

# Case Study:

# Vrije Universiteit

# Brussel



studyportals



VRIJE  
UNIVERSITEIT  
BRUSSEL

# **USING REAL-TIME DATA INSIGHTS TO IDENTIFY RECRUITMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

#actingoninsights

# 1 Introduction



## Upgrading your programme portfolio

Universities and business schools are faced with the challenge of continuously having to identify new market opportunities within their programme offerings.

However, with a limited budget, marketing efforts may not be properly translated to an increase in student enrolments within these courses.

The partnership with Studyportals and Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) enabled straight forward identification of new focus countries, fit for targeting. As a result, this translated to improved prospect-to-applicant conversions and a better ROI.

# 2 The Case Study

## Meet our client and the institution



### Daisy Bocchi

International Marketing & Recruitment officer  
at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)

Daisy is responsible for the recruitment of international students, outside of Belgium for VUB's English-taught programmes.

Together with her team, she is also involved with the marketing and lead nurturing of VUB's English-taught programmes.

### Vrije Universiteit Brussel

VUB is an internationally oriented university in Brussels, the heart of Europe. Through tailor-made high-quality research and education, VUB wants to contribute in an active and committed way to a better society for tomorrow. As of 2022, Vrije Universiteit Brussel belongs in the top 18% of best universities worldwide, offering 137 Bachelor's, Master's and Advanced Master's study programmes to more than 20,600 students, 24% of them being international. Over the past two decades VUB significantly expanded its English taught offer; with various Bachelors and Masters taught in English.





**VUB's vision is where**

**Studyportals comes in**

VUB strives to have a very diverse and inclusive student population, where intercultural exchange among students is present both within and outside the classrooms. Over the past 15 years VUB has almost doubled its size thanks to its attractive, innovative and affordable educational offer, supported, of course, by targeted recruitment efforts.



### **The university aims to:**

- Ensure all programmes meet their enrolment targets while ensuring student quality, diversity and fit.
- Extra support for the newly established English-taught Bachelor's and Master's programmes, to ensure a successful first student intake.
- Develop a data-driven international marketing and recruitment strategy.

# The partnership's

## timeline

2010

Start Analytics and Consulting Team partnership - 2012



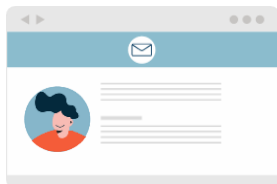
2011

Kick-off exposure to prospective students worldwide



2016

Implementation of Email Campaign



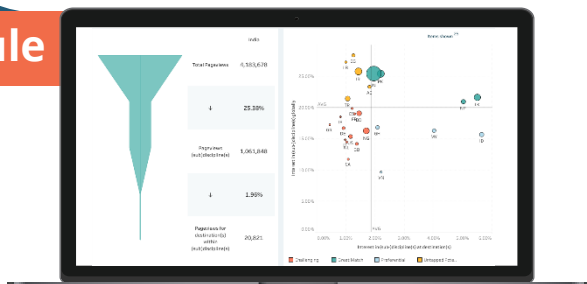
2021

Microsite launch



## ACT Dashboard Module


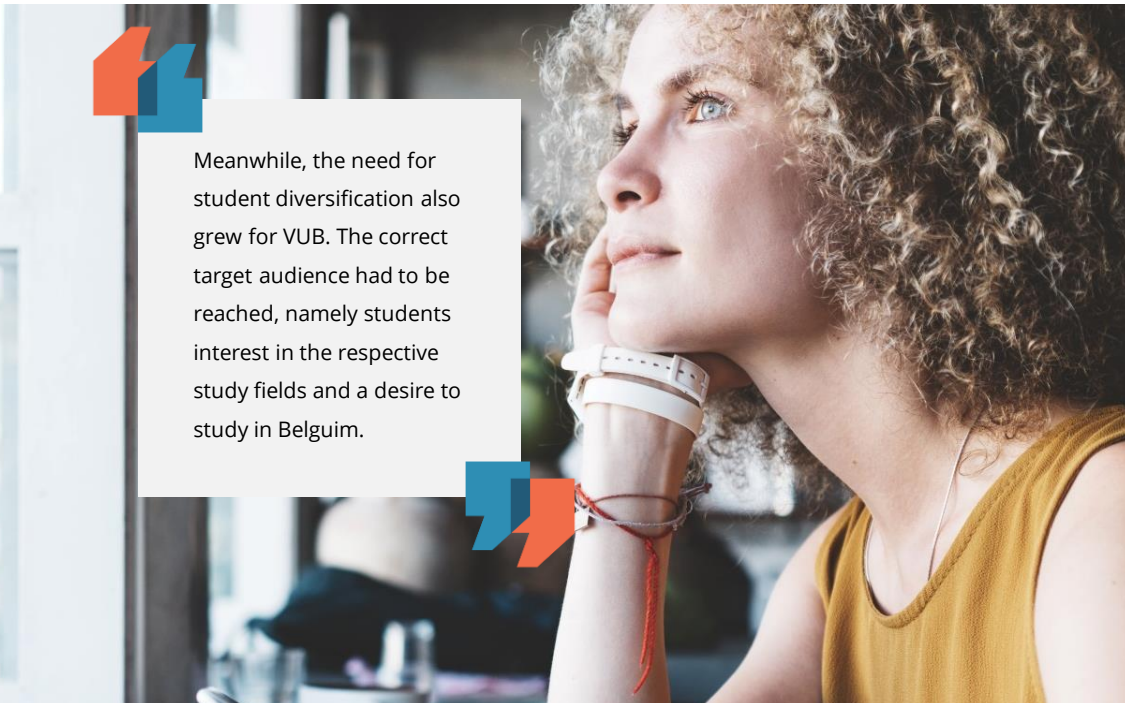
The Focus Country Selector Module allows VUB to gain specific insights into their desired student demographic, tied to their non-mainstream programme offerings.




# 3 The Goal

## Identifying new market opportunities for non-mainstream programmes

Vrije Universiteit Brussel has been looking for ways to target best-fit international students, that enrol for their non-mainstream programmes. There was a lack of overview on the geographical targeting for VUB's campaigns. Without a proper benchmark on student interests, marketing and recruitment activities may not lead to the desired ROI; a lacking applicant to enrolled student ratio.



Meanwhile, the need for student diversification also grew for VUB. The correct target audience had to be reached, namely students interest in the respective study fields and a desire to study in Belgium.



# 4 The Dashboard

## **What made you decide to further investigate the Studyportals dashboard solutions?**

We've been working with Studyportals for many years and already knew that their websites are the most prominent source of information for students interested in studying abroad.

With such a large number of visitors on the platform, and with so many programme providers listing their offer, we knew that the data volumes Studyportals can extract concerning user behaviour would help us gain insight into the programme demand and supply. More importantly, that these data are an accurate reflection of the current higher education market.

## **How have the dashboards helped provide the answers you were looking for?**

The Focus Country Selector dashboard helped us identify new target countries for most of our study programmes, helping us geo-target in our marketing activities across different platforms (sponsored posts, mailings, remarketing campaign, etc.) to get better ROI.





# Studyportals Dashboard module:

## Focus Country Selector

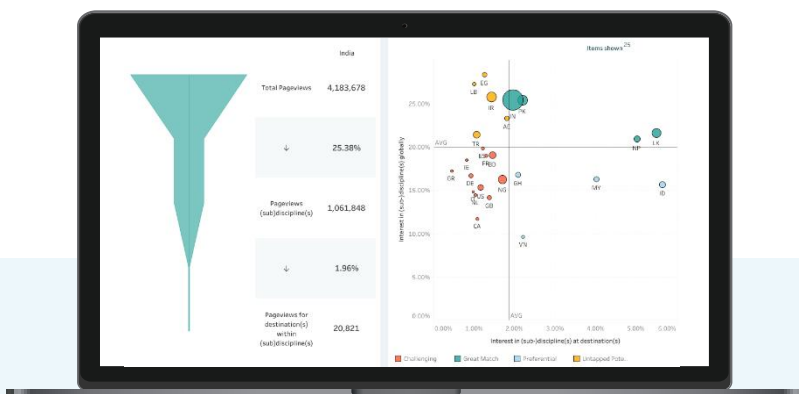
Using the Focus Country Selector Module, VUB was able to identify new target countries and grow their student body. This information allowed VUB to make more justified recruitment activities due to a broad mix of data sources. It further helped with geo-targeting across different platforms such as sponsored posts, mailings and remarketing campaigns.

### What our Focus Country Selector Module helps you identify

Which part of our portfolio should we prioritise in which recruitment countries?

Which other destination countries are students comparing us to?

Can we drill down into interests per individual country of student origin



### Studyportals' data is a reliable indicator of future student recruitment

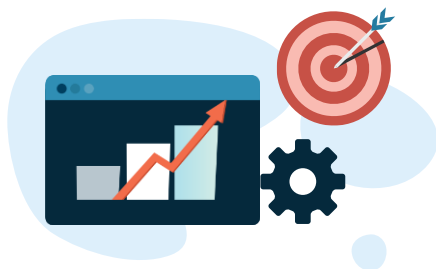
Studyportals tracks the anonymous, organic search behaviour of 50+ million prospective students annually on its proprietary platforms. Studyportals' data records changes in student interest as they emerge and is a reliable indicator of future enrolments. UK HESA data shows a correlation of 83% between search behaviour on Studyportals and actual enrolments, 18 months later.

# 5 Key Benefits



## Practical data solutions

We see the added value of the dashboard, especially when complemented by our own data. For example, when identifying new focus countries from the dashboard, we also cross check the list with our student performance related data for those countries, or with the historical applicant to enrolled student conversion rate. This way we define an actual shortlist.



## Justification of recruitment activities

Our recruitment activities are better justified as we've been able to geo-target our campaigns based on a broader mix of data (sources). As a result, this should translate in better prospect to-applicant conversion, thanks to the relevance of our institution and its programmes with respect to the prospective student's interests.



# 6

# Implementation & Service



## How did you like working with Studyportals?

Studyportals is an innovative, proactive company. The staff is receptive to feedback and willing to meet customer's needs. From the very beginning the timeline on setting up the dashboard and training was clearly communicated and executed. During the training we immediately get the chance to test the dashboard and this way the people at Studyportals learn what is (not) instinctively clear when using the filters/tabs. We also receive updates on what's new/in the pipeline linked to the dashboard(s). All our questions have been followed up in a quick manner often with clear examples.



# 7 Results

The Focus Country Selector Module has helped VUB to focus their international strategy on the countries that are most attractive.



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# 8 Key Facts

Do you know how your institution's strategy could benefit from our real-time student data?

## Degree Supply & Demand

Which specialisation should our new Master's degree offer? Which fields are currently being under and over supplied?

## Portfolio Development

Where do we start with improving our portfolio?

What subject areas are students in my focus country interested in?

## Trends & Forecasting

What are the upcoming countries of international students? How is the demand for degrees forecasted to develop over the next years?

### Not seeing a Modular Dashboard that suits your institution's needs?

Reach out to us for a consultation on a dashboard fitting your requirements!

[consulting@studyportals.com](mailto:consulting@studyportals.com)



9 portals



50M unique visitors every year



840,000 international enrolments



3,610+ participating institutions



250,000+ programmes listed



Multiple levels of education



Geographic detail at city-level



Monthly data updates





**studyportals**

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