

DATE: December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
 TO: Sarah Moberg, Owner of *The Farmhouse Coffee Exchange*  
 FROM: Abigail George  
 REF: Website Launch and Community Engagement Strategy

<b>Key Question/Problem Statement:</b>	How can <i>The Farmhouse Coffee Exchange</i> improve its brand recognition, customer engagement, and operational efficiency by leveraging digital tools, strategic community engagement, and improved business operations?
<b>Recommendation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a professional online presence, implement an online ordering system, and engage in strategic community outreach</li> <li>• Strengthen brand recognition, customer loyalty, and operational efficiency.</li> </ul>
<b>Current Situation and Complicating Factors:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack a professional online presence by not having a user-friendly website to share essential business information.</li> <li>• Struggle with limited visibility due to its tucked-away location within a shopping center.</li> <li>• Experience a technological lag by not having an online ordering system to meet customer demands for convenience.</li> </ul>
<b>Alternative Recommendations Considered:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Alternative 1: Expand Advertising Efforts through Local Partnerships           <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Collaborate with nearby businesses to cross-promote and increase visibility, drawing attention to The Farmhouse Coffee Exchange's location.</li> <li>ii. While local partnerships can increase visibility, the main recommendation of building a professional online presence and implementing digital tools ensures sustained brand recognition and customer engagement.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Alternative 2: Introduce a Loyalty Program for In-Store Purchases           <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>iii. Develop a rewards system to encourage repeat visits and foster customer loyalty.</li> <li>iv. While a loyalty program fosters customer retention, it primarily benefits existing customers, whereas the main recommendation attracts new customers and builds a scalable digital foundation for long-term growth.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<b>Other Considerations:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leverage Social Media Campaigns to promote the new website and online ordering system, offering limited-time discounts or promotions to encourage immediate adoption and engagement.</li> </ul>

Over the course of the semester, I analyzed *The FarmHouse Coffee Exchange* in Seneca, SC, by exploring its business operations, market trends, competitive landscape, risks, and opportunities. The projects gave me a comprehensive understanding of the coffee shop's strengths, challenges, and potential growth opportunities. Through research and understanding, I was able to come up with actionable recommendations to improve the business's operations and strengthen its market positioning.

To begin my research, I assessed *The Farmhouse Coffee Exchange*'s current operations and identified areas of improvement. I found two major opportunities for improvement: the need for a professional online presence, and the introduction of a subscription service. A well-designed website would improve customer access to essential information like menus and business hours, while also building visibility for the business through SEO strategies. Similarly, a subscription service could attract convenience-seeking customers while also creating a steady stream of revenue. My initial findings emphasized the importance of adopting technological solutions and customer-centered strategies.

Building on this, I analyzed market trends and competitive pressures to find growth opportunities. Key insights highlighted customer preferences for health-conscious choices like plant-based milk and adaptogen-infused drinks, as well as the rising demand for online ordering and "third spaces" as remote work or study options. Competitors such as *Starbucks* and *Dunkin' Donuts* already utilized these trends, setting an example for *The Farmhouse Coffee Exchange*. Additionally, local competitors like *Summer Moon* and *All In Coffee Shop* serve as attractive spaces for students and professionals, creating pressure to meet similar expectations. These insights revealed opportunities for the business to diversify its product offerings and enhance convenience through technology like online ordering, helping it better align with modern consumer needs.

Despite these opportunities, I also identified potential risks that could hinder growth if left unaddressed. Technological lag, limited visibility, and staffing shortages were the primary concerns. Without a website or online ordering system, customer convenience could suffer, while limited visibility could impact foot traffic. Staffing challenges during peak hours and a lack of inventory management could also lead to operational inefficiencies. Addressing these risks through technological upgrades, strategic local partnerships, and optimized staffing strategies would ensure a smoother customer experience and operational stability.

To address these findings, I proposed a strategic quarterly plan. In Q1, the focus would be on establishing a professional online presence by launching a website and running a social media campaign to generate awareness. Q2 would introduce an online ordering system and subscription service to enhance convenience while using promotional discounts to drive adoption. In Q3, efforts would shift toward local engagement by creating student-friendly promotions on game days and offering pre-order snack packs for tailgates. Finally, Q4 would focus on community events, including participation in the Seneca Christmas Parade and partnerships with local charities, to strengthen brand loyalty and visibility.

By combining technological investments, community-building strategies, and operational improvements, these recommendations directly address the opportunities and risks identified throughout the analysis. Through these efforts, *The Farmhouse Coffee Exchange* can strengthen its operations, attract a diverse customer base, and build stronger community relationships, positioning itself for long-term success.

### **Economic Logic**

*The Farmhouse Coffee Exchange* is already a local gem in Seneca, but with a few updates to its business model, it could boost its online presence and attract even more customers. Currently, the coffee shop uses a hybrid business model, providing both products and services. They generate revenue through selling coffee and other beverages, pastries, and desserts. They also provide the service of making beverages and pastries and a comfortable atmosphere that encourages customers to spend time in the coffee shop socializing or working. This combination of high-quality products and a welcoming environment is central to their business strategy.

One suggestion for improving this business model would be to create a simple website. Currently, the coffee shop relies on *Facebook* solely, but a website could offer several advantages. A dedicated website could expand its internet presence by appealing to a broader audience and establishing a stronger brand identity. Furthermore, a website could improve SEO results for searches like “coffee shops near me” compared to *Facebook*, which does not rank as high. Another suggestion for improving this business model would be to introduce a subscription service for customers, such as offering unlimited black coffee for a fixed monthly fee. This would create a steady stream of revenue and encourage repeat customers, as they would be more likely to visit frequently in order to maximize the value of their subscription. This could be more effective than the current loyalty program since it requires more financial commitment and offers a stronger incentive to visit the coffee shop more frequently.

### **Talent Management**

*The Farmhouse Coffee Exchange* offers several advantages to potential employees, particularly for baristas. The position may require less prior experience compared with other businesses, which could be a good option for people new to the industry or looking for part-time work. The flexible hours and relaxed environment create a positive work experience, and the smaller size of the business may offer more opportunities for advancement.

In addition to these advantages, the coffee shop could implement a few strategies to attract and retain top talent. For instance, offering wages that meet or exceed the wages of similar roles at coffee chains such as Dunkin or Starbucks could encourage more skilled employees to apply, as well as improve retention rates by making it a more attractive place to work. Creating a positive work environment is also important, and this can be done through various team-building activities and social events organized for the employees. Providing employees benefits or discounts, such as free coffee or shift meals, can incentivize employees to stay with the company. Also, if possible, providing basic employee benefits like health insurance could further enhance the appeal of working there. While some of these benefits are standard and may already be in place at chains such as Dunkin and Starbucks, implementing them in a small business like *The Farmhouse Coffee Exchange* would set it apart by displaying a commitment to employee satisfaction and help increase overall employee retention.

## Top Competitors

*Starbucks* is a popular coffee chain that offers a wide variety of drinks and snacks. It stands out due to its consistency, the mobile app with a rewards program, and their seasonal drinks, making it a favorite among both students and professionals. *Dunkin Donuts* is a coffee chain similar to *Starbucks*, known for affordable coffee and donuts. It is a fast, budget-friendly option. *All In Coffee Shop* is a cozy local cafe in downtown Clemson, which is popular among students for its great coffee and comfortable atmosphere. *Summer Moon* is a relatively new coffee shop in downtown Clemson, known for its sweet “Moon Milk” drinks. *Summer Moon*’s design and trendy atmosphere may be more appealing to college students; however, the limited seating can make it crowded, which may reduce its appeal as a study space.

## External Trends Analysis

After conducting an analysis of key industry trends for coffee shops in 2024, I’ve identified several factors that could positively affect business for *The Farmhouse Coffee Exchange* in Seneca, SC. Trends including plant-based milk, cold brew, health-conscious options, and sustainability reflect the growing consumer demand for healthier and environmentally friendly choices. Additionally, the rise of online ordering, subscription services, and the need for “third spaces” for remote work are shaping consumer expectations for convenience and flexible work environments. Among these trends, sustainability, health consciousness, and online ordering check the most boxes since they align closely with current consumer values.

These trends show an opportunity for *The Farmhouse Coffee Exchange* to improve its business and attract a diverse customer base. For example, expanding the menu to include more plant-based milk options and adaptogen-infused drinks can attract health-conscious customers. Implementing a subscription service can provide convenience and increase customer loyalty. Furthermore, creating a welcoming environment with more seating and stronger Wi-Fi connection can attract digital nomads or students looking for a comfortable work environment. Major competitors like *Starbucks* and *Dunkin’ Donuts* already leverage these trends through their established mobile ordering systems and diverse menu offerings. Local favorites such as *Summer Moon* and *All In Coffee Shop* also present competition with their proximity to the Clemson campus, unique environment, and specialty drinks. By adapting to these emerging trends, the business could strengthen its market presence and continue to thrive in the competitive landscape, making sure it meets the changing preferences of its customers.

## Risk Assessment

Biggest Risks of Failure / Potential Challenges	Cause(s)	How to Reduce or Eliminate the Effect
<b>Risk # 1</b>  Decline in Customer Visits Due to Technological Lag	Absence of Online Ordering	Implement Online Ordering system through a website or a third-party delivery app (like GrubHub) to provide convenience
	No Official Website to Provide Information	Develop a simple, user-friendly website that includes information such as menu, hours, location, or events
<b>Risk # 2</b>  Limited Visibility Leading to Low Foot Traffic	Tucked Location in Shopping Center	Partner or collaborate with other businesses in the shopping center using flyers or window decals to encourage customers of nearby shops to stop by <i>The Farmhouse Coffee Exchange</i>
	Lack of Roadside Signage	Invest in visually appealing signs near the main road/entrance of shopping center to capture attention
<b>Risk # 3</b>  Staffing Limitations	Inadequate Staff Coverage During Peak Hours	Analyze peak business hours and adjust staffing schedules accordingly
	Difficulty in Managing Inventory	Implement an inventory management system or software instead of manually tracking inventory

## **Risk Assessment Summary**

When assessing potential risks for The Farmhouse Coffee Exchange, I found three significant challenges that could hinder success in the coming year.

First, the coffee shop faces a technological lag that could lead to a decline in customer visits. The absence of an online ordering system limits convenience for customers who are in a rush or just prefer to have limited face-to-face interactions. Additionally, the lack of a formal website could create confusion among the customer base about things such as the updated menu, business hours, or special events. A well-designed website serves not only as a platform for essential information, but also as a marketing tool for the business.

Secondly, limited visibility significantly impacts foot traffic. Since the business is in a location tucked within a shopping center, it is likely to often miss potential customers and business opportunities. Partnering with neighboring businesses to promote each other, as well as investing in eye-catching road signage will draw in customers who might otherwise overlook the shop.

Lastly, staffing limitations could impact operational efficiency. The lack of coverage during peak hours could lead to a loss of business from customers who are not willing to wait. Analyzing peak business hours to optimize staffing could create shorter wait times for customers. Furthermore, a small staff could face difficulty with managing inventory if there is no inventory management software in place. Using an inventory management system could prevent inconsistent product availability.

By addressing these challenges, The Farmhouse Coffee Exchange can strengthen its operations and improve customer engagement and retention.

## Action Plan

<b>Aspiration- One Year Out</b>	<b>Over the next 12 months, <i>The Farmhouse Coffee Exchange</i> will strengthen its brand recognition by launching a professional website, implementing an online ordering system, and forging strong ties with the Clemson and local communities through targeted engagement initiatives.</b>			
<b>Quarterly Deliverables</b>	1-90 Days  (Next quarter)  Launch a user-friendly, visually appealing website by the end of Q1	91-180 Days  (Two quarters Out)  Fully functional online ordering for pickup and subscriptions by the end of Q2 to streamline customer purchases	181-270 Days  (Three Quarters Out)  Position <i>The Farmhouse Coffee Exchange</i> as a go-to alternative for students and locals on Clemson game days by the end of Q3	271-360 Days  (Four Quarters Out)  Strengthen ties with the local community by participating in two holiday events and increasing brand visibility through festive-themed initiatives
<b>Initiatives (provide 2-3 initiatives for focus for each quarter)</b>	Design and publish a website with key pages	Integrate an ordering platform	Promote Game Day Study Spot	Seneca Christmas Parade Pop-Up Stand
	"Website Launch Countdown"  Campaign/Website Launch  Announcement	Create monthly subscription service	Tailgate Snack Pack Pre-Orders	Holiday "Pay It Forward" Campaign
	Set Up SEO Fundamentals for Long-Term Visibility	Launch with a promotional campaign	Game Day Loyalty Card	Seasonal Instagram Photo Spot & Contest

### **Action Plan Summary:**

To strengthen *The Farmhouse Coffee Exchange*'s brand recognition and community ties, I created a strategic quarterly plan with four key deliverables.

In Q1, the focus will be on establishing a strong online presence by launching a visually appealing, user-friendly website with key pages like About, Menu, and Contact, supported by SEO best practices. A social media campaign will promote the website launch, using teasers and a 20% discount with a random keyword located somewhere on the webpage to drive engagement and sales. In Q2, the business will implement an online ordering system and a monthly subscription service to increase customer convenience. Customers will place orders on the website or through services such as *UberEats* or *GrubHub*. A promotional campaign with discounts on online orders will encourage customer participation.

In Q3, efforts will target diligent Clemson students looking for a quiet spot to study on game days, pre-order snack packs for tailgates, and a game-day loyalty card. These initiatives will solidify the business as a go-to destination for students during busy weekends. Finally, Q4 will emphasize community engagement during the holiday season. Initiatives include setting up a pop-up stand at the Seneca Christmas Parade, launching a holiday giving campaign with local charities, and creating a festive Instagram photo spot to foster social media interaction.

To track the success of these deliverables, website analytics will monitor metrics such as traffic patterns and conversion rates, while sales data from both online orders and in-store purchases will provide insights into the effectiveness of the promotional campaigns.