

# THE CAREER DISPATCH



INSIGHTS ON HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH ASIA



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**Labour shortage in OECD, Destination Germany, & more on higher ed in South Asia**

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## Introduction

Given the region's vast population and the developing nature of its economies, South Asia presents an immense opportunity for higher education institutions. It is the second largest in terms of student enrolments and, according to recent World Bank data, accounts for 18% of all tertiary education students globally. While the governments of these nations are involved in the development of primary education, the private sector dominates higher education. In India and Nepal, private education institutions, including universities, colleges, and stand-alone institutions, account for over 65% of higher education enrolment; in Bangladesh and Afghanistan, the share is over 40%; and in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, private HEIs cover 20% of all enrolment. The top seven destination countries chosen by South Asian students are the USA, UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Germany, and China, but new markets, such as Turkey and Ireland, are emerging as alternative choices by students. The region has many opportunities, but it requires a dependable and knowledgeable local presence to manage agent, school, and university relationships in order to continually succeed in an increasingly competitive and ever-changing environment. I hope you will enjoy this edition of *The Career Dispatch*.

**Tarun Gupta**  
Global Managing Partner, T&A Consulting



## NOVEMBER 2023 ISSUE

2023 marked a vibrant year for the global higher education sector, witnessing a surge in student applications to foreign universities and recruitment levels surpassing those seen before the pandemic for many Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). This edition focuses on the escalating demand for skilled Indian workers given the labor shortage in OECD countries. It underscores the value addition by Indian skilled workers and the significance of vocational training in closing the gap between formal education and employment.

# SOUTH ASIA UNLOCKED

## A primer for HEIs looking to enter the market



**South Asia Unlocked** is a special series by T&A Consulting, serving as a primer for new market entrants as well as existing Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) looking to leverage opportunities in the vast South Asian market. In the series, we discuss issues that are relevant to entry into the South Asian market—one of the most lucrative sources for international student recruitment that is undergoing massive changes in the sphere of higher education.

After discussing issues like **Visa frauds**, which have seen a spike in numbers as international borders opened post the Covid-19 pandemic, and **housing crisis** woes for students abroad in the first two issues, we explore the dynamics of **labor shortages in OECD countries** and the imperative for importing skilled talent from countries like India in this edition of *The Career Dispatch*.





## Labour shortage in OECD countries & the demand for skilled Indians

In recent years, labor shortages have emerged as a significant challenge for OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries, driven by demographic shifts, technological advancements, and evolving skill requirements.

As per the paper titled '*The post-COVID-19 rise in labour shortages*' by the Economics Department of the OECD, "On average across the OECD, vacancy rates have increased the most in manufacturing industries and in accommodation and food. Attracting workers in these industries has become a challenge as the pandemic has drawn attention to the low quality of many such jobs, often characterised by low pay, low job security, poor working conditions and inadequate social protection.

### Did You Know?

A report by the National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom) highlights India's leadership in the AI domain. India ranks first in AI skill penetration and AI talent concentration among all OECD and G20 countries.

India's AI Skills Penetration Factor measures at 3.09. This indicator shows that compared to other countries, Indian tech talent is three times more likely to possess AI skills.

A number of countries have also been facing recruitment tensions in health and care-related jobs for similar reasons, aggravating shortages prevalent even before the pandemic.”

Demographic changes, such as aging populations and declining birth rates, have given rise to labor shortages in several OECD countries. The resulting imbalance between retiring workers and new entrants has created a demand for skilled professionals to sustain economic growth and maintain global competitiveness.

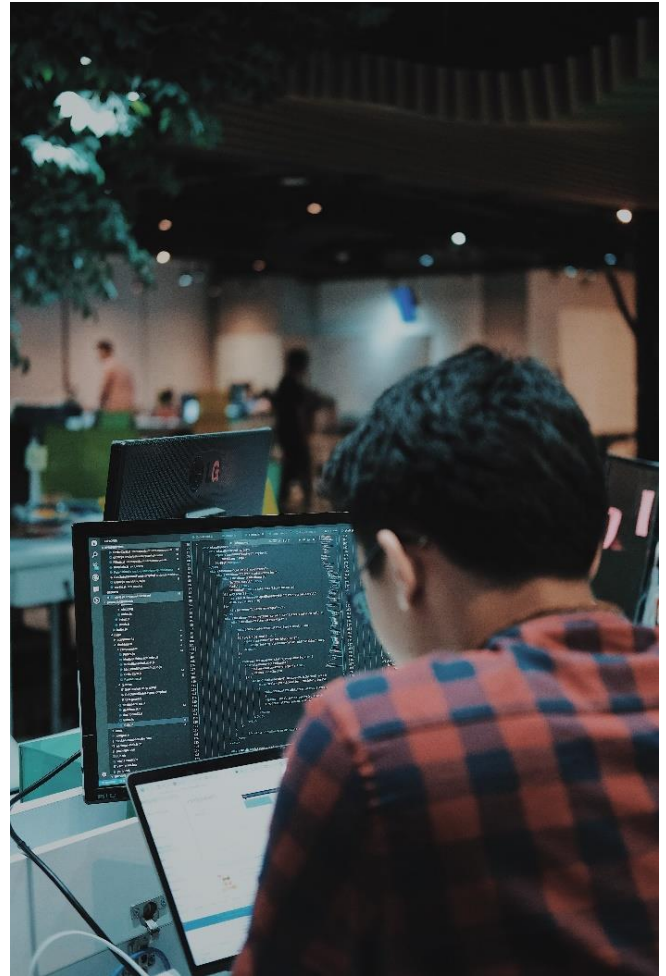
As a result, migration into OECD countries has accelerated. Permanent migration to OECD countries in 2022 stood at 6.1 million, a 26% increase compared with 2021, and its highest level since at least 2005.

### **WHY INDIAN SKILLED WORKFORCE IS IN DEMAND**

India has emerged as a key source of talent to fill critical skill gaps in OECD countries, with its burgeoning youth population and a rising aspirational middle class. Many Indian graduates excel in science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM), medicine, and other fields, making them valuable assets for industries seeking specialized skills.

India is renowned for its prowess in the information technology (IT) sector. Indian IT professionals are sought after for their strong programming skills, software development expertise, and ability to contribute to the digital transformation of businesses in OECD countries.

Indian engineers are widely recognized for their competence in various engineering disciplines. Their expertise spans fields such as civil engineering, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, and more, making them crucial contributors to infrastructure and technology projects.



Moreover, the international healthcare industry is experiencing a surge in demand for Indian nursing professionals, as revealed by Indeed's recent report. Over the past three years (from October 2020 to 2023), job searches for "nurse" roles from India with a global interest have risen by an impressive 38%. This escalating demand is evident in the consistent annual growth: a commendable 4% increase from October 2020 to 2021, a significant 9% surge from October 2021 to 2022, and a noteworthy 22% rise from October 2022 to 2023.

These statistics not only signify the increasing popularity of Indian nursing talent in the global job market but also highlight their coveted expertise in the international healthcare sector, positioning them as sought-after professionals in high demand.

Additionally, English is widely spoken and the primary language of instruction in Indian educational institutions. Indian professionals are often fluent in English, facilitating seamless communication in international workplaces, which is particularly advantageous for English-speaking OECD countries.

## **BOOMING MIGRATION & MOBILITY AGREEMENTS**

According to a recent OECD report titled '*International Migration Outlook: 2023*', India has been the leading source country for acquiring OECD country citizenship since 2019. In 2021, approximately 130,000 Indians acquired citizenship in an OECD member country, compared to around 150,000 in 2019. Among the 38-member OECD, the top three countries that granted passports to Indian immigrants in 2021 were the United States (56,000), Australia (24,000), and Canada (21,000).

OECD countries and India have collaborated on many frameworks that streamline visa processes, ensure the recognition of international qualifications, and provide a conducive environment for skilled professionals to contribute effectively. India has entered into mobility and migration agreements with



multiple OECD nations, including the UK, France, Germany, Portugal, Austria, and Finland.

## **VOCATIONAL TRAINING AS THE WAY FORWARD**

Vocational training serves as a crucial link between education and the workforce, enhancing learning outcomes by imparting skills that are most effectively acquired through practical work experience.

As per the report '*OECD Education at a Glance 2023*', 44% of all upper secondary students are enrolled in vocational education and training (VET) across the OECD. Despite this high share, vocational programmes are still seen as a last resort in too many countries.

The report adds, "boosting access to vocational training will be critical to ensure more young people can meet increasing demands for skilled workers and adapt to and benefit from the profound changes spurred by the green and digital transformations."



# Interview in focus:

## T&A in discussion with The PIE

T&A's Akshit Jain gets candid with The Pie's team in the special segment called Five Minutes With... He talks about the importance of people-to-people connections and why India is such a promising education market.

### Excerpts:

#### What do you like most about your job?

The importance of the Indian market as a major driver for global growth in student mobility is on display everywhere. The mindset of the growing market here is incredibly dynamic, and being a part of it allows me to stay connected with the pulse of the changing educational landscape.

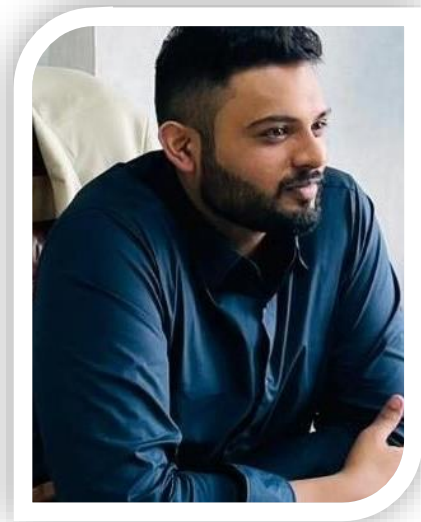
What brings me immense satisfaction is knowing that I am in a position to offer valuable guidance and counselling to students. I find great fulfillment in providing the kind of career advice and direction that I wish I had received during my student years. As a country manager, I am able to positively impact the lives of hundreds of people I interact with, and contribute to institutional partnerships and try to build a sustainable model of student recruitment.

This role not only brings out the best in me but also enhances my empathy, people skills and public engagement, making it a personally and professionally enriching experience.

#### What work-related issues keep you awake at night?

Two work-related issues keep me awake.

Firstly, the volatile nature of government policies, particularly last-minute alterations, that significantly affect student mobility.




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*“This role enhances my empathy, people skills and public engagement”*

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These sudden shifts can lead to many challenges, impacting the planning and execution of a student's plans and decisions.

Secondly, the holistic experience of Indian students within international universities is another area of concern. I often reflect on ways to enhance the overall journey for these students – from the application process to on-campus integration and academic achievement.

#### What is your proudest career moment?

Revisiting my alma mater as a valued member of a Russell Group university in a previous role, and engaging in a multi-faceted partnership between these institutions, stands as a remarkable highlight. It felt amazing to be in the same place I was as a student, now being part of a university-wide collaboration on an international level, that will widen the horizon of students willing to go abroad.



**How did you find yourself working in international education?**

My journey into international education has a lot to do with my inner calling. I went to an Engineering college in 2015 to do computer sciences and spent my foundation years doing internships with top MNCs. Grades were not an issue, I was getting the job done but my heart was not in the right place.

Right out of college, I got a fantastic chance to work for a top university, thanks to my placement coordinator. It was a switch from spending time with machines to public dealing. I soon realised that what intrigues me isn't gadgets, but people.

So, I dove into the education world, and it's been an amazing ride ever since. I have done university representation and then switched gears to project management within the education sector. This allowed me to understand the ropes of HR, Recruitment, Operations, and Client Relationships.

**Biggest challenge to your profession?**

Our industry is run on students' sentiments. It is integral to understand the saving, investment and expenditure sentiment of your region from a consumer point of view.

Unforeseen factors like the pandemic, travel restrictions, and political disturbances majorly affect the student mindset and their plans to study abroad.

A well-researched student looks into rankings, the impact of research, location, support services, alumni networks, accommodation, employability, visas, post-study opportunities and so much more. We as providers try to ensure that the equilibrium is maintained but in an individual capacity one can only do so much, this becomes the biggest challenge for me.

**Champion/cheerleader which we should all follow and why/ who from the sector do you admire most?**

In the past years, I've met some truly amazing folks with incredible talent. While I don't have just one champion to follow, I think it's important to learn from everyone around us. I try to soak up knowledge like a sponge.

Each of us has strengths and areas where we can do better. I like to pick out the best in everyone and add it to my professional outlook. I like the person I am becoming.





## Country In Focus

# GERMANY

Recent data from the DAAD German Academic Exchange Service reveals that a record-breaking 370,000 (approx.) international students were enrolled in German higher education institutions during the 2022/2023 winter semester, marking a 5% increase from the previous year. Nearly 45% of international students choose to remain in Germany a decade after enrolling, showcasing the country's attractiveness as a long-term academic and professional destination.

In a significant development, the number of **Indian students in Germany has surged to a record high, reaching around 43,000 in the winter term 2022/23**—a remarkable 26% increase from the previous year. India now leads with the highest number of students, followed by China, which has secured the second spot for the first time.

The Academic Evaluation Center (APS), associated with the German Embassy, has introduced digital certificates to streamline the application process for aspiring students. This forward-looking initiative aims to enhance efficiency and convenience, aligning with the increasing number of Indian students choosing Germany for their higher education journey.

# T&A at work:

## Events and initiatives

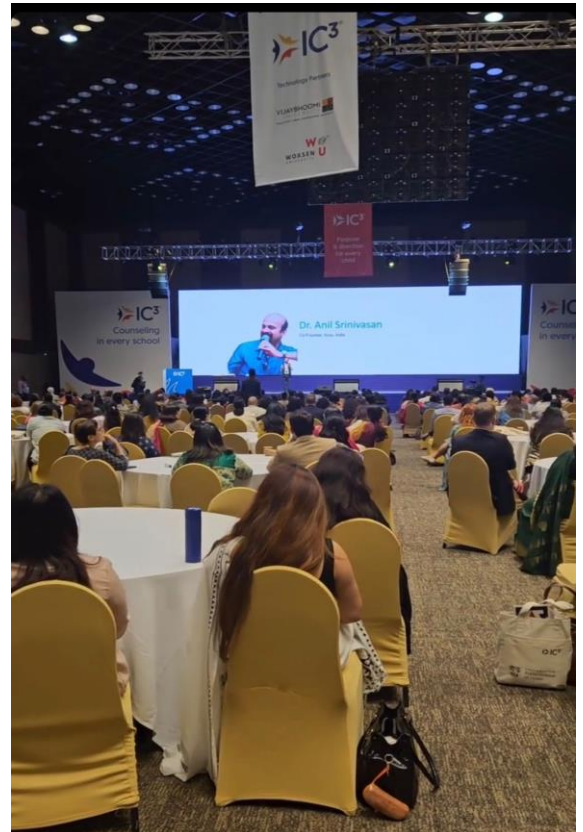
### IC3 Conference: T&A Consulting explores innovations in education

T&A Consulting, represented by Arjun Mukundd – Associate Director, Client Engagement was pleased to attend the Annual International Career & College Counseling (IC3 Movement) Conference & Expo.

The IC3 Conference, held every August, serves as a dynamic platform for high schools, universities, counselors, and educational organizations to engage in collaborative discussions about the evolving landscape of career and college counseling.

These conversations focused on pioneering solutions and practices that are reshaping the realm of career and college counselling. Amidst the dynamic discussions, we had the opportunity to attend insightful breakout sessions, network with industry peers, and glean wisdom from thought leaders.

A standout moment was the keynote address by Mr. Ashok Krish, who delivered an engaging talk on the 'Algorithm of Strategic Laziness.' His insights into this intriguing concept offered fresh perspectives on efficiency and productivity, sparking engaging conversations among attendees.



## Talent Boost: T&A and Business Finland showcase Finland's education landscape

T&A Consulting, Knowledge Partner for the Talent Boost programme in India, in collaboration with Business Finland, hosted a seminar on the Finnish education system to welcome the Minister of Education of Finland, H.E. Ms. Anna-Maja Henriksson. The event was also graced by the Ambassador of Finland to India, H.E. Mr. Kimmo Lähdevirta in Bangalore on 17th October 2023.

The event provided valuable insights into Finland's offering for Indian talents. Among the distinguished speakers were Dr. A. Senthil Kumaran, Chief Conflucner at The Learners Confluence, Ms. Avnee Garg-Kaljunen, Specialist at Study in Finland, and Mr. Vinayak BA, Head of Location Development at Nokia India.





## **Queen's University Belfast: South Asia team empowers 1,200+ students with counseling; practical learning by the Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences**

The South Asia team at Queen's University Belfast has been actively working to promote the university and its undergraduate and postgraduate courses in South Asia. From August'23 to October'23, the team organized 112 activities in 75 cities across South Asia, which included career counselling and workshops for students. A total of more than 1,200 students participated in these events, which were designed to give them a better understanding of the opportunities available to them at Queen's University Belfast.

In addition to promoting the university's undergraduate and postgraduate courses, the South Asia team also represented QUB at the Annual IC3 Conference and Expo – Hyderabad. The two daylong conference attracted over 1400+ delegates from all around the globe, which included a high-profile discussion forum with global high school counsellors, together with undergraduate admissions representatives and educators from colleges and universities from all around the world.

The month of October ended with a journey to multiple international schools, giving the essence of practical knowledge-based learning in streams of Psychology, Engineering, and Structural Design Engineering which was successfully executed by the Queen's visiting Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences (EPS) along with the South Asia team.

Overall, the South Asia team has been successful in promoting Queen's University Belfast and its courses in the region. Through their efforts, they have been able to reach many potential students and provide them with valuable information about the opportunities available at the university.





## University of Derby: Counseling of more than 600 students

Between August and October 2023, T&A's team representing the University of Derby demonstrated a strong commitment to enhancing the academic journey of prospective students. A key focus during this period was dedicated to securing Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) for applicants planning to begin their educational endeavors in September 2023.

Concurrently, the team conducted agent trainings and connected with offer holders in strategic cities, laying the foundation for the upcoming intake. Expanding outreach, support was extended to prospective students for the January 2024 intake.

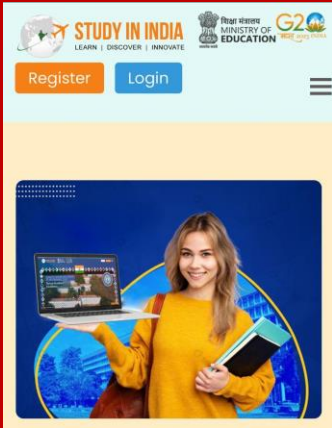
During this dynamic period, our proactive efforts led to the successful organization of more than 20 agent fairs, 5 school events, and 2 virtual fairs specifically tailored for offer holders. These events provided valuable platforms for counseling and guidance.

Our team reached out to and assisted over 600 students across various cities, including Delhi, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Pune, Kolkata, Bhubaneswar, Dehradun, Guwahati, Bangalore, and multiple locations in Sri Lanka. This engagement had a positive impact on their academic aspirations.



# News and Updates

## Indian government launches new Study In India portal for international students



India's Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of External Affairs, has launched a centralised digital platform for global students seeking higher education in India. The SII Portal will simplify the application and visa process for international students.

Earlier, international students had to apply separately to institutions but with the new platform, they can choose from 2,650 courses to apply to across 240 higher education institutions, making multiple applications and receiving offers all in one place.



### London tops QS Best Student Cities 2024 list

London has once again topped the list of the world's best cities for students. The QS Best Student Cities list places Tokyo in the second position, followed by Seoul, Melbourne, Munich, Paris, Sydney, Berlin, Zurich, and Boston. The list features five cities from Europe in the top 10, while the US is represented by one city in the top 10 list. Canada follows shortly after with Toronto and Montreal coming in at 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> ranks.



### Symbiosis inks pact with Australia's Deakin university

Symbiosis University, Pune, India, and Deakin University, Australia have signed an MoU, as part of which they will jointly offer two new programmes starting 2024: an accelerated integrated master's programme in Liberal Arts and a dual degree in Business Analytics. Students enrolling for an accelerated integrated master's programme in Liberal Arts and dual degree in Business Analytics will do their final course semesters at Deakin University campus in Australia.



### BRICS nations to launch new university ranking system

The BRICS nations, Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, have announced plans to launch a new university ranking system.

BRICS Education Ministers, in a meeting in August 2023, came to an agreement to establish an autonomous university rating system. The decision follows concerns raised about the current rankings, which have faced criticism for their failure to encompass impartial data.





### **Education New Zealand's Learn New Every Day campaign**

Education New Zealand has unveiled a new international campaign titled 'Learn New Every Day' to build awareness and interest in education in New Zealand for prospective overseas students. Designed to give a first-hand perspective of the experiences international students may get in a single day in New Zealand, the campaign kicked off in key markets such as India, South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam and Japan on 31 October.



### **UK's University of Essex to offer scholarship of £3000 to Indian students**

The UK's University of Essex has launched the Academic Excellence International Master's Scholarship for Indian students, which offers scholarships of up to £3000 for those intending to enroll in the January 2024 intakes. The scholarship, awarded as a partial tuition fee waiver, is specifically available to self-funding Indian students from Tier II universities who have completed their undergraduate degrees either abroad or in the UK.



### **Record Indian students went to US for higher studies in 2022-23**

The Open Doors 2023 report on International Educational Exchange revealed that record Indian students went to the US for higher studies in 2022-23, up by 35% since last year reaching an all-time high of 268,923.

The count of Indian graduate students witnessed a remarkable 63% surge, reaching 165,936 students, an addition of nearly 64,000 students from the previous year. Furthermore, there was a 16% increase in the number of undergraduates. India continued to be the Number 1 place of origin of students on OPT, with 69,062 students.



### **UGC issues guidelines for foreign universities to set up campuses in India**

The UGC has announced revised regulations for the establishment and operation of campuses by foreign universities in India. Among the guidelines are regulations like foreign universities can collaborate to set up campuses in India, provided they meet eligibility criteria individually; they will be required to seek prior approval from UGC before starting new courses; foreign universities can set up more than one campus in India, and they need to make separate applications.

# ABOUT T&A CONSULTING

## INDIA & SOUTH ASIA EDUCATION REPRESENTATION SERVICES

T&A Consulting is an international consulting practice to government economic development organisations, higher education institutions (HEIs), and private businesses.

We specialise in developing and successfully executing market entry and growth strategies across the many markets in which we operate. As a global practice, we have a subsidiary in Canada and representative offices in Europe and the UK.

With a strong belief in the age-old adage “quality is the best business plan”, and going against the more traditional approach of representing multiple HEIs, we understand that HEIs want more than just a marketing function in-market. HEIs want to build sustainable brand recognition in the South Asia region, which is the fastest growing geography for international student mobility in the world.

Therefore, we made a deliberate choice to introduce a unique reward-based partner approach to a limited number of HEIs, ensuring each one of them has dedicated resources and the full support of our experienced marketing, representation, and admissions capabilities.



## T&A CONSULTING | SERVICES

### In Market and Operational Support

- Assistance in developing strategies and implementation of plans to recruit students in line with entry requirements.
- Management and reassessment of existing agents' network.
- Appointment of new agents in previously unexplored South Asian markets including Tier 2,3 and 4 cities in India.
- Maintenance of data on market specific changes, admission requirements and course information.
- Market Intelligence towards new interventions including new programmes, agent engagements and rewards and scholarships.



Get in touch with our University Engagement Manager



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## Event Management & Logistics

- Design, schedule and implement physical and virtual events
- On-site logistics, AV equipment, catering, venue set-up
- Co-ordinate inter and intra city travel and transport



## Industry Integration /Employability

- Development of industry linkages to boost student work placements
- Partnerships with private companies with research and innovation centres to provide hands-on research experience to students



## Marketing & PR Services

- Brand positioning and strategy development
- Social media strategy creation and implementation
- Managing social media platforms
- Designing advertising campaigns
- Strategic planning and execution of public relations initiatives



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