



April 2016

University of Manchester

Undergraduate | Postgraduate | Website & eProspectus | Digital & Social | Brand & Storytelling | Innovation & Future | Outdoor & Experiential | Guardian Awards





Introduction | User Guide

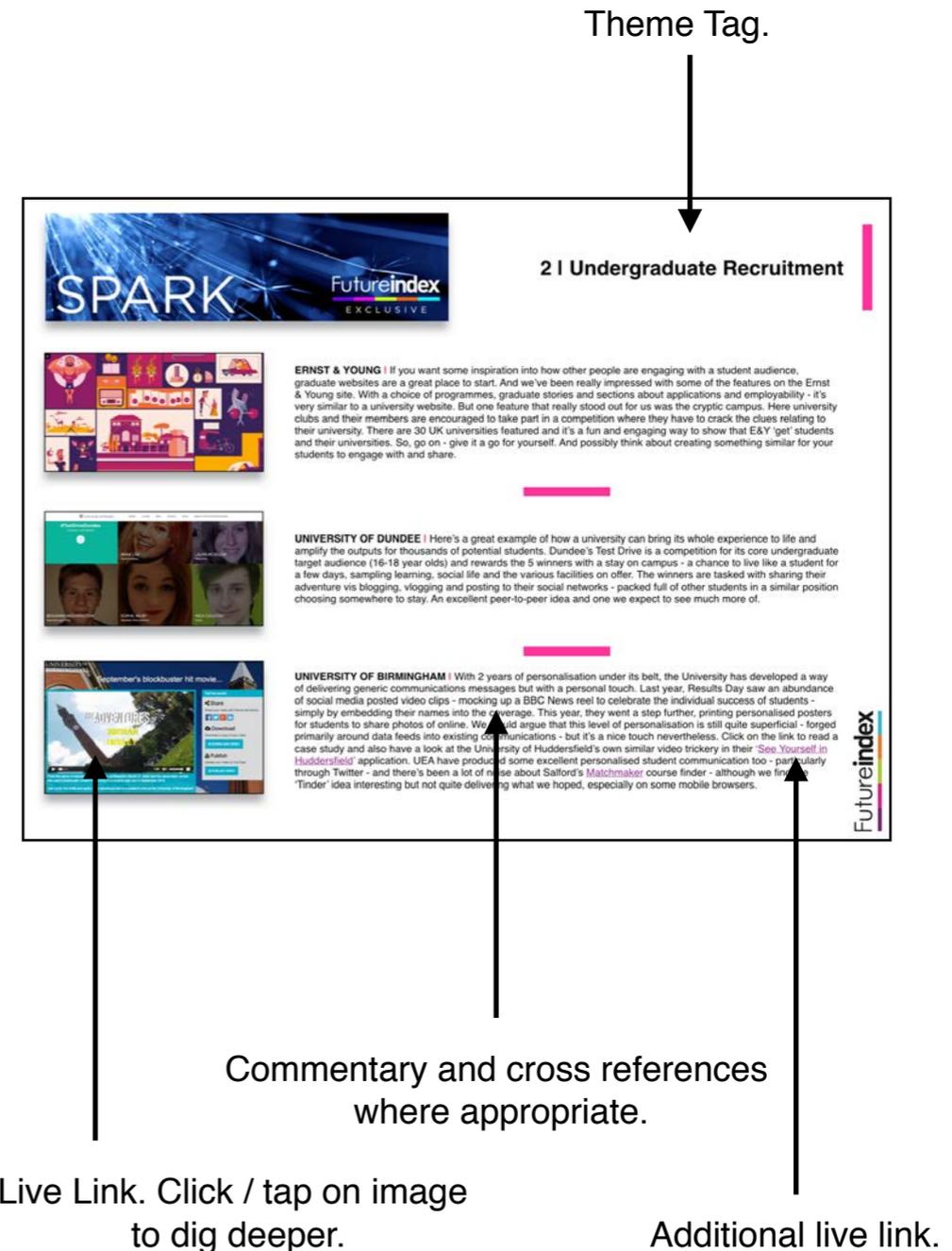
Welcome to our fourth 'Spark' trends report. It's designed to quickly ignite your thinking - a launchpad for your very own ideas. Unlike other trends reports, this is not so much about the theory but about the evidence. As with everything the Future Index® delivers, it is based upon real examples. It's the trends in action. Many of these examples are from the global Higher Education world, but we've included some from outside too. We think that's crucial to helping you see the bigger landscape and opportunity.

And the report is designed with you in mind. We have included the 6 core topics that we're focusing on, with an additional 2 to learn from too. This edition we've decided to give a section to explore some of the best Guardian Awards winners.

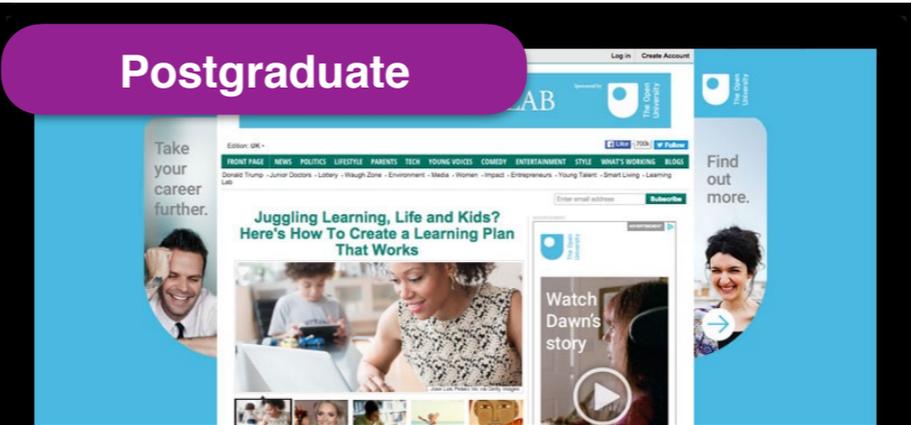
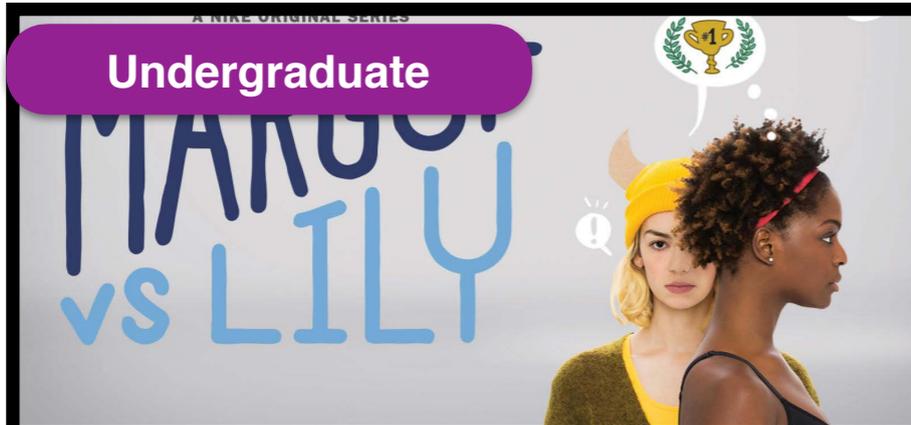
Everything is in an interactive PDF format that works perfectly across a range of screens. It's all easily accessible and quick to read and lends itself to a quick scan. It's also full of live links, so click on the pictures or on the text links and you'll be taken to case studies, videos and articles that will deepen your understanding. We've included contents and highlights to help you make the jumps to information much easier.

We continue in beta mode and your feedback remains invaluable. The next edition will introduce a whole new look to the reports so look out for Spark 01.05 in June. In the meantime, enjoy over fifty sparks of inspiration in front of you right now!

This report is designed for screen use, and is ideal for full-screen and tablet viewing. Please respect the environment and only print if essential.

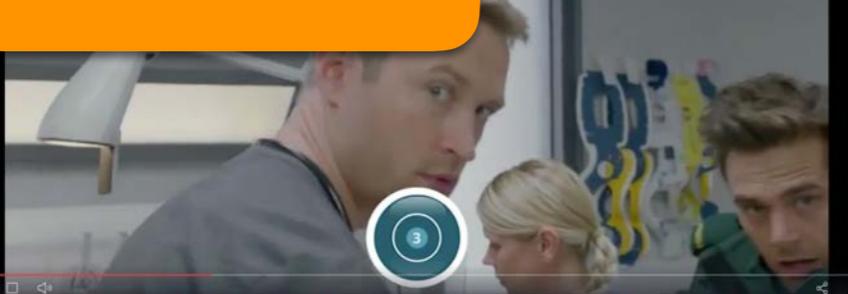


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Casualty Taster



Deakin Podcasts



60 Seconds PhD



Academic Showcase



Tasmania Links In

The University of Tasmania and LinkedIn have teamed up so you can look into the future – knowing where you could be 5-10 years after graduating makes deciding what to study next just that little bit easier.

 Sign in with LinkedIn

You'll need a LinkedIn account to access this site. No LinkedIn account? [Sign up here.](#)



Snapchat Filters



UBC Future

100 YEARS

FEATURE STORY

Virtual Education



Highlights

Here's a few highlights that we're confident will get you thinking. The BBC Casualty Taster and Deakin Podcasts show different ways of packaging sample learning - something that audiences are going to want more of. The PG community are asking for better profiles of existing students and academics and so the 60 seconds stories and Texas Academic Showcase are a must see. We could imagine Manchester 'beacon' academics in the Texas style - but with their own Mancunian swagger of course!

The University of Tasmania's use of LinkedIn could trigger your own ideas of using web based 'glue' to stick in new functionality. And we had to include Snapchat because its filters really are an important trend for both brands and universities.

We thought Canada's UBC look 100 years into the future was just the kind of thing the University of Manchester could do with authority and we had to highlight some virtual reality inspiration - Samsung's innovative learning experiment is the perfect stimulus.



click images to jump to the section



1 | Undergraduate Recruitment



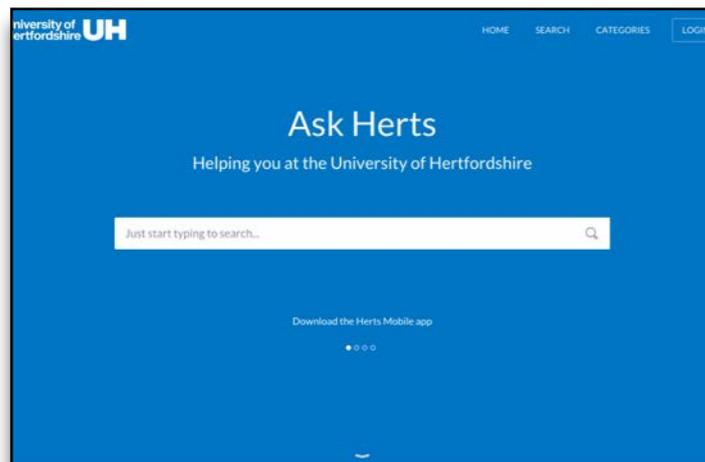
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1 | Undergraduate Recruitment



NIKE | It's interesting to see how Nike are targeting female millennials as they aim to turn women's sportswear into a \$11 billion business by 2020. As part of their 'Better For It' campaign, they've launched a digital content marketing experiment that tells the story of two fictional sisters who set each other a bet/challenge. One has to 'get more than zero friends'. The other has to 'start exercising'. Their story is told through a series of 8 YouTube videos, which according to their Brand President have attracted over 80 million views. There are also all kinds of add on features such as the chance to sign up for exclusive content and a Ninja Zone with fitness vlogs by one of the characters. It all fits with the current empowerment trend in sport. And we wonder whether this will be the end of Margot V Lilly or just the beginning. It's certainly a step up from standard vlogs. We felt this mix of aspiration, storytelling, user generated content and competition could be the perfect stimulus for some Higher Education bar raising too.



HERTFORDSHIRE | These days if we want some information, the vast majority of us 'Google It' or ask Siri. So, Herts have tapped into this way of thinking and created a similar feature 'Ask Herts' that enables you to search for whatever you want to know about the university. You can search online or download the app to discover the answers to your burning questions and be signposted to relevant links so you can learn more. You can also browse the many different categories. Sure, it's not perfect. But it's a nice idea - we would suggest development with crowdsourced answers that could tell students everything they need to know about the university from funding and accommodation to finding the best local curry.



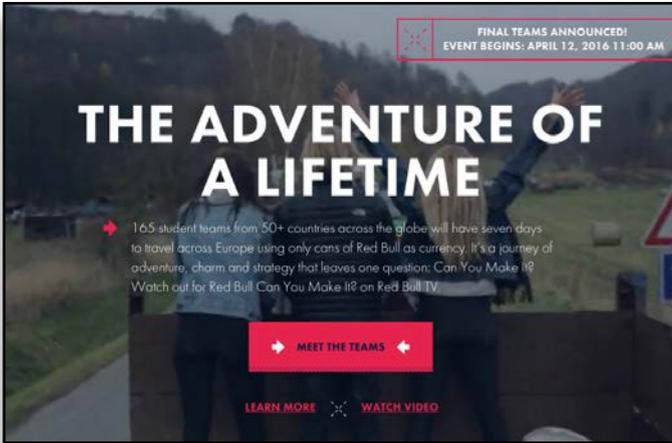
SHEFFIELD HALLAM | There's been a big trend for BuzzFeed style articles that focus on 5 facts, 8 reasons why and the top 10 things you need to know. This kind of content helps marketers to quickly get across their propositions and selling points. While at a glance audiences can learn all the main things they need to know. Great content has been created in terms of infographics and links to student blog pieces. But this video approach from Sheffield Hallam University really stood out for us. It adds an emotive element by simply asking current students true and false questions about the university and region. It's simple. It's effective. It's watchable. And it communicates key information in a fun, engaging and stylish way. It's something that can easily be shared on Facebook and Twitter. While stills and clips of the video are ideal for Instagram, Pinterest and Vine. This video forms part of a wider series of 'Coffee Conversations' that also cover the 'Best things about Hallam', 'Make the most of Hallam' and 'Placements at Hallam'.



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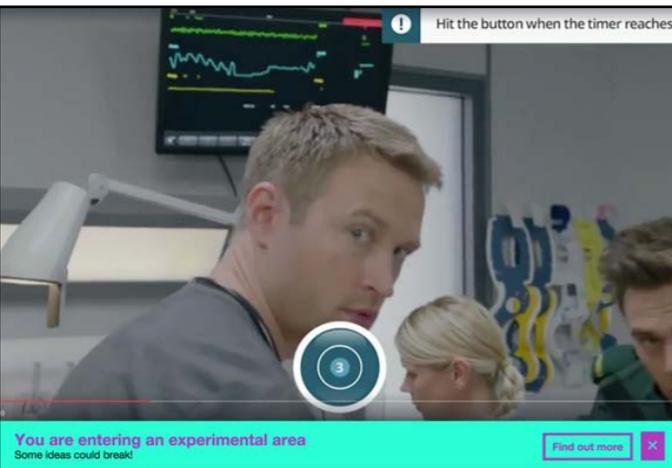
1 | Undergraduate Recruitment



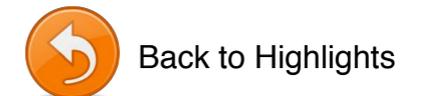
RED BULL STUDENT CHALLENGE | When it comes to engaging with a student audience, Red Bull is a brand that sets the pace in terms of content, style and innovation. So, it's interesting to see how they connect with students with bold colours, full-page video and social media updates. 165 student teams from over 50 countries recently took up their challenge of travelling across Europe in 7 days using 24 cans of Red Bull each as currency. The teams needed to meet at checkpoints, take part in adventures and post images and videos of their journey. There was a big prize on offer and you could keep track of the winning teams on the leaderboard. Every team had its own page and hashtag so you could check their points, see where they were on their journey and follow their progress in real time. There was even a daily TV show, so you could catch up with the latest action. It was the adventure of a lifetime. Professional and amateur images sat seamlessly side by side. And it enabled Red Bull to capture great content and tell the stories of adventurous young people. How did your students do?



BOSTON UNIVERSITY | It may not be quite up there with Full Sail's Pathfinder but we really liked the BU College of Communication Pathfinder. As there's a lot of crossover between careers in the world of communications, it's not easy to choose the right course. But by enabling you to click on the things you love doing, this Pathfinder feature highlights different career routes you'll love and the courses you can take that will help you to get there. This idea simply uses words, but a combination of words, photos and videos would work even better. And talking of people doing things they love, we thought the Staffordshire University 'Do challenge' was a great idea that encourages people to 'do good' at university by pledging to save water, reduce CO2 emissions and more. The take up has been pretty underwhelming so far – but we think it has got good potential and taps into those students who want to save and change the world.

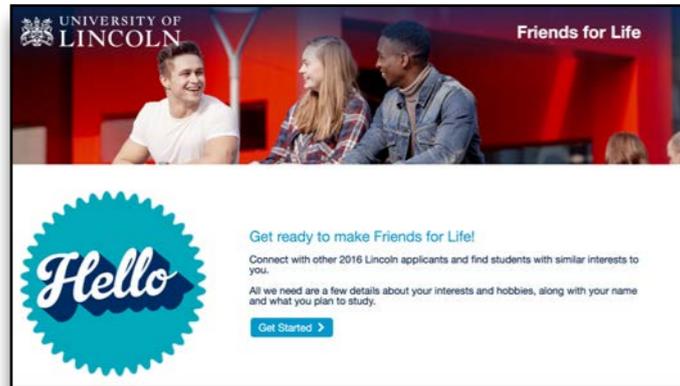


BBC CASUALTY | Increasingly, new UG students will want to sample their courses, and perhaps even their future careers. The opportunity is to tie both together. The inspiration could be the BBC's Casualty - 'First Day' teaser, an interactive POV video that immerses you in the action of working in a busy casualty department. Many of the main actors from the TV series are involved, and they ask you questions throughout your experience. When it gets to choosing which patient gets the ICU bed, and the clock starts ticking, then you know the pressure is on. A brilliant way of sampling life in a hospital.





1 | Undergraduate Recruitment



UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN | The early part of 2016 has seen the University of Lincoln very active in its conversion tactics. Bespoke social media pages have been set up, applicants have been sent hoodies, and then there's 'Friends For Life' - a dedicated web app linking prospective students based on hobbies and interests. Essentially it's a CRM strategy but follow up email links channel like-minded students into their own Facebook groups (click on the image to learn more). By March, over a third of applicants had registered for the scheme. Law students have been the most active, posting 10,000 messages in the first few months. The insight is interesting. The university now knows that 32% of Psychology applicants are Harry Potter fans. Time to work some magic then.



OPEN UNIVERSITY | Whilst many universities focus on peer-to-peer video, the Open University remind us of the value of getting celebrity endorsement - if it's the right one. Their's comes via the ever-popular geek style of David Mitchell, and he does a brilliant job providing students with 60 second adventures into various subject areas. The last few years have seen a number of less formal, and often irreverent, takes on academia ('Horrible Histories' was one of the forerunners), and there is clearly some influence on this. Generally, the videos are interesting, fun and make sense of the subject. Celebrity support isn't essential of course. We think this approach would work well led by any engaging academic, particularly in bridging knowledge gaps between A Level and Degree courses.



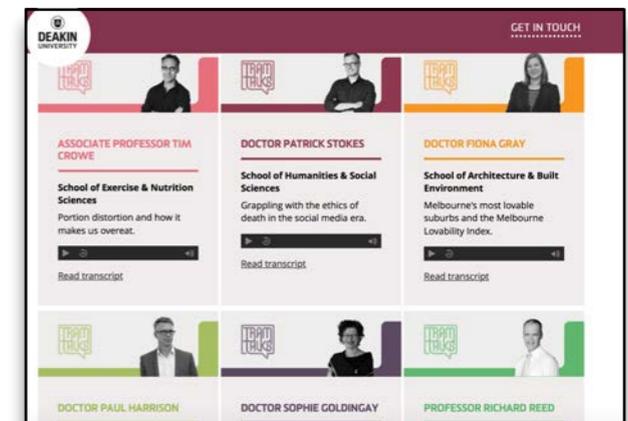
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1 | Undergraduate Recruitment



Social Media is awash with the trams and messages to share the series, and videos have been created to show just how easy the podcasts are to access. Click on the image above to see the 55 second trailer and a humorous take on just how immersed you can feel.



DEAKIN UNIVERSITY | The university's new Tram Talks is a series of podcast lectures designed for existing students that might have missed out on a session - or simply need a refresh - and for prospective students wanting a taste of a subject. Whilst many universities have released audio of lectures, Deakin yet again show that a lot is the packaging. Part of this is in giving the lectures a home and a name. But Deakin go much further, using their own wrapped trams to showcase the series throughout Melbourne.

Yet again Deakin are taking a modern idea and running with it. By packaging it and showing relevance to a target audience they expect this to take off.



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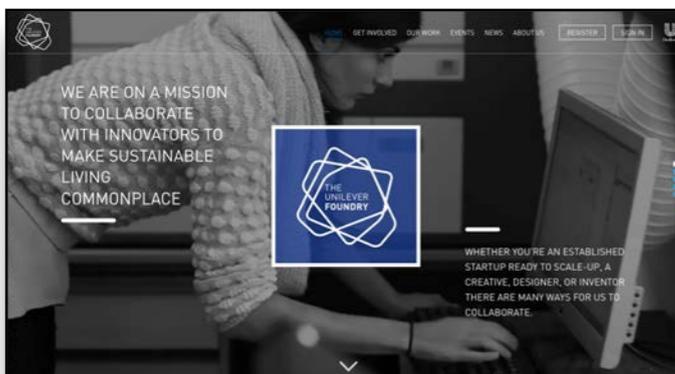
2 | Postgraduate Recruitment



OPEN UNIVERSITY | We've previously featured some great native marketing content by the likes of Netflix. And now we have the Open University following suit and partnering with The Huffington Post. This leading aggregated news site keeps millions of people up-to-date with the latest stories. Which makes it the ideal place for the Open University to create a Learning Lab. Here people can read all kinds of articles about learning, watch inspirational videos and even take part in quizzes. All the time the Open University supports and encourages learners and promotes the many benefits of part-time online learning. People can also comment, share articles on social media and take part in the conversation. The Learning Lab has only just launched. And with articles covering everything from male role models to beauty vloggers to juggling life and studies – we're sure it's going to be a big hit.



WU VIENNA | This simple idea is well executed and provides people with a real insight into the university's research and researchers. The university's brand new researcher of the month feature is - 'intended as a sign of special recognition and appreciation awarded for outstanding achievements in research.' It's also a nice way to tell stories through video and powerful imagery and showcase the scope and variety of their research impact from 'boosting sales through crowdsourcing' to the link between 'forests and gross domestic product.' All thought-provoking stuff, great content for sharing on social media and an engaging series that we're sure will gather real momentum.



UNILEVER | Universities aren't the only ones partnering, collaborating, thinking across disciplines and sharing spaces to inspire innovation and new ways of thinking. The Unilever Foundry has been created so they can tap into the creativity of innovators and start-ups, partnering with them to solve business problems, hack new ideas and share sparks of imagination. Unilever put on events, provide mentorship and offer funding to accelerate growth. It's a great way for them to discover and support brilliant entrepreneurial talent and tap into the growing number of UK start-ups. They believe it's the new way to innovate in a VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous) world with a 4-step process that involves briefing, pitching, launching/learning and partnering. Many universities embrace a similar approach to supporting entrepreneurs and start-ups – but the corporate competition is hotting up.



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2 | Postgraduate Recruitment



UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK | The university has done an excellent job in bringing Postgraduate research programmes to life for potential applicants. Their 'PhD in 60 Seconds' gallery consists of 15 videos of current students giving insight into what they get up to. Warwick manage to achieve the right balance of university marketing direction (the creative camera angles, the white back drop, and probably the organisation to get these videos all made in a day) with genuine unscripted student created content. Click on the image to see for yourself.



SKILLS FUTURE SINGAPORE | Many universities are needing to think bigger about PG and CPD. As students and employers demand more value and flexibility, and technology opens up markets and breaks down barriers, we're seeing some new strategies that are worth looking at. Creating loyalty programmes and credit systems is one interesting area, tapping into the idea of life-long learning. Maybe there's some inspiration in the recent Singaporean initiative to offer all adults S\$500 to invest in their ongoing professional learning. Click on the image to read more about the SkillsFuture programme, and to watch the animation too.



UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA | Over in Canada, Victoria have recognised the value of raising their research profile for everyone, including prospective PG taught and research students. Prospective students are looking at a university's relevant research credentials and 'IdeaFest' answered this recently with a week of research showcasing. Whilst live events took place throughout the campus, highlights were shared on a dedicated site and throughout social media. A great way of bringing those credentials to life.



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2 | Postgraduate Recruitment



The highlights include walking DNA, mapping the universe, digging for dinosaurs, virtual reality journalism and epidermal electronics. All nicely done and mobile friendly with videos, powerful pictures, soundcloud talks, imported tweets and big images of the hero academics.



Crucially, the stories focus on the academics themselves, immersing the audience into what they do. They even dress accordingly!

TEXAS AT AUSTIN | Prospective PG students and researchers want to know about their future teachers and supervisors. It's therefore surprising that many universities are still failing to give their staff the centre stage they need. But some are doing a stand out job. Every university has some great stories to tell. Especially in the area of research. To tell the world about the reach and impact of their research, The University of Texas at Austin has put together a stunning website that tells some of their research stories.



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3 | Website & eProspectus



FILE Spark 01.04



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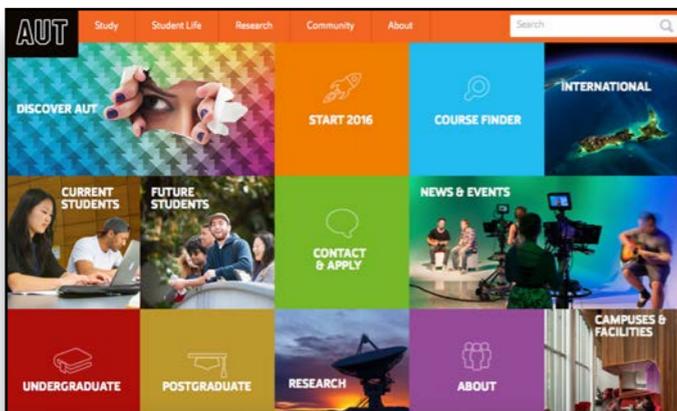
3 | Website & eProspectus



END OF SOCIETY | It's not the cheeriest of subjects, but we were impressed with the personalisation of this website that has been created to coincide with the launch of the game – Tom Clancy's, *The Division*. Once you have typed in your postcode you then become patient zero with a strand of smallpox. And you quickly see how long it would take you to spread the virus and end society. The journey focuses on local maps and you can make key decisions about which hospitals and makeshift emergency centres you'd go to in your local area. All the time, you learn facts about disaster planning and the spread of diseases while seeing how many people around the world get infected. All very scary stuff – but nicely done and educational. See how long it would take you to end civilisation as we know it. And of course you can share the results with your friends on social media.



WAIKATO | We really liked this nifty website from the University of Waikato. They claim to be the first university in New Zealand to use this innovative interactive video technology that combines moving scenes, animation, video profiles and gamification. The website takes you on a brief tour of their campus. If you leave your cursor off the screen, the video keeps on rolling. However, whenever you put your cursor over the video, the action stops and you can click on the different illustrations to explore different highlighted features and learn more about university life. You can even save your links as you go along in a shopping basket style feature, so you can watch them when your virtual campus tour finishes. Sure, it may be a bit clunky at times and it could probably do with being a bit longer. But this innovative website really stands out and we expect to see more of this kind of thing in the future.



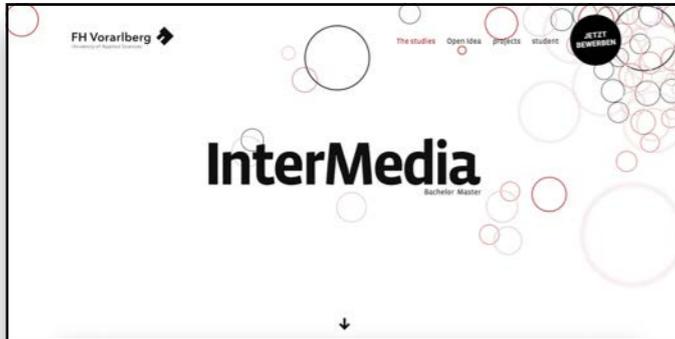
AUT | With more and more university websites being accessed by mobiles and tablets, it's good to see some universities simplifying their design and user journey and making their websites very mobile friendly. At Auckland University of Technology for example, their home page is full of colourful squares. Each of these represents a main area of their website and enables people to discover more through expandable boxes. Although unfortunately once you dig a bit deeper the website is pretty ordinary. It's interesting to see how some universities are simplifying things and keeping it low tech while others are going for the beauty of full screen videos and parallax scrolling.



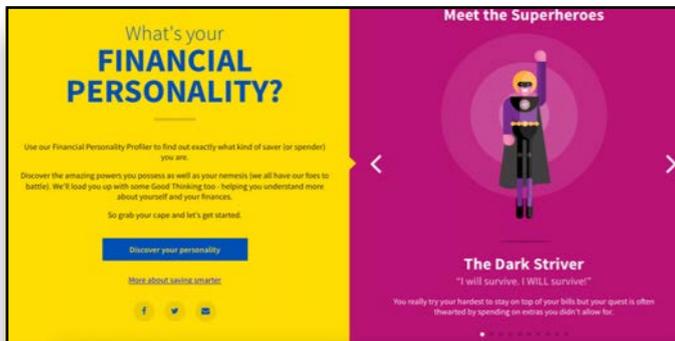
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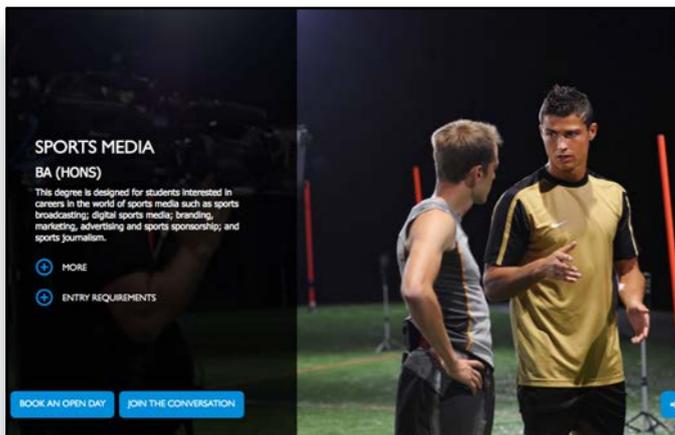
3 | Website & eProspectus



FH VORALBERG | This is just a great website that's worth looking at. Whilst universities have been getting better with their overall web showcase, some are proving just what you can do with specific courses. This look at an 'InterMedia' programme shows how you can pull together stories, magazine style design and various content to give a great course impression. All housed within a simple parallax journey. It's an Austrian university so you may have to involve Google Translate to understand it. Courses remain a fundamental factor in applicant decisions, so we expect to see lots more stand-out sites like this hitting our screens.



AVIVA | There are quite a few 'What kind of...are you?' features out there at the moment. It's a trend you see regularly, particularly as some people like to share all of their results on social media. But we thought that this one was better than most and was very well done. The colourful characters with superpowers are fun and engaging. And this approach also enables Aviva to serve up targeted features based on your answers and personality. This approach could work really well for students. You could have a 'What kind of university student would you be?' feature with characters based on people's answers and related information about music, sports, tech and their individual interests. A more practical application could be 'What kind of learner are you?' helping people to understand how they learn while providing hints, tips and ways they could build on their strengths and weaknesses. Sure, a few people are doing this with standard questionnaires. But the Aviva approach could really bring this to life.



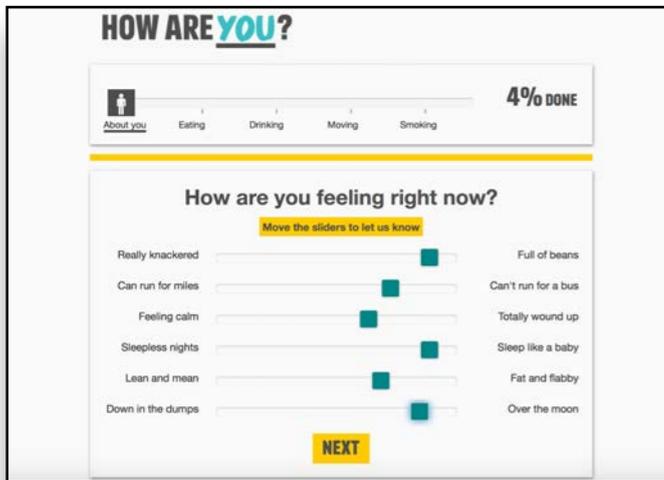
UNIVERSITY OF CHICHESTER | We thought that this 'recreate' e-prospectus from the University of Chichester was simple yet really well done. It's easy to find the course you're looking for and access all kinds of relevant information. It quickly covers off the basic course information and requirements while serving up engaging and course specific content through videos, alumnus profiles and talking more about the faculty facilities. The parallax scrolling design also covers the university essentials such as accommodation, student support and the Students' Union. While on every page potential students can apply, share the link, sign up for an open day and ask current students questions at The Student Room. The e-prospectus also links to the main course page and their social wall – [Picture yourself at Chichester](#). The approach and style are ideal for the mobile generation making it easy to navigate through wherever you are.



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3 | Website & eProspectus



ONE YOU | The Government have launched their £6m 'One You' campaign to promote healthier living. Central to this is the 'How Are You?' quiz and we think it's worth checking out. The quiz covers key areas such as smoking, drinking, eating, sleep and stress, and offers tutorial style advice as you progress through the quiz. We think you can draw communication inspiration from how the quiz journey works. We couldn't help but see the student journey potential with this. It's engaging stuff. We particularly liked the use of sliders to help give answers. And if you draw some health benefits from it too all the better! Click on the image to try it.



UEA | It's worth flagging up any excellent new course finders out there. Future Index Exclusive member UEA have certainly delivered recently. We really liked their course finder for the way it links together so much excellent content - headlining with video and key facts delivered in slide-show style and all bang on brand. And then there's blog links, infographics and plenty of advice. We also liked the simplicity and accessibility of being able to search by course, school or simply interests. And the social media sharing features work particularly well too. An excellent experience all round!



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3 | Website & eProspectus

UNIVERSITY of TASMANIA AUSTRALIA

Where do you see yourself in five to ten years' time?

Maybe you'll choose a degree that could secure your financial future. Perhaps your family will suggest a certain direction. Or maybe you will follow your heart and explore a field that has always fascinated you.

But what if you could look five to ten years into your future and see where a particular degree from the University of Tasmania might take you?

The University of Tasmania and LinkedIn have teamed up so you can look into the future – knowing where you could be 5-10 years after graduating makes deciding what to study next just that little bit easier.

in Sign in with LinkedIn

You'll need a LinkedIn account to access this site. No LinkedIn account? [Sign up here.](#)

UNIVERSITY of TASMANIA AUSTRALIA

Hello Jim

Location: Manchester, United Kingdom

Latest Degree: Leadership, Excellence Programs

Latest School: University of Pennsylvania, The Wharton School

Intended Study Area: Journalism, Media & Communications

Intended Level Of Study: Undergraduate

[ENQUIRE NOW >](#)

You get a snapshot of what alumni from your selected course have gone on to achieve. You also get the opportunity to click on the profiles and send them an email to ask for further insight.

The reality is that this is no different to what you can do in any normal visit to LinkedIn. What Tasmania have done is to fill in some of the boxes for you. They've provided the glue.

We've searched the world for people just like you who have studied at the University of Tasmania. See where you could be after graduating.

- Thomas Bevall**
Marketing Seeking New Opportunities
- Jared Wainman**
Marketing, Marketing & Communications at Destination Southern Tasmania
- Wayne Foster**
Managing Director (Australia) at Digital Jungle
- David Blak**
Helping organisations turn employee engagement into business success

UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA | Here's a window into the future. With so much useful content and functionality out there, universities are going to keep plugging into into it. And the trend for developing middleware is going to grow. Think of it as software glue - sticking applications together. In Tasmania they have simply created their own window into LinkedIn. Heading with 'Where do you see yourself in ten years' time' they use the power of LinkedIn to help you imagine course outcomes. You need a LinkedIn account to do this, and then you sign in, choose your preferred course and LinkedIn serves up the content you need.



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4 | Digital & Social



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4 | Digital & Social Communications



KLIKSEE | A big trend at the moment is to make video more interactive, so people can buy or discover more about what they're watching. Kliksee is one new app that adds a new dimension to watching movies. Who's the actor? What else have they been in? Where is the scene set? What's the music? Where can I buy those shoes? These are the kinds of things that Kliksee can help you to explore on screen while watching your favourite movies. And you can also tag, save and share your favourite related articles. Imagine being able to watch a university video that way, clicking on related articles that catch your eye and being able to apply in an instant. Google has also developed TrueView in-stream cards that enable viewers to discover more about the content of the video they are watching and even buy the clothes. Asda used them for their 360 degree Halloween YouTube advert – but unfortunately the in-stream ads are no longer viewable (presumably as Halloween stock has a short shelf-life).



RESCUE ROOM | As we've previously highlighted, zombie and Crystal Maze style experiences are all the rage at the moment. So, we were impressed with this student generated intervarsity campaign in Malaysia. Escape Room is a puzzle game where people get locked in a room and have to solve puzzle style games in 45 minutes to escape. It's popular. It's a high growth market. And it's the kind of brand that wants to attract more and more students. So, proPassion Communications, a student consultancy managed by final year communications students at Taylor University saw an opportunity. Their idea to promote Escape Room saw them release 3 viral videos featuring kidnapped Malaysian social influencers. To save them, students had to solve different online puzzles. And to encourage more and more students to take part, they also ran an intervarsity competition complete with leader boards. The immersive storyline meant people could actually play a role in the story. While the campaign effectively combined social media and gamification to target today's media savvy students.



MEMORIES FOR LIFE | The #MemoriesforLife campaign by HDFC Life is an idea with real potential for universities. They have created a digital platform where people can record words of wisdom, life lessons and little anecdotes for their loved ones. And the really neat bit is that you can set a post-date for the message to be sent in the future. The idea is that even when you've gone, you can help guide your family in the short and distant future. It's all supported by an emotional video. A successful executive receives a video from his father and changes his day to spend it with his mother on her birthday. Now imagine the different applications for universities. Parents could send post-dated messages to their children at university telling them how proud they are when they are revising for their finals. Students could send themselves messages to keep them motivated during their studies and inspire them after they have graduated. And inspirational professors could send video messages at key stages of learning, passing on their knowledge, advice and words of wisdom. Just a thought.



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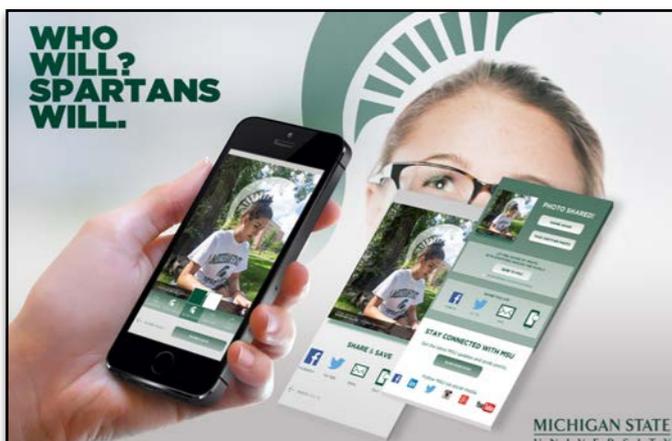
4 | Digital & Social Communications



GIGA SELFIES | Want a new idea for your open days? Well, try offering giga selfies so students can see themselves (and their friends) in the bigger picture. It works the same as a selfie, it's just that when you click your smartphone it triggers another camera positioned high up, and some distance away, pinpointing you in a much bigger environment. It's been popular in Japan and Australia, especially with the tourist industry as they look for innovative ways of capturing stories. Click the image on the left to see how it all works.



PLYMOUTH UNIVERSITY | The university have been doing some excellent digital communications over the last few months. This video proves just how well they have grasped many of the trends in good storytelling targeted at younger audiences - slideshow style, energy, big statements and aspirational. This recent graduation story oozes style and is definitely one for the Instagram generation. Also, it's more proof that music does matter. And it doesn't just sit on YouTube. It's been embedded in Facebook too and trailed through numerous social posts.



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | We've featured MSU's filters before but recently they've gone up the gears to offer their very own selfie mobile app. Click on the left if you want to download it. Once on your phone you can snap away and drag onto the pictures MSU filters and stickers to give your selfie your university identity. You can then share the pictures in what ever social network and messenger app you like. MSU have taken the filter fashion of Snapchat and made it their own.



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Universities are producing their own filters. It's been particularly popular in the USA and we've seen the likes of NYU and DePaul creating filters for their own campuses. In the UK, Coventry have been pushing their own filter, including options of stencils of local, iconic buildings. The University of Birmingham have been using their famous clock tower. Some halls of residences (such as Owen's Park in Manchester) have their own filters too. Rather than pay for the branded filters, it's worth applying for a free community filter - some universities have these - but Snapchat will have to approve it first.

SNAPCHAT GEOFILTERS | Snapchat branded geofilters continue to be big news. Some of the leading brands targeting young consumers have been producing their own filters. Names include Starbucks, AppleMusic, McDonalds and Hollister. Hollister have been one of the most progressive, enabling filters to be uploaded to Snapchats, once you're inside the store. They've even been paying to have their filters targeted at 19,000 US and Canadian high schools, enabling the 'Friday Vibes' filter to be enabled in and around the schools. And in February this year Hollister launched its own sponsored Geolens, moving from simple filters to face recognising sunglasses. [You can read about it here.](#)





5 | Brand & Storytelling



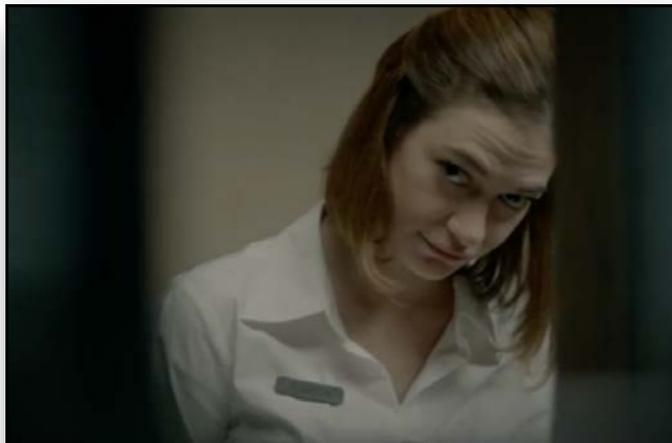
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STRIVE | We've seen some great examples of student storytelling recently. These have gone beyond the university to tell people's life stories before, during and after university. Nova Scotia Community College has recently created some powerful video stories that are well worth a watch. While their main advert may be a bit twee, we do like the supporting more in-depth storytelling videos that have all been well scripted and filmed. These cover different student tales from making money to survive and developing underwater cameras to horse therapy, boxing and even hair styling.



PHOENIX BRAINS | The University of Phoenix has also released an 'empowering' commercial called 'More than brains' complete with a quirky soundtrack that has polarised opinion as it shows non-traditional online students combining life with studies. If anything, the commercial has diverted some attention away from Phoenix's negative press attention (based on administration processes) and refocused on the life-changing powers of online learning. Click the image on the left to watch the advert, complete with Wizard of Oz backing track, and [read more about it here](#).



RENFE | Some people see train journeys as boring. Others, like innovative train service providers see them as something much bigger. A place where people pass exams, talk to their loved ones, read inspiring books, create game-changing ideas, meet future partners, travel to amazing events, write hit songs and much more. It's this ability to look beyond travelling from A-B and show the emotional side and impact of the brand that makes this advert stand out. Do click on the image and give it a watch. And if all this happens on a humble train journey - just imagine what kinds of stories universities could tell in a similar way as they bring together life-long friends, create music, write books, inspire great minds and so much more.



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HEINEKEN | We think that this a brilliant piece of storytelling from Heineken that was captured on video with some of it played out in front of a fervent football crowd at a Champions League game. It follows the story of 4 close friends who have a tradition of always watching Roma football matches together on the same settee (while drinking Heineken of course). The dilemma occurs when one of them is offered one free VIP ticket for the game against Real Madrid. You wonder whether he will be able to tell his mates that he won't be with them to watch the match. He avoids their phone calls and puts off speaking to them, even when he's in the stadium. Until his friends appear on the settee on the big screen in the stadium. And then his big dilemma starts. He gets booed by the fans for ignoring his mates. And then he has a choice to make. Stay in his seat? Or rush to a waiting helicopter so he can watch the game on the settee with his friends? The crowd cheers as he decides to be with his mates – who are all sat on the sofa in the stadium with the best seats in the house. An uplifting stunt that gets across the camaraderie of football and drinking beer responsibly together.



UNITEC - THINK.DO. | We really like the way New Zealand's Unitec are positioning their higher education offer. Their approach goes beyond the lecture theatre, immersing students in the world they want to work in. Students leave with more than a piece of paper. They are clear about how their preferred industry works and know all about the relevant tech and systems. They think. And prepare to do. To bring their approach to life, they created a virtual learning experience that put brains to the test. They created a street installation complete with Virtual Reality headsets and brain scanning technology to transport potential students into 3D learning environments and see how their brains responded. This is a really engaging idea that highlights how Unitec combines theory with very real, relevant experience to prepare work ready students. And it takes learning off campus and into the heart of the community.



OBERLIN COLLEGE | Over at Oberlin they've been sharing their audio postcards. In reality they are simply images uploaded with an embedded audio track. We've seen them being shared on Facebook and we love the idea. The actual execution is a bit weak but we're sure they could be done so much better. How about an image of a research experiment with some narration and sound effects over it. Or a student describing their favourite place on campus. The ideas are endless.



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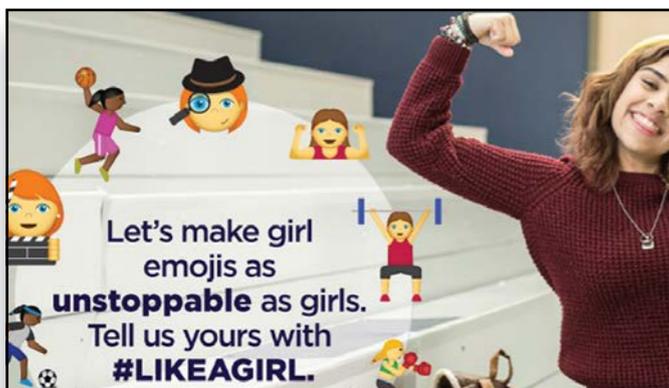
5 | Brand & Storytelling



DIRECT LINE INSURANCE | Here's a wildcard to think about. In a cluttered work of 'compare this' insurance sites, all shouting about price, products and services, Direct Line had to do something different. It can only sell direct to the public so had to sidestep the aggregator market. Instead it focused on its own stand-out service, amplifying it by personalising it all within the character of Winston Wolf - the Fixer. Click on the left to see how Direct Line uses the Fixer (and other characters) to humanise the kind of services that have got a little lost in all of the noise out there. It's that stark reminder that if something bad does happen, you need someone that can really fix it. Universities can definitely learn something from this approach, especially as HE's own aggregator world grows.



UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA | UBC are 100 years old. So, not surprisingly they have been doing what lots of other centennial universities have done and looked back over all of the achievements in that time. But hey've done something far more interesting too. They've looked forward. Their 'Next 100 Years' series offers fascinating insight into the future, straight from the academics themselves. It's a great example of thought leadership that can work so well for lots of different audiences, particularly in raising the profiles of key protagonists in the UBC story.



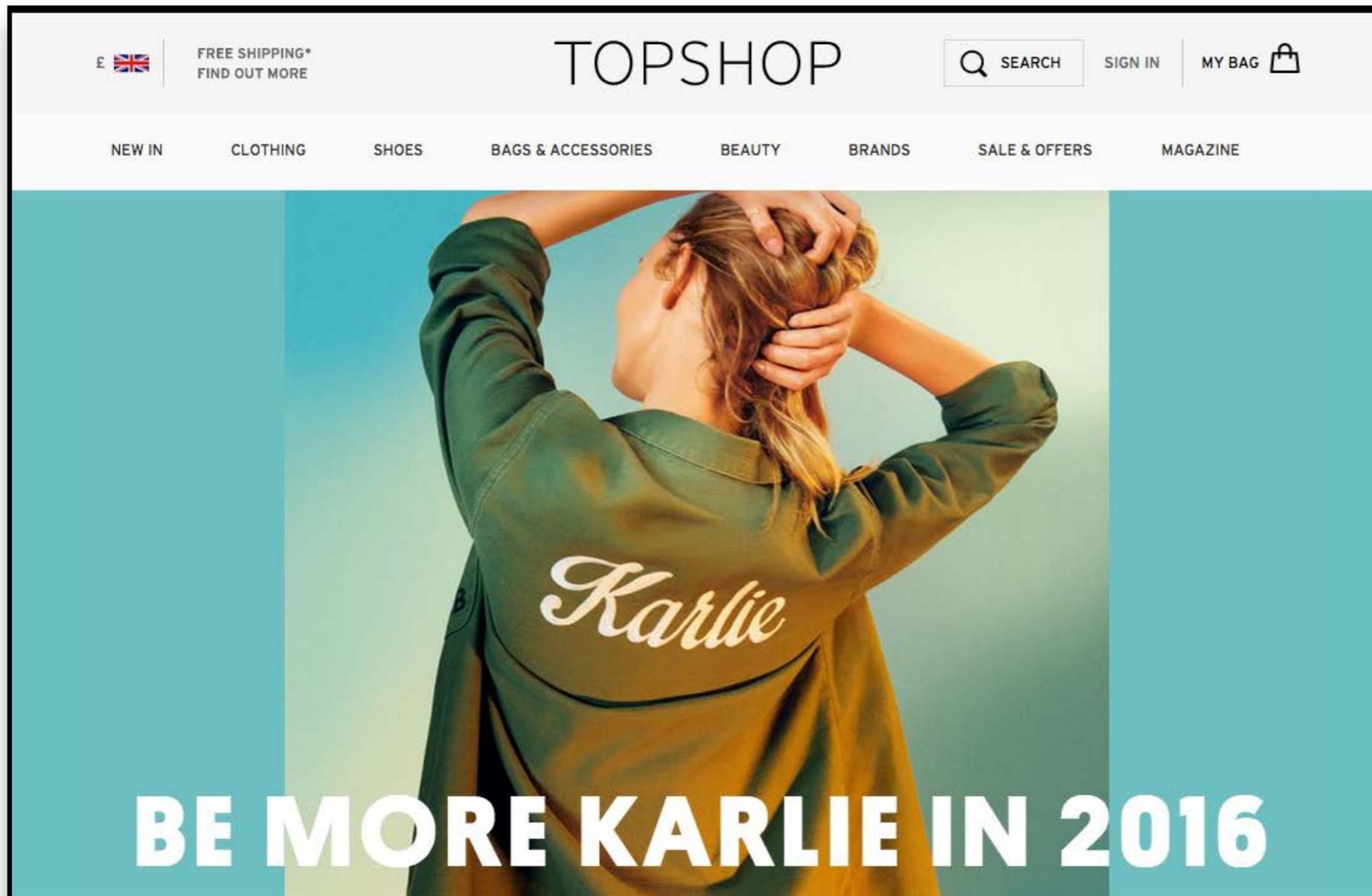
#LIKEAGIRL | The P&G Always #LikeAGirl campaign has long been a good example of how a brand can tell its story and add wider purpose. Click on the image to read about how the brand is going to a new level, this time in tackling the world of emoji stereotypes. In emoji-world, girls are generally wearing pink and don't do much - apart from dress up as a bride. The sports and professional work is mainly reserved for the men. And we know how popular emojis are so none of this can be great for the confidence of young women. And so Always are addressing the problem, empowering a new female emoji keyboard and raising the issue, as well as the bar. This kind of cause marketing is particularly relevant to universities tasked with widening the participation from their communities, whilst also confronting serious concerns around confidence and anxiety with many students.



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5 | Brand & Storytelling



TOP SHOP | The big brands have known for some time that the most influential platforms are often driven by peer-to-peer communications, by user generation, by communities and sometimes by You Tubers themselves. Many have tried to create their own versions but very few have achieved the reach they aspire to. The fact is that You Tubers can still sprinkle the gold dust. They often have the key to success. And that's why we've seen Karlite Kloss - model, entrepreneur, student, philanthropist, coder, fitness guru and foodie - spearhead the Top Shop brand recently. Her CV fits with the aspirational values Top Shop wants to project, and she's a You Tube superstar too with almost 350,000 subscribers to bring to the party!



Boots are also tapping into the influencers out there and have shaped their teen-targeted Tumblr around You Tube tutorials, GIFs and multi faceted content from the people teens will listen to. Type in confidence advice and you'll get served up the full range of content.



Meanwhile, Habitat are looking to engage with the millennial world with their own influencer content. Freddie Harrel is a fashion blogger and her home provides the perfect context to show off the full Habitat range. Click on the link to see just how important this kind of advocacy has become. Universities may take some inspiration from this.



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6 | Innovation & Future



FACEBOOK EVENTS | Taping into the lead from Snapchat's stories and the big trend of FOMO (fear of missing out), Facebook have been rolling out their Events feature. In essence it's the full events works - virtually at least. The new functionality allows events to pull in all of the live action - the posts, photos and videos. It was trialled at big American music festivals last year and the output is impressive stuff. It's a step up from the likes of Storify and should well be an important feature of future university open days. After all, whilst teens might not be using Facebook for fun, many still have it and can be persuaded to use it if it makes sense.



SONY PS4 VR | The response to Sony's step into Virtual Reality has helped justify claims that 2016 will be the year the whole experience really takes off. The PS4 headsets should be available in October and whilst games may be limited to start with, there are about 50 already in the pipeline. People are already ordering the headsets en-masse, with 2-3m sales expected this year. University marketers have to take notice of this and sense-check their own VR plans. After all, you can't expect to wow a student with a simple corridor tour when they've just come away from battling goblins in their living rooms.



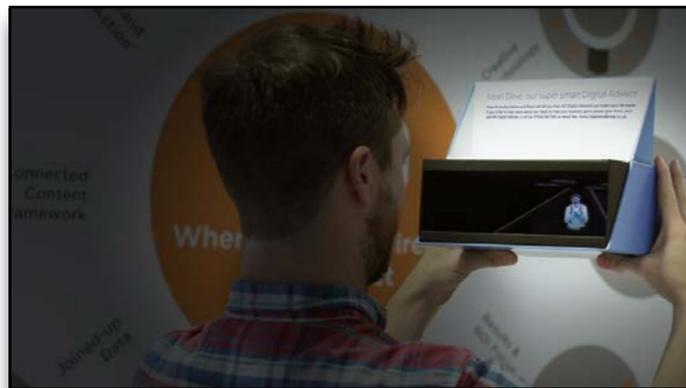
HOLENS | Microsoft are planning to take the virtual world by storm with their HoloLens headsets that merge an augmented hologram landscape with reality. Click on the image to see how Microsoft are testing the technology with Minecraft. Imagine building with virtual Minecraft pieces on a table in front of you! Again, it's essential for university marketers to absorb all of this, to help them understand just the type of communications students will and will not be experiencing in the next few years. And it's all fantastic inspiration for course delivery and promotion. Time to get immersed!



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6 | Innovation & Future



O2 | Holograms are alive and well, and they're making their move on the marketing landscape. Click on the image and learn about O2's 'super smart Digital Advisor' called Dave. He's actually a hologram in a box and part of a strategy that should see him being posted to high value, mid-market prospects. Maybe the VC or President will get his or her own box in the near future?



SAMSUNG | Virtual reality is finally beginning to realise its potential and be taken seriously, rather than being seen as a fad. While many are still getting to grips with the possibilities, we like the way Samsung is already using the technology to help people through their #BeFearless campaign. They are using VR headsets to help people conquer their fear of public speaking and their fear of heights. And they've put together some short videos to show the impact VR can make. As well as improving life skills, Samsung demonstrated the powerful experiences VR can bring to people around the world, through their stunt – shark diving in the desert. And the apps and experiences are set to come thick and fast. Tilt Brush is an immersive 3D painting experience that surrounds people with their art and enables them to create amazing artwork using different tools. VR is set to be part of every syllabus.



ALTERNATE REALITY TEACHING | The concept has been around for a while but is likely to get a big injection of energy (and much more take up) in the next few years. Very simply ART is about using a game-based storyline (often a challenge) to invigorate learning. We've seen it taking off in some of the highest profile institutions including Wharton in the USA, where students are given new personas, email and chat apps to solve a business problem. The idea being that they live the role. This kind of immersion can go on for weeks. But why not think of the possibility for open and application days - maybe over an hour or two? Just a thought.



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London pizza delivery company Sodo have also found an innovative way of using Periscope. The company's growth has been accelerated by its green proposition of foregoing pizza delivery vehicles for local runners. It's a nice touch and certainly keeps the emissions down. But to boost the whole experience, the runners have been filming their journey and broadcasting live to customers through Periscope. So if you're wondering just where your pizza is, load up Twitter and see for yourself.

ROYAL CARIBBEAN | We've had Persicope and Meerkat for over a year now but inspiration can still be a little thin on the ground. But have a look at what Royal Caribbean have done and we're sure your mind will be racing with possibilities. In order to showcase the island hopping adventures of their holidays, the cruise company hired social media influencers to go on holiday and live broadcast their experiences. Everything was relayed live from smartphones into Royal Caribbean's website and social media channels. But to really create a buzz they also broadcast live to a selection of billboards in New York. There was a 10 minute delay just in case! Imagine broadcasting student study abroad adventures, or live research in the same way. We told you it would get you thinking.



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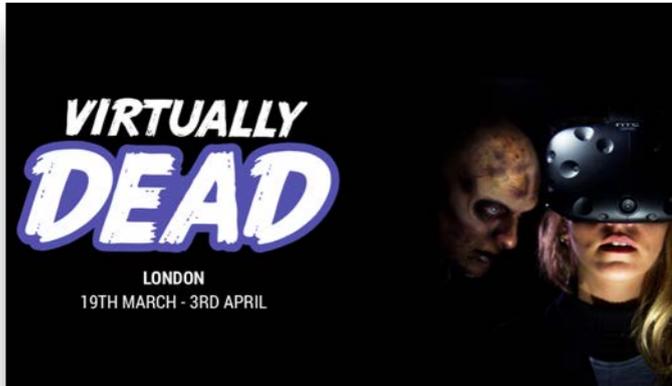
7 | Outdoor & Experiential



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7 | Outdoor & Experiential



VIRTUALLY DEAD | We featured zombies on campus in our last trend report. And now things have gone to the next level. Virtual reality and theatre have come together to create a truly immersive experience where you can touch, see and feel the fear. London's 'Virtually Dead' experience (click image) has just taken place. We're watching out for the results. We're sure this is just the beginning as theatre and VR combine to create more unique experiences. Headsets could take audiences to scenes that just wouldn't be possible for scene designers to create. While universities could create immersive experiences themselves in lecture theatres combining VR headsets with actors and special effects such as fans to create wind during flyovers, smells of the canteen and more. Something that would be truly memorable and take your campus all over the world.



SNCF | Ok it's a couple of years old but it was ahead of the curve. Maybe the trend of virtual doorways is ready to open up. We loved this idea for SNCF that encourages people to travel on their rail network to cities across Europe. The appearance of doors in random locations intrigues people. And then when those people who are brave enough, open the door, they see, hear and interact with people live on a screen in different European cities. A mime artist in Milan. Party goes in Barcelona. A caricature artist in Brussels. People on a boat in Geneva. Cyclists in Stuttgart. These are doors (rather than windows) into another world. Now just imagine a similar campaign for a university. You could showcase sports near a football stadium. Have students painting art live in an art gallery. And students carrying out live experiments in a busy city centre. All while talking about your university and answering questions live.



SKY ATLANTIC | Another older one but worth a look. When Sky Atlantic released their new TV series Fortitude that is set in a fictional town in a remote Arctic region – they decided to create a bit of a stir. As the town is supposed to have more polar bears than people, they set a polar bear loose in the streets of London. Not a real one of course, but a prosthetic (scarily real looking bear) with two puppeteers inside. The reactions of the public were fantastic. And of course it led to lots of sharing on social media as people took videos, photos and the obligatory selfies. It would have been a powerful way to promote a climate change course. And a similar stunt on campus could make a big impact and generate a cacophony of likes, shares and photos.



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7 | Outdoor & Experiential



ASHAI | When it comes to social media, people are very keen to share memorable moments. Which is good news for those brands that go out of their way to help people create these moments so they can share them on their social media channels. The beer brand Asahi recently created a fun super-slow motion video booth (a world first apparently) that captured people reacting in slow motion to a variety of different activities. Their video booth captured slow-motion clips of people taking the tops of their bottles of beer, serving tennis balls, pulling party poppers, shaking their hair & hips, spraying party foam, pulling funny faces and being pelted by ping-pong balls to reflect what it's like to be a bubble in their beer.



BRUSSELS | Unfortunately Brussels has had a bit of a job persuading tourists to visit the city recently. So, they have done something a little bit different and crowdsourced direct answers to people's questions by setting up three yellow phones on billboards in the centre of Brussels. All potential visitors have to do is ring the phone and a passing local will pick it up and give you the inside story into Brussels and its attractions. All of the calls are being captured on webcam and collated, so tourists will soon also be able to hear the best questions and answers online. Now this is an idea we could see working quite nicely at a university with students taking turns to pick up the phone and answer all kinds of different questions – with everything being videoed to share online of course.



THALYS | Some other innovative outdoor ideas that could work well as university marketing campaigns or interactive campus features include Sounds of the City, the poster you can conduct and the 'To do' art installation. Sounds of the City is where 3 interactive billboards were specifically designed so people could plug in their headphones and listen to what it's like in different parts of cities – to encourage people to travel there by train. Over in Budapest digital billboards have been designed so you can conduct one of the best orchestras in the world by moving your mobile. This would be a great way to promote music courses. While we were also inspired by a recent Post-it Note art installation in New York that encouraged people to stop and think what they wanted 'To do' in life. A simple yet engaging piece that aims to get people thinking about their future goals, aims and lives. All of the things universities can help with.



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Click on the video to see an excellent trailer for the weekend. The film has a magical, 'night at the museum' feel to it. And why not? Science can be pretty magical. Overall, it's a stand-out adventure and a brilliant example of taking science and engineering out into the wider world.



You can pick up the results of everything on the university's social channels. The #scienceX Twitter feed is full of photos, videos and gifs from the day. And judging by the likes and retweets, the university certainly did manage to raise the volume!

UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER | Future Index Exclusive member the University of Manchester has a lot to shout about in the world of science. And it's been doing just that, reaching out into the regional community to ensure science stays high on everyone's agenda. Click on the main image and have a look at the recent #scienceX extravaganza, held in one of Europe's largest shopping centres. Across one weekend, the university helped showcase everything from robot orchestras to flight simulators and racing cars, and from outer space to virtual reality. The website is an impressive piece of work too.



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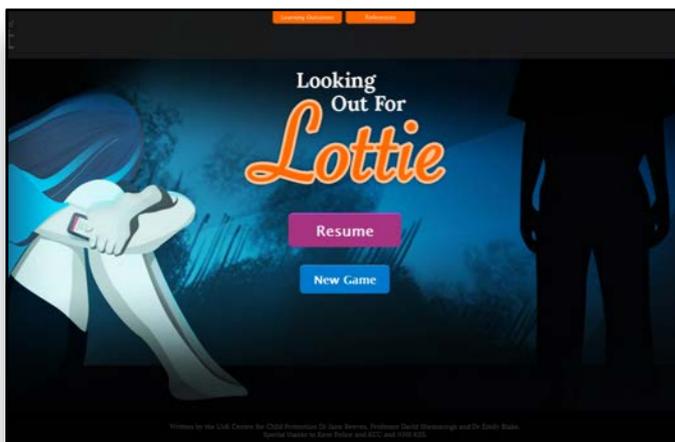
8 | Guardian Awards



ESSEX THINKS | In March the Guardian Awards honoured some of the best higher education initiatives out there. We've covered some of the winners in previous reports. But here's a round up of the winners and nominations that caught our eye. Debating and education go hand in hand. But the University of Essex has taken it to a whole new level. Through The Think Series they bring together students from across the university to discuss, challenge and reflect on the controversial and thought-provoking subjects that are the burning issues of the day. It's a way of enhancing the learning experience beyond lectures while helping students develop soft skills such as public speaking. Guest speakers have included a sex worker and convicted IRA bomber. Lasting 90 minutes the talks have attracted around 1,200 students. We'll leave the final quote to Think Co-ordinator Dr Carlos Gigoux - "Think seminars really make a university what it should be - a place where you think creatively and critically and engage with society from a human and professional experience."



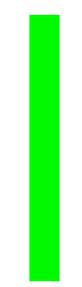
EDIBLE BUGS | How do you bring to life the future challenges facing agriculture and the world food supply? It's a serious subject that needs to attract more great minds who can innovate and come up with new ways to feed the world. Well Harper Adams University deservedly won an award by bringing the subject to life in a fun way at agricultural shows with the 'Edible Bug Challenge'. And over 5,000 people tucked into the freeze-dried bugs creating a 159% increase in interactions with visitors compared to previous years. Not only is this an engaging and interactive way to get across a serious subject, it's ideal for photo and video sharing as the more squeamish try bugs for the very first time – a food supply the planet may need to rely on in the future as the demand for food grows and grows.



LOOKING OUT FOR LOTTIE | Gamification isn't just for techies and gamers – it can help to tackle serious subjects too. The sexual exploitation of children is a complex and emotive issue with subtle signs and different indicators. To help a variety of professionals involved with social care to get to grips with grooming, sexting, cyber bullying and a whole host of issues, the University of Kent has created an interactive simulation. This immersive approach enables people to see the compelling story of Lottie and her seemingly innocent boyfriend who is grooming her. It's all part of a social care CPD programme that helps people to identify the signs and be more confident in dealing with such situations. They do this by learning more about the two characters, their social media interactions and the implications for Lottie. We anticipate we'll see more CPD courses embracing gamification in such a way.



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HEALTH SIMULATION | There's a big difference between reading about an injury in a book and seeing it with your own eyes. Which is why we really liked this idea from Buckinghamshire New University. They have a full-time moulage practitioner in their team who mocks up gorily realistic injuries for live simulations. It brings a bit of Hollywood to health education. And it helps students to get used to providing healthcare in the real world without having access to patients. Everything gets the make over treatment from scars, burns and infected wounds to blood and vomit. It leaves nothing to the imagination. And students get feedback on how they respond to these challenging situations. There are some sights and smells that even virtual reality can't prepare you for. We think it's a really good way to add to the experience of health students.



WIDENING PARTICIPATION | We were also impressed with a couple of initiatives aimed at widening participation as the concept of lifelong learning really takes hold. The Open Book scheme from Goldsmiths reaches out way beyond the 'traditional graduate' profile to open up access to higher education for those with addictions, criminal records and complex mental health issues. Mainly operating by word-by-mouth, the scheme is run by staff who have all been members of Open Book themselves – so they appreciate the journeys people aged 18-80 are going through. People reflect on their own experiences and enjoy taster courses before going on to foundation and UG programmes. While at the other end of the spectrum King's College London runs K+ a free 2-year programme of events, activities and workshops to help students aged 16+ with their university application and develop the skills they will need to make the most of their potential. King's invests £100k a year to help students discover and distinguish themselves.



GET RALPH HOME | Internal comms have long been of vital importance for colleague retention. They are also key to student retention and enhancing the student journey. So, it's good to see universities getting more and more creative. And this idea really made us smile. Asking students to update their addresses details might not sound like the most exciting of campaign briefs – but the team turned it into an epic 3-part video story. The main character is lost teddy bear Ralph who can't be reunited with his owner because he failed to update his student address details. As well as the videos that told the story over a few weeks, students were asked to help reunite Ralph by taking pictures of him if they found him around the campus, sharing them on Twitter #GetRalphHome. It's an engaging campaign that is nicely produced, has lots of fun and gets across an important message to students who probably don't have updating their details at the top of their priority list.



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STUDENT SUPPORT | The Guardian Awards also highlighted some innovative ways that universities are now helping their students. The University of Sheffield has created a free MOOC to help students apply for their dream jobs and create the perfect CV and online profile. Students at the University of Teesside have created SALT – The Student’s Academic Literacy Tool to help students improve their academic writing. It’s currently being tested and is set to be launched online. While Cardiff Met University has developed the ‘Belonging Cube’ to help students studying PG International Business Management. Their students from around the world are asked to collect images and mount them onto a card cube. They then present their cube and work together to create ‘a wall of culture’, ‘a tower of fears’ and ‘pyramid of challenges’ to explore different hopes and fears. A nice way to bring people together, break the ice and establish what students want to achieve and why.





SPARK

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EXCLUSIVE