



EDU-CON Study 2011

Internet Use for Academic Choice

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Method

In fall 2011, the EDU-CON Study for internet and social media behavior of students and prospective students was carried out for the second time. In an online-survey adolescents who already had experience with using the internet for profession and study choice were surveyed.

Included were young people who had already made their first choice towards higher education studies:

- Students of secondary education, at least 16 years old, as well as adolescents with higher education entrance qualification who contemplate studying;
- Students, who first enrolled in a university in 2008 or later.

The adolescents were addressed on ca. 200 EDU-CON internet offers – Information portals, communities, profiles in communities, e-newsletters. In case of relevant search terms, these were almost always located on the first five places on Google. Answers of 971 adolescents were included in the evaluation, of which 49% belonged to the group of prospective students and 51 to students.

Decision making process

He who strives for higher education has to make different decisions with regarding his academic future. These are arguably the most important questions:

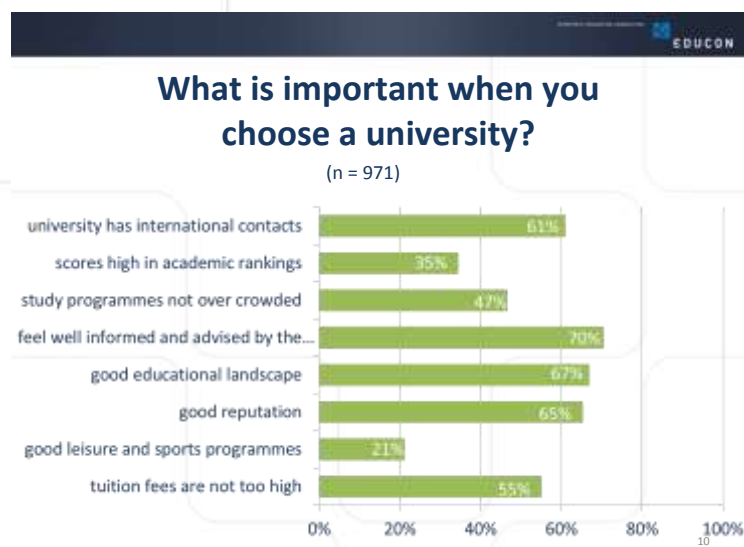
- What do I want to study?
- Where do I want to study?
- At what type of higher education institution do I want to study?

78 % of the respondents claimed to first decide on a field of study, only then for location and for a type of institution. Only 11 % decide on a type of institution first and only 9 % began their choice with the academic location.



For higher education marketing it is therefore essential to display the individual degree courses and only subordinately promote the university as a brand or special location. Marketing for the university as a brand would be utterly pointless.

After which criteria do adolescents choose their university? The service quality of information and consulting has the highest significance to the choice for a university: 70 % of the adolescents stated that it was important to feel well informed and advised by the university. High placements in university rankings however are crucial to only 35% of adolescents.



In the choice of the academic location, 73% are mindful of a good atmosphere in the city.

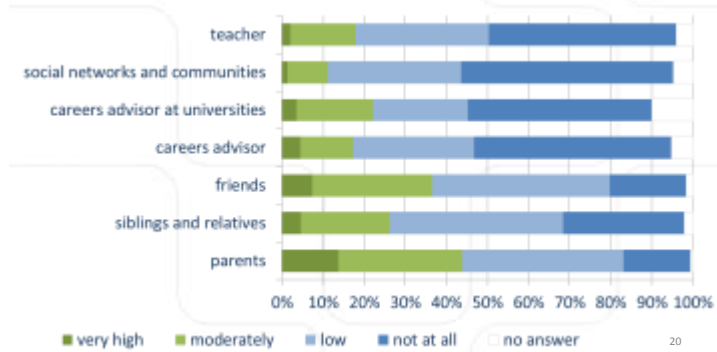
In the process of the academic choice and choice of occupation, the intake of information and decision making are to be distinguished. Here, decision making is considered first.

Which people, media and concomitant circumstances sway adolescents in their decision making process? The question was: “How much influence do the following people/factors have on your study choice?” The adolescents were asked if factors had very high/moderate/low/no influence.

As to influential people, parents still have the most influence on academic choice. Professional advisors play a subordinate role.

Influence on academic choice (1)

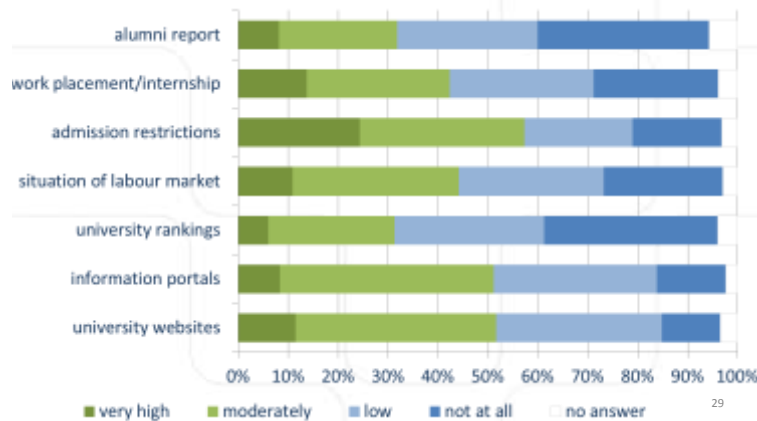
(n = 971)



Other influential factors showed that admission restrictions have the most influence on academic choice. Adolescents who cannot implement their first preference for academic study at an institute switch to other fields of study or universities, or accept long waiting times. In addition to opportunity, it becomes clear that adolescents orient themselves to the situation on the labor market. 43% of the adolescents indicated that internships were an aid to making their decision. University rankings were distinctly less influential, their significance probably unintelligible for a lot of adolescents.

Influence on academic choice (2)

(n = 971)

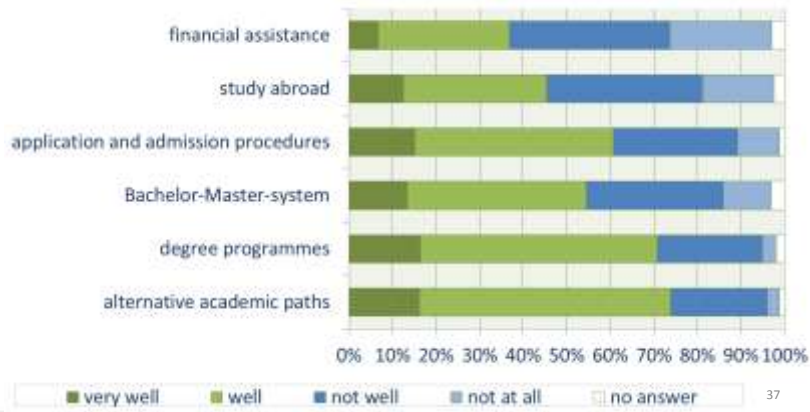


Information search – Information gap

Most adolescents felt sufficiently informed about the different academic options. The information demand for individual degree programs, application and admission procedures, is comparatively small as well. But 52% felt ill-informed about studying abroad and 60% expressed a desire for information on financing their studies.

How well-informed do you feel about the following issues?

(n = 971)

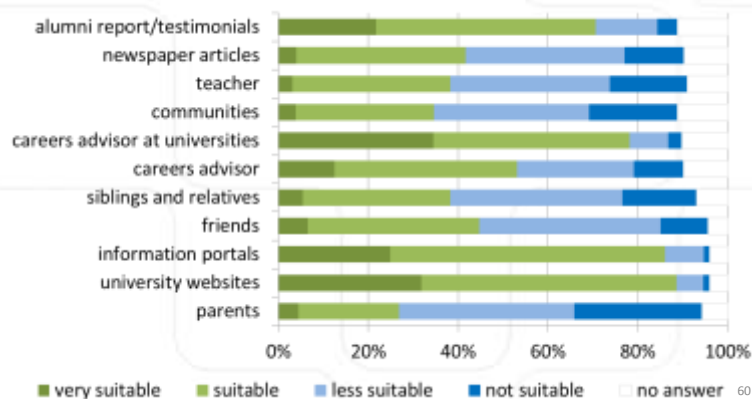


Suitable information sources

Information sources provided by the universities themselves are rated as especially suitable; both the websites and the academic advisors at the universities. Academic advisors however had very little influence on adolescents' academic choices (see above). This points to the assumption that only few adolescents were actually in contact with academic advisors. The information portals are considered to be very suitable as well.

Informative suitability of sources for a specific programme

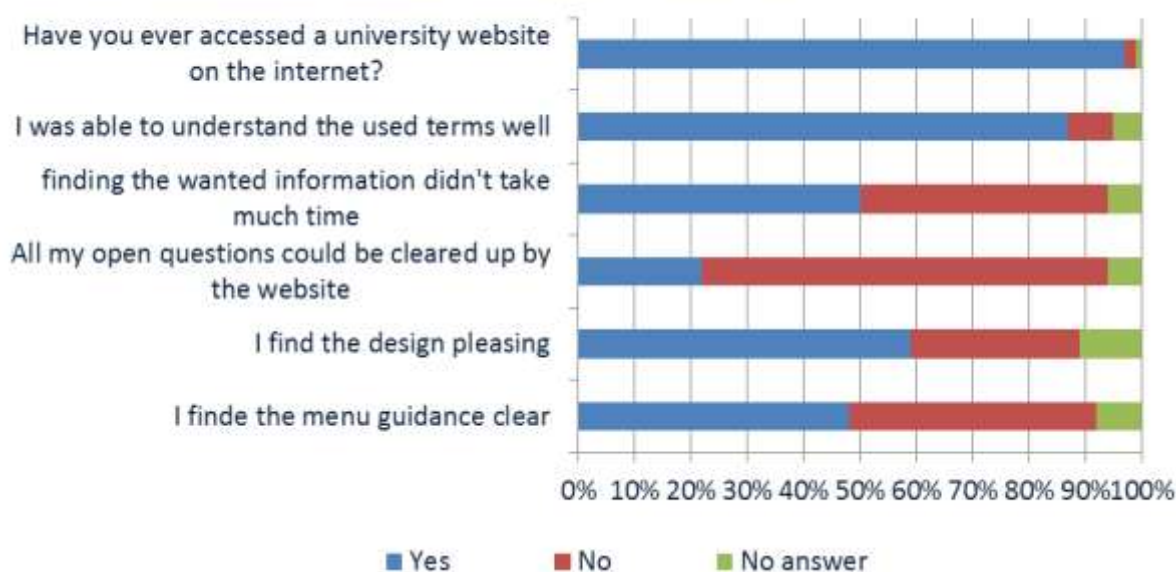
(n = 971)



University Websites

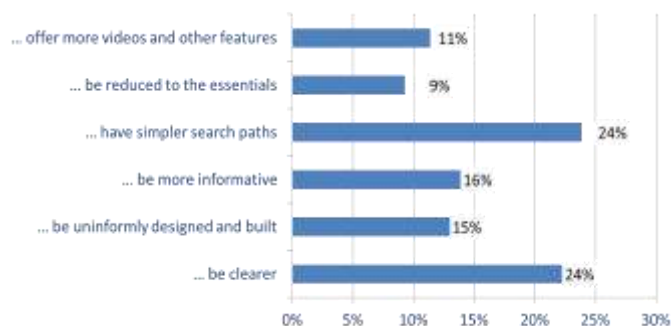
University websites are admittedly the most important and most reliable information source from the adolescents' point of view. 44%, however, expressed difficulties finding the desired information because the website menus were not clear. 72% still had open questions after visiting the websites.

University websites



Accordingly, adolescents wish above all that university websites be clearer and more simply structured.

The university website should ... (n = 971)



Outlook

The study, which will be repeated in October 2012, will be given two new thematic priorities. First questions will be asked about university's services as, after finding the field of study, this is the most important criterion for the choice of a university. Secondly, an emphasis will be put on how well information and admission procedures are transmitted to adolescents. After the letter can be said to have gone the way of the steam engine, now the email is losing importance as a preferred communication tool for universities' target groups. For this reason questions on new communication behavior will be included.

Authors

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Gertrud Hovestadt has gained her scientific knowledge of the educational market from different positions. She was in charge of the research for the "expert advisory board for education at Hans-Böckler-Stiftung". Also she was a member of the scientific staff of the task force for Educational Research – Educational Planning at the Essen University. Since 2001 Gertrud Hovestadt, Co-Founder and director of academic research, puts her experience to use for EDU-CON.

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He is expert for questions in educational law and marketing. Peter Stegelmann institutionalized his broad knowledge in the field of higher educational marketing, student recruitment and reorganization by co-founding EDU-CON. Since then he consults international higher educational institutions and conducts strategies for them to keep up with the changing challenges of modern student recruitment.

www.edu-con.eu

Under <http://www.edu-con.eu/64,1,download.html> you can download for free the full version of the study!