FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENT'S PERCEPTIONS OF PROMOTIONAL TOOLS ADOPTED BY A SELECTED UNIVERSITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract- As institutions of high learning, the ability to survive and grow would be enhanced by knowledge and information in employing communication strategies. The result of restructuring of South African higher education landscape, was that all HEIs had to compete for resources and determine which information sources does first year students use when they decide on a university of choice. Hence, the main objective of the study is to discover first year university student's perceptions on promotional tools adopted by universities in South Africa. A sample of 370 both male and female first year university students from the four faculties within the selected university were selected by making use of a non-probability convenience sampling technique. The usefulness of the measurement instrument was analysed through the descriptive statistics, reliability and validity analysis as well as both exploratory and confirmatory factor loadings. Overall, the research findings (results) suggests that the following three promotional tools identified through EFA procedure were the most useful sources of information in the selection of a HEI to attend: university publications, university websites and word of mouth. The findings of the study suggest that respective universities should be more student -oriented and should improve their marketing strategies in attracting the best and more talented students. To this end, HEIs should consider which strategic management approaches they are currently utilising and streamline them to cement their promotion tools. Furthermore managerial implications, recommendations, limitations and future research avenues are alluded to.

Keywords- first year students, higher education, promotional tools, information sources, university,