THE INFLUENCE OF INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS ON FRESHMEN SELECTION OF A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION OF CHOICE: A CASE OF A SELECTED UNIVERSITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

BA MOKOENA

Vaal University of Technology, Department of Marketing & Sport Management, Vanderbijl Park, South Africa
E-mail: aubrey@vut.ac.za

Abstract: There is growing evidence in higher education literature which acknowledges that institutional factors influences both male and female freshmen selection of a university of choice. The main objective of this research is to identify the key institutional factors that determine which information sources does first year students use when they decide on a university of choice.
A quantitative research approach located within a post-positivism paradigm was used to undertake a survey among freshmen across the four faculties within the selected university at the beginning of the academic year in 2014. Of the 400 questionnaire distributed, only 370 questionnaires recording a response rate of 92.5% were used for analysis. The statistical analysis of the collected data included the description statistics, reliability analysis, validity analysis as well as exploratory factor analysis. From this study, the top four factors labelled flexible study mode, academic faculties, entry requirements and language policy emerged as being those that are significantly used by this sample in deciding a university of choice to attend. The findings of the study suggest that a proper assessment of the institutional factors considered by freshmen in selecting a university of choice, will enable universities to expend funds, time and resources more effectively and efficientlytowards the recruitment process. Furthermore managerial implications, recommendations, limitations and future research avenues are alluded to in the study.

Keywords: Institutional Factors, University, Freshmen, Higher Education Institution, Exploratory Factor Analysis.