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Impact of the Center for communication and digital knowledge on students' university choice: a case study at Hanoi University of Science and Technology

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Abstract. The study explores the impact of admissions communication on students' choices of universities, emphasizing the crucial role of the Center for communication and digital knowledge in providing essential information that helps applicants better understand the majors, study programs, and future career opportunities. The authors used the mixed research methods, including qualitative and quantitative methods; the study analyzed survey results from 500 students at the University of Science and Technology. The findings revealed that students predominantly accessed online admissions communication channels, using them 4.5 times more than offline channels. The information most sought after by students included detailed descriptions of various training programs and career guidance post-graduation. The impact of online and offline admissions communication channels on students' perceptions and decision-making in selecting a university was carefully evaluated based on students' feedback regarding specific criteria on a 5-point Likert scale. A notable aspect of this research is its confirmation that both admissions communication methods complement each other in the context of theory and practice at Hanoi University of Science and Technology. The proposed solutions aim to enhance the quality of recruitment communication for higher education institutions amidst the rapid advancements in digital technology.

Keywords: admission, communication, online communication, offline communication, student university choice

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Влияние Центра коммуникаций и цифровых знаний на выбор университета студентами: кейс-стади в Ханойском университете науки и технологий

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Аннотация. В исследовании рассматривается влияние информации, предоставляемой приемной комиссией, на выбор студентами университетов. Подчеркивается важнейшая роль Центра коммуникаций и цифровых знаний в предоставлении необходимой информации, помогающей абитуриентам лучше понять содержание каждой специальности, учебные программы и будущие карьерные возможности.

Методы. С помощью смешанных методов исследования, включая качественные и количественные, были проанализированы результаты опроса 500 студентов Ханойского университета науки и технологий.

Результаты. Студенты использовали онлайн-каналы коммуникации с приемной комиссией в 4,5 раза чаще, чем офлайн-каналы. Наиболее востребованной была информация о различных программах обучения и профориентации после окончания вуза. Влияние онлайн- и офлайн-каналов коммуникации с приемной комиссией на восприятие и принятие решений студентами при выборе университета было оценено на основе отзывов студентов по конкретным критериям по пятибалльной шкале Лайкерта. Важным аспектом данного исследования является подтверждение того, что оба метода коммуникации с приемной комиссией дополняют друг друга в контексте теории и практики в Ханойском университете науки и технологий. Предлагаемые решения направлены на повышение качества коммуникации с приемной комиссией в высших учебных заведениях в условиях стремительного развития цифровых технологий.

Ключевые слова: поступление, коммуникация, онлайн-коммуникация, офлайн-коммуникация, выбор университета студентами

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Introduction

Effective admissions communication plays a crucial role in helping higher education institutions (HEIs) promote their image and brand, and increase their competitiveness [1, 2]. The way a university presents itself is often the first impression on students who have graduated from high school when choosing a university. An engaging and vivid promotional style, complete and accurate information significantly influences their decision.

Admissions communication channels provide essential and useful information about various majors, training programs, career orientations, and the university traditions and achievements. This information serves as a vital foundation for learners, assisting them in making informed decisions about selecting a university and planning their future careers [3]. In the digital age, information and communication technology use for enrollment has become increasingly popular globally in HEIs. Therefore, evaluating the effectiveness of enrollment communication is essential to enhance this system, meet the needs of candidates, and achieve greater efficiency in the enrollment process in Vietnamese HEIs [4].

Hanoi University of Science and Technology (HUST) is the leading technical university in Vietnam, serving as a multidisciplinary training and research center for science and technology. The university is dedicated to closely integrating education with scientific research to develop high-quality graduates and nurture talents in science and technology. HUST aims to elevate its status to that of prominent universities in the region and around the world.

Under the autonomy mechanism, enrollment become increasingly important at HUST. It helps ensure both the quantity and quality of incoming students and other learners, aligning with the university enrollment objectives. This, in its turn, supports ongoing training activities and enhances the institution revenue. Therefore, HUST places significant emphasis on improving admissions communication. The university adopts a dual approach that combines online communication via various digital channels with direct engagement through organized programs and events. This strategy is considered a key priority for each academic year. Thus, this study aims to clarify

theoretical aspects of admissions communication and evaluate its impact on students' impressions and university selection, ultimately enhancing the quality of admissions in HEIs.

The authors employed a mixed-methods research approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research and found that both online and offline (face-to-face) admissions communications positively impact students' impressions and their university choices. These communication methods complement each other to enhance applicants' decisions regarding their choice of university.

Literature review

Concept of admissions communication

Early studies defined communication as a process occurring solely between people. Communication is a special type of human interaction that involves continuous efforts to reduce ambiguity for effective behavior and it is a process, by which knowledge held by one or a group of people becomes available to a larger number of people.

Later, referring to communication with social issues, it is broadly defined as the actionable transfer or sharing information from one person, group, or place to another by writing, speaking, or using a medium that provides a means of understanding [5]. Communication refers to a "continuous process of exchanging information, ideas, emotions, and sharing skills or experiences between two or more people to enhance mutual understanding, change perceptions, and adjust behavior and attitudes in alignment with the development needs of groups, individuals, communities, and society" [6], or to the interaction between individuals or, more broadly, the process of conveying and sharing information and sending messages with specific communication objectives among the participating parties [7]. This process involves transmitting information, opinions, or messages from a source to a target audience or the public through various media and communication channels, including the Internet platforms, television, radio, print media, advertising, events, social media, and other forms. We can approach this through marketing communication, which includes activities that convey information about products and businesses to customers either directly or indirectly, to persuade them to trust and purchase the product [6]. Communication and customer relations are often referred to as marketing communication.

Marketing communication includes all communications related to advertising, marketing, and brand building, as well as creating and delivering messages, information, and content to market specific products, services, or brands. Marketing communication places significant emphasis on brand building, determining product value, and assessing the impact of the company brand on customer choices [8]. A strong brand is a valuable tool for university management, especially in a highly competitive environment where many institutions offer similar programs at comparable prices. A university brand is shaped by a variety of factors, including the quality of its faculty, its facilities, student performance, extracurricular activities, and support services. Building a strong brand takes time and consistent effort.

Thus, communication, regardless of the tools or platforms used, aims to convey and share information of all kinds among individuals, groups, or organizations to enhance mutual understanding, change perceptions, and adjust behaviors and attitudes to suit individual, community and social needs. Marketing communication refers to all communication activities related to advertising, marketing and branding; in higher education, it enhances the reputation and brand of a university, contributing significantly to enrollment.

Admissions understood as the recruitment of students into an educational institution. In the most general way, it can be understood that admission is the selection of students to study at an educational institution according to the standards prescribed by that educational institution, based on the provisions of law and other regulations of the Education Authorities [9]. In higher education,

admission is the process of establishing criteria for selecting and attracting potential students, assessing their qualifications, and finally providing them with a place in a university according to a certain training program [10].

Effective communication is essential in university admissions as it facilitates outreach, information sharing, and interactions with students. It helps universities attract qualified candidates, manage the application process effectively, and foster strong relationships with both prospective and admitted students [2].

Admissions communication involves organizing and disseminating various communication materials (such as brochures, videos, advertisements, and articles, etc.) to support the admissions counseling across multiple channels, including direct, indirect, and social media. This activity is conducted annually according to the institution criteria, enabling the university to convey relevant information and content effectively to prospective students and to ensure students clearly understand the admissions details provided. Admissions communication aims to create awareness, understanding, and a positive impression among potential students about various aspects of the academic program. This includes conveying information about the curriculum, learning environment, career opportunities, and the value of participating in the program.

Admissions communication targets potential customers who are prospective students seeking educational opportunities. It influences their decision-making regarding educational products, thus aligning with marketing communication and sharing its characteristics. This involves understanding the needs of these individuals and determining how the institution can meet those needs while still achieving profitability [11].

The essence of admissions communication is the process through which educational institutions provide, promote, and broadly disseminate information about their facilities, faculty, programs, training quality, incentives, and benefits to prospective students. This aims to assist prospective learners in choosing and applying for programs that align with their needs and interests. At the same time, admissions communication helps institutions manage and meet enrollment targets, ensuring they recruit the required number of students with the appropriate quality to support the institution educational and developmental goals as well as societal needs.

Offline communication, as a traditional admission form, is of particular importance. It provides candidates with an overview of the prospective university, its academic programs, and its living and learning environment. Personal interactions in campus visits, interviews, and face-to-face meetings with admissions staff or ex-students, etc., provide comprehensive and accurate information that positively impacts student impressions, fosters stronger connections and enhances positive perceptions [12, 13]. The manner in which admissions communication reflects the institution culture and values is crucial. Research shows that friendly, supportive, and inclusive messaging resonates well with prospective students, reinforcing a sense of belonging [14].

The growth of digital platforms transformed the methods and forms of admissions communication. The university candidates can seek information and apply to universities online. A study conducted by Diana [15] among 131 participants in Minnesota, USA, revealed that only 21.4% of respondents used social media as a resource when deciding where to enroll. In contrast, research by Stepanova et al. found that nearly 80% of student candidates surveyed get additional information about universities on the university website and social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Discord, LinkedIn, and Twitter [16]. The presence of internet platforms and the ability to access university and course information on university social networking sites, alongside traditional information sources, influence the university course selection and decision-making process [17]. Additionally, Pathak et al. noted that it will not be possible to attract the attention of university candidates without an appropriate social media strategy, as well as tracking trends, content, and the popularity of individual media; effective use of social media and online channels can improve the brand performance of the university [18]. Generally speaking, online

communication channels are highly effective due to the ability to personalize messages and provide immediate feedback from recipients.

Generally, online and offline admission communication both offer unique advantages and disadvantages. Online enrollment communication provides a broad reach and diverse formats but requires significant resources and faces competition. Offline communication, while more localized, allows for direct interaction, personalized advice, and a tangible learning experience [19].

Bottom of Form

Pressure on the admissions communication at Hanoi University of Science and Technology

HUST currently utilizes four admission methods: (1) Talent-Based method (TB); (2) on Thinking Skills Assessment-based method (TSA); (3) High School graduation Exam Results-based method (HSER); and (4) admission under the regulations of the Ministry of Education and Training, including nomination, provisions for foreign students under intergovernmental agreements and those graduating from high schools abroad. Each admission method targets different groups of students and has specific regulations.

The admission pressure at HUST is increasing due to competition among universities and within HUST various institutes and schools. According to HUST Admissions Department, in 2023, HUST admitted over 7900 students, with the following distribution across the first three admission methods: 20.33% through the TB, 22.43% through the TSA, and 57.24% through the HSER. For 2025, HUST plans to enroll 9680 students using three of these methods. The university expects to maintain a similar distribution, aiming for 20% admission through the TB method, while the other two methods are anticipated to account for 40% each [20]. This projected total enrollment and the rate of each admission method are higher than those in 2023.

The enrollment for 65 different training programs at HUST schools and institutes creates significant pressure, necessitating effective communication and providing detailed information to applicants about the various majors and training programs. To address these challenges, HUST utilizes a combination of online communication methods (through various online channels) and offline communication methods (direct communication through programs and events conducted in person) for enrollment outreach.

Online admissions communication

To effectively share important information about admissions, university traditions, achievements, faculties, departments, training majors, and the employment rate of students six months after graduation, various online communication channels are utilized. These include the university official website, popular social media platforms such as Facebook, and the university fan pages; digital content is shared on YouTube and platforms like TikTok, LinkedIn, and Instagram. Furthermore, traditional media such as newspapers and television, as well as online search engines like Google, Bing, and Coc Coc ("knock knock" in Vietnamese), are also utilized.

The HUST website was upgraded to feature a more attractive and user-friendly design. Admission information is now presented in a more logical and visually appealing manner. The university admissions information page offers comprehensive details about academic programs and curricula to enhance communication with prospective students. This page includes thorough information on admission processes over the years, allowing potential applicants to easily find the information they need. The HUST website received high praise and ranked 5th among Vietnamese university websites and 1312th among university websites worldwide, in 2024 [20]. Additionally, HUST social media accounts on Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, and TikTok are verified and boast hundreds of thousands of followers. In addition, HUST also focuses on connecting with National Television channels such as "Chuyen Dong 24h" and news on VTV1, VTV3 to spread

admission information. Generally speaking, online communication channels are highly effective due to the ability to personalize messages and provide immediate feedback from recipients.

Direct admissions communication

HUST offers direct consultation services for applicants and their parents through effective communication channels that facilitate face-to-face interactions. The primary channels for this communication include:

- Admissions Consultation at the Career Guidance Day. This event, organized with the support of the newspaper "Tuoi Tre," takes place annually in March and April at HUST. It provides free information about various academic fields and training programs. High school students can also experience the university environment and engage in advisory and support activities.
- University Experience – Future Orientation Program. HUST runs this program and directs admissions consultation events at various high schools. The Admissions Consultation Day and the University Experience – Future Orientation Program, which run from November of the previous year to April of the following year, include activities such as campus tours. They offer free information about diverse academic disciplines and training areas, providing high school students with opportunities to experience university life and access advisory and support services.
- Direct Admissions Consultation at High Schools. These programs create a positive first introduction and impression for students, helping to enhance HUST image. Through these activities, HUST aims to support high school students's academic journey while fostering a strong connection with the university.

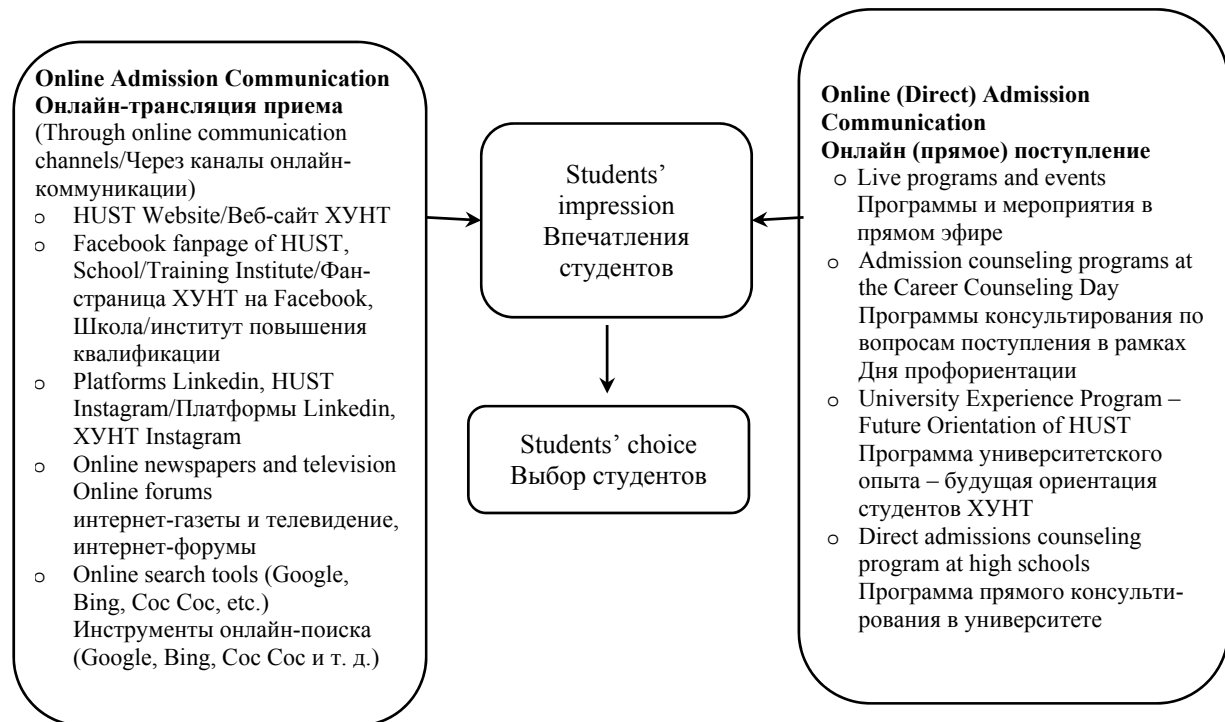
Hypothesis development and conceptual research model

Previous studies outlined the theoretical aspects and highlighted the importance of admissions communication. Candidates often seek admission information by accessing online content related to their prospective universities or engaging in offline communication forms, such as attending seminars, having face-to-face consultations with admissions staff, or visiting campuses. Hence, there is a significant research gap in these studies as they do not identify the feedback and comments on the aspects, evaluation criteria of online and offline admission communication that influence applicants' choice of university.

Based on a literature review of previous studies and the admissions communication practice implemented at HUST, as well as their significant impact on students' choices regarding future universities and faculties, as illustrated in Fig. 1, the following hypotheses can be proposed:

1. Both online and offline admissions communication positively influence students' impressions and their choices of universities.
2. Online and offline admissions communication are mutually supportive, collectively enhancing candidates' decisions regarding universities.

To address the research gap and validate the hypotheses, it is essential to investigate the following inquiries: (i) objectively identify and evaluate both online and offline media as factors influencing students' choices of universities; (ii) examine the interrelated and complementary relationship between these two forms of recruitment communication for higher education institutions; (iii) analyze respondents' feedback regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the mentioned recruitment methods. This analysis aims to optimize recruitment communication strategies to attract applicants and support their decision-making processes.

**Fig. 1. Conceptual research model****Рис. 1. Концептуальная модель исследования**

Research methodology and data collection

This study employs both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The qualitative approach is utilized to analyze secondary data, which helps describe the pressures surrounding the admission communication efforts being implemented by HUST.

To conduct the survey and gather primary data, the questionnaire was designed with input and recommendations from admissions officers. The authors utilized a 5-point Likert scale for the questions to ensure that survey participants could easily rate their responses based on their assessments. The questionnaire consisted of 24 questions focusing on the following areas:

- personal information about the participants, including gender, cohort, hometown, and admissions area (online registration and a set of priorities for admission).
- participants' satisfaction levels regarding the influence of online and offline (direct) communication methods on their decision to choose HUST, along with open-ended questions to capture students' wishes and expectations.

The survey questionnaire was distributed directly to students through the online platform Google Forms. Participants included students of academic years from K68 (enrolled in the 2023–2024 academic year) to K63 (enrolled in the 2018–2019 academic year), with ages ranging from 18 to 23 in 2023. A total of 525 responses were collected, of which 500 were valid samples after filtering with a bias of about 3%.

To calculate and ensure the accuracy of the levels of impression/satisfaction regarding the questionnaire, the study used the weighted average index methods as follows (1):

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n x_i u_i}{\sum_{i=1}^n u_i}, \quad (1)$$

where x_i is the level of agreement/impression/satisfaction with corresponding points (1, 2, 3, 4, 5); u_i is the number of students who rated the level of agreement/impression/satisfaction as x_i .

Thus, the distance value is determined as (maximum-minimum)/n. Applying the above formula, we have the distance value equal to (5–1)/5=0.8.

Student evaluations of various questions are categorized based on their average scores of agreements, impression, and satisfaction. The qualitative interpretation levels are defined in Table. This approach helps to assess the survey results more accurately.

Table. Qualitative interpretation of 5-Point Likert scale measurements

Таблица. Качественная интерпретация результатов пятибалльной шкалы Лайкерта

Likert-scale description Описание шкалы Лайкерта	Likert-Scale Шкала Лайкерта	Likert Scale interval Интервал шкалы Лайкерта
Strongly disagree/Категорически не согласен	1	1.00–1.80 (very poor/очень плохо)
Disagree/Не согласен	2	1.81–2.60 (poor/плохо)
Neutral/Uncertain/Нейтральный Неопределенный	3	2.61–3.40 (neutral/нейтральный)
Agree/Согласен	4	3.41–4.20 (good/хорошо)
Strongly agree/Полностью согласен	5	4.21–5.00 (very good/очень хорошо)

Source/Источник [21].

Research results

Admission methods. Analysis of the sample structure by academic years, gender and living areas

The majority of the survey participants were first-year students from the K68 group (18 years old in 2023), making up 36.4% of the total respondents. Next, the second-year students from the K67 group (19 years old in 2023), accounting for 29% of the total (Fig. 2).

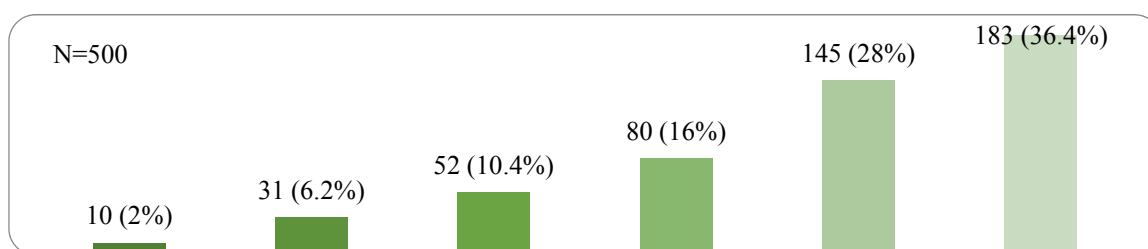


Fig. 2. Student sampling structure surveyed by academic years

Рис. 2. Структура выборки студентов по учебным годам

This indicates that both K67 and K68 students are newly admitted, who have accessed the latest admissions communication information from HUST and experienced the latest in HUST enrollment activities. This contributes to a more accurate assessment of the effectiveness of admissions communication at HUST (Fig. 3).

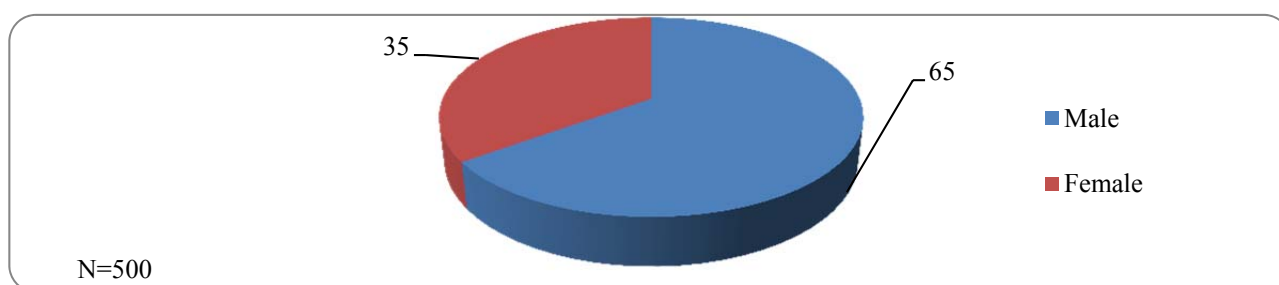


Fig. 3. Student sampling structure surveyed by gender

Рис. 3. Структура выборки студентов по полу

The survey results show that 65% of the participants are male and 35% are female. This somewhat reflects the higher percentage of male students choosing HUST than female students. This is consistent with the reality that HUST is primarily a university focused on engineering and technology. This ratio suggests the need for communication measures to attract female students to study majors such as economics and foreign languages at HUST (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Students surveyed by regions of the country, %
Рис. 4. Опрошенные студенты по регионам страны, %

The survey results indicate that students from Central Vietnam make up the majority, accounting for 81.3%, while the percentages for Southern Vietnam, and the Central Highlands are 18, 0.4 and 0.4%, respectively, out of the 500 surveyed students. Since HUST is in the center of Hanoi, the proximity and transportation from various provinces and localities make it convenient for students. The survey results categorize admission areas as KV1 (communes in difficult regions), KV2 (towns and suburban districts), KV2-NT (rural areas), and KV3 (inner-city districts). Among HUST students surveyed, 35.2% are from KV2-NT, followed by 27.8% from KV2, 22.6% from KV1, and 14.4% from KV3. Students from KV2 and KV2-NT tend to select HUST as their first choice. For the 2023–2024 academic year, the rates for all four methods were illustrated in Fig. 5. Some respondents among 500 were selected by more than one method.

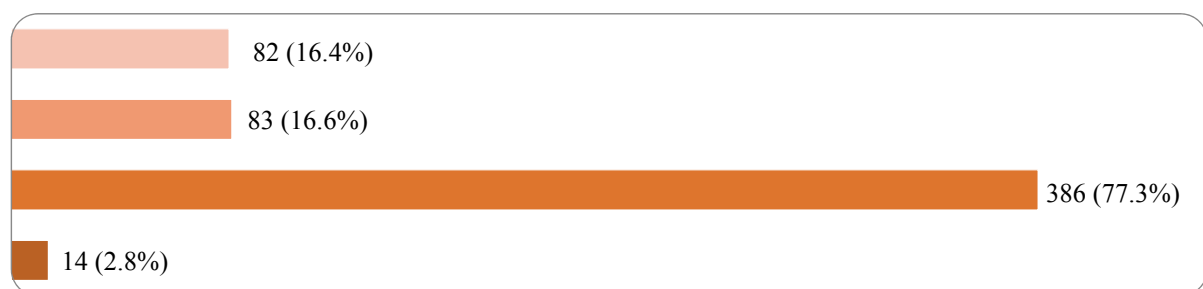


Fig. 5. Results of admission methods to HUST in the 2023–2024 academic year, in person and % (number of respondents to the total sample of 500) respondents

Рис. 5. Результаты приема в ХУНТ в 2023–2024 учебном году, очно и % (количество опрошенных к общей выборке 500) респондентов

To enhance their chances of being admitted, many candidates apply through multiple methods simultaneously. However, in the current context, the high school graduation exam is becoming less suitable for HUST. Therefore, to improve enrollment quality, the university aims to increase awareness about the admission method based on the results of the competency assessment test and the talent-based admission method in its enrollment rounds.

***The impact of online admissions communication on students' impressions
and university choices. Internet platforms for online admission
of Hanoi University of Science and Technology***

The results of the 2023 survey indicate that 82% of the surveyed students (410 respondents) preferred online communication channels to gather information about HUST. In contrast, 18% of students (90 respondents) opted for offline communication channels, such as programs and events organized in person. This reveals that online admissions communication channels are utilized 4.5 times more frequently than offline. In the digital age, accessing information via online communication channels is generally easier, faster, and offers a wider variety of formats than offline channels. While offline methods can make it difficult for students in various remote areas, online channels are favored by students due to their zero cost, broader audience reach, and diverse content formats that are visually appealing and engaging. The proportion of students (number of respondents per 500 samples) seeking online admission is dominant. Students primarily access admission information at HUST through the university Facebook fan page, with 89.5% of surveyed students relying on this source. The percentages of students accessing platforms such as HUST YouTube channel, LinkedIn and Instagram are the lowest, at 13.4 and 12.5% respectively (Fig. 6).

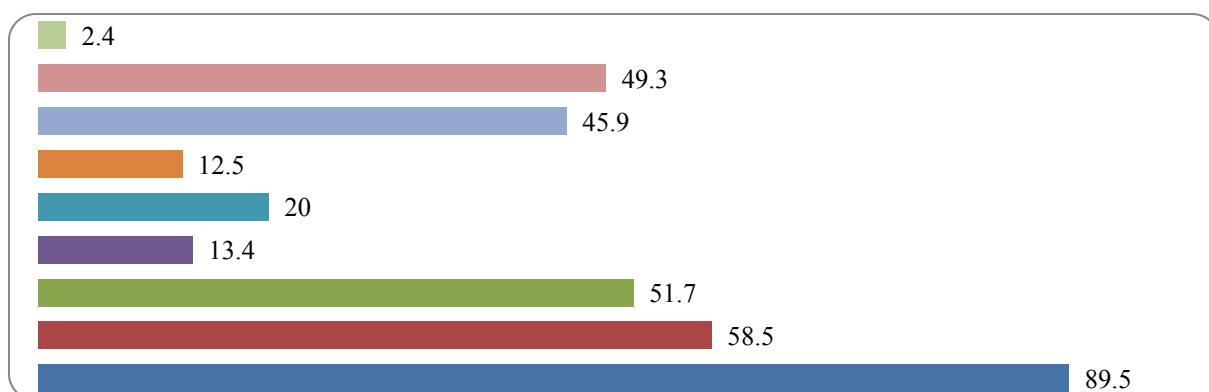


Fig. 6. Online media selection rate, % (some respondents selected more than one social media platform)

Рис. 6. Выбор онлайн-СМИ, % (некоторые респонденты выбрали более одной платформы социальных сетей)

Some channels, such as Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and TikTok, primarily provide brief content, lasting between 1 to 3 minutes. As a result, viewers may struggle to access detailed and extensive information through these platforms. However, these channels tend to present engaging, dynamic, and visually appealing content that serves as a quick advertisement, sparking viewers' curiosity to seek out more detailed information. The university should consider diversifying its communication strategies to enhance its visibility and information outreach, making it easier and more effective for students to access what they need. HUST invested in multiple communication channels, promoting recognition and reaching a diverse audience. This variety allows the university to engage a large number of users while providing comprehensive information about its activities and programs.

Students' interest in admission information on internet platforms

Choosing the right university is crucial for students and their families. Fig. 7 indicates that students primarily seek information about majors (340 responses), study programs (329 responses), and future career opportunities (338 responses). Information about university facilities, which received 199 responses, is also a significant factor in the decision-making, as students and their

families expect adequate resources, learning and research equipment, and an appropriate learning environment that meets their needs. Students' activities and research achievements at HUST garnered considerable attention, with 224 responses for student activities and 199 for research achievements. This suggests that many students value social involvement, academic initiatives, and research opportunities at HUST, which can better prepare them for postgraduate education after graduation. Level of satisfaction with the content and format of the online reception.

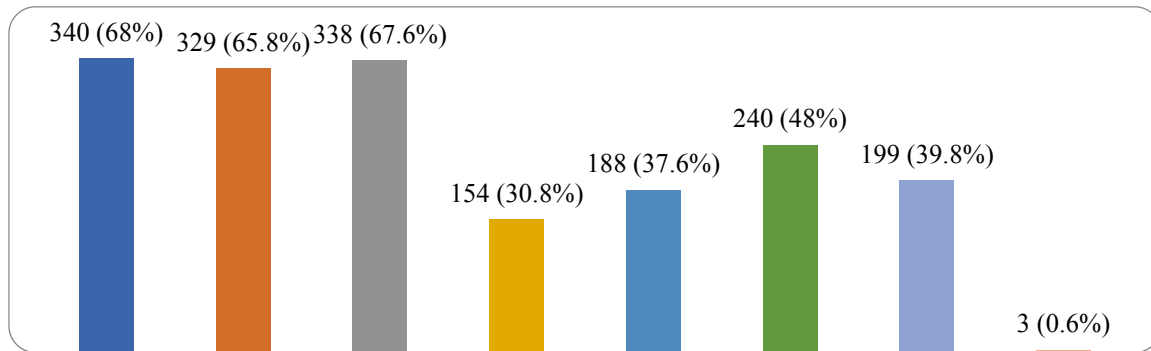


Fig. 7. Admission information content attracting students' interest
(number of respondents – 500 valid samples)

Рис. 7. Содержание информации о поступлении, привлекающее интерес студентов
(количество респондентов – 500 валидных выборов)

The format and content of online admission information received average scores ranging from 3.8 to 3.96, which indicate a good level of quality of the digital tool. Scores between 3.41 and 4.20 reflect agreement or satisfaction, corresponding to an overall good assessment shown in Table [22]. The highest-rated criteria included the accuracy, variety, richness, and accessibility of the information, with scores between 3.9 and 3.96. These were followed by clarity and ease of understanding in the online formats (Fig. 8).

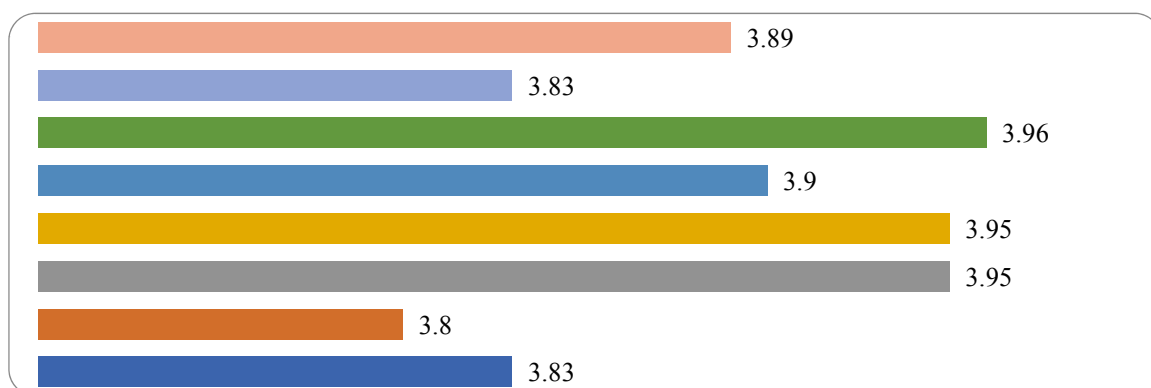


Fig. 8. Assessment of the online admissions as a digital tool

Рис. 8. Оценка онлайн-приема как цифрового инструмента

However, the average rating of 3.83 for attractiveness, timeliness, promptness, and visual appeal indicates that students are somewhat dissatisfied, signaling a need for improvement. In contrast, videos on online recruitment platforms scored well for accuracy (3.97), accessibility (3.96), and reasonable length (3.95), providing candidates with clear insight into HUST recruitment. However, enhancing the presentation style could make the videos more engaging and visually appealing.

Satisfaction level with social media and other platforms. Students' impressions of the information and promotional materials for admission on social media platforms and other media have an average score ranging from 3.35 to 3.76, which is lower than the rating for videos. The HUST website received the highest score of 3.76 out of 5, followed by Facebook fan pages, faculty and school fan pages under HUST, the HUST TikTok account, and online search engines, all of which achieved a good impression level with scores between 3.76 and 3.49. This falls within the good impression range of 3.41 to 4.20 (Fig. 9).

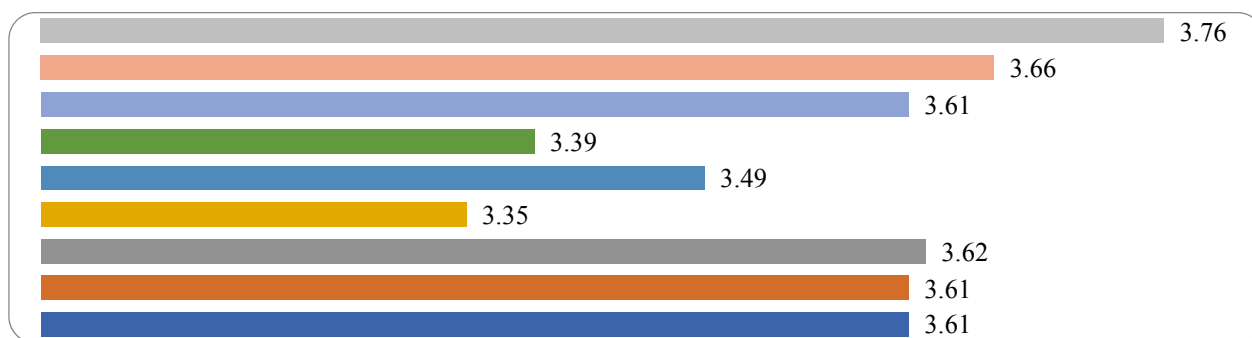


Fig. 9. *Level of impression of the admissions promotional materials on social media and other platforms*
Рис. 9. *Уровень восприятия рекламных материалов о приеме в социальных сетях и на других платформах*

On the other hand, HUST accounts on LinkedIn, Instagram, and YouTube have an average impression level, with scores of 3.35 and 3.39, respectively. This indicates that candidates do not particularly favor HUST admissions communications on these social media platforms and do not prefer the information shared there.

Offline (direct) admissions communication and students' impression

Direct admissions communication conducted by HUST includes several activities, such as: Career Counseling and Admission Day organized by the Tuoi Tre Newspaper; Admission Counseling Programs held at local high schools or on the HUST campus, presented as School Tours; University Experience and Future Orientation Program organized at HUST, which includes Campus Tours; Advice from high school teachers and relatives.

Candidates can also obtain admission information through consultations with their high school teachers, family, or relatives who have studied at HUST. Fig. 10 illustrates the number of candidates who sought admission information and news related to training majors, study programs, future careers, and HUST activities through offline communication methods.

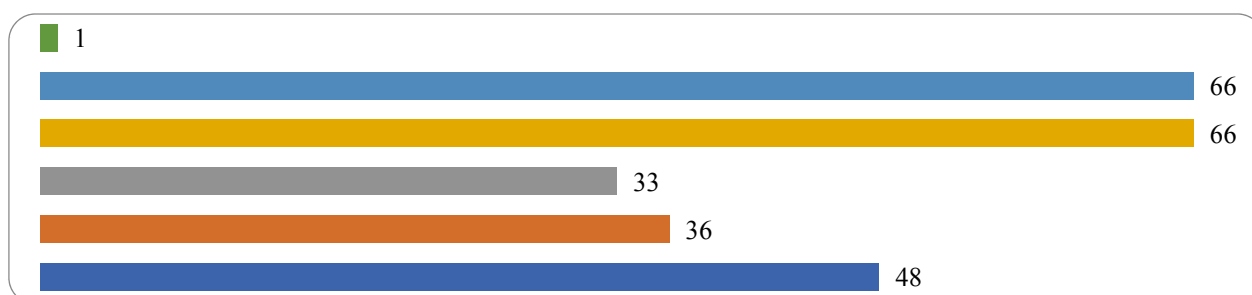


Fig. 10. *Finding admission information using offline communication methods*
Рис. 10. *Поиск информации о поступлении с помощью методов офлайн-коммуникации*

Many candidates did not respond, and some used multiple offline communication methods, suggesting that direct admissions communication at events has not met expectations. Reasons include: (i) brief events limiting detailed Q&A sessions; (ii) overly general information from admissions staff; and (iii) outdated advice from relatives and high school teachers. Consequently, candidates turned to online admissions channels and printed materials for more detailed information.

Assessment of the career counseling and admissions advising booth. On a 5-point scale, the evaluations of content related to useful and necessary consulting information, detailed communication materials, impressive and attractive decoration, and reasonable location received scores of 3.91, 3.89, 3.88, and 3.81, respectively (Fig. 11).

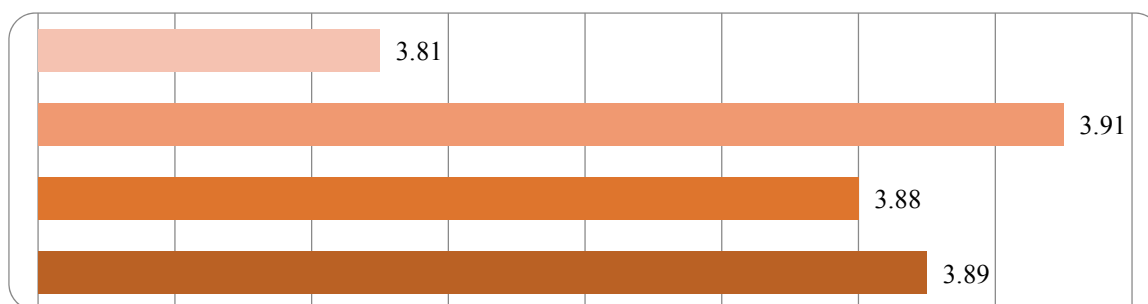


Fig. 11. Assessment of the career counseling and admissions advising booth

Рис. 11. Оценка стенда профориентации и консультирования по вопросам поступления

These high scores indicate that candidates feel comfortable receiving advice and directly inquiring about any admission information they may still be uncertain about. The admissions communication materials are detailed, appropriate, and specific, effectively catering to the needs of students seeking information about educational programs that align with their interests (Fig. 12). While career counseling booths continue to attract many students and parents, it is evident that the location of these booths is not optimal, as reflected in their score of 3.81.

Impressive aspects of the University Experience Program – Future Orientation at HUST. The University Experience – Future Orientation Program at HUST aims to provide students with an overview and practical experience of the university environment, as well as an in-depth understanding of the various fields of study they are interested in.

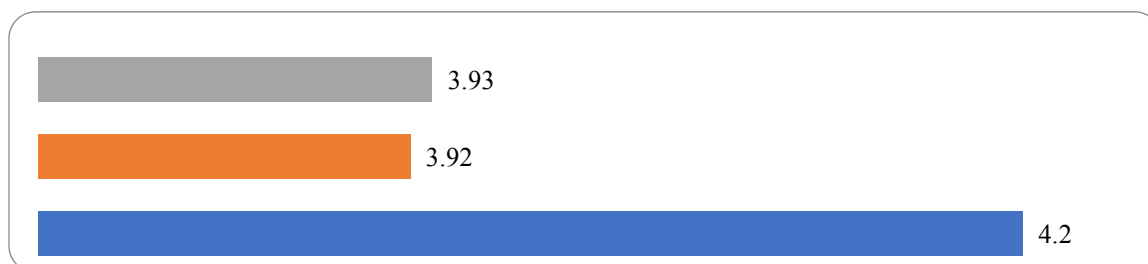


Fig. 12. Level of perception of information about educational programs by students

Рис. 12. Уровень восприятия информации об образовательных программах студентами

Regarding promotional materials for admissions to programs and events, students' impressions are not particularly high, with ratings ranging from 3.74 to 3.84 (Fig. 13). This feedback suggests a need to improve the design and visuals of materials.

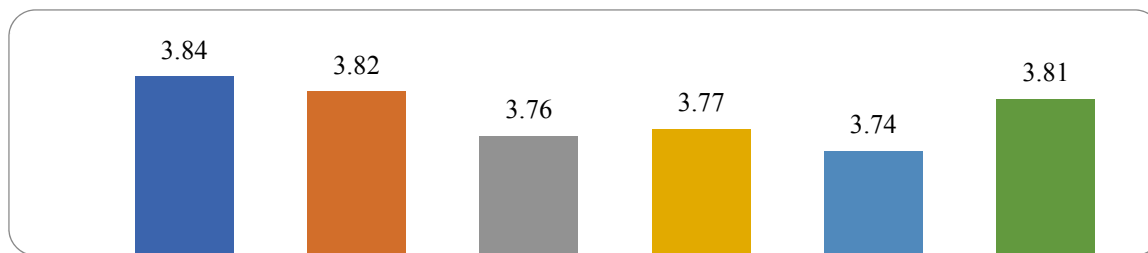


Fig. 13. Student evaluations of promotional materials for admission to programs and events

Рис. 13. Оценки студентов относительно рекламных материалов для поступления на программы и мероприятия

Discussion

To enhance the quality and effectiveness of enrollment, HUST employs a combination of online communication across various digital channels and platforms, along with direct enrollment initiatives through organized programs and events. This approach is prioritized as a key strategy for each enrollment period for the upcoming academic year. The fact that online media (digital channels) have the most substantial impact, with 82% of respondents considering it influential compared to only 18% for offline communication (direct channels). This highlights the need to invest in online admissions channels to keep pace with the development of digital technology. Both online and offline admissions communications significantly influence students' decisions to choose HUST. These channels provide essential information about academic programs, as well as achievements in training and scientific research, which help students gain a better understanding of educational offerings and future career opportunities. Thus, the novelty of this study lies in its significant contribution to the theory and practice of admissions in HEIs, as previous studies in Vietnam regarding admissions communication methods have not explored theoretical issues thoroughly, nor have they conducted specialized surveys to quantify the impact of each method in practice.

The survey of 500 HUST students shows that their impressions of online and offline admissions communication averaged between 3.42 and 4.02, placing them in the "good" rating category. These impressions significantly influence applicants' university choices, supporting the hypothesis (H1) that both types of communication positively affect students' decisions. This aligns with findings from [2, 13, 14, 16, 17].

Both online and offline admissions communication have unique strengths and weaknesses. Online methods leverage social media and various platforms to deliver engaging, multi-dimensional content to a wide audience. However, they require significant investment in technology and resources. In contrast, offline communication, often held at local high schools or campuses, allows for direct consultation, providing personalized advice and immediate answers, helping students experience the learning environment. At HUST, applicants primarily use online channels like fan pages and websites, which leave them with a positive impression due to clear and diverse information. This online communication effectively complements offline events. Therefore, the hypothesis that online and offline methods support each other in enhancing candidates' decisions (H2) was confirmed, aligning with previous studies [15–17].

Implications

HUST invested in various communication channels to enhance brand recognition and connect with diverse audiences regarding admissions. They utilize platforms such as their website, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube, along with events in collaboration with Tuoi Tre News, school tours and university campus tours for high school students. However, responses from a recent survey highlighted some shortcomings, including:

- incomplete information at crowded events due to limited time;
- lack of emphasis on understanding students' and parents' needs;
- limited responsiveness from admissions consultants on the HUST Facebook page;
- limit resources and knowledge for effective communication by some schools and institutes, especially those with challenging admission processes.

This feedback could guide improvements in HUST admissions processes.

To overcome the shortcomings and enhance the effectiveness of HUST recruitment communications, it is necessary to focus on the following solutions:

1. Combine both online and offline admissions communication methods, focusing on improving the quality of content, material of offline communication.

2. Conduct regular online and in-person surveys with applicants and new students to evaluate admissions communication effectiveness, adjusting strategies annually based on feedback to better meet student needs.

3. Improve the clarity, comprehensiveness, accuracy, and friendliness of both online and offline communications, ensuring prospective students feel valued and informed, which can positively influence their decisions.

4. Foster personal interactions through interviews during tours or campus visits, as these create positive impressions and showcase the university culture. Sharing experiences from current students and alumni can further influence perceptions.

5. Implement personalized marketing communications campaigns to provide tailored information on academic programs, scholarships, and events using automation tools to maintain engagement and build trust with prospective students throughout their decision-making.

6. Enhance recruitment communication in remote and rural areas by outlining preferential policies and scholarships to attract applicants and ensure human resources for underdeveloped regions.

The identification of the advantages and disadvantages of the above-mentioned online and offline admissions communication methods, as well as the proposal of measures to overcome the weaknesses, is of high significance. Firstly, this approach helps applicants and parents save both time and money while selecting the right university and training program. Secondly, implementing a combination of both methods, focusing on appropriate online communication in the context of digital transformation in the education sector, can be effectively applied in student recruitment for HEIs in Vietnam.

Conclusion

This study examines the influence of online and offline admissions communication on student perceptions, which in its turn affect their decisions regarding university choice. University applicants are able to gather information about various training programs and career guidance available after graduation. The findings confirmed the research hypotheses, demonstrating that combining both recruitment communication methods led to improved effectiveness, as they complement each other. The research findings and proposed solutions in this study advance both the theory and practice of admission communication, enhancing the quality of admission communication for various HEIs in the context of rapidly evolving digital technology. The limitations of the study are that it did not quantify various dimensions and variables involved in the research model. Additionally, the survey focused only on students currently studying at HUST, rather than on prospective applicants. The authors plan to address these limitations in future studies.

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