



STUDENT BRIEF

ATTRACTING THE NEXT GENERATION OF TALENT TO M&S

M&S

Summary

M&S is a multi-category retailer across Food, Fashion, Home and Beauty, with fast-moving store, supply chain and digital operations. We're reviewing how we attract undergraduates into our graduate programmes and directentry roles, and we want evidence on how students actually find, compare and choose roles. Your task is to produce a clear, research-led view of where and how to reach the right audiences, what to say, and what to test first. Please return a simple, visual recommendation we could show on two clean slides.

KEY WORDS

M&S, early careers, employer brand, graduate recruitment, campus attraction, segmentation, message testing, search behaviour, LinkedIn, Handshake, careers services, job boards, societies, ISE research, High Fliers, Universum, Glassdoor, RateMyPlacement, Bright Network, TARGETjobs, funnel conversion, content design, journey mapping, qualitative synthesis, desk research, A/B testing, slide design

INDUSTRY

Retail, Food & Grocery, Fashion & Apparel, Home & Beauty, E-commerce, Supply Chain & Logistics

FOCUS

- Undergraduate discovery channels and trust signals
- Information needs and decision factors by pathway
- Perception gap for M&S as an employer
- Barriers along the awareness-to-application journey
- Simple, testable attraction tactics with success measures



Brief

I'm the senior lead for Early Careers attraction at M&S. We're investing in longterm capability across Food, Clothing & Home, and Digital, while reshaping our store estate and strengthening supply chain and online. We have well-known consumer brands (Percy Pig, Dine In, Autograph) and a strong Food reputation, but we're competing for graduates with FMCG, consulting, tech and other retailers. We need





a sharper view of how undergraduates actually discover employers, what convinces them to apply, and where M&S is misunderstood.

Your job is to build an external evidence base and turn it into a simple attraction plan. Start from how students find roles: careers services, LinkedIn, Handshake, job boards (TARGETjobs, Bright Network, RateMyPlacement, Prospects, Gradcracker for STEM), society events, TikTok/Instagram/YouTube, peer wordofmouth and review sites (Glassdoor, The Student Room). Use reputable public sources (e.g. ISE/High Fliers/Universum studies, platform reports, university careers sites, open social/search data) to show which channels are actually used and trusted by different student groups (course type, year, university, location, background).

Map what information students want when comparing employers, and how that differs by pathway: Product Development (e.g. food science, design process, supplier exposure), Commercial/Buying & Merchandising (range ownership, pace, data use), Supply Chain & Logistics (automation, scale, sustainability), and Online/Digital (product, data, UX, engineering). Be specific about decision drivers such as progression clarity, meaningful work, development, culture, flexibility, location and pay signalling, and where proof points matter (e.g. day-in-the-life content, project examples, manager quality, alumni stories).

Assess current perception. From public forums, rankings and social search, summarise what students think M&S offers as an employer and where assumptions get in the way (e.g. "only shopfloor jobs", "fashion not technical", "limited progression", "London-only"). Contrast that with what we intend to convey: breadth across Food and Clothing & Home, real product ownership, scale logistics, modern tech, and clear early responsibility.

Then recommend a simple, testable attraction strategy:

- Who: the priority segments per pathway (by course/interest), with 1–2 crisp messages each.
- Where: 3–4 channels to prioritise, with reasons grounded in evidence and expected reach/trust.
- What: the minimum set of proof-led content formats (e.g. 30–60s reels with real project artefacts, range walkthroughs, supply chain "from depot to store" clips, junior-to-manager progression maps).
- How to judge it: practical metrics we can track (view-through rate, click-through to roles pages, sign-ups, quality signals like relevant degree mix), with one simple A/B test per pathway.

I'll be sceptical of generic channel lists, EVP slogans without proof, plans that assume big paid budgets, or anything that tries to change pay or policy. I'm looking for clear choices, cited evidence, and a tidy two-slide artefact that a hiring director would understand in two minutes. If you need to assume something, say so and move on.

