



## TOWARDS MEASURED ROI – A MARKETER’S DREAM

### Four years’ dedication to optimise online marketing for student recruitment

The vast majority of European countries and universities see the benefits of international mobility and aim to attract foreign talent. In the global arena, the audience is large but also diverse, distant both in geography and culture. Furthermore, the way students are orienting themselves and consume information is different and under constant development. Finding targeted, cost-effective marketing solutions is key. Saxion University of Applied Sciences is the frontrunner in online marketing and tracking results is a core element of their success.

### The solution: Pioneering and measuring the effects

Apart from a complete website redesign, Saxion implemented methods that originate from the world of e-commerce to track all visitor activity on the new website. This is revolutionary in the Higher Education world and therefore also took some time and effort to be implemented. However, it has given Saxion a very powerful tool to evaluate the effectiveness of their marketing activities.

The visitor tracking is done by means of a web statistics tool (Google Analytics in this case), free, online software which tracks visitors through a small tracking code on each page. By default, this gives insight in your visitors and their behaviour:

- ✓ Visitor characteristics: such as the location, age and the device they are using.
- ✓ Your website’s use: which pages are popular, how visitors browse.
- ✓ The sources of your traffic: which other websites refer to you, how visitors find you, which keywords are important etc.

*Furthermore, it is possible to set up conversion tracking. In Google Analytics one or more goals can be defined. A goal can be anything you want a visitor to do: register for an event, subscribe to a newsletter, buy a book, do an application. Saxion has an online application process for international students. They have set up goals in Google Analytics to measure the percentage of visitors that applies to one of their courses. This enables them to identify which visitors have completed the application, how these browsed the site, from which (marketing) source they originated etc.*

### Different Marketing Channels

Upon the launch of a new website and having the tracking tools in place, Saxion started to experiment with the many different marketing options available to schools. The main activities can be grouped in Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), Search Engine Advertisement (SEA – mainly Google Adwords), Social Media (Facebook) and Study Choice websites.

## Marketing channels used by Saxion

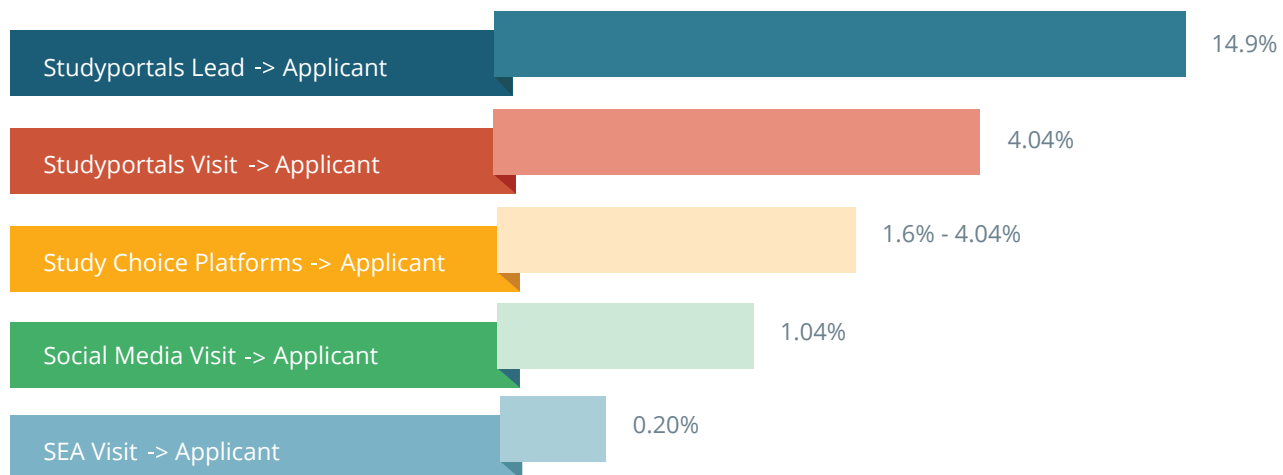


They selected the leading national and international Study Choice websites that are used by international degree-seekers on bachelor's and master's level, and also started to work with Studyportals in a result-based partnership.

## Benefits/Results

Tracking the conversion of campaigns delivers a very powerful tool for Saxion to determine where to invest their marketing budget, and to continuously improve their website. Typical conversion rates from a visitor to an application over the main advertising channels, measured over a 6 month period are 0.2% for search engine advertisement (CPC), 1.04 % for social media (mainly Facebook), and Study Choice websites scored between 1.6% to 4.04%. The Studyportals' visitors had the highest measured conversion rate of all channels with 4.04%.

## Measured conversation rates



From the Study Choice websites, Saxion does not only receive web traffic (clicks), but also enquiries/leads. These are students who have filled out an interest/enquiry form on the external website, which are typically sent to Saxion via Email. Saxion also receives these enquiries from Studyportals' visitors. These students were matched with the applicants database. This shows a conversion of 14.9% of students who did an inquiry at Studyportals, later applied to Saxion.

Looking carefully at the cost incurred (and effort) to generate traffic and enquiries, combining that with the measured effect gives a good indication of the ROI of each investment, and at least allows for a founded comparison between channels. Overall, the Saxion fact-based approach has been very successful. Over the last years, Saxion has been able to grow its webtraffic as well as the number of online international applications with about 50% every year – an important pillar in the growth of their international student base. The Studyportals cooperation proved to be very successful. As the students can make a comprehensive search and comparison and are also well-informed about the institutes and programmes, the interest of the students coming through is high. The quality of the traffic was already visible in the standard statistics (low bounce rate of 19%, 6.5 minutes avg time on site), but the ultimate proof is in the highest conversion rate of both the visitors as the enquiries.

This proves the relevance of the two Studyportals utilised: Bachelorsportal.com and Mastersportal.com and makes the invested budget of unique value-for money. Therefore, the cooperation will be continued, where Studyportals now tries to send on even more interested students to Saxion.

Web- and conversion tracking is not waterproof: students use a mix of information sources, and when a visitor closes the browser and comes back for the application later, the trail is lost. The web conversion rates above are the percentages of visitors that did the application within the same browser-session. In reality, the real conversion rates of marketing activities will be probably even higher.

## About Saxion University of Applied Sciences

Saxion University of Applied Sciences offers education in almost all disciplines and hosts about 23,000 students and 2,100 staff. The University's aim is to help students build their international future. Internationalisation (both 'inbound' and 'outbound') is a strategic priority and they focus mainly on the European and Asian student market for full-degree students.

Their 12 schools offer over 50 different bachelor's programmes, 7 master's degrees and 7 associate degrees. Their international programmes are listed on Studyportals: 30 on Bachelorsportal.com and 7 on Mastersportal.com, these are all English-taught programmes. Apart from Dutch students, Saxion has a large population of Germans (~10%). The share of students from other foreign countries is ~5% and growing.

## About the Result-Based Partnership

Studyportals is the European Study Choice platform: publisher of Bachelors-, Masters-, Phd-, Shortcourses-, Distancelearning-, and Scholarshipportal.com. First and foremost, it helps students finding and comparing currently 28,300 study programmes in the specialization of their interest, across the borders of the European nations: currently 2 million visits per month from all over the world.

Universities can list their programmes for free and make use of uniquely effective advertising services: so far, over 1,225 universities from 40 European nations have joined. Studyportals offers a result-based cooperation: the exposure of Saxion is optimised according to their objectives, target groups and programme offer.

The exposure on the Studyportals' websites is free of charge, Saxion only pays for the interested students they receive through the campaign. This reduces the possibility of ineffective marketing investments, and guarantees value-for-money. For more information, please contact us at [hello@studyportals.com](mailto:hello@studyportals.com)