The art of connection.

HELOA National Conference 2024

Agenda

A short intro to SMRS

UG audience behaviours

Effective communication in HE

Understanding who our audiences are

Understanding their challenges
and expectations

How to reach them on the right channels

Supporting wellbeing in your future
student audience

Hello

For 25 years, we've been solving the problems that matter. Our 125 talented people bring ideas, strategies and values to life.

We deliver strategic marketing campaigns, research and consultancy that have an impact in the UK and all around the world.

Whether we're exploring or finding, planning or creating, we move heaven and earth to help our clients change for the better.

Certified

B Corporation®

Effectiv
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Ever feel like audiences are keeping you guessing?

Shifts across the ages

- 18 and under -6,265 -1.88%
- 19-24 -3,865 -2.09%
- 25 and over -1,840 -1.96%

Growth in self-release

- +43.87% between 2019 & 2023.
- -10.34% in applicants applying after self release in same period

Shifts in acceptance routes behaviour

- -7.67% in mains scheme firm choice
- +2.67% in main scheme clearing
- +2.52% in RPA

Data enhanced understanding

How can we understand and communicate more effectively with our audiences?

Knowing where to connect with our audiences.

Understanding media consumption

- Media engagement data

- Third-party tracking services

- Web Analytics

- Social Analytics

Unanswered questions…

- What is the online / offline channel mix?

- Why do people use the channels they do?

- Are there any demographic variances?

That's where media consumption research comes in.

The problem with Audience Measurment Platforms

- Incomplete Data

- Unrepresentative

- Cost

So, we set out to solve this…

- Primary research

- Representative response base

- Scale

- Relevant channels

- Online / offline

Respondent overview

- Over 3,000 participants

  - 64% prospective students (enquirers/applicants)

  - 57% of respondents were aged between 16-18

  - 35% were between 19-21 years old.

- Representative of HE participation across all UK regions, including Northern Ireland

- Focused on media usage patterns during university journey

- Useful demographic profiles

*

What media is used in their free time?

Social media and streaming occupies most time when online
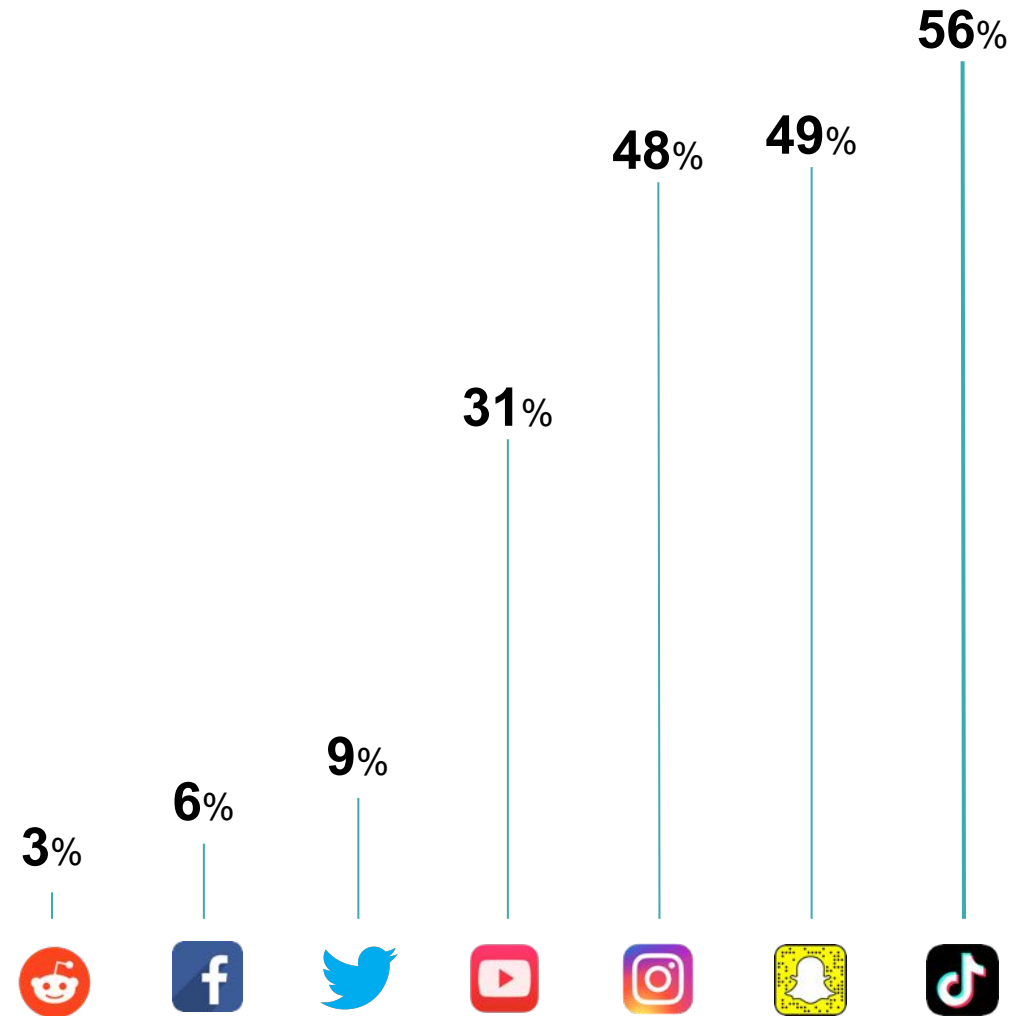
Social media

83%

Music streaming

57%

Video streaming

47%

What do you spend most of your time doing when online in your free time?
N = 3,059

TikTok dominates time spent on social channels.

56%

49%

48%

31%

9%

6%

3%

Which social media channels do you use the most in your spare time?
N = 2,086

What social media is used for university discovery?

TikTok is the preferred social channel to research universities of interest.

TikTok

YouTube

Instagram

Snapchat

Noticing universities

Instagram

TikTok

YouTube

Facebook

Channel used in free time

TikTok

Snapchat

Instagram

YouTube

Please select the social media channels that you prefer to use when researching universities, you are interested in? Please select your top 3.
N = 3,059

What media is used for university research?

The first step of discovery

	1	2	3
University website	68%	25%	5%
Social media channels	48%	26%	17%
Online chat with University staff	38%	31%	18%
UCAS events or higher education fairs	29%	31%	25%
Educational websites or university listing websites	26%	37%	28%
Prospectus – online	22%	35%	28%
Prospectus - printed	20%	25%	32%
Video/telephone call with university staff	24%	22%	28%

Top channels for initial engagement

- Website
- Social media
- Online chat

Secondary choices

- UCAS fairs
- Education channels
- Online prospectus

Least favourable options

- Printed prospectuses
- Phone calls to university

Digital platforms are preferred for initial contact.

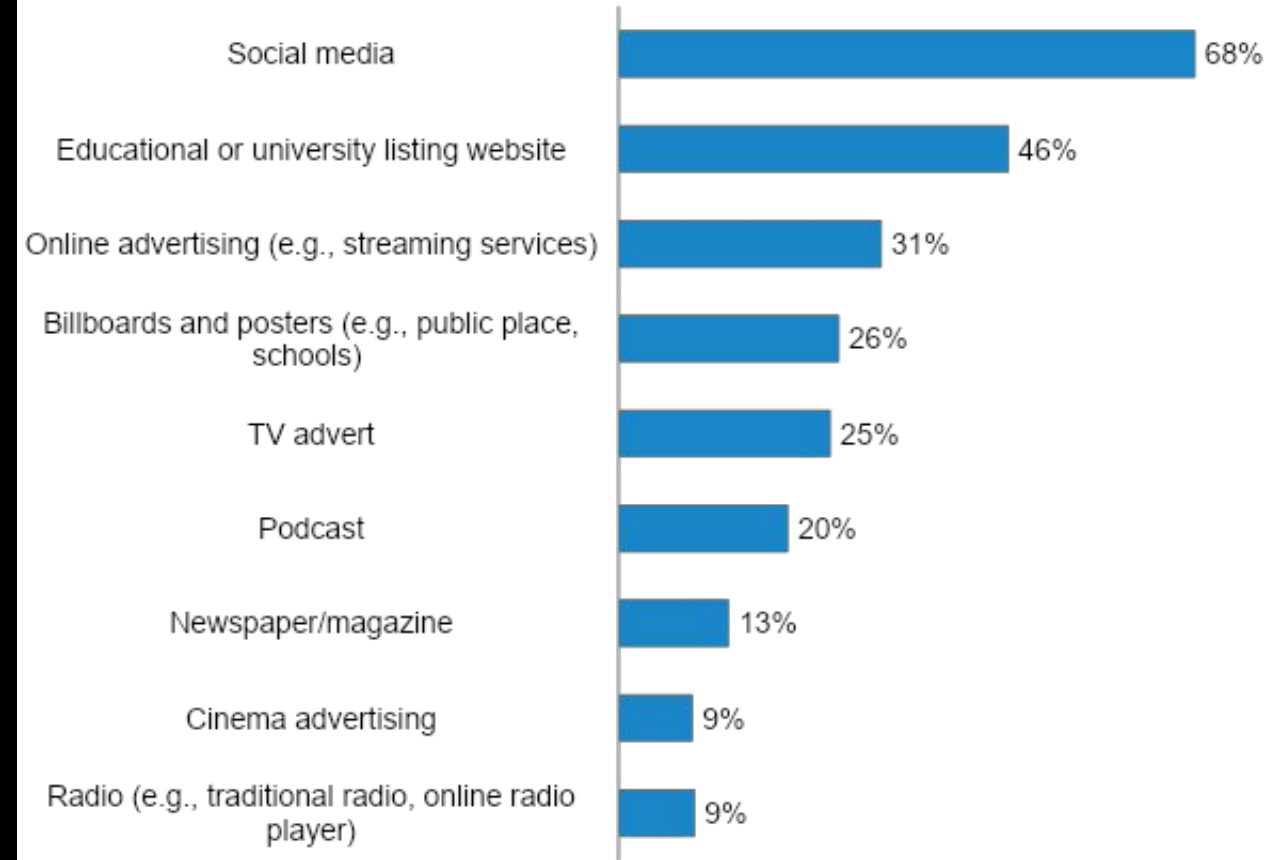Physical events and resources are considered as supplementary options.

If you wanted to find out about a university that you have no or very limited prior knowledge of, where is the first place you would go?
N = 3,052

# Where is advertising being seen?

Where is advertising being seen?

Social media	68%
Educational or university listing website	46%
Online advertising (e.g., streaming services)	31%
Billboards and posters (e.g., public place, schools)	26%
TV advert	25%
Podcast	20%
Newspaper/magazine	13%
Cinema advertising	9%
Radio (e.g., traditional radio, online radio player)	9%

Have you seen any university advertising on any of the following channels?
n:2,836

On what education sites is university advertising being seen?

UCAS	75%
TSR	40%
Unifrog	28%
The Guardian University Guide	22%
Prospects	21%
Whatuni?	18%
StudentHut	14%
The Times Good University Guide	11%
Complete University Guide	11%
THE World University Rankings	8%
Unistats	8%
Springpod	7%
The Tab	7%

Please select the educational or university listing websites where you have seen advertising about any university?
n:1,305
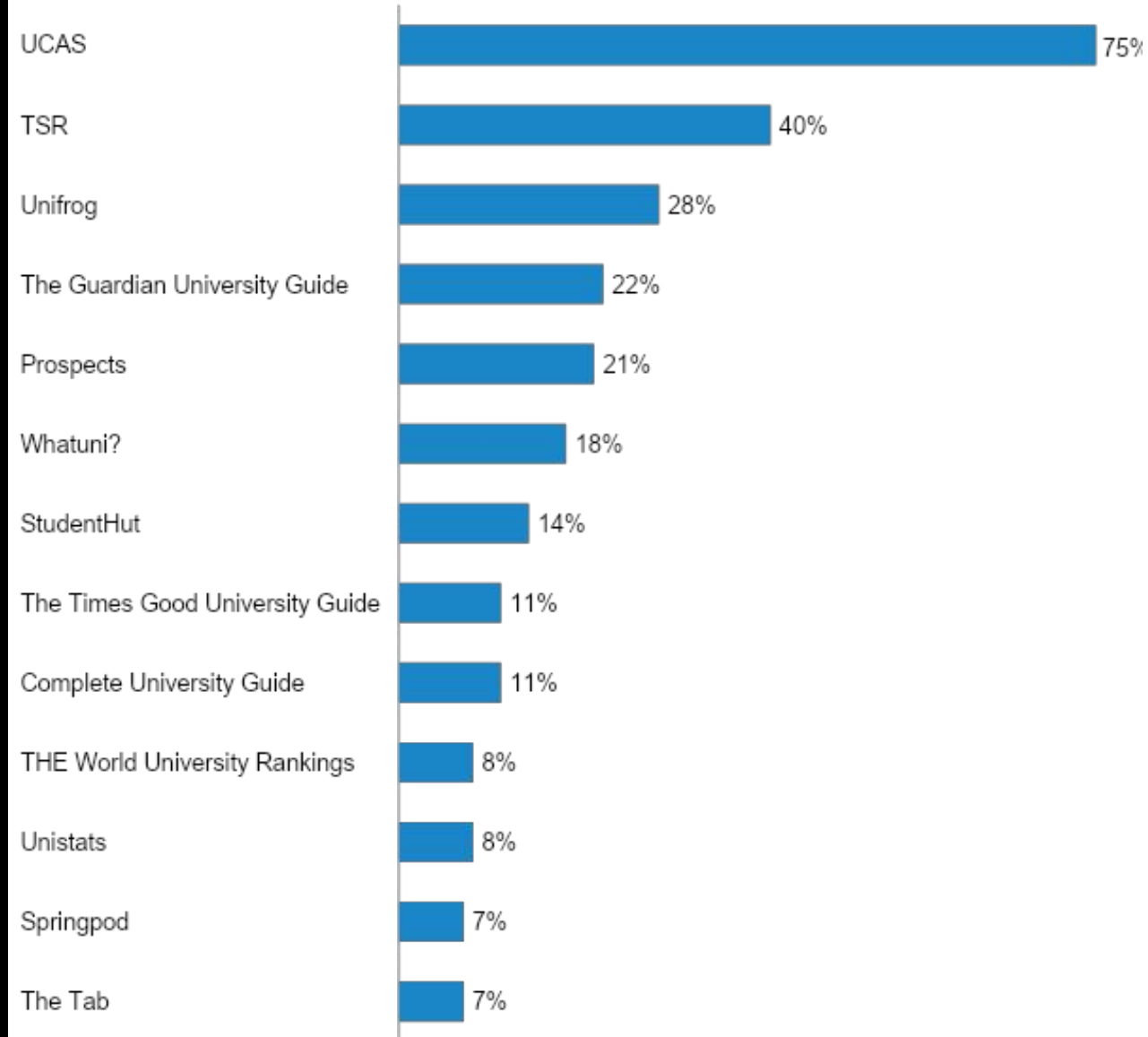
What impact does advertising have?

Advertising impact

Raising awareness

- Education listing websites
- Social media
- Out of home

Elicit a positive response

- Podcast
- TV advert
- Online advertising

Nudging

- Radio
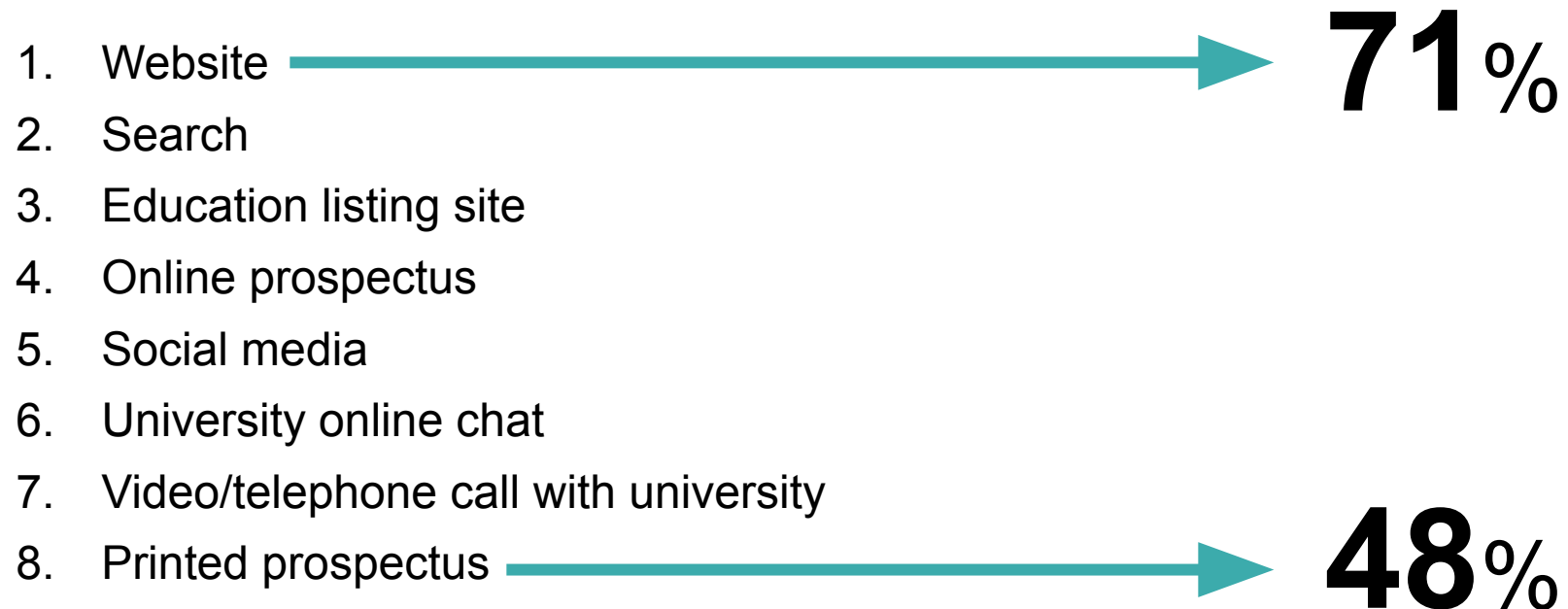- Out of home
- Social media

Elicit a negative response

- Cinema advertising
- Newspaper/magazine
- TV advert

What media is used when finalising decisions?

Influencing final decisions

Channels by rank of importance

1. Website   ➤ **71**%
2. Search
3. Education listing site
4. Online prospectus
5. Social media
6. University online chat
7. Video/telephone call with university
8. Printed prospectus   ➤ **48**%

*How important are each of the below media channels
in helping you make a final decision about a university
n:3,059*

Recap of key findings

Dominance of TikTok

TikTok is the preferred social channel for university research and entertainment during free time.

Trust in university websites

Websites are the primary choice for accurate, reliable, and comprehensive information.

Traditional channels remain relevant

Despite the digital age, traditional channels continue to have an impact on prospective students.

Advertising drives action

Ads successfully motivate prospective students to reach out to universities.

Advertising influences preferences

Advertising plays a role in boosting prospective students' interest in specific universities.

Final decision influencers

A wide mix of channels continue to play an important role in decision-making, right up to the last moment.

SMRS MediaMapper
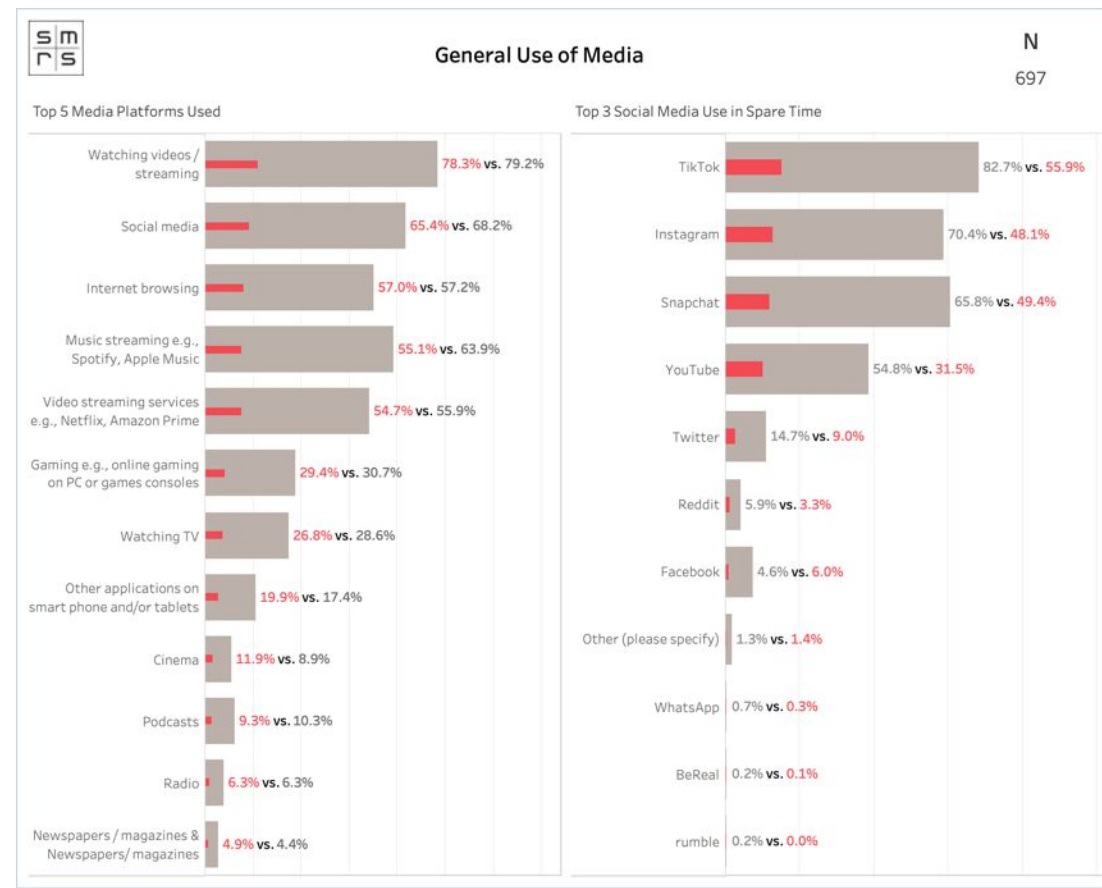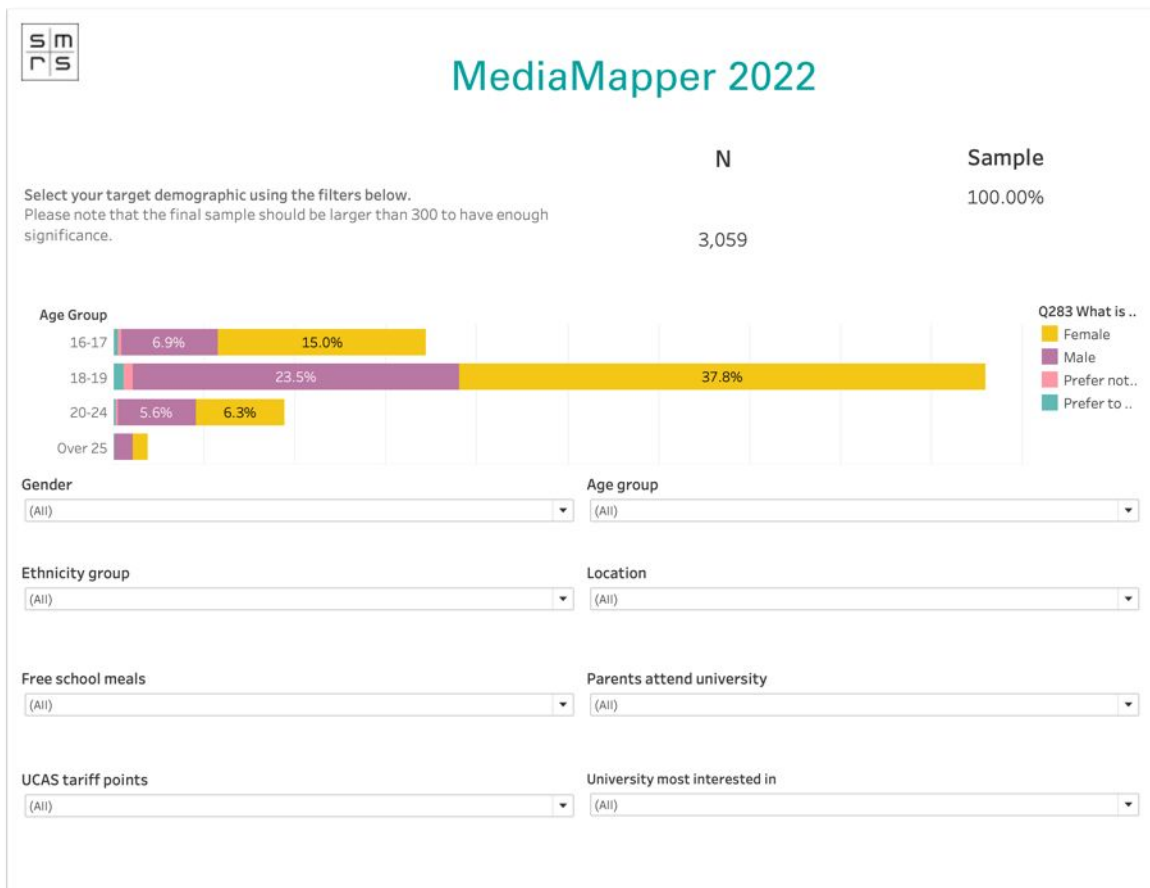
Summary

- Successful connections require the alignment of a multitude of factors

- Our audiences are complex

- Start to identify how you can enhance your data and understanding

- Engage your audience to understand behavioural factors for personalisation and optimisation

- Reach your audiences using multiple channels & optimise your own channels
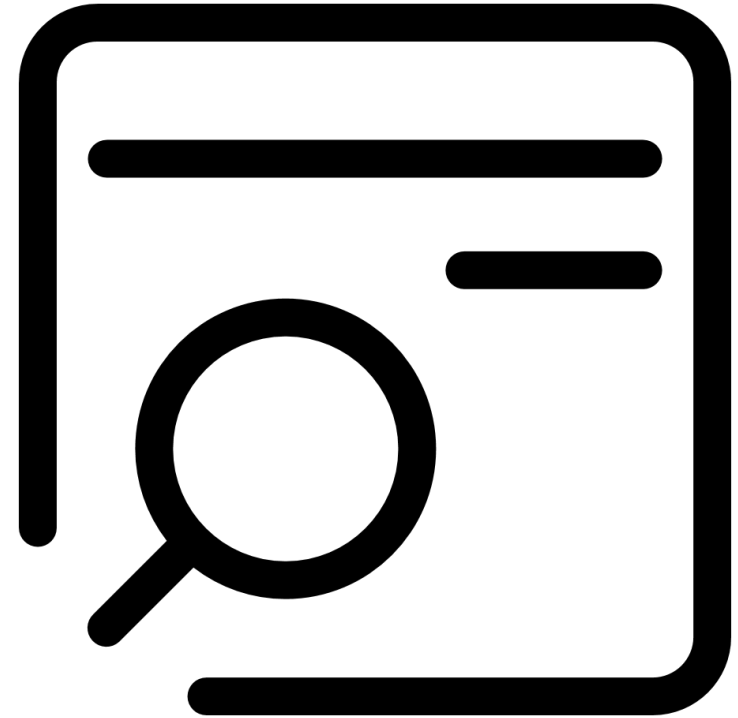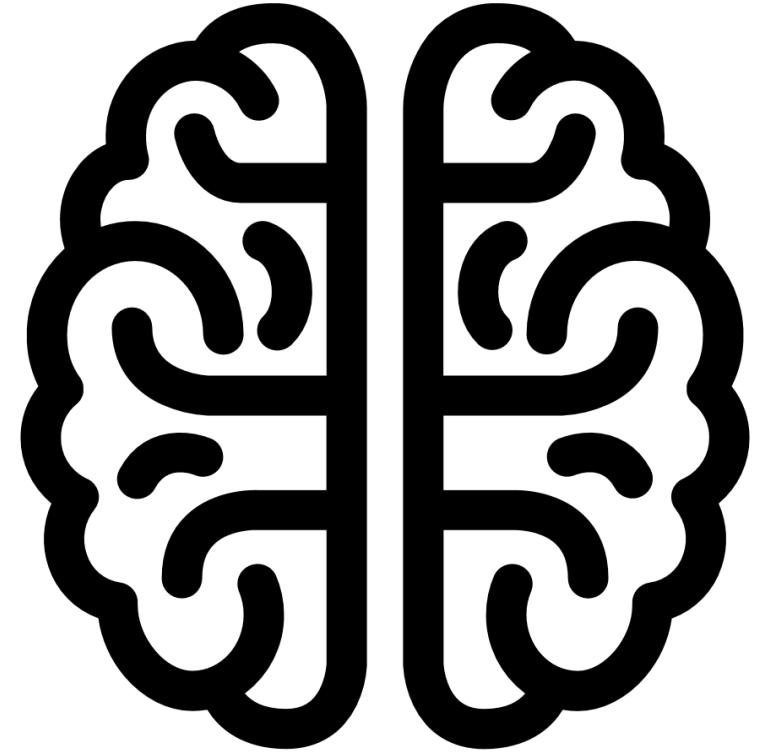
Applicant experience & wellbeing

Mental health in young people

In young people aged 17-19 years, rates of probable mental disorder rose from:

1 in 10 → **1 in 4**

in 2017   in 2022

Almost one-in-three applicants who started university this September have **a history of missing education** due to their mental health.

(Unite Students, 2023 Applicant Index)

18% of applicants with a disability, particularly those with mental health conditions or neurodivergence, **are not disclosing their status** to universities.

(Unite Students, 2023 Applicant Index)

A focus on…

conversion

Challenging times

Demand expectation vs reality

Demographic uplifts have not generated proportionate increases in applicants.

Changing applicant behaviour

Increase in applicants using all 5 choices available to them.
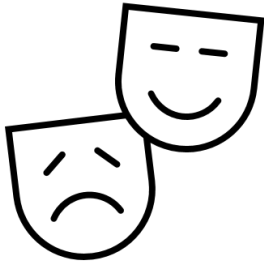
⬆ Almost 7% between 2020 - 2023.

Unpredictable to the end

Increase in applicant self-release at Confirmation and Clearing.
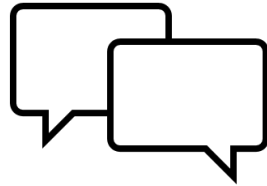
⬆ 29% in 2022.

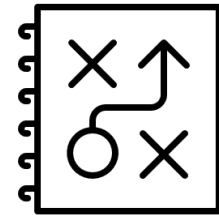⬆ 2.8% in 2023.

How to influence conversion

UNDERSTAND

Identify how applicants are feeling and understand the impact of their experiences with you, on their perceptions.

ENGAGE

Provide relevant comms and engagement to increase affiliation and preference.

SUPPORT

Identify barriers, challenges and friction and positively support applicants through them.

studentpulse

Helps universities measure and understand applicant and student experiences to optimise strategies, tactics and performance metrics.

Helps prospective students in their moment of need with resources, tools and support to overcome challenges.

Approaches to measurement

Strategic snapshot
Suitable for reporting and longer-term improvements

20-30 min.

| Confidence |
| Quality |
| Capability |
| Belonging |
| Motivation |
| Experience |

Application — Open days — Offer decision — Results — Enrolment

Check-ins
Suitable for real-time understanding and engagement.

4-5 min. | 4-5 min. | 4-5 min. | 4-5 min. | 4-5 min.

Confidence
Touchpoint experience
Wellbeing

Quality
Touchpoint experience
Wellbeing

Capability
Touchpoint experience
Wellbeing

Belonging
Touchpoint experience
Wellbeing

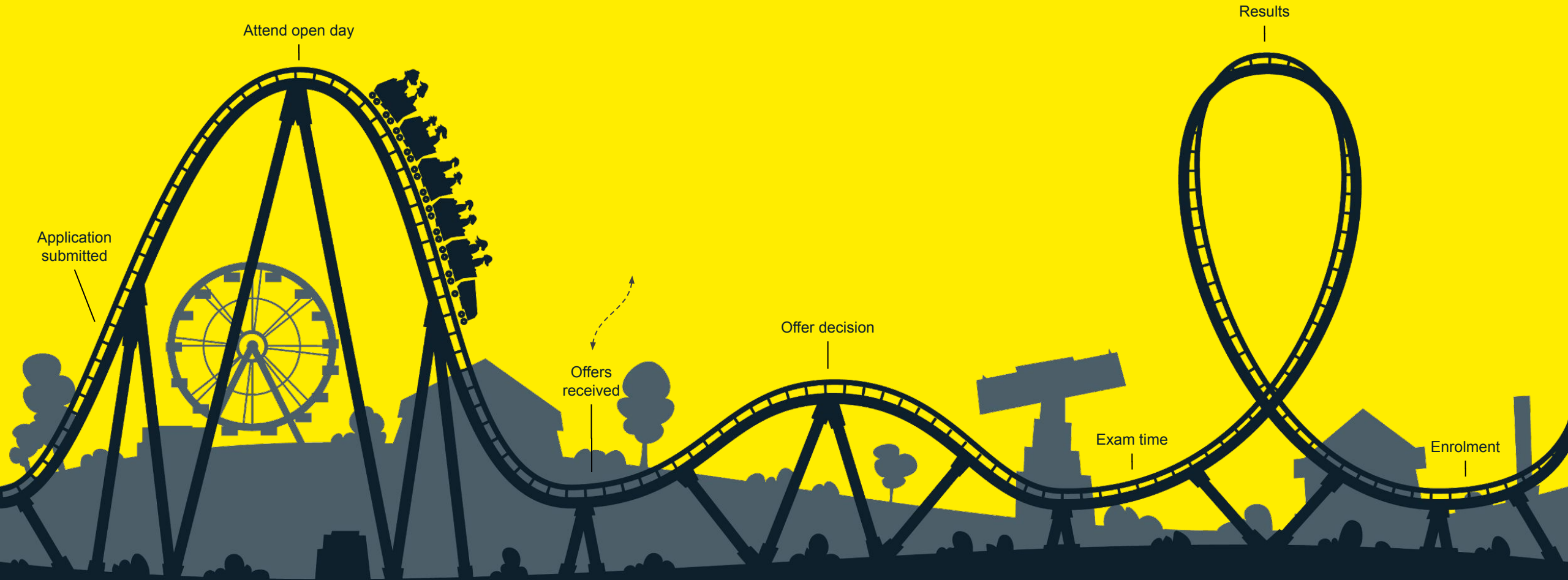**Motivation**
Touchpoint experience
Wellbeing

Application — Open days — Offer decision — Results — Enrolment

Reflecting back on the journey doesn't provide a true picture of what it was really like

Results

Attend open day

Application submitted

Offers received

Offer decision

Exam time

Enrolment

Working with
student minds

Automated and appropriate interventions

NEW CHAT STARTED
Open from 8.00AM - 6.00PM

Write your question here...

Send message

Mental health and wellbeing →
20 RESOURCES
Find out what you can do to look after your physical and mental health.

Free access to CV builder

June '23
Job Fair

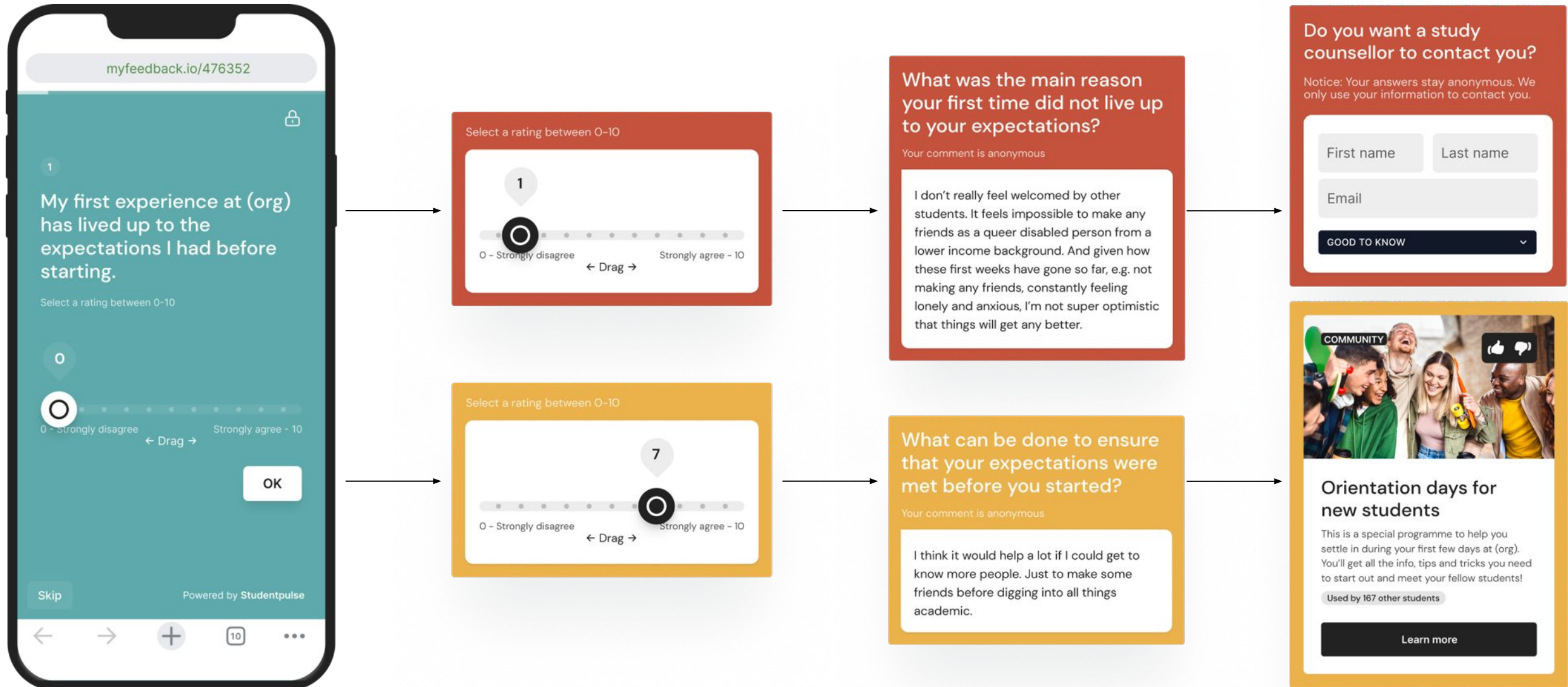We encourage you to contact us when you need us.

LinkedIn Workshop

Career Advisor
Open from 8.00AM - 6.00PM

Write your question here...

Send message

The AI intervention model for students
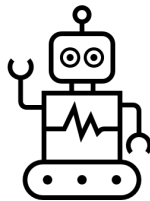
What StudentPulse gives you...

Real-time insights
Making feedback more relevant and actionable enabling issue and opportunity identification in the moment.

Engagement
Brevity and simplicity that encourages participation, increasing response rates and engagement.

Automation
Efficient distribution and analysis at scale saving time and resources.

Benchmarking
Regular distribution allows benchmarking of metrics over time to measure progress and making trends more apparent.

SMRS
Recruitment Hacks

Scan the QR code to get your
MediaMapper white paper.

Thank you

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