



Department
for Education

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

Executive summary

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Introduction

The aim of this evaluation was to generate evidence on the contribution of the latest Department for Education (DfE) marketing campaign *Your Future | Their Future* towards teacher training recruitment.

In the context of an increasing population, growing economy and improving labour market opportunities, the Department for Education has forecasted that the need for new entrant teachers in secondary subjects will continuously grow in the coming years. Positive marketing and portrayal of the profession is a key element in achieving necessary workforce supply. However, 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 government has impact, but also provides value for money.

The key research objectives of this study were threefold:

- To establish the impact of DfE's marketing campaign and the specific marketing activities on the number of individuals considering teaching; registering an interest in teaching; and applying to undertake initial teacher training;
- To undertake a detailed analysis to understand the relative cost effectiveness of the different types of marketing elements of the campaign in respect of different outcomes; and,
- To estimate the long term impact of marketing, such as that on UCAS acceptances and ITT entries, through the analysis of the relationship between intermediate and long term outcomes.

This summarises results from initial findings based on analysis carried out in 2016 but published in 2019, along with an updated analysis.

Methodology

After careful treatment of the available data, and controlling for the wider contextual factors that might affect potential entrants to initial teacher training, we implemented a range of econometric models to assess the contributory role of the *Your Future | Their Future* marketing campaign on the outcomes of interest.

The models use weekly data on marketing activities and wider economic factors from 1st September 2012 until 31st January 2016. Once the impacts from marketing activities are identified, information on marketing costs is used to calculate and compare the cost effectiveness of each marketing channel with the impact, for each outcome of interest.

There were some technical challenges associated with estimating the impact of marketing activity on longer term outcomes such as Universities and College Admission Services (UCAS) applications, UCAS acceptances and entries to Initial Teacher Training (ITT). For this reason, it is recommended that the cost effectiveness results from the

models for other outcomes (website sessions and website registrations) be used to guide future decisions on marketing spend.

Findings

The analysis found that between September 2012 and January 2016, the activities associated with the *Your Future | Their Future* marketing campaign generated an estimated 4.8 million additional website sessions and an estimated 62,000 additional website registrations, of which approximately 24,000 were in core shortage subjects¹.

The impact of different marketing activities varied depending on the outcome variable under consideration. For instance, while Paid Search contributed to the largest share of website sessions (46%) relative to other marketing activities, it had no measured impact on website registrations. In general, TV, Press, Display and Social Media were consistently effective in driving large numbers of website sessions and website registrations across all subjects and in core shortage subjects.

Looking at the role of marketing in each academic year's recruitment cycle, the *Your Future | Their Future* marketing campaign has driven an estimated 33% of the website sessions that occurred in the first four months of the 2015/16 cycle (i.e. October 2015 to January 2016), compared to 30% in 2014/15 and 26% in 2013/14. For website registrations covering all secondary subjects, the marketing contribution over the first four months of the 2015/16 cycle was estimated to be even higher – standing at 72%. This compared to 43% in 2014/15 and 29% in 2013/14. The analysis suggests that across all years (and in 2015/16 in particular), the number of registrations on the 'Get Into Teaching' website would have been significantly lower in the absence of the marketing campaign.

Cost effectiveness

Our findings suggest that the cost of achieving an additional website session was on average £2.50² across all marketing channels over the modelling period, ranging between £0.40 and £8.70, depending on the channel. Paid Search and Radio were relatively more cost effective channels, while Display and TV and Video jointly were relatively more expensive for generating web sessions.

The average cost of achieving a website registration (for any secondary subject) across the modelling period stood at £190 across all marketing channels, ranging between £50 and £290 for different channels. Email and TV and Video jointly were amongst the least

¹ Core shortage subjects cover Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Modern Languages & Computer Science. A more detailed discussion of this definition is included in section A1.2 Analysis of the Technical Annex

² It should be noted that the full cost of marketing has been attributed to only one outcome at a time. In reality, the same marketing activities are also likely to have induced other outcomes (e.g. a TV advert induces an individual to visit the website, register and apply for initial teacher training). Therefore, the stand-alone cost effectiveness figures are not reflective of the full benefit from marketing.

cost-effective channels to drive this outcome, whereas Social Media and Digital Radio were relatively the most cost-effective channels.

Meanwhile, achieving a shortage subject registration was overall considerably more expensive, at an average cost of £490. At £96 per shortage registration, Digital Radio was the cheapest channel to drive this outcome, whereas TV and Video jointly were the most expensive marketing channels at a cost of £1,140 per shortage registration.

Long-term outcomes

Econometric modelling also suggested that marketing activity appears to have led to an increase in UCAS applications. However, there are substantial caveats involved in estimating the impact of marketing activity on UCAS applications through time series econometric modelling, primarily due to the expected delayed response between a marketing activity and the resulting UCAS application, the strong seasonality of this outcome and its relatively short time series. These numerous caveats mean that it is not possible to produce a reliable estimate through econometric modelling of the size of impact from marketing, nor to provide estimates of the impacts across different marketing channels.

An alternative approach was sought using assumptions on the relationship between website registrations and long-term outcomes, as well as the findings from the models of website registrations. It was estimated that marketing activities might have led to approximately 67,000 additional UCAS applications, of which approximately 17,000 were in core shortage subjects. This in turn resulted in roughly 14,000 UCAS acceptances and about 13,000 entries to Initial Teacher Training, of which approximately 6,000 were in shortage subjects areas.

Recommendations for future analysis

If the analysis is repeated in future, the availability of longer time series data could improve the robustness of cost effectiveness estimates. If it is not possible to receive data on UCAS applications pre 2013/14 it would therefore be advisable to ensure that data continuity is maintained for the future.

UCAS applications will always be a challenging outcome to model using a time series econometric approach. If the impact of marketing on applications is to be identified robustly, there is a need for further individual-level data to be gathered. Ideally, one would have the ability to link website registration and UCAS application records. A time series econometric approach could then be used to assess the relative effectiveness of different marketing channels in terms of inducing these individuals to register.

Finally, it is recommended that whenever a structural change to the applications process is made, there is some consideration given towards how the change might influence the effectiveness of marketing; what data should be gathered in order to isolate such an impact from that of marketing; and how such impact could be feasibly and robustly evaluated.



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