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Final report for senior creative project “KeepUpKid”

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Final report for senior creative project "KeepUpKid"

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Management

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Final Report for Senior Creative Project “KeepUpKid”

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Introduction

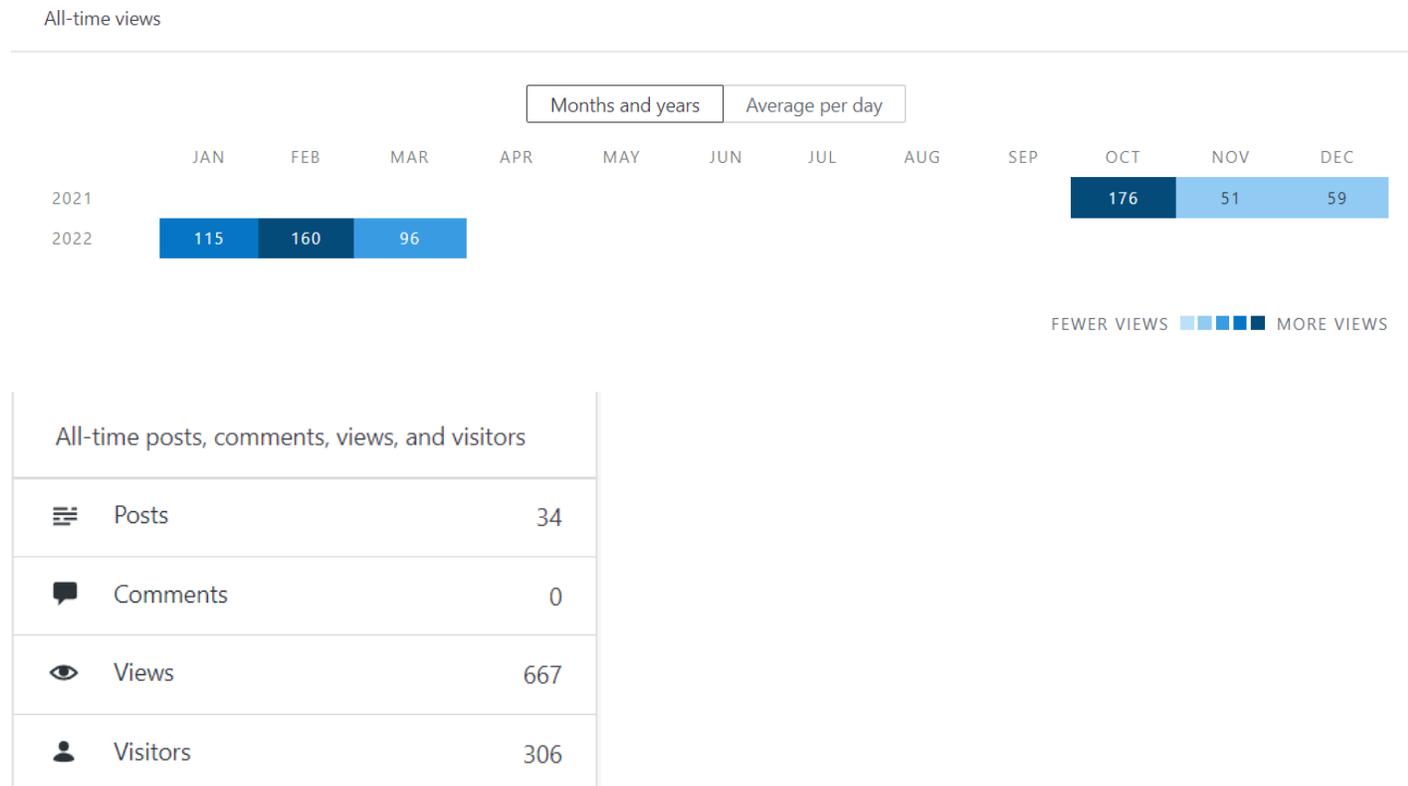
My name is Selena Fack and just a little over 6 months ago, I began my senior project called KeepUpKid, which is a lifestyle blog that has 34 live articles being read in 17 countries by 306 readers. My blog can be accessed at keep-up-kid.com. I chose to pursue creating this blog in the first place because it would and has allowed me to practice skills from my major in business administration with a concentration in management and from my minor in creative writing. Therefore, my project has allowed me to further my education through hands-on experience with a project that exists beyond the classroom.

However, there is a deeper reason behind my “why.” As a first-generation college student, I felt like I was going into college blind compared to the rest of my peers whose parents could talk to them about their college days. I would have greatly appreciated having a parent or older sibling that had gone through the college experience before me because then I could have asked them for advice and guidance when I felt lost, overwhelmed, and simply like I couldn’t keep up with everything going on. The purpose of my blog is to serve as this older sibling figure that can give my readers valuable advice and help them feel like they can keep up by reading and learning from the information I publish.

Goals and Objectives

There were several quantitative that I set for myself at the start of this project, and I am very happy that I was able to accomplish all of them. From October 11th, 2021, to the present date of March 31st, 2022, I set out to publish a minimum of 27 articles and to have at least 50 blog views each month. The graphics below, which come directly from my blogging software,

demonstrate that I achieved both of these goals with 34 articles posted and 51 to 176 views a month.



My main qualitative goal was to create valuable content for students in the higher education system such as how to make important decisions throughout college and how to take care of oneself mentally and physically. I believe that I have fulfilled this goal based on the number of readers as well as feedback that I have received from readers, such as friends, professors, and bosses who have discussed that my blog provided them with quality information that really explains concepts and provides great ideas. My second qualitative goal was to present at Eastern Michigan University's 42nd Undergraduate Symposium. I achieved this after submitting my application and being accepted. On Friday, March 25th, 2022, I presented "The Secrets of Creating a Lifestyle Blog," which consisted of an overview, the content I published, the tools I used, the results I achieved, and what I learned from the whole experience. My last

qualitative goal was to create a reflection paper of at least 10 pages to document everything that I have done for my senior creative project and everything that I have learned from it.

Documentation of the Creative Project Itself

My blog and all articles can be accessed at this link: keep-up-kid.com.

The Content

My blog consists of 5 menu headings which are titled Home, About, The College Life, Body & Mind, and Treat Yourself. My Home page discusses that the blog is intended for students trying to keep up with life and provides a brief preview of all articles. My About page introduces myself a little bit, such as my interests, as well as the purpose of my blog. The three remaining menu headers consist of my niches, which means specific content for my specific audience of college students. “The College Life” discusses how to make important decisions in college and construct materials for a professional career like resumes. “Body & Mind” talks about how to take care of one’s mental and physical health. Lastly, “Treat Yourself” describes different vacation destinations, products, and pop culture entertainment. These 3 categories house all of my 34 articles and serve as a means of organization. The following is a list of every article title within each of my three niches.

The College Life

1. How to Know What I Should Major In
2. How Do I Make Friends In College?
3. How to Write a Resume When You Have No Experience
4. 5 College Study Tips for Finals
5. Senioritis is Real

6. 15 Virtual Volunteer Opportunities
7. Do Colleges Have Clubs?
8. Easy Fundraising Ideas for College Clubs
9. Is Honors College Worth It?
10. How to Write a Cover Letter for a Job with No Experience
11. Interview Tips for Success
12. How to Create a Blog of My Own

Body & Mind

1. Are Tattoos Still Cool?
2. Managing Stress Strategies
3. Should Everyone Go to Therapy?
4. 3 of the Best Books to Read in College
5. 3 Easy to Make Desserts at Home
6. Does Gratitude Make You Happier?
7. 5 Things to Do When I'm Bored
8. 5 Things to Do When I'm Bored (Part 2)
9. The Best Order of Applying Skincare
10. 25 Great Gifts for People with Anxiety
11. Why Self Care is Important

Treat Yourself

1. What's Good to Watch on Netflix Right Now?
2. Why to Shop Local
3. Simple Gifts for Her Birthday

4. Where to Buy Personalized Christmas Ornaments
5. Chicago In a Weekend Itinerary
6. 44 Date Ideas for Valentine's Day
7. 33 Thoughtful Valentines Gift Ideas
8. The Ultimate Packing List for a Summer Vacation
9. How to Plan Your Florida Spring Break Trip
10. 20 Things to Do On Your Birthday with Your Friends
11. The Funniest Comedians on Netflix

The Best Practices

Through research as well as trial and error, I learned that there are several successful blog article formats. The first includes writing articles in a list format because this increases readability and makes it easy for readers to scan the article and find what they are looking for. I also include comparisons such as “Flying vs. Driving to Florida” because this format can be extremely beneficial for showing pros and cons to my readers when they are trying to make decisions. Quotes are also incorporated into my blog because these spark readers’ interests and persuade them to continue reading. I also like to include facts because it adds credibility to my articles, shows that I have done my research, and makes me a more trustworthy source of information. Lastly, I have found it beneficial to include links to products and travel destination websites that I mention in my articles. This increases the chances that my readers will like my articles and continue reading because they don’t have to go searching for the products or places that I am talking about. Instead, my readers can conveniently click right on my website and be taken directly to the product or place that I am talking about.

The Tools

The Platform, Host, Domain, & Email

I spent many hours researching the best blogging software to host my blog by looking into Wix, Squarespace, Wordpress.com, and Wordpress.org. I chose a Wordpress platform over the other platforms because Wordpress powers over 43% of all websites on the internet which demonstrates the reliability and success of this platform. There are two different WordPress software's and they do differ in important ways. I read multiple articles that stated Wordpress.org was the best option because it had the most customization, but I learned that more choices aren't always a good thing. After trying out Wordpress.org for a few weeks and speaking with Bud Gibson, a professor here at EMU who oversees the Center for Digital Engagement, I decided on switching to Wordpress.com. Bud also uses this for his websites and personally recommends it over Wordpress.org because the Wordpress.com version is simpler and more user friendly.

The Wordpress.org version has endless customization options that are easy to get overwhelmed with unless you have decent coding experience. It is possible to hire web designers to help out, but I didn't want to do this because I wanted to create the website on my own with few expenses. The Wordpress.com version still gave me great customization options and was much less overwhelming. I also found that many people agreed on Wordpress.com being great for blogs and Wordpress.org being great for all other websites such as an e-commerce store. There are a variety of Wordpress.com versions available and I chose the premium version for \$8 a month which equals \$96 annually. My reasoning for doing this is because this version offers great analytics which means that I can see how many readers have viewed what specific article and from what country. I also have access to 24/7 live chat support, so I can type in a question

any time of day and be provided with help. Lastly, this version has great future potential in the sense that I can attempt to start making revenue from my blog by running advertisements on it or by selling my own products. This version also includes the price of my domain, which is the URL that readers type into their search engine.

In addition to buying this software for a year, I also pay a monthly subscription to keep a professional email account through my blog and WordPress software. This email subscription costs \$3.50 a month. I personally have not used it very much because only 2 readers subscribe to email notifications, whereas 12 subscribe to my blog in general, but I like to have it in case readers would ever like to get in contact with me or ask a question.

Follower totals

 WordPress.com	12
 Email	2

SEO

SEO stands for Search Engine Optimization. It involves improving your website so that viewers can easily find your website when they type in keywords. For example, a key word that someone might type into Google would be “blog.” So, the idea is that if my blog has good SEO, when people Google the keyword “blog,” my website should be one of the first websites that pops up on the first page of Google, however, there are many things that factor into having good SEO and it has become its own data science of sorts, so simply having a keyword like “blog” in my website will not guarantee that it will be on the first page of Google search results. Instead of using general and singular words like this, I focused on using long-tail keywords which mean phrases. So, instead of putting the word “blog” into my article, I focused on putting the phrase, “how do I write a blog post” into my article. The reasoning behind long-tail keywords is that

they are more specific than general and singular words, and therefore, there will be less websites trying to compete to rank for these words which means less competition. And less competition means that my long tail keyword and website are more likely to pop up and get read. The goal is to rank for specific keywords with little competition but a high search volume, but this can be difficult to figure out on one's own, and that is where SEO software comes in.

I personally use Ubersuggest and pay \$29 for it monthly. The reason why I have chosen this software over others is because it is actually very modestly priced compared to other services that charge anywhere from \$70-\$200 a month. I like Ubersuggest because I can type in the idea that I want to write about, such as "how do I write a blog post" and it shows me the volume of keywords (meaning how much it is searched) and the SEO difficulty (meaning how many other websites are trying to rank for the same keyword). It separates words with low SEO difficulty into green, moderate difficulty in orange, and high difficulty in red. I then choose from among the keywords in green because these words are the most likely words that will bring more traffic to my website since they are highly searched with low competition.

<input type="checkbox"/>	KEYWORDS		VOLUME	CPC	PAID DIFFICULTY	SEO DIFFICULTY
YOUR KEYWORDS						
<input type="checkbox"/>	how do i write a blog post	Search Results	10	\$9.96	59	23
KEYWORD IDEAS						
<input type="checkbox"/>	how to write a blog post	Search Results	1,900	\$3.00	38	79
<input type="checkbox"/>	how to write blog post	Search Results	1,900	\$3.00	38	76
<input type="checkbox"/>	how to write a blog post outline	Search Results	260	\$3.21	45	49
<input type="checkbox"/>	how to write good blog posts	Search Results	210	\$2.29	30	76
<input type="checkbox"/>	how to write a blog post template	Search Results	140	\$5.06	24	63
<input type="checkbox"/>	how to write a blog post in wordpress	Search Results	70	\$2.50	12	60

Example of Ubersuggest Software

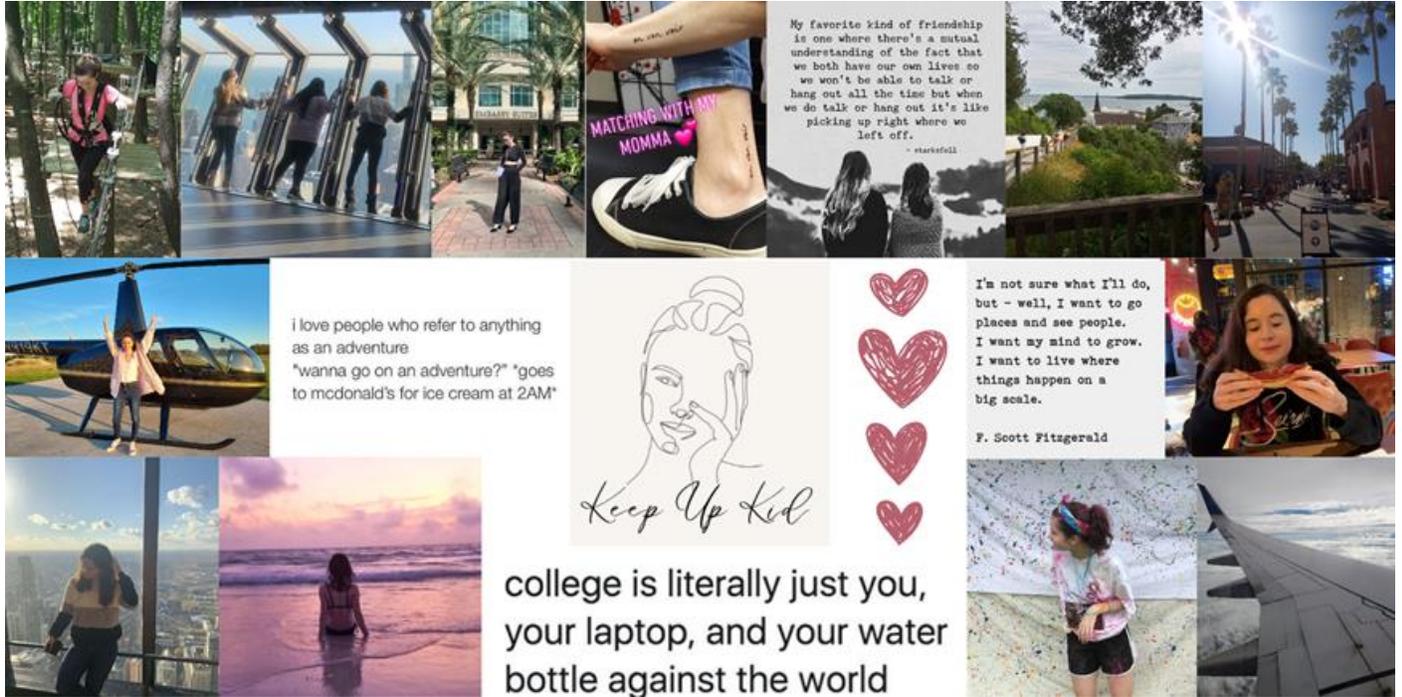
The “Search Results” button also gives me content ideas by showing me real articles from other websites with that keyword in the title. Therefore, this software allows me to pick specific keywords and phrases that relate to my idea and increases the chances of my blog popping up when people search for my idea.

Graphic Design

To create certain graphics like my home page banner, logo, and social media posts, I used the free graphic design software called Canva. Canva offers specific templates for each of these things, meaning that the logo size is already set at the standard logo size and the social media posts for Instagram and Pinterest templates are already made to specifically fit the graphic size of each social media platform because they do differ.

Organization

Staying organized was crucial in the execution and success of my project. To do this, I used Google Sheets to create content calendars consisting of when I wanted to post what article and when I wanted to market that article. These spreadsheets also allowed me to keep track of what keywords I was using and how many times I was using each word. I also used Google Docs and folders to keep my actual articles housed and organized. To proofread these articles, I simply downloaded them from a Google Doc to a Word document so that grammar and spelling could be checked.



My Home Page Banner Made with Canva

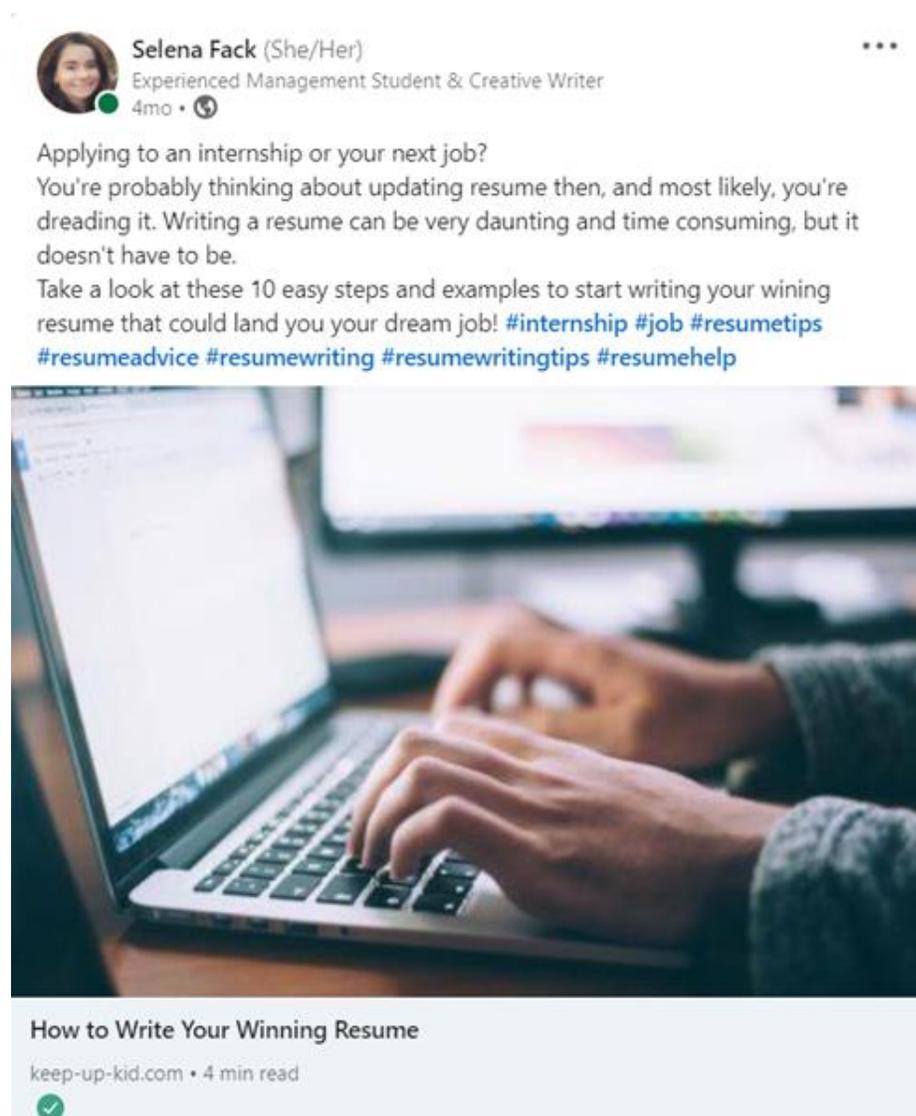


My Blog Logo Made with Canva

Marketing

In order to attract readers to my blog, I utilized four different social media platforms which consisted of LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, and Snapchat. I learned how to summarize my articles, how to persuade my followers of my articles' value, and how to convince them to click to read the entire article. This also involved learning how to link articles on each specific platform and how to create graphics for each as well. I also learned that different platforms mean

different content. For example, since LinkedIn is a professional networking social media platform, I only posted articles related to my “college life” niche like how to write a resume. Whereas on Instagram, the content is focused on aesthetically pleasing photos and less on a professional angle, so I posted from my “Treat Yourself” niche with a mix of natural photos about travel destinations and crafted graphics about products. I personally found the most success using LinkedIn and Instagram. I believe that this is because of the interesting graphics and my larger number of followers on these two platforms, versus Pinterest and Snapchat.



LinkedIn Marketing Example



Two Instagram Marketing Ex.

Pinterest Marketing Ex.

Snapchat Marketing Ex.

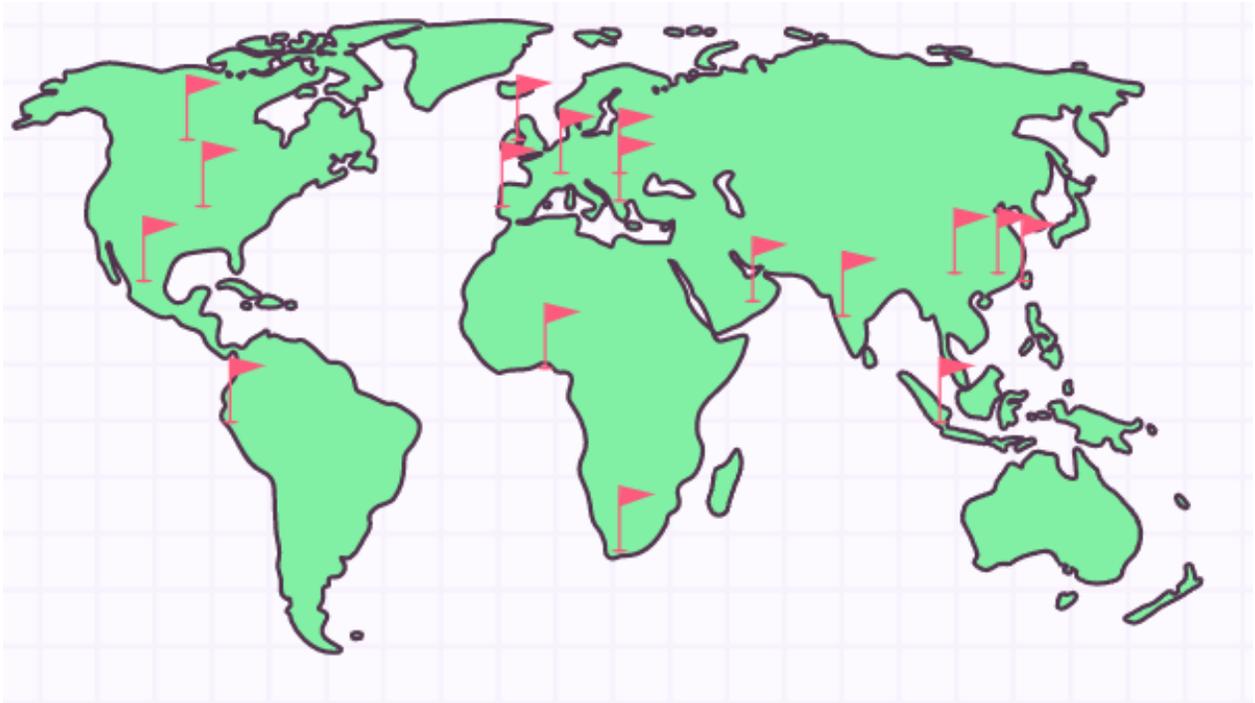
Top Photo - Natural

Bottom Photo - Crafted Graphic

Final Results & Reflective Evaluation

Results

As my senior creative project concludes, I have written a total of 45,458 words with an average of 1,263 words per article which is equivalent to 114 pages in single spaced Times New Roman 12pt. font. I have spent a total of 356 hours on this project over the past 6 months and I have readers in 17 different countries, which are pictured and listed below.



Map of Where My Readers Live

1. United States
2. Canada
3. Mexico
4. Ecuador
5. England
6. Germany
7. Spain
8. Ukraine
9. Bulgaria
10. Oman
11. Vietnam
12. Nigeria

13. South Africa

14. India

15. China

16. Singapore

17. Taiwan

Reflection: Things that I Have Yet to Explore

I am very proud of everything that I have accomplished throughout this project but were I to pursue it again from the very beginning, there are a few more things that I would like to explore such as joining blogger groups. I came across this idea in my research but did not pursue it due to lack of time. I would've also liked to experiment with creating email campaigns and templates should I have had more email subscribers. In addition to this, I might have tried investing in social media management tools like Asana or Tailwind, instead of doing all of the social media marketing manually. Exploring making revenue by running ads and selling my own merchandise through my blog would have also served as something interesting to pursue.

Reflection: The Conclusion

From creating this senior creative project, I gained a lot of confidence from owning a project that was 100% my own and that exists out in the world, beyond the classroom, for others to see. This experience, and the fact that it is public, also gave me valuable experience for future careers and actually helped me secure a paid freelance blogging job just this month. I was also able to practice and develop both my writing and project management skills even more from my education. In addition to these skills, I also learned patience and how to have empathy for myself. For example, I realized that running a blog takes a lot more time than I originally

anticipated between idea generation, content calendars, drafts, proofing, marketing, researching, and keeping everything organized. By doing all of these things, I realized that being highly critical of myself is not the best or most productive way to go about things. Instead, having empathy and understanding for myself is a much better approach because it allows me to focus on the things that I have accomplished and that gives me the motivation to continue pursuing my goals. I also gained hindsight and self-awareness when I learned that not everything I write will get published and that is okay. Sometimes, I just need to write things to process them. Or the subject simply doesn't align with my brand or niches and that's okay too. Lastly, I gained satisfaction knowing that I accomplished my goals and helped a few people along the way.