

SSD Strategy to End Users: A project assessment for Kingston Technology

Group 2, Team C

MET AD 648 OL – Introduction to E-Commerce

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February 25, 2016

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I. Executive Summary

Kingston Technology is the largest private manufacturer of memory products in the world. Since about five years ago, the company has been focusing on developing its solid state drive (SSD) business and portfolio to increase sales volume in the corporate channel market. SSD products represent the latest innovation in PC and laptop processing because it utilizes flash technology which has no mobile parts that reduces the chance of malfunctions and provides the best performance and speed. Moreover, it makes the computer booting process, software loading, and processing times much faster in comparison to traditional hard disk drives (HDD).

In the last two years, Kingston has been trying to increase SSD sales volume by targeting and extending to the consumer market. The goal is to target those end users that are looking to upgrade their PC's or laptop. The strategy is to educate, advertise, and market the fact that replacing a HDD with an SSD can improve computer performance and rid the need to invest in a new computer.

The purpose of this project is to evaluate Kingston's current website and social media platforms in order to propose a new way to undertake a solid digital marketing strategy that effectively attracts end users. It will attempt to promote the benefits of SSD's as well as position it as a relevant and necessary product for the average computer user to the heavy user who seek better PC performance without buying a new one.

II. Introduction to Kingston Technology

Kingston Technology is a privately-owned company established in 1987 and is one of the world's largest independent manufacturer of computer memory products such as solid state drives (SSD), USB drives, flash cards, and etc. It is headquartered in Fountain Valley, California and sells its products in the global market with five main

offices around the world that attend to key regions in Europe, Asia, and Latin America.

As of the past five years, Kingston Technology has been diversifying its technology portfolio by incorporating new, high performance line-ups that target enthusiast markets from end user level to corporate level. Among the new product lines, Kingston has been incorporating a huge focus on creating a market for SSD's at a corporate and end user level. So, what exactly is an SSD? Kingston's website defines it as, "...a flash-based memory storage product that allows persistent memory process with higher speeds, to improve general system operation and performance" (Kingston Technology, n.d.). Before SSD's were invented, hard disk drives (HDD) were used. HDD serves the same purpose as SSD's in regards to storing data but does so in a different way-- "The data is stored on a stack of disks that are mounted inside a solid encasement. These disks spin extremely fast so that data can be accessed immediately from anywhere on the drive" (Tech Terms, n.d.). The infographic in Appendix II shows a good comparison between an SSD and HDD to illustrate how they perform better in time processing speeds, provides better CPU performance and energy savings, and has faster access times and backup rates.

III. Current Positioning of SSD

1. Opportunities in the Consumer Market

There are various models for SSD's within Kingston's portfolio and the products fall under the following four categories: Enterprise, Business, Integrators and Consumer. The consumer model SSD V300 will be the focus, since it's on the entry level range, therefore affordable for the average consumer than the other models.

Kingston strongly believes that SSD's will become a commodity product in the years to come and is focused on promoting them, especially since the price of SSD's are and have been decreasing over the years and rapid technology development is requiring better-performing computers. The price of SSD per gigabyte decreased from \$40 in 2007 to \$1 in 2009 (Appendix III) and the cost has dropped even more since up to \$0.36 per GB in 2015 (SSD Sales Department of Kingston Technology, personal communication, February 16, 2016). However, there is a challenge in reaching the massive volumes that commoditization represents. Sales have been increasing around 120% year over year in the past three years, which is good. But the quantity is not up to company expectations, which is to become a 50% of the total revenue, from its actual 12% globally (SSD Sales Department of Kingston Technology, personal communication, February 16, 2016).

Since technology is developing at a rapid pace, programs, games or apps are requiring better processing computers as they are consuming more memory to operate and therefore it is easy to fall behind on hardware capabilities. This is the opportunity when it comes to promoting SSD's to a consumer market that is looking for a better performing computer overall without having to buy a new computer. It would represent an aftermarket or "do it yourself" generation that would feel comfortable opening their laptops or PC's to upgrade them. The target profile for this project will be the following: men and women in their 20's to 50's, professionals, that actively use a PC or notebook, and mid to heavy users, generally looking for better computer performance without spending a lot of money or buying a new computer.

The goal of this project is to reinvent the company's SSD business model and implement marketing strategies that will be geared towards the idea that make SSD's

approachable and accessible to the average consumer by simplifying the message to meet the consumer market challenge. One of Kingston's strengths as a company in general is the way they have consolidated their distribution channels globally. With a logistic value, the company assures the product distribution throughout the supply chain to ensure products reach end users. Typically, the distribution channel goes from the distributor to the reseller and from there to retailers, integrators or corporate end users (SSD Sales Department of Kingston Technology, personal communication, February 16, 2016). Our focus distribution will be targeting and reaching retailer and e-commerce partners. Therefore, a major consideration will take place in regards to the development of a retail strategy distribution to assure product presence in major stores globally.

2. Evaluation of Existing Platforms

Kingston exposes their products primarily through its corporate website and utilization of their social media platforms. However, for the purpose of this project, a specially designed website will introduce SSD's in a clear, concise, friendlier way with less of a cold, corporate look as it is now.

Kingston has an established Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram, Google Plus, and SpiceWorks page. Kingston will take advantage of these social media platforms and market a simplified explanation of SSD's to consumers. It will convey a message that appeals to consumers thinking about purchasing a new computer, that a simple SSD installation which is a relatively affordable is a quick way to improve slow-running computers. Kingston generally has a low number of social media followers considering their global presence (Appendix VIII). As a means of increasing social media followers, more SSD content will be uploaded and shared in a way that the average

consumer can understand and relate to by avoiding heavy technical terms.

IV. Infrastructure Considerations for Consumer Branding Strategy

1. Redesigning Website & Digital Platforms

By proposing a new SSD dedicated website and by improving frequency of SSD content on social media platforms, it will allow an opportunity to engage with consumers. While expanding user interface by adapting to PC's and mobile devices, the new interface will be based on the following core objectives: Educate consumers on what SSD's are and their benefits; Introduce illustrations and videos of installations, access to links to reviews and unboxing videos; Promote retailers, pricing options and added value dynamics that can be tied into our social media networks. The purpose of Kingston's rebranded website will be to assist any information that consumers who want or need to improve their PC and laptop experience, emphasizing on SSD's. The proposed URL name will be MyKingstonSSD.com

Considering how much we want to simplify the navigation, experience, and the message the brand presents, the product's website will be intuitive and informative. Clear presentation targeted towards an average consumer will be key to the success of the website. This will be accomplished by making Kingston's SSD website look less "geeky" per say. Upon visiting Kingston's current website, unless you have a good knowledge about computers or work with computers, it can be intimidating to the average consumer.

Also, as a means to make the concept of SSD's user-friendly, we propose to engage with a wider range target--men and women, to achieve the sales volume that Kingston is striving for. Kingston wants to encourage people who are not tech savvy with

computers to consider upgrading their system performance by installing an SSD instead of buying a computer that costs much more.

Kingston's Facebook page offers tremendous opportunities to engage consumers. For example, one of the most popular meme posted by Kingston was, "Is your name WIFI? Because I'm really feeling a connection" (Kingston Technology: Facebook, 2016). This meme had the most shares and likes because everyone, not just "tech geeks," can understand it and it stirs an emotional connection-humor. Therefore, Kingston will need to continuously make posts in such a way where the average consumer can understand, relate to, and stir an emotion to get more likes and shares which ultimately translates into more advertising and followers of the company.

According to Kingston, Samsung and Crucial are representing the biggest competitors in the SSD space globally. Both competitor brands offer their products through their corporate website in a much less appealing and end user centric manner as you can see in the screenshots of their website in Appendix V, VI, and VII. They both feature static information about product benefits (no video) and it does not suggest which SSD would be ideal for a consumer vs. corporate use. Only Crucial hosts a live chat service for its website and a community forum where people can go to look for information about installations. They both have social media platforms, but focus on wider portfolio with other products such as memory Ram, peripherals etc.

Despite the competition, Kingston Technology holds a strong position in the market for its brand recognition for the highest quality memory products available. Kingston's website states that "Reliability is the cornerstone of Kingston's product strategy and contributes to the high degree of trust between Kingston and its customers.

Kingston is dedicated to exceeding the industry standard when it comes to detail, product quality and product reliability” (Kingston Technology, n.d). This kind of guarantee to their customers is made by conducting rigorous testing at all stages of production and generous warranty offers.

2. Supporting Internet Activities

Furthermore, the primary objective of a dedicated website for SSD, is to help consumers truly understand SSD’s benefits and show that using and installing an SSD is not intimidating. As mentioned, the website and social media will promote how-to videos on various types of computers such as laptops, desktops, Apple computers, and etc. which already exist on Kingston’s YouTube channel. Even after providing video tutorials and instructions to install SSD’s, still, opening up your computer for the first time can be intimidating to which the 24-hour online customer service can offer advice and guidance.

Implementing a platform with online customer service is critical to the communication with end users, especially since the company is trying to push for SSD’s on the consumer level. Kingston’s current online customer service features an option to send an email or call their customer service center with limited hours. The new website will feature a 24-hour online chat and phone service, which we will market as #AskCameron within a section of the website. It will be the technical face towards your performance needs. As Kingston operates globally, this 24-hour availability is important because potential users are located around the world. This new online chat and phone service will help consumers shop online for the appropriate SSD and customer service representatives will be trained to help consumers through the installation process. Further, Kingston’s current email technical support is discouraging as it asks for proof of

original purchase. The customers opt for such support when they need assistance with products. It is important to provide easy access of customer support, and we suggest that no proof of purchase to be required.

Current content video tutorials posted in YouTube channels by Kingston has focused on products in a technical aspect without reinforcing true, sensitive benefits to average potential users. Not much promotion or consistency in the content has been presented, and no affinity or connections has been created, based on the views obtained. Even though the company is aware of the content need, it has been very traditional in that sense and needs to create videos that are consumer-friendly.

By 2016, there will be more than 1 billion PC's accrued globally that would be ready for an upgrade (Alvergue, personal interview, February 8, 2016). The potential and reach is far more massive than anticipated. The use of Influencer's that will ultimately review the practical use of products and recommends them, would allow also to create opinion matrix for practical and creative content that will be related to a real necessity. An aftermarket eager to improve their PC's, but more than that, improves their work, time, and general performance.

3. Core Objectives

Furthermore, Kingston's integrated marketing strategy will follow this new approach on an S.S.D marketing strategy defined as: Solid association, State of paradigm & Driving experimentation (Appendix IV). This will become the three pillars of all the efforts we want to cascade towards the reach of our business goals and also to strengthen consumer relation. Content creation and storytelling will be a key focus and by having a spreadable "friendly content marketing" ideas that can be used across platforms, the

strategy would need to sustain the level of engagements that the different social media portals are having by increasing the SSD content posts and exposure for more than 55% from its current 15%. By spreading a wide level of content that touches more on the beneficial attributes of the product will allow a solid “Solid base” for consumers to potentially understand how an Upgrade with SSD will benefit each and everyone’s personal needs. Offering the “peace of mind” of incorporating a Chat service to our website to clear out the questions, point into the right direction, we want Kingston to become the first go-to brand that offers this 24/7 service for free.

V. Proposed Campaign - #PerformBetterNow

In order to reposition with a mission of expanded reach and increased loyalty, the strategy is to refocus on multiple platforms with an introduction of campaign called #PerformBetterNow. The proposed inbound campaign #PerformBetterNow is not only based on the promotion of SSD products but also strengthening the Kingston brand throughout programmatic advertising method, that will allow reaching targets more effectively based on digital behavior. #PerformBetterNow concept will show that there is always an opportunity to improve, despite you are a graphic designer, grad student, an architect or just a mom trying to read Pinterest/emails without waiting for her laptop to boot slowly. The campaign will start discussions and evoke customer thoughts and opinions related to their life by raising questions like, ‘What is slowing you down?’ and ‘What will help you perform better?’ By generating these types of conversations throughout social media platforms, it will allow to start tying in the importance of “not to

settle,” reach for excellence and will bring the emotional value we want to create, so understanding of the benefits of an SSD can become more relevant and appealing.

As a disruptive tool, we also propose the creation of an app that connects with free technical PC support, creating a community of certified Kingston experts. By logging into the app, the user will access an enormous database of technicians that can be contacted via chat (WhatsApp style) to ask anything referenced to their PC performance and ask for recommendation. The whole intention is to become the brand that really wants to help computer users to attain the maximum experience with their PC's. This is important as Kingston consolidates a vast of solutions and while having 100% reliable products, the perception will be, “Kingston is reliable and also supportive with my PC needs.”

Lastly, the physical components will be based on demos and exposing people to the experience of a faster PC with an SSD installation. Kingston will work with distinguished retailers such as Best Buy and reach potential end users through SSD installation demonstrations in various stores or shopping malls. For example, an event will be hosted where we would ask shoppers at a Best Buy store to participate in a contest to install an SSD after showing them a short installation video and handing out Kingston SSD gift cards or free SSD's to winners.

After their strategy implementation, Kingston Technology needs to move fast with a follow-up plan, tracking the effectiveness of the campaign by measuring performance indicators for the activities, such as website visits, click-through rates, fan-based engagements, view counts, and sales--making sure that new audiences are becoming solid prospects to have an SSD experience.

Our proposed strategy has the ultimate vision for Kingston to become the first “go-to” brand, through engaging platforms, to assist end users with any computer performance issues, having them interact with true relevant content, community and friendly conversations to position the SSD product as their first choice of consideration through our #PerformBetterNow campaign.

Appendix I:

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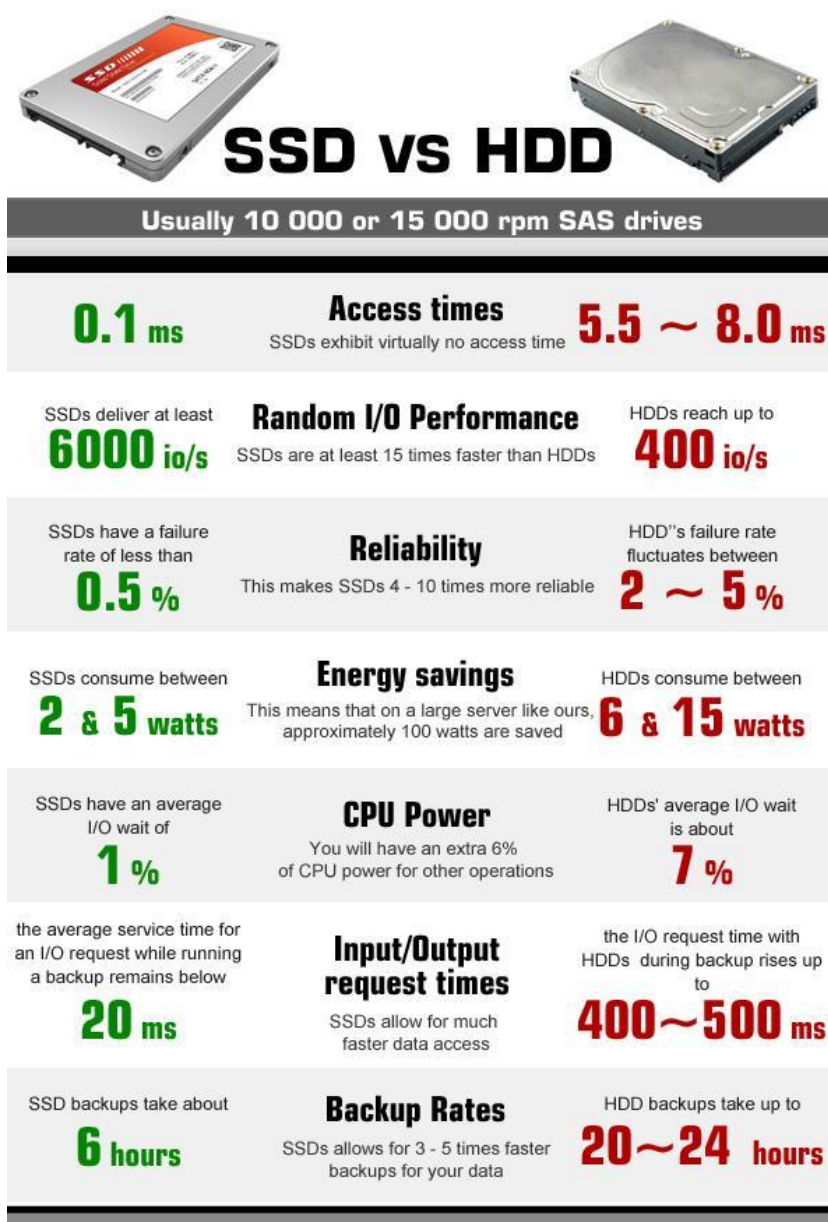
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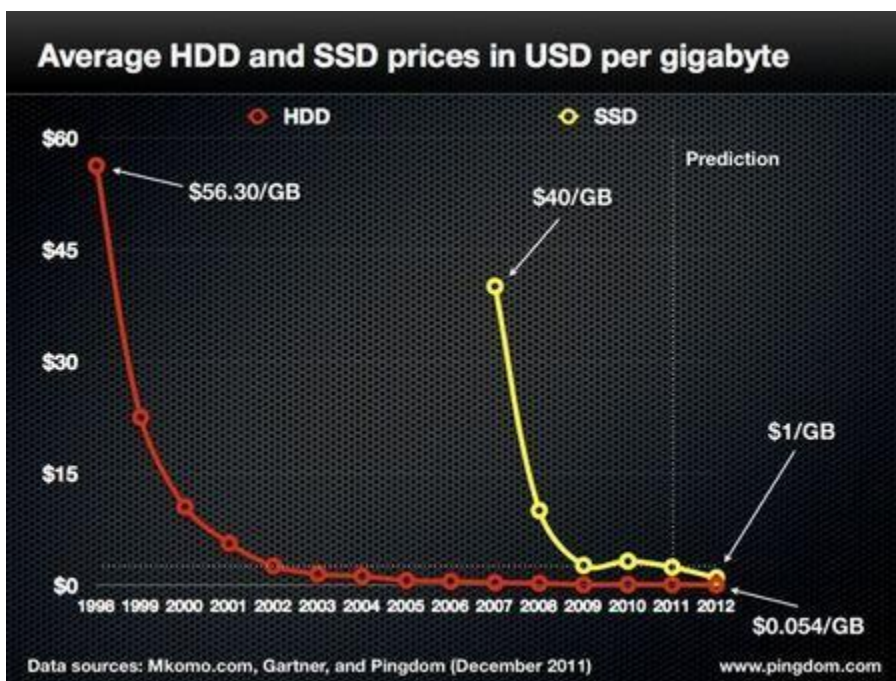
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Appendix II



(HDDmag, 2015)

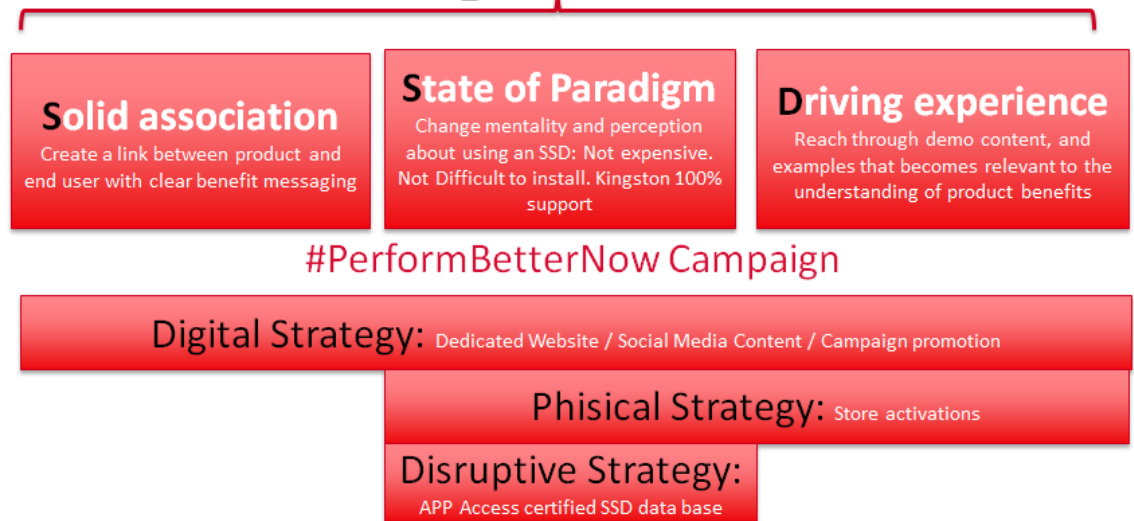
Appendix III



(Perry, 2011)

Appendix IV

KINGSTON S.S.D STRATEGY SCHEME APPROACH



Appendix V

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(Crucial, n.d.)

Appendix VI

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(Samsung, n.d.)

Appendix VII


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(Samsung, n.d.)

Appendix VIII

Kingston Social Networks 2016



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19K



129k

