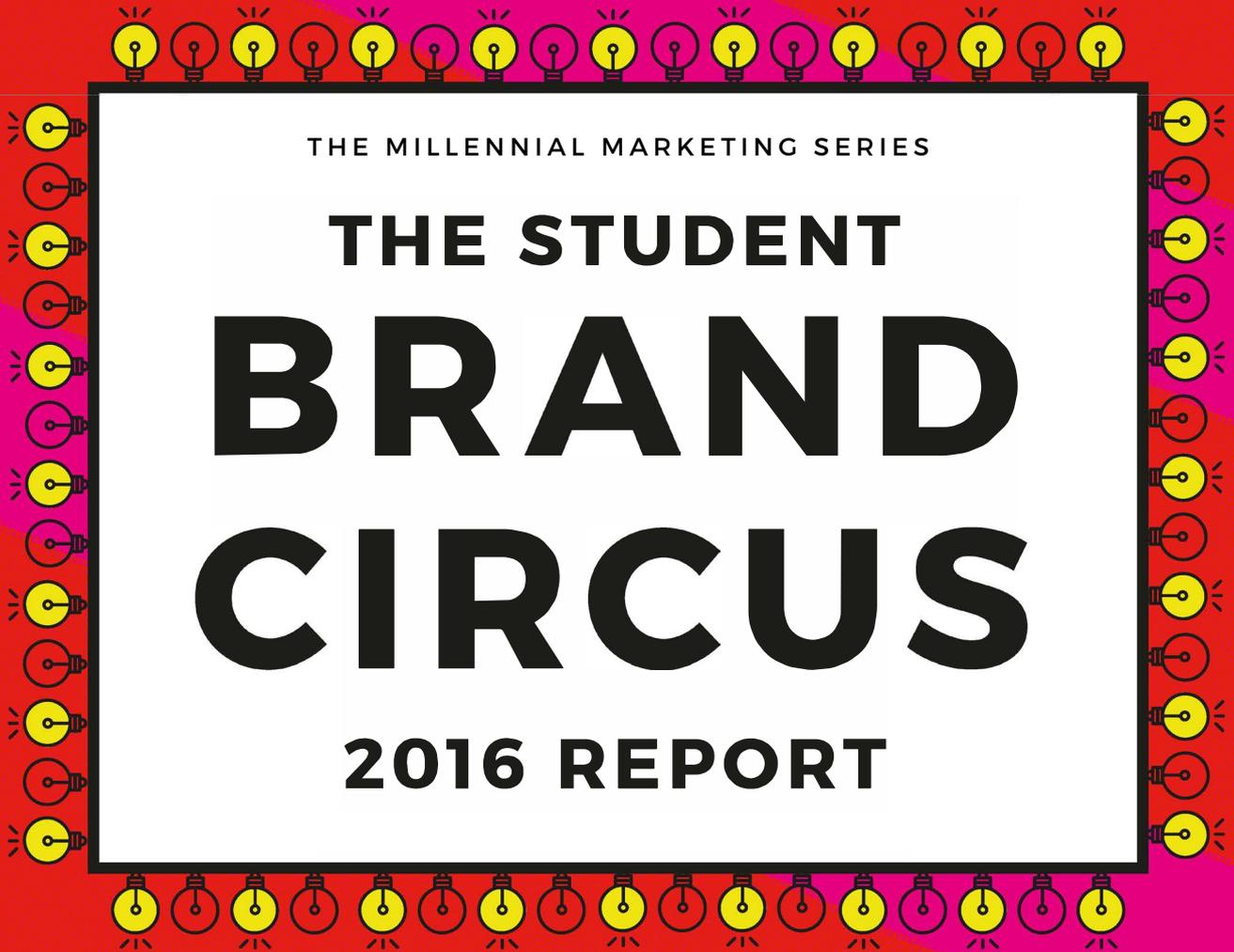


**magpie**



THE MILLENNIAL MARKETING SERIES

**THE STUDENT  
BRAND  
CIRCUS  
2016 REPORT**

**Helping brands perform  
better for students**

A REPORT BY MAGPIE BASED ON STUDENT INSIGHT AND OPINION, © 2016

[WEAREMAGPIE.COM](http://WEAREMAGPIE.COM)

At Magpie, we are experts in student marketing. We fully immerse ourselves in youth culture, understanding the complexities and rewards of working with such a vibrant and energetic market. The insight we gather from our nationwide team of student market researchers fuels our ideas and creativity.

Our passion is connecting young audiences with new experiences, launching campaigns that enhance brand awareness and create brand loyalty for life.

Helping to create brand advocates from student audiences is what drives results and we are well positioned to deliver this in the UK or internationally.

## Why students?

Brands have many reasons to market to this vibrant and energetic audience...

The student marketplace is huge and mostly community-based so finding students is easy:

**2,299,355**

**HE students studying in the UK**

**109**  
**Universities**

**600**

**Students' Unions in the UK**

Students make a large contribution to our economy:

**The average student spend (excl. uni fees) is**

**£735 p/m**

(National Student Money Survey 2014)

**Student spending supports over**

**£80bn**

**of UK economic output and generates over £25bn of Gross Value Added (GVA)**

(nef Consulting/NUS)

**85% spend £5  
or less on lunch each  
time they eat out**

**53%**  
spend up to £20 a week  
on tea and coffee and café  
culture is increasing

**20%**  
of GDP growth in the  
UK from 1982 to 2005  
was due to increased  
graduate skills  
(UniversitiesUK.ac.uk survey)

**50%**  
socialise at home or at  
a friend's house

As well as income generation, having students within a city also generates jobs:

**15%**  
get their groceries online and  
this trend continues to grow

**830,000**  
UK jobs are generated  
through student  
expenditure  
(nef Consulting/NUS)

**79%**  
make an effort to eat  
healthily

Student lifestyles are constantly evolving, are you keeping up with their causes and aspirations?

**OVER 1/3**  
of students report they  
don't drink alcohol.

**56%**  
say sustainability strategies  
and efforts to reduce waste  
or cut power usage matter

# Brand Circus was launched to engage students in a unique way, to understand their creative thoughts and opinions around what brands of today need to do to become more student-loved

On Wednesday April 27 2016, we launched Brand Circus, a first of its kind insight event in Hyde Park, Leeds. The event was created to engage with students in a unique way to understand their creative thoughts and opinions around what brands of today need to do to become more student-loved.

On the day, 60 students took part in 10 student focus groups with a twist; each part of the session took inspiration from the circus, including:

## **The brand contortionist**

Students picked a brand category from the box and told us how they would contort a particular brand to make it more student-loved.

## **The brand strength test**

We described the traits of several brands and students took turns to strike the strength test, determining what the most important traits were to them. From this we can understand how strong or weak a brand is in the eyes of students.

## **Fortune teller**

Students described a brand they were thinking of until their opponent guessed it from the description they provided. The descriptions gave us some useful insight on student opinions of certain brands.

## **Ringmaster's main stage**

The Ringmaster hosted debates and one-minute briefs whereby students had one-minute to scribble down ideas on a particular brand topic before reviewing the ideas as a group.

Note: our methodology is based around collecting qualitative information by studying how students respond and their reasons 'why'. We believe our ability to generate the best ideas involves working with target audiences using our expertise coupled with their brilliant minds to develop concepts in engaging ways.

**Is your brand  
student-loved?**

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**Are you future  
proofing for  
the influencers  
of tomorrow?**

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**Read on for the  
2016 Student  
Brand Circus  
Report...**



University students are discovering who they are as independent consumers away from home and they see the brands they choose to engage with as a defining part of themselves. Small peer pressures still exist surrounding the brand choices some students make but, on the whole, today's marketing-savvy millennials know their own mind and have a clear desire for authenticity, flawsomeness and empathy from brands who want this generation as their future loyal consumers. How are you performing for students?

Read on for more information...

## Authenticity

Authenticity means keeping it real (across all channels). Students don't like brands that pay lip service and don't deliver. Whether or not your ethos and brand story is written on your website, students are intuitive detectives with the resource at their fingertips to investigate and make an instant opinion based on how you present yourself and what you are saying. In the swipe of a page, if the abstract isn't cohesive, or external reviews and publicity differ, then credibility will be lost.

Gimmicks are fails. Students can call out a hoax within minutes, however **they are empowered by the content they find**

**to be authentic and intelligent.** They will tweet, snap, love, pin, share, like, comment, review and forward things that they believe they have found a genuine connection with and, with the prospect of branded content spreading from campus-to-campus with students in their millions, authenticity can be a very powerful ally for brands.

Students like to be entertained by brands and doing that means you can't always see a direct return on the investment you put in. Funny films, quirky or intelligent memes and Instagramable opportunities in physical spaces are not products you sell but they all create opportunities for a unique brand experience, one that can be shared and therefore the return isn't always profit-based. Nevertheless this is the brand expectation of today's student so you should treat these type of investments as your new marketing opportunities and chances to build up social credit.

## Flawsomeness

Students value a brand that is 'flawsome', i.e. a brand that points out its flaws and recognises itself as imperfect with the aspiration to become perfect. Flawsome brands can take their audience on a growth journey with them. A brand that constantly promotes perfection has a much bigger fall from grace in the event of a mistake. Students like brand confidence but not brand arrogance.

Let students in. **Students love to input, give ideas and contribute feedback.** Successful student brands let them in. Launch opinion polls, GOAT (Go Out And Talk) to students, request photos or content that can bring insightful clues indicating where they are now in their lives, but most



importantly be creative and engaging. Monetary incentives aren't necessary to gauge student input, often the strongest relationship is built when you take your student audience on a journey with you and allow them to grow with you. That's flawsome.



## Empathy

Empathise and be relevant. Students aren't all comparable and planning to market to them as one homogeneous group labeled 'students' just won't cut the mustard in a world where we have the power and technology to personalise.

**To market effectively to students don't define them as part of a life-stage or even a studious campus community.**

Consider the social aspects of student life, the causes they believe in, the celebrities they follow, their hobbies or lifestyle aspirations. Connecting on this level will be more effective and shows you have taken time to understand and be relevant to them in this moment in time.

Students told us traditional one-way marketing methods such as newspaper adverts are impersonal and treated like wallpaper. They trust intelligent content from experts or bloggers who sit outside of the targeting brand. They believe their peers sometimes more than a brand so **growing networks of student advocates can bring great strength to student brands.**

There is still a place for more 'traditional' marketing methods in a world where technology rules and students say this rule should be applied to unique experiences. For example, students who have never received a handwritten letter from a company may see more value in this as a piece of direct mail.

Students place more value on a brand's interest and investment in them. The way of selling your product or service needs to start with content that shows students you are interested in them and not their cash. You need to have a passion for their knowledge and curiosity and treat them as an equal. The buy-in comes once you have gained a mutual interest in one another and then a brand can build up trust from there. The upfront investment in this relationship may be costly but the more you invest the more you will get in return.

## Co-creation

Co-creation is key. At Magpie, we co-create campaign and content ideas with students across the country through our student insight team and network of students. Both students and clients alike have seen the results of working in this way and agree it is the key to a successful project.

**RINGMASTER'S  
MAIN STAGE**



# Busting the myths

## **Myth:**

Social media is the only way to connect with students these days

## **Truth:**

Students told us they value physical brand experiences over social media campaigns. Pop-ups, ambient media, guerilla advertising and exclusive events were recalled as effective.

The Internet is competitive, saturated and doesn't always allow visibility for upcoming brands. Intelligent, creative and entertaining physical brand experiences work best. This gives students the opportunity to connect both physically and emotionally with a brand. If your offline experience meets student expectations it will inevitably end up on social media and if it is good enough to encourage your audience to share it for you, then it will speak volumes.

Students said events with live entertainment, lots of colour, wit or humour, a festival feel or a luxury offering are more likely to get shared.

## **Myth:**

Freebies are necessary to attract students

## **Truth:**

Freebies aren't always necessary or valued. To create a stronger brand connection, students told us they favour upgrades, the chance of a money-can't buy experience or VIP treatment, all of which they value more.

In the realm of freebies, students want to feel like they are getting something that sits outside of a mass-produced or marketed experience, therefore personalised freebies or random acts of kindness (i.e. unique giveaways that don't resemble what everyone else receives) have a much stronger emotional and memorable connection.

## **Myth:**

Student discount is all it takes to attract students

## **Truth:**

Students like to know brands are thinking about them, however blanket student discounts of 10 - 15% aren't always viewed favourably by students. Having personalised discounts or offers on special days (such as birthdays), having flash sales or using insight and intelligence to understand where discount is most valued at a particular time goes a long way to building loyalty.

Most importantly, discount is only valued on products students need, want or desire. Just because you offer student



discount doesn't mean you can guarantee students as consumers.

**Myth:**

Students like cheaper products and services

**Truth:**

Students told us they like the best quality at the best price. Students prefer to spend their money on aspirational experiences (such as quirky dining or unique events). Group incentives, packages or discounts are valued.

**Myth:**

Students like loud rainbow coloured communications

**Truth:**

Students said they feel some brands miss the mark by going with full on patterned communications, deeming illustrations necessary for students or creating print that is awash with colour. The truth is that students hate visual noise and like 'stand out'. If you're planning on communicating on poster sites or in physical spaces, do your research and ensure that you are giving your communications an opportunity to shine.

If you are exhibiting in a big white space then an injection of colour or pattern will stand out, if you are going on a wall full of posters or next to 100 competitors, simplicity will give you brand stand out.



# THE BRAND CONTORTIONISTS

Students told us how they would contort brands to make them more student-loved. Here are some snippets from the ideas they shared with us:



## BANKS & FINANCE

Students told us they want:

- Convenient branches on campus
- 16-25 railcard, taste card
- At least £1,500 interest free overdraft
- Easy to use online and banking app
- Contactless and mobile payments
- Money can't buy experiences
- Birthday favours
- Personalised content



## TECHNOLOGY

Students told us they want:

- Ability to customise products
- Student offers and trials
- Better tutorials through apps
- Better personalised customer service
- Student-friendly flexible contracts
- Ability to get upgrades
- Charitable use of old technology
- Green/sustainable credentials



## GROCERIES

Students told us they want:

- More restaurant brands in the fridge
- Packaging innovation
- Student community groups
- Limited edition products
- Supermarket social events
- Student offers online
- Student login area/rewards card
- Competitions



## TRAVEL

Students told us they want:

- Ability to customise packages
- Easy to use and reliable apps
- Entertaining customer service
- Virtual reality goggles in store
- On time and reliable
- Surprise upgrades
- Unexpected freebies



## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Students told us they want:

- To bring their own food and drink in
- 'Partify' the travel
- Include travel in the ticket price
- Regional/local club night presence
- Votes on festival themes
- Random acts of kindness
- Secret spaces
- Group discounts



## HEALTH

Students told us they want:

- More reliable video content
- Motivational tone of voice
- Online prescription instructions
- Innovative prescription packaging
- Better use of technology
- Student competitions
- Bolder campaigns

Get in touch to find out more specific ideas for your business or sector.

## How student strong is your brand?

Students told us the following criteria builds a strong brand gaining student and graduate loyalty...

140

Becoming a way of life

Being seen as 'cool' by the people you want to connect with

Always on: a seamless brand experience 24/7

Really knowing your audience and evidencing it

Creating tweetable and instagramable experiences

Sticking to your guns - self believe confidence - without arrogance

120

Being visually awesome and making the most of visual media

Keeping things shorter - cut the bull and get to the point

100

Sponsoring an event or being involved in something cool

80

Do what you say

60

Handing out freebies at events or relevant locations

**STRONGER**

A decorative border of lightbulbs surrounds the central text. The top and bottom edges feature a row of 12 lightbulbs each, alternating between glowing yellow and unlit white. The left and right sides feature a vertical column of 12 lightbulbs each, also alternating between glowing yellow and unlit white. The background is a vibrant, abstract pattern of overlapping triangles in shades of red, orange, and yellow.

## Thank you for reading. Magpie can help your brand perform better for students in five steps:

**01** We will meet and conduct a free two-hour consultation and creative workshop to audit your current position and build your creative brief.

**02** Using our national network of students, we will put together a relevant student team.

**03** We will generate insight and co-create ideas amongst the team extending out to their peers, providing creativity and opinion on a national scale.

**04** We will deliver you a full report combining our expertise and student insight, providing a commercial case for moving forward with our suggestions.

**05** Our full-service creative team can bring our student insight ideas to life from concepts through to completion.

Get in touch to arrange your consultation and work with us in a unique way to uncover the rewards of your brand gaining loyal lifetime advocates from the vibrant student market.

Contact Ged: [ged@wearemagpie.com](mailto:ged@wearemagpie.com) or call **0113 318 3051**

# Would you like to get involved?

We are just getting started with Brand Circus. Our next stop is London, where we will be connecting brands with students through unique insight activity ensuring both brands and participants go away feeling closer to one another.

At our next Circus event we will be hosting exclusive arenas for a selection of brands who want to learn more about their audience in a fun and engaging setting. Get in touch if you would like to sponsor an arena.

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