

# Vote and Tell

A new way to test your  
prospectus cover creative

Webinar 22 July 2020



# Vote and Tell: A new way to test your prospectus cover creative

## Agenda

- Introduction to The Student Room in numbers
- Risks and rewards: the importance of getting your prospectus right before print
- The Vote and Tell methodology, features and benefits
- The process: what it is like to work with The Student Room and what you can expect from Vote and Tell
- Key takeaways
- Q&A



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## Presenters

### **Barbara Bradshaw | Senior Market Research Consultant**

15 years experience specializing in qualitative and quantitative research. University background. Leading Vote and Tell.



### **Amii Lanham | Commercial Operations Director**

Responsible for the development of new, high-performance products including Vote and Tell. Previously worked with Suzuki, Rolls Royce, Fiat and Bentley on CRM and Client Services.



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## Also joining us

### **Marissa Freeman | B2B Marketing Manager**

Here for you in the background, and on chat to support you with technical issues you may encounter during the webinar.



# The Student Room in numbers



## TSR in numbers

**8 - 10m**  
average  
monthly users  
on TSR

**+2.5m**  
posts annually

**+250**  
forums on the  
site

# Risk and Reward

The importance of getting your design right  
before you go to print



## Prospectus: a rite of passage

- Prospectuses have always been a key part of the HE marketing strategy. They are historical and more cultural than other marketing tools
- In recent times, there have been various efforts to reduce or eliminate prospectuses altogether, usually because of **waste, budget and ROI**
- However, **no university has successfully done this permanently** as the prospectus is a central theme in UCAS fairs and other HE exhibitions
- University applicants expect prospectuses as part of their cultural experience of university hunting – they create **a meaningful connection with your university brand**

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## A cornerstone of university marketing

*“The prospectus is a cornerstone of university marketing. Despite the rise of digital, and increased attention on websites and social media content, it remains evident — through feedback and experiences shared at UCAS Masterclasses and elsewhere — that university audiences still expect something tangible.”*

**Bond + Coyne, HE Agency**



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## 85% isn't to be taken lightly

Our last Options report revealed that 85% of prospective students in Years 11-13 had used printed prospectuses as part of their decision-making process when applying to university.



# University prospectus development in numbers



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# Prospectus development in numbers

**£30-50k**

Average print cost for  
one university  
prospectus

**£100k**

Top-end  
prospectus cost

**1000 hrs**

Average hours an HE  
team invests in  
prospectuses before  
print even starts

**9**

Average number of  
months it takes to  
develop a new  
prospectus

**24**

Number of  
students who are  
typically part of  
testing across 3  
traditional focus  
groups

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## Tips & tricks for university printing:

# BELMONT PRESS

One of the largest and most reputable university prospectus printers in the UK.

Clients include Bath Spa University, The Open University, Liverpool John Moores University, Regents University London, Edinburgh University. They said:

- **Creative:** talk to printers early in the design process to save money regarding pagination and size
- **Common pitfall:** leaving it too late to get the best deal on paper (Belmont can get off the shelf sizes/reels of paper that are then cut down to exact sizing)

**£3.2M**

Uni spend on all print annually before the cost of design and shipping

**£30-50k**

Average spend on a prospectus, can be up to £100k

**£1.5M**

Spent across all prospectus printing annually

## The Front Cover: How do you want to be perceived?

- The front cover is the most illustrative opportunity to communicate your brand
- **The front cover isn't passive.** It works for your university by attracting and aligning with prospective applicants
- Many things can be communicated by the front cover alone, including:  
**brand alignment, ethos, experience, celebration of strengths, style of the university and teaching method, student cohort and core values**
- What do you want potential students to understand about you?



## Risk and Rewards: Key takeaways

1. The ROI of good quality testing is so high it's almost immeasurable
2. 85% students use prospectuses as part of their decision-making process
3. Thousands of hours and pounds contribute to each prospectus cycle
4. Start talking to your printers early in the creative process to save time, money and headaches

# Methodology: the technical science bit



# The target audience

- Our target audience is **prospective** students (2021 or 2022 applicants) – this is more beneficial than testing on existing students who already have an understanding of university life and are therefore not a good test subject cohort
- We test students who are independent of your institution
  - Not adding pressure to your CRM database
  - No need to send 'concepts' to your enquirers and applicants
- Honest feedback from students who have an unbiased relationship with your institution



## Vote and Tell: Methodology

# Research Method

- We use a set of tried and tested questions (validated in a pilot)
- We get students' initial impressions of each design
- Poll to establish their preference - which one they would pick up
- Then the depth of **why**
- Qualitative feedback on each option
- You can test up to 3 cover designs



# Bespoke questions

- Bespoke questions tailored to your campaign
- **Campaign-related** examples:
  - Test headlines to ensure they have impact
  - Ensure messages resonate by testing supporting text options
- Or ask something else:
  - Expected prospectus content
  - Preferred method of communications with universities



# Qualitative depth with quantitative numbers

- Robust sample size to give numbers you can rely on: **minimum of 200 students**
- Actionable data so senior decision-makers and designers can make **data-informed creative choices**
- Qualitative feedback so you can be confident that your key messages are clear and resonate with your target audience. They also provide insights on **why** a design does/doesn't work



## Methodology: Key takeaways

1. Our target audience is **prospective** students
2. We explore the **why**, not just the **what** and **how**
3. Honest feedback from students who have an unbiased relationship with your institution
4. Bespoke questions tailored to your campaign

# The Process: working with TSR



# Excellent results start with an excellent brief

TSR INSIGHT

### Vote and Tell Client Briefing Form

This form is designed to help us understand as much as possible about your project before we get started. Please provide as much detail as you can. \* sections must be completed

#### \*Your details

Name	
Role	
Organisation	
Email	
Phone	
TSR Account Manager	
Date	

#### \*Project Summary

If you had to sum up your project in a couple of sentences what would you say?

#### \*Research Objectives

First you'll work with your Account Manager to fill in the briefing form document. They will send it to you and you'll have **one week** to finalise it before sending it back to us. Then our insight team will sign off the plan, or feedback if necessary. You send in an IO and your campaign is good to go.

# Clear timelines you can rely on



### **Week 1: Planning and scripting**

A researcher will call you to talk you through your briefing document and the process. You submit up to three front covers for testing. We write up your questions (please note you are only allotted two rounds of question amends to keep delivery timescales on track).

### **Week 2 – 4: Fieldwork, analysis and reporting**

We collect the results from students. Your data is analysed and formulated into a report. We call you to discuss the findings.

# Key takeaways summary



## Key takeaways Summary

1. **Prospectuses are still essential** - no university has successfully omitted them and 85% of students use prospectuses to make decisions about their university choice
2. **The front cover can 'make or break' the rest of a prospectus**
3. **Testing is vital to prove ROI** - thousands of hours and pounds are invested in each prospectus print cycle
4. **Vote and Tell gives you clear tangible evidence** on how your work will lead to an impactful prospectus which you can say with confidence will resonate with your prospective students
5. **Benefits include:** huge sample sizes, an unbiased target audience of prospective students, tested in a virtual environment (can still be run in a Lockdown scenario), data that will clarify the **why**, as well as the **what** and **how**

Contact us

**Thank you so much for joining us**

**Keep in touch**

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