Marketing communication tools for world of work opportunities: A case study of university of technology graduates in South Africa

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of marketing communication tools adopted by graduates of the Durban University of Technology. A quantitative approach was utilised, and data were collected through a structured self-developed questionnaire. The population for this study was graduates of the Durban University of Technology. A sample of four hundred and fifty questionnaires was administered to graduates from all faculties at the Durban campuses. The findings revealed that the communication media adopted by the respondents were generally appropriate and effective. The results indicated that traditional communication tools (newspapers and career magazines) and non-traditional communication tools (amongst others, social media, the internet websites, electronic databases and email systems) were adopted by graduates. The university allocates a 4life email address to all registered students. The 4life email address is maintained after completion of studies thus facilitating email communication between the graduates and cooperative education. Furthermore, respondents suggested that email communication fosters a strategic world of work engagements and partnerships with the University of Technology in recruiting high-calibre graduates. Therefore, the study concludes with the notion that a blend of traditional and electronic marketing communication is required. It is important to note traditional postal addresses have been replaced with email.

Introduction

University graduates believe that with a university qualification, one will immediately progress to the world of work. However, there are two prerequisites for graduates to enter the world of work, namely: work experience and job specialisation. Notably, a degree is no longer adequate to guarantee graduates a rewarding future career, especially in the present-day socio-economic environment (Ortlieb, 2015). In numerous sectors, organisations and recruiters search for ‘work-ready graduates with a clear affirmation of job-specific skills and solid graduate attributes (Docherty, 2014). Graduate employability is a primary concern worldwide, with the various stakeholders embarking on finding solutions to graduate unemployment. Employers’ skills and attribute requirements are constantly changing with the trends. As a result, graduates find it challenging to identify and acquire the necessary skills for entering the world of work (Durrani and Tariq, 2012).

Universities of Technology have created a direct link between themselves and the labour market. Universities of Technology' curricula are designed to provide students with specialised training, and work-integrated learning (WIL) prepares students for practical proficiency in their chosen fields. Universities of Technology provide undergraduate students with theoretical knowledge and technological competency, and the workplace (WIL) provides the student with theory and technological application. When students graduate with diplomas and degrees, they can move directly into the world of work as skilled employees (Kruss, 2004).
However, recently, graduate unemployment in South Africa has been under the spotlight. Jamah (2014) maintains that many university graduates find it difficult to secure employment upon graduating. It is interesting to note that the British Council Kenyan County Director, Tony Reilly, stated at a graduate unemployment conference held on 2014 February 4 in Nairobi; that graduate employability is a critical problem in African countries, and South Africa is no exception. However, little research has been conducted to date to address graduate employability. Graduate unemployment is a national/primary concern with the recession accompanied by the debt crisis and the pandemic, graduate unemployment is a national/primary concern. Increased unemployment leads to widespread economic, psychological and social problems. The research problem identified was to ascertain the impact of marketing communication tools on vocational opportunities for university graduates. Employers expect marketing communication tools to communicate with job seekers to provide, inform, and influence individuals and create perceptions of brands, products, services, and ideas. In order to achieve the purpose of the study, a survey was conducted to collect primary data from 450 graduates from the selected university. The quantitative research method was adopted for the descriptive study.

In this article literature pertaining to integrated marketing communication, South Africa’s higher education landscape, employability, vocational opportunities, and work integrated learning are presented. For the primary section of this study the research methodology and the discussion of results, discussing the implications and further research and conclusion will be presented.

**Literature review**

**Theoretical Review and Conceptual Background**

**Integrated marketing communication**

The integrated marketing communication tools for mass communication include advertising, propaganda, publicity, sales promotion, sponsorship and the internet. Integrated marketing communication tools for direct communication are; personal selling, direct marketing, and the internet (Matovic, Knezevic, & Brankov-Papic, 2015). Integrated marketing communication refers to the utilisation of each of the communication tools synergistically so that the various communication platforms are aligned and convey the same message to the intended or target audience.

Hence, collaboratively utilising the various communication tools makes the effect much more significant than independently using each communication tool (Du Plessis, Bothma, Jordan, & Van Heerden, 2008). Industrial employers have adopted marketing communication tools and governmental sectors to communicate with a targeted audience by attracting attention, creating interest and desire and eventually achieving action. At the same time, it also makes and builds trust and loyalty (Reid, 2005).

**South Africa's Higher Education Landscape**

Higher education institutions (HEIs), further education and training (FET) colleges, and adult education and training (AET) centres make up the South African education landscape. According to Presidential Minute No. 690, dated July 6, 2009, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) was founded. However, it only became effective on April 1, 2010. (Bailey, 2014). Traditional universities, universities of technology (former Technikons), private universities, further education and training colleges (FET), and professional training colleges (PTC) (nursing and the police force) make up the higher education landscape today. Apartheid and post-apartheid periods in higher education brought about numerous adjustments and transformations. Innumerable universities provide multiple certification formats in higher education. Vocational degrees and doctorate degrees are among the certificates available. Universities are knowledge-intensive organisations built on historic principles of collegiality, autonomy, and accomplishment. (Schwarzman, Pinheiro and Pillay, 2015).

Furthermore, changes in the higher education environment have boosted the number of students enrolled in higher education by giving various financial options. This gives many individuals the opportunity to pursue higher education. The higher education environment in South Africa is following worldwide and, global trends, such as curriculum renewals, in which skills directed toward economic growth are being developed rather than producing a society of graduates just for governance, business, and management. Science and technology are being emphasised more directly in order to improve society and bring solutions to the world's present environmental problems (Council on Higher Education, 2016).

South Africa offers twenty-three public higher education institutions that provide local and international students with various academic options. After the apartheid government, South Africa began revamping its higher education system to expand access to postsecondary education, merging smaller institutions to become comprehensive universities and Technikons to establish universities of technology. Universities provide academic degrees, whereas technological universities provide vocational education. The national government funds South Africa's universities overseen by the Higher Education Act (South Africa's universities, 2012).

**Employability**

With this in mind, many university graduates are struggling to secure work experience and employment; compared to the fourth quarter of 2019, the official unemployment rate rose by one percentage point to (30.1%). As high as it is, the rate of graduate unemployment is still lower than the rate for those with other levels of education, which means that education is still the answer to improving the opportunities for young people in the South African labour market. Education in South Africa and around the world
is regarded as a crucial tool in the growth of human resources. The more educated people are, the more likely they will have career prospects and careers with decent working conditions (Department: Statistics South Africa).

In other words, the unemployment rate amongst graduates has doubled in less than four years. The unemployment rate was 40,3% for those aged 15–24 and 15,5% among those aged 25–34 years, while the rate among adults (aged 35–64 years) was 5,4%. Education and prior work experience play an essential role in the labour market. Employers often prefer to employ those with previous work experience and a higher level of education (Department: Statistics South Africa). Furthermore, a study conducted by the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) together with the South African Graduates Development Agency (SAGDA) showed that there are between 300 000 and 600 000 unemployed graduates in South Africa at a given time. There is a growing concern as more than forty per cent of graduate internship candidates have been unsuccessful in securing permanent employment in South Africa. Furthermore, approximately forty-two per cent of graduates have not been absorbed into the labour market (Ntshidi, 2014). Consequently, insufficient mass communication is one of the leading causes of graduate unemployment, whereby organisations that require graduate and internship candidates are not engaging with universities. Employers from various organisations do not discuss graduate employment with educators from universities, and many educators are not updated concerning current graduate job placement rates. As a result, university graduates are even changing career paths as they are unaware of the job opportunities that are available to them (Miletich, 2013). Thus far, it has not been established whether the efficiency of marketing communication initiatives in corporate and government sectors is linked to the many university graduates’ inability to secure work experience and employment. Therefore, this can be a lack of information gap (Mangan, 2013).

As a result, there are rising levels of graduate unemployment and, concomitantly, employers seeking quality candidates within organisations. It is apparent that there is a limited understanding of marketing communications and its influence on graduates when selecting organisations for employment or vocational opportunities.

Vocational opportunities

Vocational opportunities incorporate education and training in all industries. Vocational opportunities specifically focus on the practical skills which allow graduates to interact in employment-related activities. Vocational opportunities assist in enhancing labour mobility, adaptability, and productivity, which is beneficial to the individual (graduate) and the organisation. This increases the organisation’s competitiveness and redresses the labour market imbalances (Agrawal, 2013). In turn, academic graduates need to balance their general knowledge with work-specific human capital. The increase in the productive ability of graduates with vocational experience inculcates higher labour market returns at career entry-level compared to academic graduates (Gellner and Geel, 2014). It is important to note that interning is invaluable for job seekers as graduates have an opportunity to impress the organisations with their ability and work ethic and to befriend decision-makers and various stakeholders.

Work-integrated learning

Kramer and Usher (2011) refer to work-integrated learning as various types of student employment experiences, generally arranged by the educational institution, which coincides with the student’s field of study and elicits a relationship between theory gained in the classroom with practical on-the-job training. Matoti and Junqueria (2012) define work-integrated learning as an element of an educational programme that focuses on applying learning in an original learning work-based context under the guidance and supervision or mentorship of an individual representing the workplace. Work-integrated learning also includes experiential learning in many Higher Education institutions. Work-integrated learning consolidates theory gained by the student in the classroom with practical applications and knowledge gained from workplace exposure. Since there is an increase in the quest for talented employees, human resource professionals from various organisations are utilising work-integrated learning as a measuring instrument to identify potential employees. The organisation takes note of talented students who are most likely to perform well at their organisation upon graduating. Therefore, it is apparent that experiential training/learning has many benefits for both students and organisations (Kant, 2007). At the same time, to bridge the gap between higher education and the world of work, higher education institutions and the private sector have developed university learning that is orientated to provide practical ‘real-world’ experience to students. This form of learning is referred to as work-integrated learning (WIL). WIL is an umbrella term to outline curricular, pedagogic, and assessment practices covering a span of academic disciplines which integrate formal learning and workplace concerns. Combining the theoretical and practical application in student learning can transpire through work-integrated learning approaches. Clearly, in formal or informal work placements, work-integrated learning is fundamentally intended to improve student learning, using innovative curricular, pedagogical and assessment forms developed to address concerns regarding graduate attributes, employability, and civic responsibility. Some examples of WIL include action-learning, apprenticeships, co-operative education, experiential learning, inquiry learning, inter-professional, practicum placements, problem-based learning, project-based learning, scenario learning, service learning, team-based learning, virtual or simulated work-integrated learning, work-based learning, work experience and workplace learning. All are forms of WIL and focus on empowering students to integrate theoretical knowledge obtained through formal learning; with practical knowledge obtained through workplace exposure (Council on Higher Education, 2011).

Research and Method

A quantitative approach was utilised due to the descriptive nature of the study (Blythe, 2009). The study used a cross-sectional methodology. Researchers usually draw conclusions about large groups of respondents by studying a small sample of the total
population. The study population were graduates of the Durban University of Technology. To this end, a sample of 450 respondents was considered appropriate. The sample size was guided by Leedy and Ormrod (2010), that suggests for a population size of approximately 5000, a sample size of four hundred will be appropriate. Non-probability sampling method was adopted to recruit respondents (Diggines and Wiid, 2009). Graduates from the Durban campuses across all six facilities were chosen using the convenience sampling technique. Data were collected through a structured self-developed questionnaire. Data collection was undertaken at various DUT registration venues between January 2016 to March 2016, during the DUT graduation ceremonies in April 2016 and at the Co-operative of Education Department between; January 2016 to April 2016. The researcher had employed three research field assistants to assist with the administering and collection of the questionnaires. The questionnaire covered respondent demographics, integrated marketing communication tools, and marketing communication tools adopted by DUT graduates and the relationship between work-integrated learning and graduate employment. A pilot study was conducted among fifty, B Tech, Marketing and Retail Management graduate registered students at the Durban University of Technology who was not included in the sample. The pilot study data was captured and processed using Moon stats. Thereafter, the main data collection was conducted. The questionnaires were numbered; thereafter the data were captured onto a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet manually by the researcher and checked before submission to the statistician. The data was exported to and were analysed using the Statistical Software for Social Sciences (SPSS) package (Version 23.0), and both descriptive and inferential statistical calculations and tests were performed. Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to measure the reliability of measurement; a reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered as ‘acceptable’. The overall Cronbach’s Alpha score was 0.851, which is deemed reliable.

Analysis and Findings

Demographic Analysis

As illustrated in Table 1, 52.9% of respondents were male, and 47.1% were female. The findings are consistent with previous research studies conducted (Konyana, 2012), which revealed; that some higher education institutions have more males (52.8%) than females (47.3%). The largest respondent group was from the 18 to 25 age category (42%). The latter age cohort of 18 to 23 generally registers toward an undergraduate diploma. Hence, these respondents apply to study for post-matric qualifications. The largest respondent group obtained a National Diploma (65.6%). The largest group (71.3%) were African. This is consistent with the Durban University of Technology Annual report (2020) in 2016, whose graduate racial composition was (79%) African. The majority (42.7%) were unemployed and searching for employment. Consequently, an unemployment rate of 31% among graduates up to the age of 24 was reported in the first quarter of 2019 (Department: Statistics South Africa).

| Respondents | n=450 | Percentage (%) |
|-------------|-------|----------------|
| **Gender**  |       |                |
| Male        | 238   | 52.9           |
| Female      | 212   | 47.1           |
| **Age**     |       |                |
| 18 – 23     | 189   | 42.0           |
| 24 – 29     | 176   | 39.1           |
| 30 – 35     | 50    | 11.1           |
| 36 – 41     | 20    | 4.4            |
| 42 and above| 15    | 3.3            |
| **Racial composition** | | |
| African     | 321   | 71.3           |
| Coloured    | 32    | 7.1            |
| Indian      | 82    | 18.2           |
| White       | 12    | 2.7            |
| Other       | 3     | 0.7            |
| **Employment status** | | |
| Employed full-time | 103 | 22.9 |
| Employed part-time | 83  | 18.4 |
| Unemployed searching for employment | 192 | 42.7 |
| Unemployed not searching for employment | 53  | 11.8 |
| Self-employed | 19  | 4.2 |
| **Educational qualification** | | |
| National Diploma | 295 | 65.6 |
| Bachelor's degree | 121 | 26.9 |
| Master's degree | 19  | 4.2 |
| Other        | 15    | 3.3            |
Integrated marketing communication tools

Table 2 indicates the frequency distribution scores for integrated marketing communication dimensions. The Likert scale was used to determine the dimension's frequency measured, from one lowest to five highest. The findings of the majority of respondents, in descending order, revealed the following:

i. I searched for job/graduate opportunities in various print media (newspapers, career magazines, etc.) (Mean 3.84) (Std. 1.167);
ii. I consulted friends, family and peers about job/graduate opportunities (Mean 3.73) (Std. 1.144);
iii. Search for employment using social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.) (Mean 3.24) (Std. 1.308);
iv. I applied for job/graduate opportunities through a recruitment agency (Mean 3.04) (Std. 1.367); and
v. I telephone the organisations to query about the job/graduate opportunity (Mean 2.96) (Std. 1.233)

There are some very different scoring patterns among the respondents surveyed in this study. In Table 2, the following patterns are observed. Some items show (significantly) higher levels of agreement whilst other levels of agreement are lower (but still greater than the levels of disagreement). The highest agreement value is (80.5%) to the statement "I searched for job/graduate opportunities in various print media (newspapers, career magazines, etc.) (76.6%)". Graduates and students trust print media as respondents believe that many scams take place only online. Whereby false job advertisements are advertised, and some job advertisements request money from graduate job-seekers. The respondents believe that it is difficult for them to distinguish between legitimate and fake job advertisements due to various scams. This creates doubt about whether they should complete the application and send relevant documentation in response to the job advertisement.

**Table 2: Integrated marketing communications**

|          | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Uncertain | Agree | Strongly agree | Mean/Std. |
|----------|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|-----------|
| Count    | N %               | Count    | N %       | Count | N %            | Count     | N %       | Count | N %   | Mean/Std. |
| 2.1) I searched for job/graduate opportunities in various print media (newspapers, career magazines, etc.) | 33 | 7.4 | 37 | 8.3 | 34 | 7.6 | 204 | 45.8 | 137 | 30.8 | 3.84/1.167 |
| 2.2) I telephone the organisations to query about the job/graduate opportunity | 64 | 14.4 | 108 | 24.3 | 102 | 22.9 | 124 | 27.9 | 47 | 10.6 | 2.96/1.233 |
| 2.3) I applied for job/graduate opportunities through a recruitment agency | 81 | 18.2 | 98 | 22.0 | 56 | 12.6 | 144 | 32.4 | 66 | 14.8 | 3.04/1.367 |
| 2.4) I consulted friends, family and peers about job/graduate opportunities | 31 | 7.0 | 45 | 10.1 | 44 | 9.9 | 216 | 48.5 | 109 | 24.5 | 3.73/1.144 |
| 2.5) I search for employment using social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.) | 62 | 13.9 | 76 | 17.1 | 76 | 17.1 | 154 | 34.6 | 77 | 17.3 | 3.24/1.308 |

DUT promotional tool

Table 3 indicates the frequency distribution scores concerning DUT promotional activities. The Likert scale was used to determine the frequency of the dimensions measured, from one lowest to five highest. The findings of the majority of respondents, in descending order, revealed the following:

i. I receive emails from DUT regarding job/graduate opportunities (Mean 3.52) (Std. 1.468).
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ii. The world of work (WOW) promotional event made me aware of the job/graduate opportunities available for me (Mean 3.49) (Std. 1.217);

iii. Department staff informed me about experiential training opportunities available (Mean 3.42) (Std. 1.234);

iv. The Alumni office communicates via email (dut4life) with graduates about job/graduate opportunities (Mean 3.27) (Std. 1.028);

v. DUT CO-OP informed me about experiential training and job/graduate opportunities (Mean 3.20) (Std. 1.236); and

vi. I prefer using the DUT App (Mean 2.91) (Std.1.121).

This research study has different scoring patterns from the DUT respondents surveyed. Table 3 revealed high scores for agreeing to the statement in this section. The highest agreement value is (63.6%) to the statement "I receive emails from DUT regarding job/graduate opportunities". The university sends out mass communication using the dut4life email system. According to Delgado (2018) phone calls and email are still vital to the recruitment of employees hence their findings state that approximately 74 per cent of hires connect with companies using phone calls and 73 per cent use email.

| Table 3: DUT Promotional Opportunities |
|---------------------------------------|
| Count | Strongly disagree | Count | Disagree | Count | Uncertain | Count | Agree | Count | Strongly agree | Mean/Std. |
|-------|-------------------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|----------------|-----------|
| 3.1) The world of work (WOW) promotional event made me aware of the job/graduate opportunities available for me | 34 | 7.6 | 71 | 16.0 | 83 | 18.7 | 157 | 35.3 | 100 | 22.5 | 3.49/1.217 |
| 3.2) Department staff informed me about experiential training opportunities available | 38 | 8.5 | 81 | 18.2 | 70 | 15.7 | 167 | 37.5 | 89 | 20.0 | 3.42/1.234 |
| 3.3) DUT CO-OP informed me about experiential training, job/graduate opportunities | 46 | 10.3 | 94 | 21.1 | 104 | 23.4 | 129 | 29.0 | 72 | 16.2 | 3.20/1.236 |
| 3.4) The Alumni office communicates via email (dut4life) with graduates about job/graduate opportunities | 32 | 7.2 | 43 | 9.7 | 195 | 43.8 | 123 | 27.6 | 52 | 11.7 | 3.27/1.028 |
| 3.5) I receive emails from DUT regarding job/graduate opportunities | 77 | 17.3 | 44 | 9.9 | 41 | 9.2 | 135 | 30.3 | 148 | 33.3 | 3.52/1.468 |
| 3.6) I prefer using the DUT App | 63 | 14.2 | 83 | 18.7 | 162 | 36.4 | 107 | 24.0 | 30 | 6.7 | 2.91/1.121 |

Work-integrating learning

Table 4 presents the frequency distribution scores concerning work-integrated learning and graduate employment dimensions. The Likert scale was used to determine the dimension's frequency measured, from one lowest to five highest. The findings revealed the following:

i. I responded to experiential training opportunities (Mean 3.85) (Std.1.115);
The pattern in Table 4 indicates that (73.7%) of the respondents are in agreement with the statement "I respond to experiential training opportunities". This indicated that experiential training was a compulsory module for completing the National Diploma qualification for many respondents. This is stated by (Kraak, 2010) that work placement and practical work experience form part of the curriculum and is usually compulsory before qualifying. WIL allows students exposure to the workplace and assists in developing the necessary skillset. This also includes soft skills, namely social interaction etiquette, communication, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills. In addition, the ability to apply the expertise learned in the classroom. Graduates require academic and practical skills to find employment and grow in their careers. While educational institutions, particularly universities, focus on theoretical knowledge, work-readiness training needs to be an integral part of an academic qualification, so students are exposed to theoretical and practical aspects. It is vital for universities to have direct communication and interaction with the workplace, to ensure current needs in the working environment so that there are skills that match to jobs to build the economy and allow graduate entry into the workplace (Closing the Graduate Employment Gap, 2021).

Table 4: Work-integrated learning

| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Uncertain | Agree | Strongly agree | Mean/Std. |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|---------------|-----------|
| Count             | N %      | Count     | N %   | Count         | N %       | Count     | N %   | Count     | N %   | 3.85/1.115 |
| 4.1) I responded to experiential training opportunities | 24 | 5.4 | 39 | 8.8 | 54 | 12.1 | 192 | 43.1 | 136 | 30.6 |

Regression analysis

The multiple regression analysis of work-integrated learning opportunities predictors is given in Table 5. The F test suggests that the model was statistically significant. The regression coefficient (r=0.459; p<0.01) suggests a strong causal relationship in the predicted model. The beta coefficients for integrated marketing (0.287) and DUT promotional tools (0.474) were positive and significant predictors for work-integrated learning opportunities. The R² values measured suggest a strong explanatory power (21%) for the predictors in the model. Overall, DUT promotional tools constitute the strongest contributor to work-integrated learning opportunities for the respondents. The data suggest no collinearity in the measured independent variable (predictor).

Table 5: Multiple regression on the predictors of work-integrated learning opportunities

| Predictor         | F-value | P-value | R      | Beta coefficients | Error | R Square | Predicted | Significance | Collinearity statistics | VIF |
|-------------------|---------|---------|-------|-------------------|-------|----------|-----------|--------------|-------------------------|-----|
| Integrated marketing | 55.770  | 0.000   | .459  | .287              | .062  | .210     | Work-integrated learning opportunities | .000 | 1.084 |
| DUT promotional tools | .474   | .060   |       |                   |       |          |           | .000         | 1.084 |

Discussion

The study aimed to determine the impact of integrated marketing communication tools on vocational opportunities for Durban University of Technology graduates. The primary objective of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of marketing communication tools adopted by graduates of the Durban University of Technology. South Africa has one of the highest levels of unemployment in the world. Dludla (2022) states South Africa's unemployment rate is likely to remain the highest in the world for the foreseeable future. The objective of this article was to understand which tools were adopted by DUT graduates when searching for work-integrated learning, vocational and employment opportunities. According to the analysis and interpretation of the findings traditional communication tools (newspapers and career magazines) and non-traditional communication tools (amongst others, social media, the internet, electronic database and email systems) were adopted by DUT graduates. This is supported by the College marketing group (2022) that states students search for job opportunities in the following places; 1) Career service centres on campus,
2) online recruiting platforms, 3) job fairs on campus and 4) social media platforms. Some of the factors why DUT students/graduates would utilise institutional resources for vocational opportunities during their work-integrated learning include: 1) Free resources, students can utilise all resources on campus by incurring no costs, 2) staff members’ networks assist in obtaining employment, especially if staff members have practical expertise in the chosen profession and have industry colleagues to assist students (Live career, 2022). Traditional media is a popular choice for job search by DUT graduates; hence many organisations still utilise newspapers to attract talent. This is supported by publisher and marketing agency Advance Ohio (2022) which further states that newspapers are still an excellent approach to locating and recruiting the right person. Using newspaper and internet media to access the greatest local talent provides businesses with a significant edge. Since many organisations advertise in print media, graduates utilise this platform when job searching. Many DUT graduates have challenges in terms of not being able to afford data, connectivity issues as many students live in rural areas, not being able to afford technological devices such as laptops and issues of load shedding. Hence, the use of traditional platforms and tools when job searching. The use of email is due to the email system being active even after completing the qualification. Email is a communication platform that allows two-way communication between the university and graduates. The university emails graduate vocational opportunities with links to virtual career fairs such as the world of work (WOW) expo and Alumni programmes to graduates.

Implications

This study has some implications for a higher education institution. Human resource departments should liaise with the marketing departments to effectively promote and market the organisation to the graduate job seekers (Konyana, 2012). Guest lecturers or speakers during the lecture period whereby an employee representing an organisation can conduct a presentation to the students regarding the organisation which they represent. In this manner, students can learn more about the organisation and develop positive attitudes toward the organisation. Technology walls can be very frustrating for graduates who apply online for various graduate programmes, internships and jobs to wait for a lengthy period of time for no feedback. Therefore, organisations that utilise online search and application methods for graduate vocational opportunities should provide constructive feedback to graduates. Graduates will have the chance to learn from their failures (Goodman, 2015).

Conclusions

Marketing communication tools are essential in marketing, communicating, and promoting vocational/employment offerings to students and graduates. DUT graduates utilise traditional and digital communication tools for vocational and employment opportunities. Traditional communication tools are utilised due to their trustworthiness. The university utilises electronic mail as all registered students have a dut4life email account which can still be used upon graduating. Hence keeping students and graduates informed of vocational and employment opportunities. DUT students respond to vocational opportunities; therefore, it is compulsory in order to complete their undergraduate qualifications.

South Africa is a developing economy with advancements in various sectors. As the country and industries continue to develop, it will require additional human capital. Together with universities of technology and Higher Education Institutions, public and private organisations should adopt the various marketing communication tools and channels in their marketing strategies to successfully target and recruit students for WIL and graduates for vocational and employment opportunities. By utilising the correct implementation of marketing communication tools in their recruitment, it will provide a competitive advantage in selecting among the most exemplary students and graduates within specific disciplines. It is anticipated that the findings from this research study provide an understanding of the importance of integrated marketing communication tools in recruiting students for work-integrated learning and graduates for the labour market.

The university allocates a 4life email address to all registered students. The 4life email address is maintained after completion of studies thus facilitating email communication between the graduates and cooperative education. Furthermore, respondents suggested that email communication fosters strategic world of work engagements and partnerships with the University of Technology in recruiting high-calibre graduates. Therefore, the study concludes with the notion that a blend of traditional and electronic marketing communication is required. It is important to note traditional postal addresses have been replaced with email.

Limitations

The study was limited to the Durban University of Technology graduates rather than all universities of technology. Owing to these constraints, the findings may not necessarily apply to any other Higher Educational Institutions outside this location and the target group.

Recommendations

Allow current students to connect with alumni within the same fields to understand more about their careers. Coordinate an alumni day for each department or faculty. This will allow students to meet alumni within their disciplines to discover real working experiences. Posting in print: (DUT newspaper) the university newspaper can have a pull-out supplement for vocational opportunities/careers/backchat, whereby students/graduates give their opinions regarding jobs and career experiences. Using the internet - the university's online student portal, Facebook page, Twitter Page, and online blog is a manner in which to advertise
student and graduate vocational opportunities. Using broadcast media - The university radio (Radio DUT) can be a platform for organisations to promote student and graduate vocational opportunities. Entrepreneurial workshops: Educating graduates about creating job opportunities for themselves and others, especially during an economic downturn. Provide graduates at the graduation ceremonies with a USB that includes pdf or PowerPoint file formats consisting of interview tips, psychometric test tips and examples, cv templates and job search information.

Future research direction

For future research, it is suggested that comparable studies be undertaken with other universities of technology in South Africa to see if the conclusions are similar. Similar research may be conducted to determine the parallels and differences between universities of technology and traditional universities in South Africa and globally. Further research should look into the fourth industrial revolution and the tools and platforms used by the industry in terms of graduate recruitment. And social media tools being used by all stakeholders and the impact it has on graduate employability.

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