Digital Marketing Strategy

Present to: *Wisconsin Union Theater*

Marketing in the Digital Age

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Executive Summary

The Wisconsin Union Theater (WUT) is a cherished cultural institution at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, dedicated to cultivating a lifelong appreciation of the performing arts. Currently, WUT boasts a robust digital presence with extensive social media activity but has limited reach among students and young audiences as well as an under-optimized mobile user experience. Despite a strong presence for certain search terms, WUT's visibility for local search keywords remains limited, indicating room for SEO improvement.

The primary objectives are to increase student ticket sales by 10% and enhance 20% audience growth on social media, targeting users aged 18-24. The recommended strategy encompasses utilizing SEO-focused keywords, optimizing for mobile web user experience, crafting innovative social media campaigns, and leveraging artists as influencers. By implementing these strategies, WUT aims to not only reach its target audience more effectively but also strengthen its position as a leading cultural venue, blending traditional arts with modern digital tools and ensuring WUT's legacy and relevance in a rapidly evolving digital world.

Overview of the Business

WUT presents world-class performances, the annual season has over thirty events like Classical and Jazz Series, Global Music, Dance, and Black Arts Matter. WUT offers regular season tickets and subscriptions, alongside discounted student tickets priced between $5-$12, compared to the standard $40 per show. WUT currently reaches out to students using a multifaceted marketing strategy including environmental signage in campus buildings and dorms, organic and paid social media, as well as collaboration with the UW School of Music. WUT sells 480 tickets per show on average, with a 13% student ticket sale rate. (Appendix Figure 1.) Based on WUT's current situation and student outreach efforts, our goals for this campaign are:

- *Business Goal*: Increase 10% student ticket sales to 23% by the end of the Fall 2024 season through a mobile website and SEO keywords optimization, as well as a social media campaign targeting a younger audience aged 18-24.

- *Digital Marketing Goal:* Enhance 20% audience growth on Facebook and Instagram of users aged 18-24 by the end of the Fall 2024 season by executing a social media campaign featuring increased Instagram reels and seasonal artists partnership.

Digital Marketing Audit

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
• Frequent Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter content schedule.	• Low engagement from young social media users, especially on Facebook.	• Use more keywords on websites for SEO optimization. • Optimization of websites for mobile.	• High Google Ad prices.
• Updated website with several landing pages and a monthly blog.	• Limited access to the student audience. Not allowed to email students specifically.	• Incorporation of Instagram Reels. • Can use seasonal artists as Influencers.	• Competitor venues near campus such as the Overture Center.

WUT has a strong digital media presence. They publish over 100 posts per quarter across Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Beyond organic content, WUT also uses paid ads on platforms such as Meta, The Weekly, Madison.com, and WPR. To stay ahead in the digital marketing landscape, WUT monitors the strategies of its competitors. The Hamel Music Center, Overture Center, The Orpheum Theater, and Majestic Theatre serve as notable local competitors. On average, the Wisconsin Union Theater posts over twice as much as their competitors (Figure 2). Despite their strong posting schedule, the Theater receives only half as much engagement on average as their competitors (Figure 3).

WUT has high online visibility on specific terms like "wut," "WUT" or "Wisconsin Union Theater", but they remain less competitive in local search keywords like "theaters near me" or "theaters in Madison". Of WUT's competitors, The Overture Center is the only business that allocates its budget on sponsored ads of its own keywords, but there are no sponsored ads on local keywords. This insight reveals the potential for WUT to grow through both organic SEO efforts of revising content to align with search algorithms, and bidding on keywords to stand out among competitors.

Digital Marketing Audit
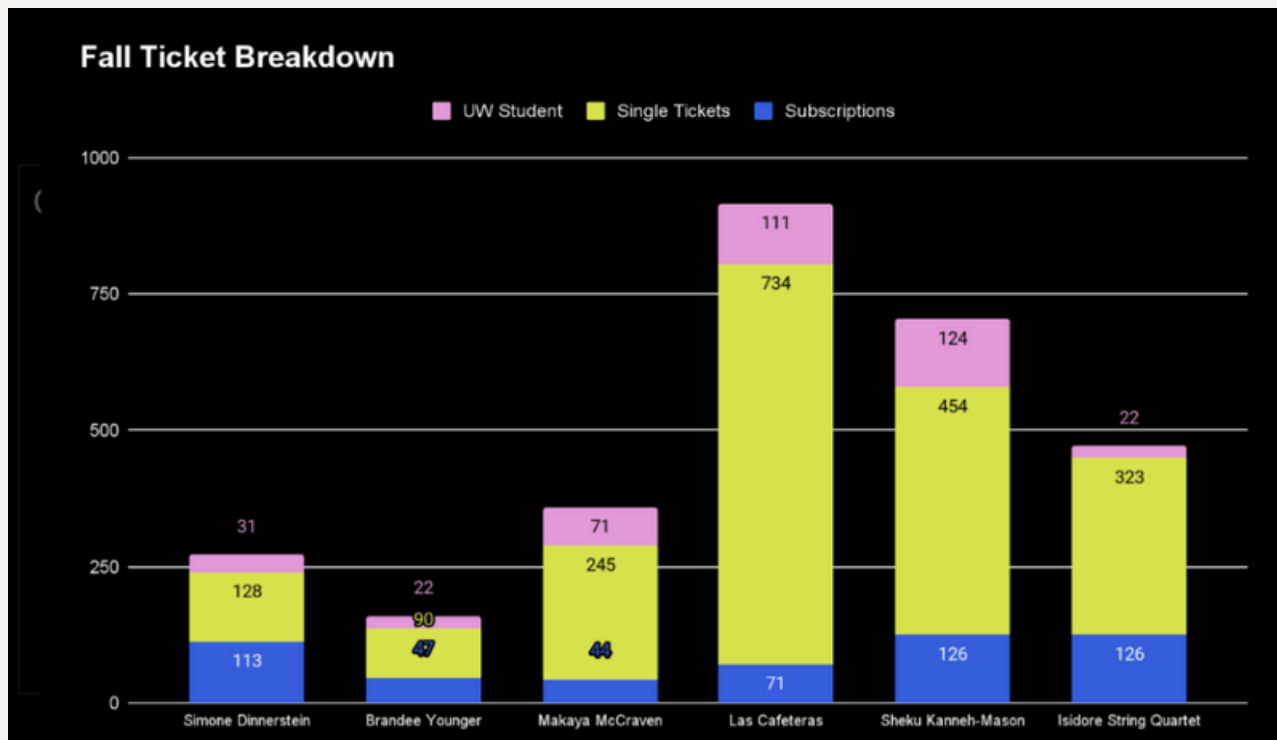
Figure 1: WUT Ticket Breakdown

Fall Ticket Breakdown

■ UW Student   ■ Single Tickets   ■ Subscriptions

Artist	UW Student	Single Tickets	Subscriptions
Simone Dinnerstein	31	128	113
Brandee Younger	22	90	47
Makaya McCraven	71	245	44
Las Cafeteras	111	734	71
Sheku Kanneh-Mason	124	454	126
Isidore String Quartet	22	323	126

Figure 2: Publishing Frequency of WUT vs. Local Competitors

Source: Sprout Social

Publishing Behavior

View the different types of posts you and your competitors published during the selected time period.

Published Posts Average

● Your Average   ● Competitor Average

WUT's web pages are hosted on the Wisconsin Union's website, boasting a comprehensive structure comprising over 16 landing pages dedicated to various facets of the theater. These pages include the season schedule, Classical and Jazz series, festivals, and more, each outfitted with ticketing links. However, there are concerns regarding the ease of mobile navigation due to the website's limited functionality on cellular devices. In contrast, the mobile websites of Overture Center and Majestic Theatre feature clear and easy-to-navigate ticket purchasing processes, which potentially boosts ticket sales by simplifying the consumer journey.

Through online listening, Mention.com reveals a minimal online buzz about WUT, indicating a need for increased online visibility. On Instagram, engagement and visibility is most popular with video content. Additionally, Google Trends highlights peaks of traffic during specific periods, such as Halloween and the beginning of academic semesters which correlates to the start of the annual season. Google Reviews showcases a positive sentiment with an overall rating of 4.7 stars. Yelp and TripAdvisor reviews, both with high overall ratings, lack substantial discussions about the WUT. These findings underscore the importance of WUT broadening its online presence and audience engagement to build upon its existing reputation and reach.

Target Market Online

WUT's current audience comprises UW-Madison students and staff, alumni, and Madison area residents. WUT has a large proportion of engagement from matured audiences aged 25-44 (Figure 4). To further expand WUT's awareness and reach, the online target market for this campaign will focus on current UW-Madison students aged 18-24. They have moderate or student income and usually use mobile phones and laptops for gathering information online and interacting with others. (Figure 5) They are highly active on social media like Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok, where they post about their lives and engage with the content they are interested in (Figure 6). WUT primarily attracts individuals interested in music, live performances, and cultural events, based on our market research and Simmons Insight data (Figure 7). Their online behaviors also indicate an interest in event-related content, with engagement peaking around significant academic periods and holidays, which reveals a potential to engage with them through special and engaging events-related content.

Target Market Online

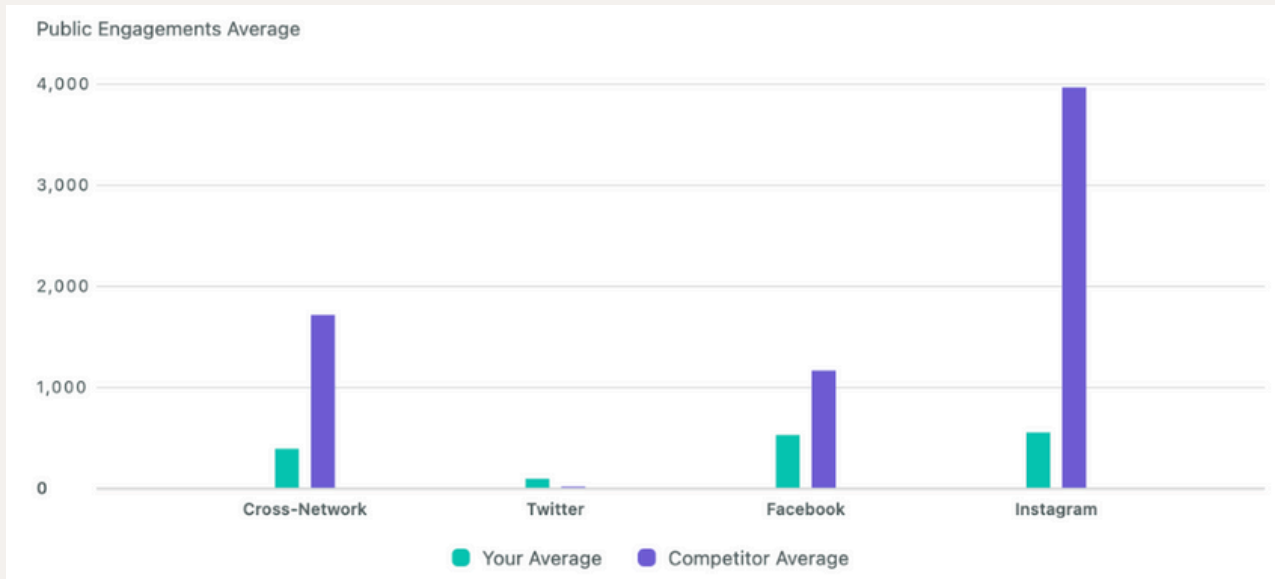**Figure 3: Engagement Levels of WUT vs. Local Competitors**

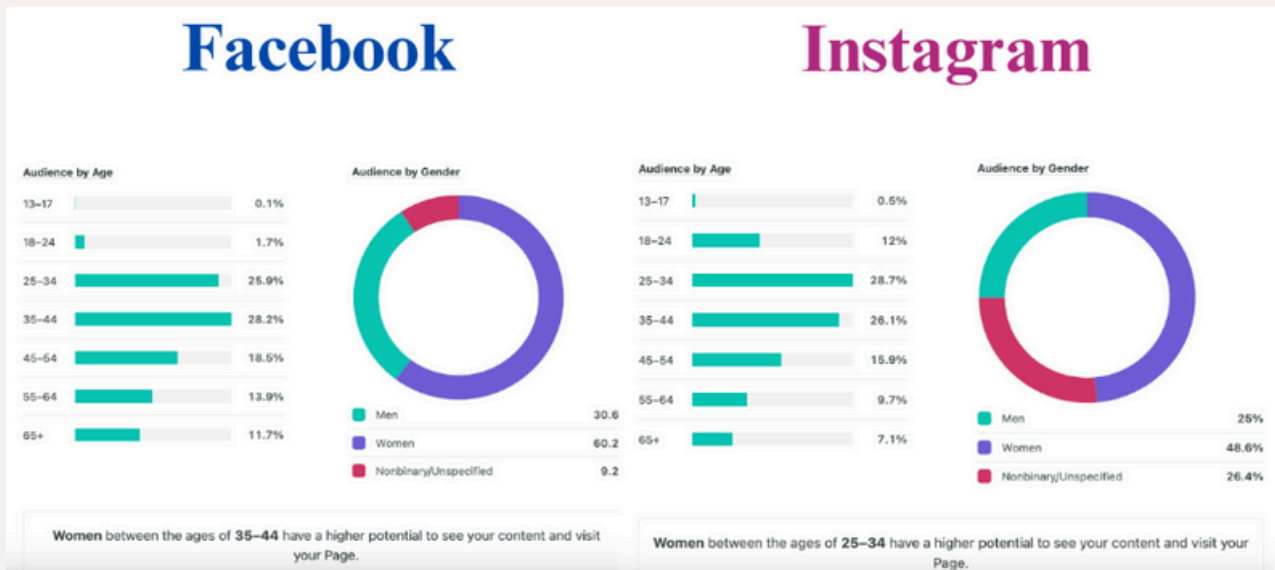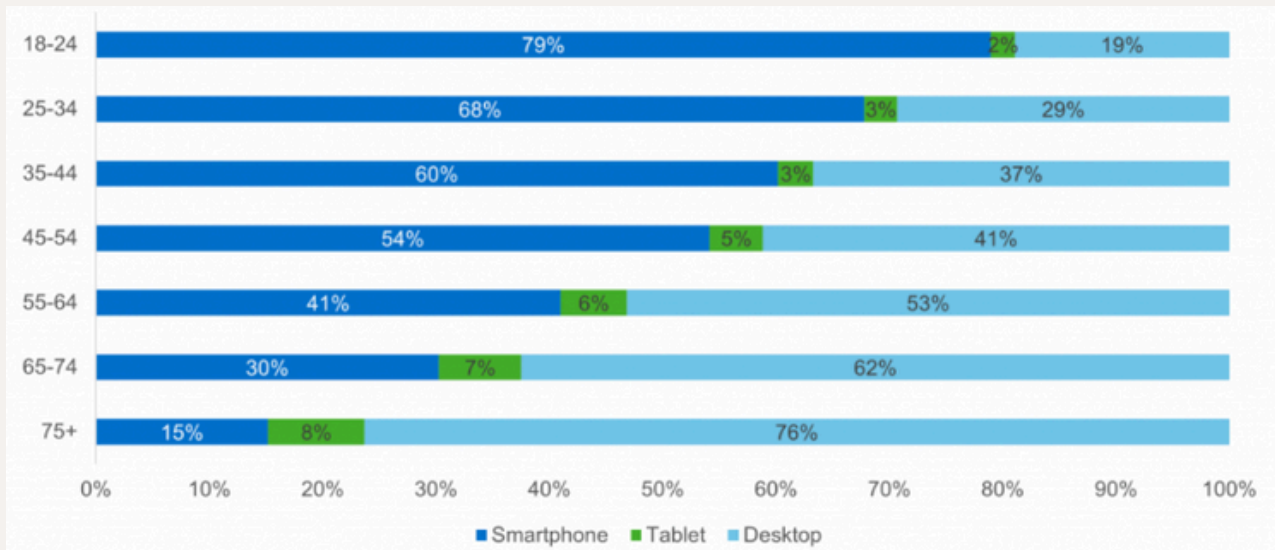**Figure 4: Current Social Media Audience Breakdown**

Figure 5: Target Audience Device Usage by Age Group

Target Market Online

Figure 6: Target Audience Social Media Usage

	AGE SUMMARY_ 18-24				
	Sample	Weighted(000)	Vertical %	Horizontal %	Index
Total	28,476	136,583	100%	54%	100
SOCIAL MEDIA USED IN THE LAST 30 DAYS_ FACEBOOK	19,118	91,729	67.2%	55.5%	103
SOCIAL MEDIA USED IN THE LAST 30 DAYS_ INSTAGRAM	15,541	71,314	52.2%	74.7%	138
SOCIAL MEDIA USED IN THE LAST 30 DAYS_ LINKEDIN	6,233	22,353	16.4%	63.4%	117
SOCIAL MEDIA USED IN THE LAST 30 DAYS_ PINTEREST	6,500	30,608	22.4%	61.3%	114
SOCIAL MEDIA USED IN THE LAST 30 DAYS_ SNAPCHAT	9,080	45,478	33.3%	86.8%	161
SOCIAL MEDIA USED IN THE LAST 30 DAYS_ TIKTOK	6,236	31,744	23.2%	83%	154
SOCIAL MEDIA USED IN THE LAST 30 DAYS_ YOUTUBE	18,142	86,024	63%	62.3%	115

Figure 7: Target Audience Age Range and Behavior Correlation

	AGE SUMMARY_18-24				
	Sample	Weighted(000)	Vertical %	Horizontal %	Index
Total	15,498	74,857	100%	29.6%	100
ATTEND COUNTRY MUSIC PERFORMANCES IN LAST 12 MONTHS[1]	616	2,933	3.9%	35.3%	119
#ATTEND R&B/HIP-HOP/RAP PERFORMANCES_PARTICIPATED IN LAST 12 MONTHS [44	244	1,120	1.5%	50.6%	171
ATTEND OTHER MUSIC PERFORMANCES_PARTICIPATED IN LAST 12 MONTHS	1,127	5,283	7.1%	33.4%	113
ATTEND DANCE PERFORMANCES_PARTICIPATED IN LAST 12 MONTHS	443	2,279	3%	32.9%	111
LISTENING TO MUSIC_PARTICIPATED IN LAST 12 MONTHS	8,683	41,185	55%	32.2%	109

Figure 8: Target Audience Websites Visit

	AGE SUMMARY_ 18-24					GO TO LIVE THEATER_ PARTICIPATED IN LAST 12 MONTHS				
	Sample	Weighted(000)	Vertical %	Horizontal %	Index	Sample	Weighted(000)	Vertical %	Horizontal %	Index
Total	28,476	136,583	100%	54%	100	4,142	19,245	100%	7.6%	100
ENTERTAINMENT_BUZZFEED	3,111	13,487	9.9%	85.4%	158	382	1,588	8.3%	10.1%	132
ENTERTAINMENT_IMDB	4,175	17,061	12.5%	70.2%	130	626	2,280	11.8%	9.4%	123
NEWS/COMMENTARY_BBC.COM	2,609	10,279	7.5%	61%	113	463	1,908	9.9%	11.3%	149
NEWS/COMMENTARY_BLOOMBERG.COM	1,774	6,594	4.8%	59.8%	111	321	1,197	6.2%	10.9%	143
NEWS/COMMENTARY_HUFFPOST	2,393	9,623	7%	61.3%	113	419	1,629	8.5%	10.4%	136
NEWS/COMMENTARY_NYTIMES.COM	8,417	33,779	24.7%	68.6%	127	1,276	4,890	25.4%	9.9%	130
NEWS/COMMENTARY_THE WASHINGTON POS	4,682	18,698	13.7%	63.7%	118	816	3,214	16.7%	10.9%	144
NEWS/COMMENTARY_USA TODAY.COM	4,724	20,687	15.1%	69.1%	128	600	2,578	13.4%	8.6%	113
NEWS/COMMENTARY_WSJ.COM	4,810	18,845	13.8%	70.2%	130	658	2,452	12.7%	9.1%	120

Digital Marketing Recommendations

Based on WUT's current digital marketing efforts and the target audience's online behavior, we recommend WUT enhance SEO visibility and friendliness, optimize mobile user experience, leverage Instagram reels, and utilize artists as influencers, thus, attracting more student customer base and growing ticket sales.

1. *Enhance SEO Visibility and Friendliness of WUT Website:*

- **Organic Search:** To improve online visibility and attract a broader audience, WUT should prioritize its website functionality to make it more SEO-friendly. This involves optimizing content and maintaining an intuitive site layout and structure.

  - *Content Optimization on Google:* Based on our keyword research, we would like to see an increase in the use of the terms: "classical music", "jazz", "chamber music concert" "music concert", "music venues Madison", "Play Circle", and "Shannon Hall" on the WUT website, thus enhancing its organic search ranking and making it easier for potential attendees to discover upcoming events and engage with WUT. This includes updating existing blog posts and articles to align with popular search terms, integrating keywords naturally into narratives, and refreshing older posts with current information and internal links to event pages or ticket sales. Creating themed blog series around each keyword, such as "Jazz Nights at WUT," with a regular posting schedule can further engage with audiences.

  - *Intuitive Website Layout and Structure:* WUT's website currently features a sidebar containing valuable links such as the seasonal schedule, parking details, ticketing, and blog posts. However, this sidebar configuration restricts space, resulting in a linear list presentation of the season schedule, hindering visitors from getting a comprehensive season overview at first glance. A more effective layout would be to adopt a calendar format for event display, providing a complete and easily navigable overview, seamlessly facilitating the path to purchase event tickets. Moreover, the current site structure causes the entire schedule to be replaced when a specific event is clicked. An improved design would keep the full event calendar within view, and open the specific events in a new tab, allowing for seamless transition between events, which could potentially increase seasonal ticket sales.

Digital Marketing Recommendations

1. *Enhance SEO Visibility and Friendliness of WUT Website:*
   - **Paid Search:** In the paid search space, our research identified a distinct lack of sponsored ads and paid promotions on Google for local keywords related to theater and live performance. This gap presented an opportunity for WUT to differentiate itself from the competition by allocating its budget to bidding on local keywords such as "theaters madison" and "theaters near me." Additionally, by linking a variety of landing pages that includes links to tickets within the sponsored search, WUT could effectively drive traffic to its website and promote ticket sales.

2. Optimize Mobile User Experience and Adjust Ticket Purchase Button Placement:
Based on our target market's online behavior of favoring mobile devices usage and the growing trend for mobile event discovery and ticket purchases, we would recommend WUT to optimize the ticket purchase processes on mobile devices.

- Responsive Design: The current layout of WUT's mobile website is not optimally user-friendly; a header with little content occupies a large portion of screen and event details are text-only, creating a dense and unengaging layout. Therefore, consulting a software engineer and implementing responsive web design that automatically adjusts the layout, content, and interface based on the device's screen size will improve WUT's mobile user experience and make it easily navigable and visually appealing.
- More Visible Purchase Button: According to the Pew Research Center, about 80% of Americans aged 18-29 prefer smartphones over computers for online purchases. Therefore, a seamless and functional mobile platform is necessary to improve mobile purchase experience. WUT could relocate the "purchase tickets" button to a more prominent and accessible position to streamline the ticket-buying process, increase the ticket sales, and ensure a positive interaction with potential attendees.

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Digital Marketing Recommendations

3. Leverage More Instagram Reels for Enhanced User Engagement:

Given the success of video content in terms of engagement, impressions, and likes, WUT should strategically incorporate more Instagram Reels into its content strategy. Creatively showcasing behind-the-scenes stories, artist spotlights, Q&A sessions, and educational content can attract more online attention and foster a stronger connection with the audience.

- Behind-the-Scenes Content: WUT can enhance audience engagement by sharing behind-the-scenes content on Instagram Reels. This could include clips from rehearsals to offer an intimate look at the preparation process for performances. Also, 'Day-in-the-Life' segments featuring artists, directors, or crew members can add a personal touch, allowing the audience to connect more deeply with the individuals behind the Theater. These unseen aspects of performance can foster a sense of closeness and relatability among the audience and WUT to foster user engagement and attract more attention online.

- Artist Spotlights and Q&A: Hosting Q&A sessions with artists can also help WUT to gain more attention. These sessions allow artists to answer questions from fans, share stories that highlight their journeys, inspirations, and experiences with WUT, therefore, creating a two-way interaction between the Theater and the audience.

- Educational Content: WUT can use Instagram reels to create informative and educational content with cultural and background information about performances. Providing interesting historical facts or stories related to performances can educate and intrigue the audience and deepen the audience's understanding and appreciation of the art form.

This recommendation aligns with the goal of increasing engagement and follower amount on social media. By diversifying and enriching its Instagram reels content through these dynamic strategies, WUT can significantly enhance its digital engagement and effectively connect with its target audience, thereby boosting its presence in the digital space.

Digital Marketing Recommendations

4. Utilize Artists as Influencers to Reach Broader Audience:
Harnessing the influence of artists can be a game-changer for WUT's digital marketing strategy. Collaborating with these artists is a great opportunity for WUT to create engaging content and enhance influence by cross-promoting with artists and leverage the artists' existing fan base.

- Collaborative Posts: WUT can leverage the popularity of artists performing at the Theater by collaborating with them to create engaging content. This strategy could include collaborative posts with artists sharing their personal stories, favorite moments, or unique insights related to their performances at WUT. WUT can also implement a series featuring artists, such as "10 Things I Can't Travel Without" or "My Favorite Snacks," as seen in the "First We Feast" video posted previously. This approach adds a relatable element to the content and also enhances WUT's brand personality.
- Call-To-Action from Artists: At the same time, the messaging should be aligned with the overall goal of the campaign, increase social media followers and engagement. WUT can incorporate direct call-to-action in the influencer content, encouraging artists to invite fans and UW-Madison students to their shows in their posts using terms like "We can't wait to see you at WUT" and "Follow WUT to get first-hand information about us". This will create a direct link between WUT performers and the audience to engage with them.

Measurement and Evaluation

We have 4 suggestions for the measurement and evaluation of our strategy: Ticket sale data, Social media analytics, Google analytics and Keyword research.

During the duration of the new digital campaign, the WUT will be experiencing measurable traffic patterns. The ultimate goal of this project is to increase student ticket sales, so WUT will need to keep track of ticket data with weekly ticket sales reports. Each week of the fall 2024 season, WUT should calculate the percentage of sales made by UW-Madison students. If there is no improvement from the Fall 2023 season, the strategy will need to be reevaluated. Right now, WUT is at a 13% student ticket sale rate. We would like to see this number jump to 20% by the end of October 2024, and 23% by the end of the season.

Measurement and Evaluation

Our secondary goal of social engagement can be measured through Sprout Social analytics. Using Sprout Social, WUT can view its audience demographics of Facebook and Instagram by age and gender (Figure 4). Since Sprout Social cannot differentiate UW-Madison students, we have suggested a goal pertaining to student-aged users at 18-24 years. By the end of the campaign, the theater Instagram page should be at an aged 18-24 audience rate of 50% (currently 40.7%), and Facebook should be at a rate of 32% (currently 27.6%). Overall, this will lead to an average aged 18-24 audience rate of 41% between both platforms, or a 20% increase.

In tandem with specific sales and social goals, our suggestions include SEO and mobile optimization. These two factors can be measured with Google Analytics and keyword research. Using Google Analytics, we want to see a bounce rate of around 60%, indicating that users are interacting with and finding adequate information on our web pages without too many clicks. WUT may also want to incorporate more UTM codes in its links, particularly on social media. It is much more effective to know how many web sessions came from a specific social post, rather than from social media in general. These UTM links would be especially useful as part of our Instagram reel suggestion. Using Google Trends, WUT can measure the change in keyword usage by the end of Fall 2024, relative to the Fall 2023 season, using the keywords mentioned in our recommendations. These numbers will differ based on the specific word, but we are looking for a general increase in usage, relative to the amount of times these keywords appear on the WUT website.

Conclusion

The digital marketing strategy tailored for WUT is aimed at enhancing engagement with students and young audiences. By focusing on improving SEO visibility, optimizing the mobile user experience, utilizing Instagram reels, and collaborating with artists as influencers, WUT is positioned to significantly boost student ticket sales and social media presence. These strategies, deeply rooted in an understanding of WUT's digital landscape and audience behavior, are designed not only to meet immediate goals but also to establish a sustainable foundation for future growth, ensuring its continued relevance and appeal to modern audiences.