



Challenger Sports



Introduction

- I attended Challenger's British Soccer Camp in the summers of 2012 and 2013 as well as a night camp in fall of 2013.
- As a young soccer player, it was very exciting to have experienced British coaches to teach me the fundamentals of soccer.
- The coaches from the camp would each stay with a host family for the duration of the camp.
- The camp teaches various soccer skills as well as some of the culture from the coach's home country.



Challenges

- Summer soccer camps are not in high demand as they once were. When Challenger started, soccer was not very popular in the US. Having experienced British coaches to teach influential soccer skills made Challenger unique and exciting to Americans. However, once soccer in the US started to thrive, individual soccer leagues and clubs were putting on their own camps and there were many more American coaches that were just as experienced.
- Challenger has also been challenged by international travel. When the British coaches come in from overseas, they have a certain Visa that they get so that they can work here legally. With the change in government in the US, the Visa qualifications and procedures have changed, and it has made it a lot harder to get workers into the US.
- Covid-19 has also caused a big challenge for Challenger as a company. Due to soccer camps being an In-person market, Covid caused Challenger to have to cancel a lot of their summer camps in 2020. Also, due to the borders being shut down, it was impossible to get the international coaches here to run the camps. Challenger hosted a few online camps showing campers how to do some skills just through Zoom, but compared to their usual camps, attendance was very low. Without being able to directly interact with their consumers, Challenger was forced to find alternate ways to reach the market.

CHALLENGER SPORTS™

History of the Organization

- Challenger Sports started as an indoor soccer camp organization in 1985.
- The camps were run by British soccer coaches brought overseas to teach Americans the fundamentals of soccer. Due to the minimal soccer influence in America, there were not a lot of talented American soccer coaches to run camps.
- However, since soccer in America has grown immensely, Challenger isn't only bringing British coaches to run camps, they are also using coaches from other countries as well as American coaches.
- The brand of Challenger has changed from British Soccer Camp to International Soccer Camp.

Process

- For my research, I conducted a semi-structured interview with two members of the Challenger organization.
- I asked a series of open-ended questions that were predetermined in order to learn more about the organization. The questions mainly focused on Challenger's history, purpose, challenges, and marketing strategies.
- Each interviewee took turns answering the questions asked in as many words as they needed.
- For other forms of research, I used my own personal experiences, Challenger's website, and Challenger's social media sites.
- (Given, L. M. (Ed.). (2008). *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications, pp.810-811)



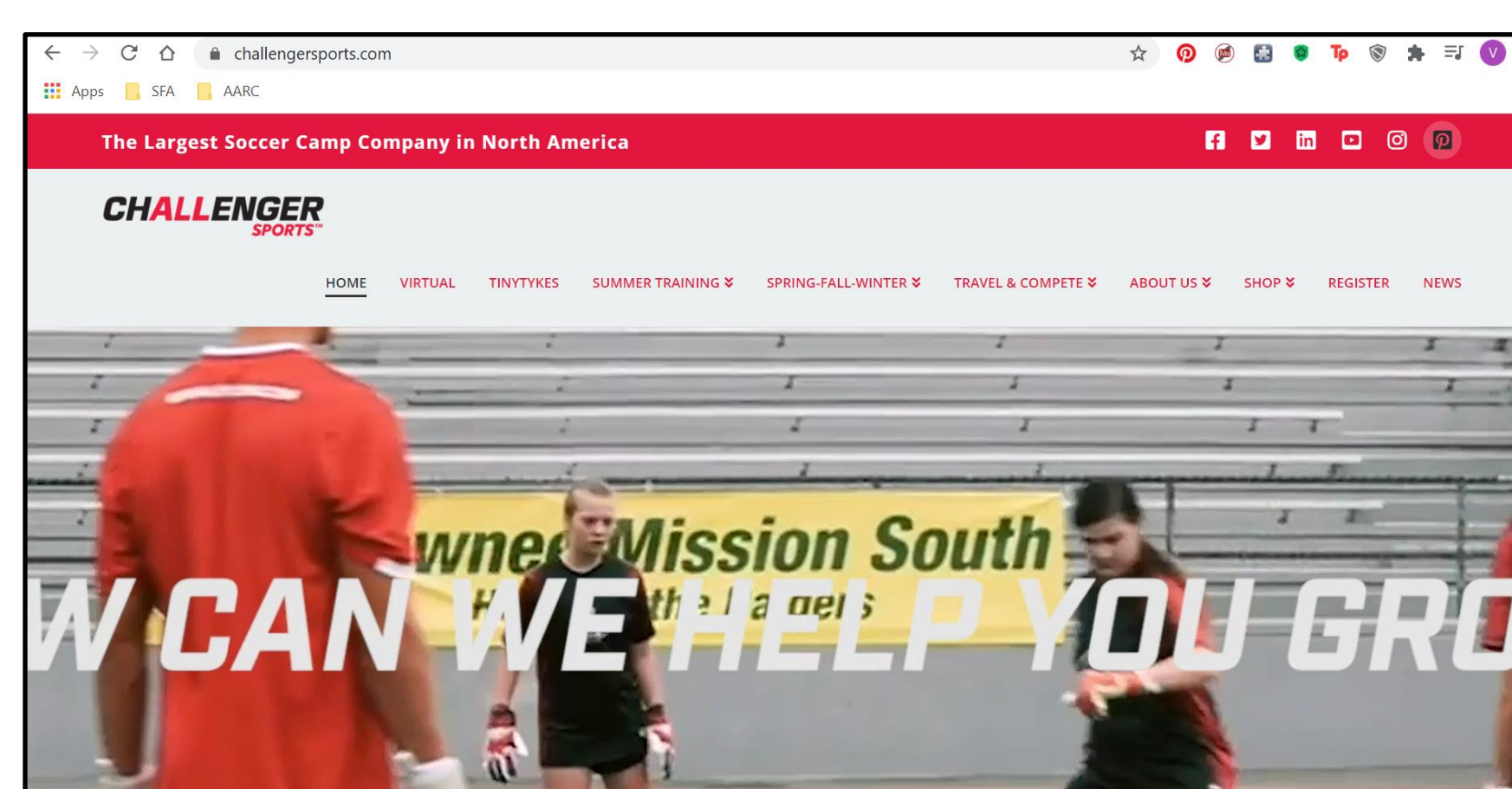
“Not just your little Community camp, but you know, this can take you to other countries, this can be your job, this can be your passion. I think that's really what we're trying to sell.”

-Brandon Milburn



Subjects

- I interviewed the Senior Vice President of Challenger Sports, **Alan Jones**, as well as the Head of Marketing, **Brandon Milburn**.
- **Alan Jones** was originally from Wales in the UK, then came to the U.S. in 1989. He was a physical education instructor overseas and was asked to come to the states to work for Challenger.
- In the Challenger company today, Alan is the “jack of all trades” and holds a lot of responsibilities within the company.
- **Brandon Milburn** joined Challenger a little under three years ago and is currently the Head of Marketing there.
- Brandon's focuses in the company are social media marketing and content creation. He has played a huge part in building Challenger's social media presence and brand.



Marketing Strategies

- Challenger started with a word-of-mouth marketing strategy. Challenger would interact with soccer clubs or leagues, then the leagues would advertise to the consumers. Challenger had no relationship with its consumers directly, only marketed through third party volunteers.
- However, with the growing Internet use and technology, Challenger had to adapt to keep up with the competition. Challenger started building a social media presence and a database of consumers to start building relationships with.
- The decreasing demand for summer soccer camps caused Challenger to rethink its business plan. Instead of staying focused on just soccer camps, Challenger started expanding into other markets. Challenger now has a teamwear division, hosts tournaments, runs an academy, and even runs world tours.



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