

Case Study:

Tilburg University

How Tilburg University increased the quality and diversity of their international student body, while accelerating growth



TILBURG  UNIVERSITY

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studyportals



STRATEGIC COLLABORATION THROUGH ADVANCED, OMNI-CHANNEL STUDENT JOURNEY ANALYTICS

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#winningstrategies

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Introduction

Digital student recruitment

to stay ahead of the game



There is ever-increasing competition among university programmes with many institutions, cities, countries and continents having ambitious international student recruitment goals in the 'chase for talent'. University marketing staff need to master all modern communication channels to attract their best-fit prospective students.

Studyportals is on a mission to make education transparent globally. In 2021, over 52 million students used Studyportals to explore over 250,000+ degree options abroad. For universities, Studyportals is a result-based partner for international student recruitment and marketing, revolutionising the way universities reach a global audience and optimise their student population. Studyportals is truly global, fully digital and direct-to-students.

This case study shows how Tilburg University has collaborated with Studyportals to qualitatively outgrow many other universities while building a future-proof, measured funnel for effective talent recruitment.

This study also shares the results of a comprehensive student-journey touchpoint analysis, outlining the students' journey from discovery to enrolment into Tilburg University and Studyportals' role in their decision making.

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The Case Study

Meet our client & the institution



Fernanda Guimarães

International Marketing Advisor
Tilburg University

Fernanda Guimarães is the international marketing advisor at Tilburg University. In addition to her advisory and implementing role as member of the department's Strategic Marketing & Development Team, Fernanda acts as the contract manager for Studyportals.

Her connection with the university started in 2013 when she did her pre-Master's and subsequently her Master's in Culture Studies: Management of Cultural Diversity. She has been working for the Marketing and Recruitment department of Tilburg University since 2016.

TILBURG
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Tilburg University

Tilburg University is a public research university specialising in social and behavioural sciences, economics, law, business sciences, theology and humanities, and located in Tilburg, the Netherlands. With its motto 'Understanding Society', Tilburg University aims to contribute to solving complex social issues.

There were 20,254 students at Tilburg University in 2021 – including 4,231 international students. There are 74 Bachelor's & Master's programmes offered, of which 34 are offered in English.

A world-renowned University

for research and student satisfaction

Tilburg University Rankings:

- #17 worldwide in Business Administration: Shanghai Global Ranking of Academic Subjects, 2021
- Top 47 worldwide in Business & Economics, Law and Psychology: Times Higher Education World University Ranking, 2022
- Top 45 QS Rankings by Subject, 2022 worldwide, in Accounting & Finance, Management & Business, Economics & Econometrics, Law & Legal Studies, and Psychology

Global Student Satisfaction Awards 2021:



Studyportals' Global Student Satisfaction awards are the only student-powered global university overview capturing feedback on life inside and outside the classroom. The Awards empower students to share their views and to create recognition for the best universities in the world.

In 2021, Tilburg University received seven Global Student Satisfaction awards. It is a remarkable achievement, granted by international students themselves, who shared their first-hand experiences of studying at Tilburg University.

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The problem

Growing & diversifying the student

population by 2025

Tilburg University has made large investments into teaching, developing new programmes, and ensuring state of the art teaching facilities, but has a limited marketing budget.

Nonetheless, in 2016 the university leadership defined ambitious plans to increase its student body from 14,000 students to 20,000 students and increase the number and quality of international students by 2025. This goal was achieved by 2021.

Achieving this strategy required reimagining traditional student recruitment with the help of digital tools, and the smart investment of the marketing budget in methods with **provable results**.



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The solution

Tilburg University's marketing and recruitment team wanted to find the effective, 'no cure-no pay' cooperation model - a risk-free cooperation, where both partners could play to their strengths, and achieve tangible results in international recruitment.

In order to achieve the ambitious growth plan of Tilburg University and to minimise the university's commercial risk, Studyportals and Tilburg University agreed on an innovative Enrolment-based Partnership.



The **Enrolment-based Partnership** focuses on long-term cooperation with close communication between the university and Studyportals teams. Together we share the same goal – attracting talented students from all over the world.

Studyportals takes the risk, by providing unlimited exposure and dedicating more resources to worldwide digital marketing promotion in order to increase interest from more relevant candidates. As a result, Studyportals helps the university attract the best-fit prospective international students.

Omni-channel

Student recruitment

Tilburg University employs a wide range of marketing and recruitment activities, ranging from physical (and virtual) events, paid online advertisements, social media, peer-to-peer marketing through alumni and student ambassadors, supporting student recruitment agents with marketing material, and using Studyportals' services.

It was important to assess the role each activity plays to find the best-possible mix and ROI.



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Implementation & Service



The partnership started on the 1st of April 2018, with the promotion of all Bachelor's, Master's and Pre-Master's English taught degree programmes on Studyportals.

The tracking set up was achieved with:

- Optimised cross-domain tracking of completed university applications
- Anonymised comparison of Tilburg University's and Studyportals' data
- Individual UTM links to track traffic coming from Studyportals to Tilburg University website

Throughout the partnership there has been intensive collaboration between Studyportals' team and the Marketing and Communication team at Tilburg University. This collaboration includes multiple touchpoints such as alignment meetings aimed at outlining priorities, challenges, and enrolment projections, as well as annual strategic meetings to reflect on delivered results.

The most recent strategic meeting took place in May 2022, where performance to date was reviewed in detail and an expansion of the partnership was agreed.

Key actions

taken by Studyportals

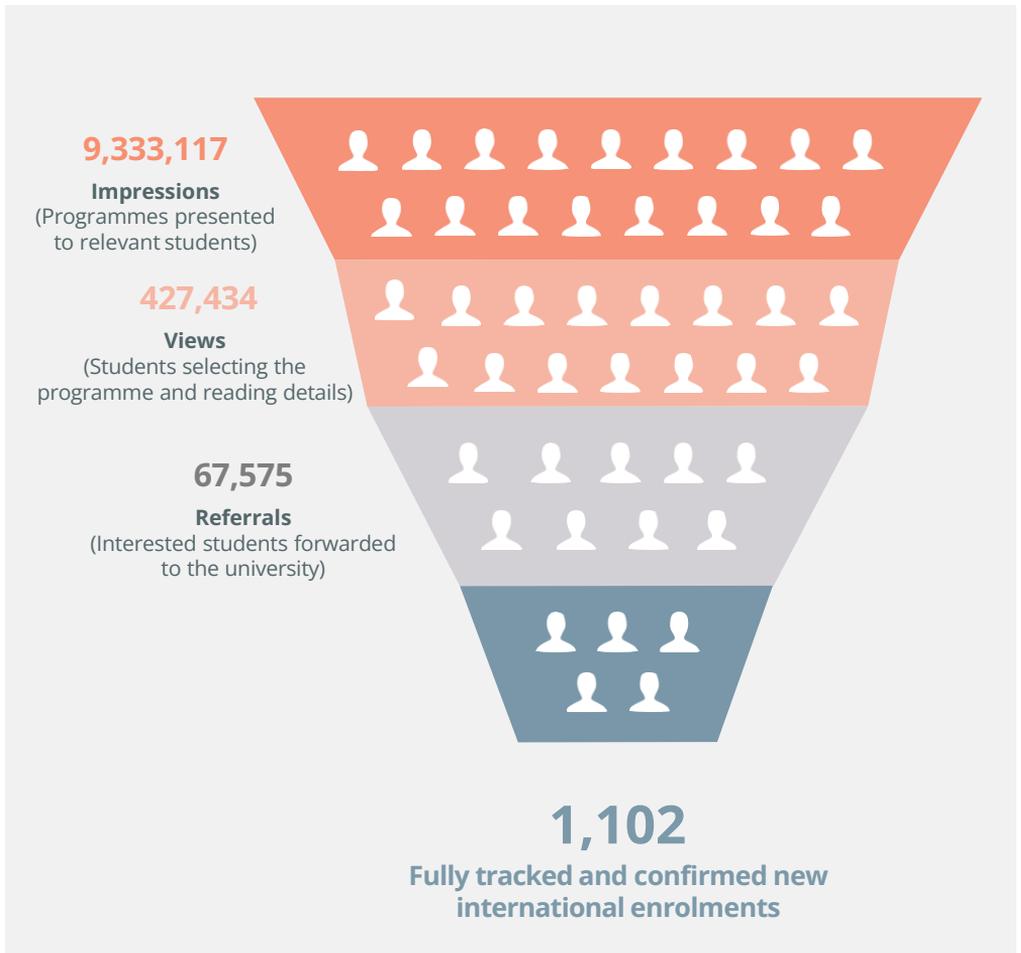
- Rapidly expanded reach and discoverability of studies by publishing the complete portfolio of English-taught degree programmes
- Enhanced nurturing depending on the interaction of the student with Tilburg University's content. Personalisation is based on three pillars: to reaffirm value & nudge to act, to re-engage with useful content, and to help them move further in their journey
- Offering 'best fit' tool for students to assess their academic and financial fit for their programmes of interest
- Presenting relevant and up-to-date information so students can make well-informed study choices
- Contributing to Tilburg University's worldwide online brand exposure by delivering high-quality traffic to the university's website
- Measuring campaign results throughout the student journey
- Assessing and recalibrating campaigns based on the university's strategic objectives



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Results

From 1 April 2018 to 31 December 2021, promoting via Studyportals generated a strong digital presence for the Tilburg University brand with over **9.3 million brand impressions, 427,4 million page views** and **67,575 referrals** to the university's website. The direct result of this promotion and collaboration is **1,102 enrolments** over **4 years**, with many additional strategic benefits for the institution.



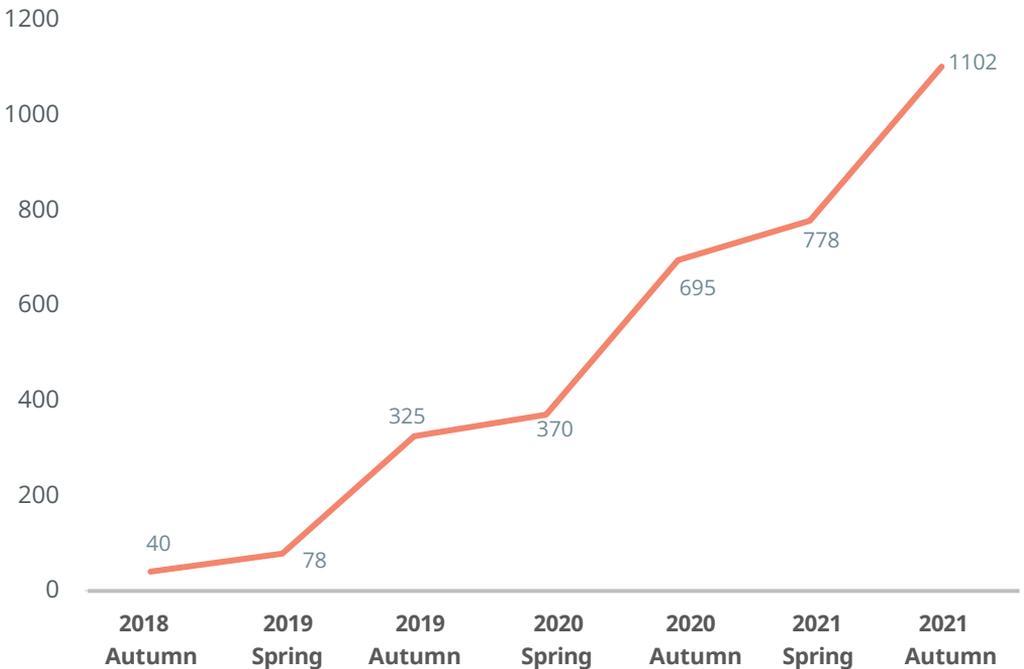
Steady growth of

tracked and confirmed enrolments

As the Partnership started in April 2018, and students typically take 12-18 months from discovery to enrolment, **only a part of the results** is reflected before the end of 2021.

Also, due to conservative tracking, only a portion of students can be tracked from discovery to enrolment. **The full enrolment effect of the partnership is estimated at 1,350 - 1,740 enrolments.** This estimate is supported by University data showing the increase in overall growth.

Cumulative tracked and confirmed enrolments per intake



Diverse and truly global student recruitment

The partnership between Studypartals and Tilburg University has resulted in tracked and confirmed enrolments by students originating from **108 countries**.

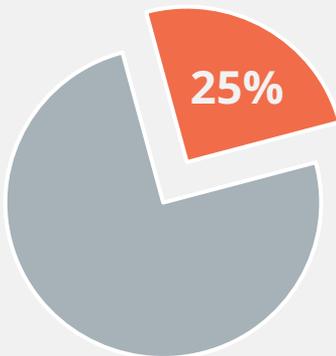


Studyportals contribution to programme diversity

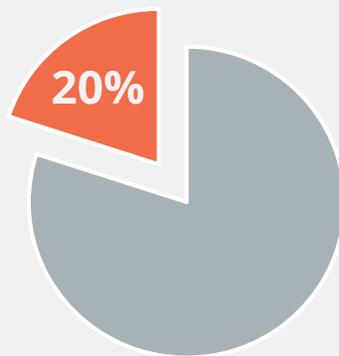
New and niche programmes that have had more difficulty attracting international talent also benefited from this collaboration. **25% of students** in 52 programmes with **lower international diversity** (9 or less int'l students) were delivered by Studyportals. Among these programmes are research masters, as well as 'Christianity and Society', Philosophy, Theology, and 'Linguistics and Communication Sciences'.

For 34 'more popular' programmes (with 10 or more int'l students), Studyportals helped **20% of students** find their study programme at Tilburg University.

Studyportals' share of international students by programme popularity



Smaller/
struggling
programmes



Most popular
programmes

Key findings of the student journey analysis

Students discovered Tilburg University through Studyportals but were also active throughout their whole decision-making process, including when making the final choice between multiple offers from universities.



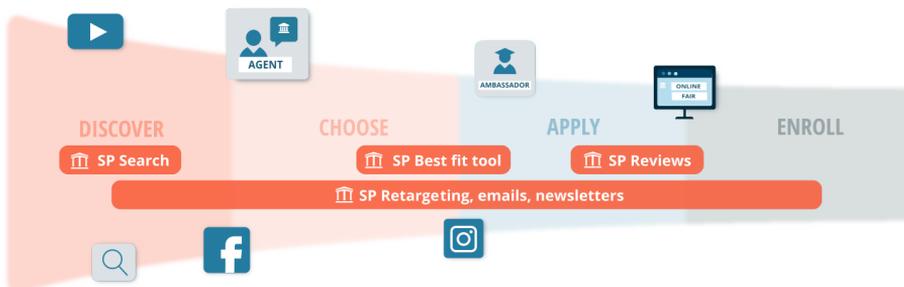
On average, the confirmed enrolments were registered to have been active on Studyportals during a period of **575 days** throughout their study choice process.



78% of confirmed enrolments were active earlier on Studyportals than any other touchpoint tracked by the university.



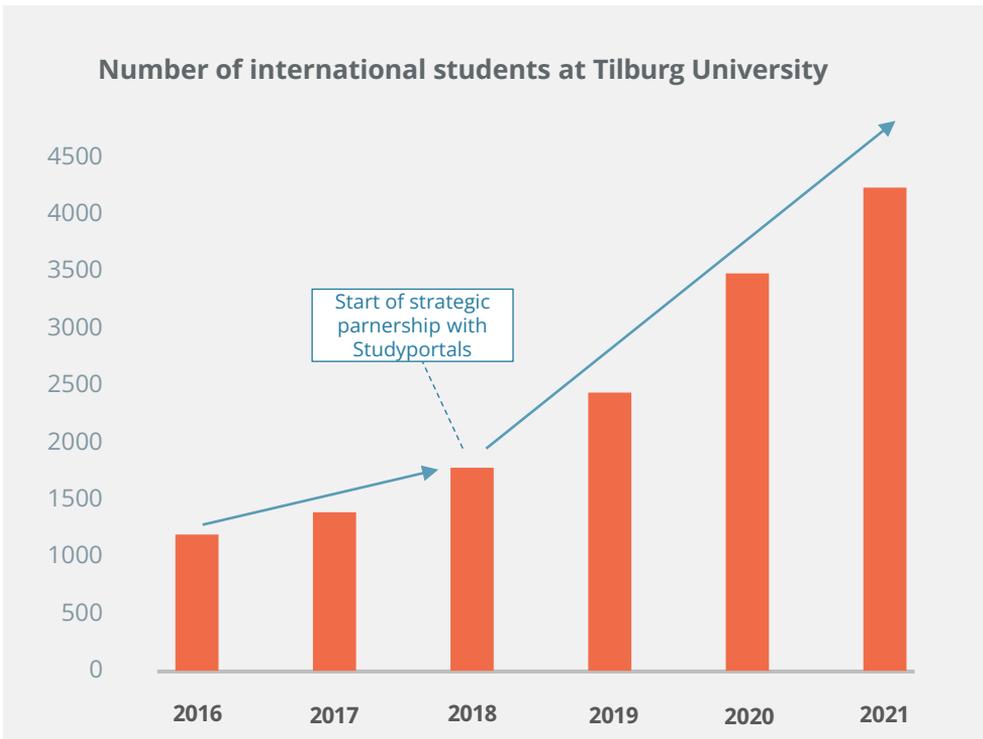
Those students were active for an average **207 days** before they first registered on Tilburg University's systems. They were also still active for **81 days** after they registered with the University.



The majority of students discovered the university through Studyportals. Students were active throughout their entire decision-making process, including when making the final choice between multiple offers from universities.

Tilburg University's accelerated growth of its international student body

In a combination of various promotional efforts online and offline, Tilburg University has achieved remarkable results attracting more international students over the course of the past 6 years.





Key benefits



Innovative services

Studyportals is an innovative company, which is both supportive and flexible in their business model, so that it fits best to their clients' strategy and needs. There were complex and challenging projects and trajectories, but Studyportals showed its willingness and cooperation along the way.



Close collaboration

Studyportals was open for feedback and tried to adjust their business model and advice for Tilburg University every time it was necessary. Studyportals' team is definitely open for feedback, proactive, manages to implement requests and changes and always responds in due time.



Partnering for transparency and more control over student recruitment

Can you compare the results with Studyportals to other marketing efforts?

Studyportals offers comprehensive information and helps international students with comparing their available options and limits the resulting list based on their profile. This was exactly what Tilburg University needed, in addition to their omni-channel marketing strategy.

The most outstanding advantage of the partnership with Studyportals is their place as an innovative strategic, marketing and recruitment first mover.



“The strategic account management from Studyportals enabled Tilburg University to set up the promotional activities in close collaboration, and align the input, throughput and output.”

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Get in touch

Increase brand awareness

When students are finding their dream programme, make sure your university stands out through SEO, targeted banners, emails and newsletters.

Capture student interest, diversify

Have informed and interested students referred to your university and programme landing pages and capture requests for additional information.

Convert interest into enrolments

Track the full student journey, measure the ROI of your digital campaign, reduce your risk and scale your result.

Curious on how Studyportals can help your institution excel in student diversification?
Let's talk!
hello@studyportals.com



8 portals



52M unique visitors every year



635,000 international enrolments



3,750+ participating institutions



200,000+ programmes listed



Multiple levels of education



Geographic detail at city-level



Monthly data updates



studyportals

**Get in touch to discover how we can help
you enhance your international student
recruitment strategy**

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