



Department
for Education

Your Future | Their Future: impact of Department for Education's marketing campaign

2019 update

Executive summary

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Introduction

In 2015 and 2016, the Department for Education commissioned London Economics to conduct an evaluation of the *Your Future | Their Future* marketing campaign that captured the impact of marketing activities on a range of outcome measures (such as website visits and registrations) between September 2012 to January 2016. This study concluded that the campaign had been effective in attracting visits and registrations to the 'Get into Teaching' (GiT) website.

Since initial evaluations were conducted, and in response to ever challenging environment for initial teacher training, the Department has increased marketing investment; intensified marketing activities; introduced more frequent bursts of TV advertising; and added new marketing channels. In light of the wider fiscal constraints facing the UK economy, there is a clear requirement to ensure that all marketing and advertising expenditure undertaken by the Department has impact, but also provides value for money.

With the additional data available (and greater reliability of the modelling approach), the aim of this evaluation was to update our understanding of the impact and cost effectiveness of marketing activities. The key research objectives of this study were fourfold:

- to establish the 'aggregate' impact of the Department's marketing campaign on the number of people *considering teaching* (represented by the number of **website sessions**) and registering an interest in teaching (represented by **website registrations**), and how this impact has changed over the most recent recruitment cycles;
- to consider and isolate the impact of the **individual marketing channels** used in the campaign using the econometric analysis, in addition to the 'aggregate' analysis
- to undertake a detailed analysis to understand the relative **cost effectiveness** of the various strands of marketing using the results from the econometric analysis and various cost measures associated with the campaign; and
- to shed light on the **potential impact of marketing on UCAS applications** to the greatest extent possible, using pre-existing conversion rate analysis.

Methodology

As in the previous evaluations, the key methodological challenge involved the assessment of what might have happened in the absence of the marketing campaign (i.e. the **counterfactual**), in order to correctly attribute any potential change in attitudes and behaviours amongst the target group to the marketing campaign. In the absence of individual-level data, the construction of a synthetic counterfactual group was achieved using econometric analysis of weekly time series data.

Since the website visits and the two website registration models (namely 'all secondary-level subjects' and 'secondary school "core" shortage subjects') produced in the 2016 study were statistically robust, these models were used as a starting point for the current analysis. Once results based on the previous model specifications were obtained, the impact of any new marketing channels launched since 2016 (e.g. Out-of-Home (OOH) and cinema advertising) were also tested by adding relevant variables. With new marketing data and insights, further model refinements were implemented to improve and enrich the initial models by testing alternative variables measuring similar types of activity.

This report also attempts to demonstrate the potential impact that marketing has on UCAS applications. With applications being a highly seasonal variable that take place with a significant time lag from when the marketing message might have been initially observed, econometric time series analysis is not the most appropriate methodology in this case. Instead, the impact of marketing on UCAS applications was assessed using Departmental data on the proportion of Get Into Teaching (GiT) website registrants who subsequently converted into UCAS applicants.

Findings

Overall impact of marketing

The updated analysis demonstrated that marketing has substantially boosted its contribution to the incidence of website sessions as well as registrations to both shortage and non-shortage subjects over the course of 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18 (up to 31st March 2018).

In particular, compared to what might have been expected to occur in the absence of marketing, the analysis found that marketing activities have brought an additional 5.3 million website sessions and 121,600 website registrations (for all secondary subjects) between September 2015 and March 2018, compared to around 4.2 million website sessions and 42,500 website registrations over the course of the first three academic cycles (2012/13 – 2014/15).

Amongst shortage subjects however, in contrast to website registrations overall, improvements in the graduate labour market appear to have dampened the growth of registrations. This reflects the fundamentally different labour market opportunities available to this pool of graduates. Despite this, marketing activities have driven the increased volume of shortage subject registrations over the last two and a half academic cycles, contributing approximately 35,100 website registrations for shortage subjects.

Marketing mix and cost effectiveness

TV & Video, **Social Media** and **paid Search** have been the strongest drivers of website sessions in the latest period; with paid **Search** and **Social Media** also being the most cost-effective marketing drivers. In terms of website registrations for all secondary subjects, **paid Search** has been the most successful channel, both in terms of impact and cost effectiveness. **Digital Display** is relatively more successful in driving registrations than website sessions, and it has been particularly cost effective in driving shortage subject registrations.

Overall, despite the relatively strong impact of **Social Media** on website sessions, the analysis indicates a decline in the effectiveness of this channel on both shortage and non-shortage subjects' registrations. The observed decrease in the conversion rate between website sessions and registrations for **Social Media** appears to be the primary contributor to a lower level of registrations between January-March in the 2017/18 recruitment cycle compared to the same period of the previous recruitment cycle, followed by the lower levels of **Digital Display** activity.

The impact of marketing on UCAS applications

To overcome limitations encountered during the 2015 study, the analysis of the potential impact of marketing on UCAS applications has made use of Departmental data on the conversion rates between registrants with the GiT and UCAS applicants, rather than econometric techniques. Although this methodology only allows to identify the impact of marketing on the limited set of UCAS applicants who previously registered with the GiT website (thus potentially underestimating the impact of marketing), nonetheless the analysis indicates that the Department's marketing activity has effectively boosted the number of UCAS applicants. In particular, the marketing activity undertaken in the 2016/17 academic year appears to be linked with an additional 8,150 UCAS applicants for secondary subjects. Of these, 4,180 (51%) applied in the 2016/17 recruitment cycle, whilst 3,980 (49%) submitted their application in the 2017/18 recruitment cycle, thus suggesting a long-lasting impact of the marketing activity beyond the academic year in which it takes place.

Conclusions

This updated analysis of *Get into Teaching* marketing up to 31st March 2018 has demonstrated that the marketing campaign has substantially boosted its contribution to website sessions and registrations to both shortage and non-shortage subject areas over the course of 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18. Therefore, in the face of increasing recruitment shortfalls, continuing marketing activity is clearly necessary to secure consistent engagement with potential Initial Teacher Training applicants.

The results presented in the main report suggest that DfE's marketing campaign has become more effective compared to earlier periods, albeit illustrating a slight stall in the 2017/18 academic cycle (up to 31st March). However, in the absence of marketing activities, all outcomes would have been substantially lower than those that actually occurred.

In addition, new evidence on conversion rates between *Get into Teaching* website registrants and UCAS applicants was used for the first time to estimate the potential impact of marketing on this long-term outcome, suggesting a positive impact of marketing activities on the number of UCAS applicants. However, there is room for future research using individual level registration data and digital marketing data to improve the confidence of estimates in terms of the impact on applications.



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