped a lot, after I was accepted, I asked questions later

: I contacted ambassador, Thatou on fb, another professor from university, she studied at HIS in 90’s, she only had good things to say, good experience, that’s how I made up my mind

: Website was quite clear, always can find anything, that’s why I didn’t bother to ask anybody, cool was to save application and come back to it, gave time to confirm

Everybody saved up, nobody finished in one day

Michael: website shows people by department, I spoke to Charm and Ni, that Charm was alumni herself gave him confidence

Dzifa: I wanted to go to Holland, wanted to work in planning after business, worked in marketing, was looking for a job and couldn’t do it, someone from marketing sent me us and applied, just wen tot website

Q: Everybody found everything on website?

Some info is also on eur website, most of info on eur, housing, living cost

: Price for living cost is unreal

Everybody saw video from specialization before coming

: Came here for specialization, after talking to people still confused about specialization

: Changed my mind on specialization

: So decided after got here

: There is not enough info to give before, has to experience

Sherif: For HIS is better strategy to put eur more in marketing with Erasmus university, couldn’t understand before coming, some even don’t understand

: It would matter lot more before applying

: For specific type of people, that his if specific on urban planning was the main criteria, comes from urban planning background

Q: What should be communicated more?

: Affiliation was a big thing outside of urban planning

: What was not clear, started from specialization, thought mfui was separate master, didn’t see umd was covering it

Q? What would you like to see more about the structure?

: Yes very,

: Need to understand the curriculum better, more credits, which course

: Why do we have different time? Others ask, why are we different

Q: Shows website – what is not clear?

: It is lot better now

: Structure and specialization – one part of the year

: The curriculum

: Number of credits

: More info about core period

: More customer friendly, more structured, compared to other uni are better, lacking in structure

: Less word, eur is nice website

Michael: doesn’t show building, picture of campus, all want to see

: More about Rotterdam than campus,

: You feel better to see it

: When google campus in the city, when you google his you see it is further, you want to visualize more, HIS promotes itself in theory and practice but on the website is little info about ground project, projects in different places, more about activities, also because of structure, I want to see this network in India, see if they are any project

All looked at teachers

Sherif: I trust the university and that’s enough

: Looked up campus on google maps

: Had to search on YouTube videos from website, there is a lot

Sherif: I was looking if IHS is part of actual campus, is it located somewhere else?

Q: Looked on fb? LinkedIn?

: Yes, fb and LinkedIn, it pops up on fb, always pops up

: After searching it all appears

: Found about IHS through architects in s. Africa – pops up on linked in, came up after talking to somebody in Johannesburg

Q: First time ever?

: Teacher, institute of architect

: Nuffic website

: Typed in google urban infrastructure

: Friend at work

: Internet – searching, googled scholarships and masters

Grace: google, search masters

Hanna: searching for masters

Then all went to website

Michael: first to Erasmus then His website

Diego: I applied to 4 cities and didn’t get in, looked at Erasmus and then to webpage

Hanna: choosing between 4 cities and HIS, I was searching for programmes with different background

: Same for me, different background

All find useful or annoying here

Sherif: people in here without math knowledge, so hard to explain, group in together has trouble with it, groups should be teamed up in that matter

Hilia: Sheer amount of class was surprise

Everybody was surprised

Expected maximum 50, maybe 70

: Curious see to know the countries are from, just here found out, no idea how big of a group, know the countries and how many from each

Q: Did any phone calls helped?

: Darren called me to brazil

Dzifa: talked to Darren because of my admissions, he helped a lot, got feedback, practical details

Ric: told me about payment deadline, got email about paying deadline, was not clear about it

Q: No calls before deciding to come

Grace: had problem with payment, didn’t get the information from the beginning, after invoice, accepted and you have to pay to this account, all in once, pay directly, takes few days, was rushed because of the deadline, all info should be from beginning

Dzifa: there should be more about the housing, it is limited here, there should be more about how to find accommodation, for a month I didn’t have a place

Hanna: eur site is better, it has a lot of links and info about it

Michael: make it more clear, more pictures, all was saying that they were full, came early to find a house,

Ric: I understand it is difficult

Hilia: IHS wanted papers from all the organizations, employer, and it has nothing to do with that, I decided on my own, why employers papers

Diego: I couldn’t get together all the papers

Hilia: my organization didn’t want to have anything to do about it, I missed deadline because of that, it took them a month

Sherif: ask professors is normal, endorsement letter from work is normal

Hilia: endorsement was trouble, if the organization is not interested it makes it complicated, I was doing it on my own, it made it complicated, missed deadline about scholarship

Grace: scholarships are linked with person coming back to country

Hilia: differentiation makes it better

Q: Problem during admissions?

: Seemed very clear

: Course burro didn’t respond

Diego: original diploma might be destroyed during transport in hard copy

Sheriff: it is relation between 2 universities

Q: Turning point in decision?

Michael: when I got the visa

Dzifa: when I got the email from that friend who recommended, was decided about Holland, was deferred from UMD11 but still didn’t reply anywhere else

Diego: did a course in Sweden, travelled around, wanted to go to Denmark or Holland, also found UK, it was research and decided on Netherlands

Hilia: when I read about specialization

Sherif: talked to professor from his mailing list, he received that application is open, he forwarded it to me, trusted him, it made me go through it

Ric: talked to guy and was doubting too focused on developing countries, he said that it is more than that

Michael: made phone call, could you tell me more, lot of questions, gave me a mail and number, somebody else answered, got everything through calling or mails

: Communication before here is very good, level of service is good, helpful, accommodating, people are willing, really makes a difference

Hilia: Visa, IHS needs to clarify of the specify needs about the country, didn’t get the choice on the nearest embassy, had to travel out of country

Michael: I had choices, I had all I needed,

: Info about procedure in advance

Q: Add?

Sherif: Should ground activities on developing countries, fairs, like in Egypt, more Latin America

Ambassadors in countries and do more in specific countries

Michael: through the awareness

Hanna: Russian group inactive on fb

Hilia: lot of people communicate, different people all the time, didn’t know who to send an email about what, confused about that

Dzifa: links from YouTube on website, even if it redirects