

# University City Image Tracker

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*Detailed information*

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## Introduction

### **A new subscriber service to map, compare and track the image of the UK's leading university cities with applicants.**

#### **Course-University-Location.**

All the research points to these three key factors as central to UK undergraduate applicant choice. These are what you promote and explain on your website, at open days and offer holder sessions, and in the prospectus.

We work with lots of universities to track their brand image, and to optimise the appeal of their course portfolios. Most now have good insight about their brand and manage it carefully. You track demand for your courses, the subject feedback from the NSS and the conversion of offers by programme. But when it comes to the image of your host city, our experience is that the evidence is often anecdotal.

Anyone who has evaluated market share trends of universities knows that when we assess why a trend is up or down there is invariably a gap that cannot be easily explained. That gap is often the appeal of the host city. Over time certain cities become popular with students but appeal fades and then application share declines and conversions take a hit. Having an early warning system would be a great help!

Research by The Knowledge Partnership confirms that perception of place is a vital element in student choice, particularly in the pre-application phase.

### **The truth is, we all need to be effective destination marketers.**

#### **The solution**

TKP has designed a new service to map, compare and track the image of the UK's leading study cities, using unique online surveys.

It will enable marketing teams to evaluate how much of the increase or fall in application share is down to changing location image factors and what actions should follow.

- Better understand the role of location in applicant choice and thus better manage the perception of place.
- Replace the guesswork with reliable insights on what the market thinks of your city.
- Inform collective initiatives with city authorities and partners
- Improve student destination marketing communications.

## Methodology

Qualitative research with prospective UK undergraduates informs the design of the service. The survey, a dynamic online instrument, will be completed by mobile prospective applicants each September/October. The timing means the respondents (Year 13) will be actively considering HE options but not committed to any choices that might influence their attitudes to the cities evaluated.

Location image is a primary factor for those applicants considering relocating for study; thus, we are excluding those committed to local study (often driven by convenience/cultural/cost considerations). Destination image is also most relevant to younger applicants, who are considerably more likely to relocate than mature students.

The image of a city is in part forged by familiarity (prior visits, media, etc). The sample will be UK-wide with sufficient responses from each region/country to weight it to reflect the overall market. This also means we can dive into the data at a regional level, meaning you will be able to compare your city's image overall and by the region of respondent.

## Scope

### The University City Image Tracker will measure:

- The overall appeal to prospective students of each city in the study
- The image of each city across a range of dimensions (surfaced via the qualitative research)
- The individual dimensions having the greatest impact on the overall image of your host city (using key driver analysis)
- Student preferences of location type (major city, small city, etc)
- Key channels and influencers, that shape perceptions, that you need to engage (visits, media, family, student friends, etc)
- Which dimensions of a city applicants consider to be the most critical when choosing universities
- Changes in city brand image over time and relative to other destinations

The cities included will in part be determined by the location of subscribing universities. London may be treated more specifically for clients based in the capital.

### Optional feature: compare perceptions with the lived reality

Subscribers will have the option (at additional cost) to include surveys of current undergraduate students and/or recent alumni using a similar online instrument. This allows you to see if there are gaps between applicant perceptions of your city and the “lived experience”. Gap analysis may show, for example, that students consider the city to be much stronger on nightlife than the applicant perception (and relative to students in other cities). This would be an important perception gap and the way to address this would be different than if the results were reversed (a reality gap).

## Findings and applications

- Is our city's image a competitive advantage or not? Is the trend positive or negative? Should we invest more in the destination element of our marketing mix?
- Are there segments of applicant/student that hold more favourable perceptions of the city - by study subject, prior location, likely tariff achieved, demographic profile etc? How can we leverage this to enhance conversion?
- What are the strengths of our city's image that are important to students? How can we better communicate (illustrate, justify, exemplify) these? Are these strengths real - do students/graduates agree they are positive dimensions of the city?
- What are the important weak spots of our city's image? If they are real and not misperceptions, can we work with partners to address them over the medium term?
- Are we communicating about the right features and benefits of our city - those that applicants care about? Are we using the right media to get these messages across?
- Does location matter more to some student segments than others? Those intending to study planning or geography or architecture for example?
- Do specific aspects of a city matter more to some applicants - does having successful sports teams matter to sports or event management applicants, or having great galleries and an arts scene matter more to art and design applicants?

## Pricing and invoicing

Universities can subscribe to the service for their own private use (single-user licence) or for shared use with partners in the city area (multiple-user licence).

The dual pricing structure recognises that you may want to share the findings (and perhaps the costs) with other stakeholders that would benefit from the insights, or those you may need to work with you to address any issues revealed by the research. These might include local authorities, student accommodation providers and other HE providers in your city.

### **A single university for their own private use:**

£4,950 + VAT for the University City Image Tracker (prospective students)

Optional extra:

£4,950 + VAT for the University City Image Tracker (current students and/or recent alumni)

Buy both in the same year (includes integrative analysis and reporting comparing the two samples) £8,900 + VAT - a saving of 10%.

### **A consortium/multiple user:**

£7,425+ VAT for the University City Image Tracker (prospective students)

Optional extra:

£7,425 + VAT for the University City Image Tracker (current students and/or recent alumni)

Buy both in the same year (includes integrative analysis and reporting comparing the two samples) £13,250+ VAT - a saving of 10%.

Subscribers will be invoiced in two halves; 50% upon committing to the service and prior to the service fieldwork in September/early October and 50% upon receipt of the research outputs in December.

Please note that The Knowledge Partnership reserves the right not to run the service unless a minimum viable number of subscribers is secured. If subscribers have paid the first invoice they will have the choice of a complete refund or a credit note for relevant services.

## Outputs

### An online dashboard

- Highly visual data reports from latest statistics and primary surveys
- Accessible with straight-forward dashboard navigation and downloadable reports
- All data available in one place with sample sizes included
- Monitor changes as data goes live

### Face to face meeting

A meeting at the end of the service to explore the results with a focus on your city.

## Subscribing to University City Image Tracker

To subscribe to the University City Image Tracker, complete the form on The Knowledge Partnership website at [www.theknowledgepartnership.com/services/university-city-image-tracker/](http://www.theknowledgepartnership.com/services/university-city-image-tracker/) or contact Dave Roberts at [d.roberts@theknowledgepartnership.com](mailto:d.roberts@theknowledgepartnership.com)