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The Relationship between Information Distribution and Intention to Choose a University

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Abstract

Purpose: Research on the intention to choose a university has an important role for universities in enrollment. The information element is considered essential to help students have specific information before making their decisions. However, how to distribute this information appropriately is an issue that needs to be studied. Therefore, this study was conducted to evaluate the influence of information distribution on intention to choose a university. **Research design, data, and methodology:** The study showed a survey on 259 samples from first-year students at public universities in Vietnam. PLS-SEM model was performed to find out the relationship between information distribution and intention to choose a university. **Result:** The results show that information quality and information helpfulness positively impact on attitudes towards universities. Attitude towards university has a positive effect on the intention to choose a university. **Conclusion:** From the results of this study, the authors also make some recommendations to help universities have good communication policies to improve their ability to attract students to choose a university. Quality and helpful information will help universities to be able to attract students more effectively to enroll based on an effective communication strategy.

Keywords : Information Distribution, Information Quality, Information Helpfulness, Intention to Choose a University.

JEL Classification Code: B55, H23, M10, P36.

1. Introduction

Information communication or marketing activities are no longer limited to enterprises but have become ubiquitous in universities (Carvalho, Brandão, & Pinto, 2020; Smørsvik & Vespestad, 2020; Štimac & Šimić, 2012; Vukasovic, 2015). Information communication helps organizations or individuals who want to bring information to their

customers (Kotler, 2017). The customers in this study are college-going students. Therefore, the competition to attract students to enroll in universities or higher is higher when schools have more tools to carry out university promotion (Johnston, 2010). According to the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training statistics, in the 2018-2019 school year, the number of new students is 413,277, and in 2019-2020 the number increases to 447,483. It can be seen that

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schools have expanded to attract more students. Therefore, universities are still competing fiercely in terms of enrollment. In the context of university financial autonomy, it is even more important to attract students (Dao & Thorpe, 2015) actively. Furthermore, online advertising and communication activities are becoming more and more popular and essential in the context of the complicated development of the COVID-19 pandemic in Vietnam.

To promote the effectiveness of online communication channels, it is indispensable to support information technology. With the development of technology, online communication has become more effective. Therefore, the concept of marketing 4.0 was born in the context of the development and application of science and technology in marketing (Jara, Parra, & Skarmeta, 2012; Kotler, 2017). This can be considered a market trend for businesses and universities in terms of market access - students. First, however, how to use communication or marketing needs to be considered scientifically to optimize the information and science provided by the media.

Information asymmetry can occur in the relationship between universities and students when the university releases information to attract students to enroll. Students will be the object of lack of information, so what the university offers will be well received by students and less likely to backfire. Therefore, the more information that shows the advantages of the university, the more students will admire the university.

In Vietnam, universities have many electronic information channels. First, it is a common source of information from the university (related to general activities). Second, separate information are in charge of departments and faculties. Therefore, some info is presented separately, making the approach inconsistent. The information has not been controlled for quality: How useful is it, how good is the quality. At the same time, The universities are expanding in size, leading to higher competition in attracting students to the university. Third, the fierce competition between universities in the admissions work. Therefore, universities have been investing and marketing more to attract learners. Not only small universities but also large universities focus on marketing for enrollment. Since universities' main source of revenue lies in student fees, the optimal number of students will bring sustainable finance to the universities.

There are many studies worldwide on the influence of media distribution on the decision to choose a product or service (Nguyen, Nguyen, & Nguyen, 2020). However, studies related to information quality and usefulness are still limited (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Therefore, in this study, we develop a model to evaluate the influence of information through the university information system on choosing a university. This study will investigate how the distribution

of reliable information helps to increase the intention of choosing a school for universities. The study will contribute theoretically to finding out the distribution of university information, attitudes, and intentions to choose universities. Does information theory explain the attitudes and behavior of university choice well?. The subjects of the survey were first-year students at universities. Research results will help universities have effective information-based marketing policies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Intention to Choose a University

Research of behavior of intention and use of services in technology come from the development of Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and other theories as Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), etc. to build theories predicting intention and use as Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989; Davis, 1993; Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2000), Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh et al., 2003), Model of Information Systems Success (ISS) (DeLone & McLean, 1992; 2003).

Before enrolling in a university, students will begin to research information and lead to an intention to choose the university that they will attend. Universities are selected based on students' and parents' criteria about personal ability, ability to complete programs, and employment after graduation (Hiatt, Swaim, & Maloni, 2018; Swaim, Maloni, & Napshin, 2014). Like other decisions, the intention to choose a particular university can be influenced by the information provided (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Sussman & Siegal, 2003; Tapanainen, Dao, & Nguyen, 2021), the attitude degree of information recipients (Lee & Koo, 2015), the helpfulness of information (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Pai & Huang, 2011).

2.2. Information Distribution, Attitudes Towards with University and Intention to Choose a University

2.2.1. Information Quality

Distributing information is the type of information given to provide the information to be communicated to the target audience. The factors of information quality and information helpfulness are mainly concerned (DeLone & McLean, 1992; DeLone & McLean, 2003). Information quality refers to user relevance and responsiveness (Huang & Bilal, 2019). Information quality is considered an essential factor affecting decision-making (Salehi-Esfahani,

Ravichandran, Israeli, & Bolden., 2016). Several factors related to information quality influence how helpful a review is in the eyes of potential consumers when making a decision (Tapanainen et al., 2021). Therefore, we propose two hypothesis:

H1: Information quality has a positive impact on the information helpfulness.

Quality information will bring reliable information and exactly what the audience needs. When the source of information that readers find is adequate and relevant to them, they will have a better attitude towards the university that issued the information (Salehi-Esfahani et al., 2016). Furthermore, those who approach find that the university understands and fits themselves, so they will have a positive attitude (Salehi-Esfahani et al., 2016). Therefore, information quality will improve the attitude towards the product/service. Therefore, we propose two hypothesis:

H2: Information quality has a positive impact on attitudes towards universities.

2.2.2. Information Helpfulness

Information usefulness is the degree to which information is usefully received and can be effectively used in decision-making (Cheung, Lee, & Rabjohn, 2008). The usefulness of information is often considered an essential factor in influencing attitude towards services (Lee & Koo, 2015). Many studies show evidence of the effect of helpfulness on the attitudes of information recipients. For example, research by (Luna-Nevarez & Torres, 2015) for advertising on social networks found that perceived usefulness positively influences users' attitudes towards advertising. Therefore, the study proposes two hypothesis:

H3: Perceived helpfulness of information has a positive impact on students' attitudes towards university.

The information that is considered useful will bring a sense of closeness between learners and the university. Furthermore, helpful information helps users not to spend much time filtering information as well as evaluating and checking information (Ajzen, 1991). Due to saving time and effort in searching for information and evaluating information, forming an intention to choose a university is faster. Also according to Tapanainen et al. (2021), information helpfulness also results in higher intention to choose. Providing information helpfulness will make students have a better attitude towards the university and increase the student's intention to choose the university. Therefore, the study proposes two hypothesis:

H4: Perceived helpfulness of information has a positive impact on students' intention to choose the university.

2.2.3. Attitude towards with University

Attitudes towards with university are students' affective perceptions of university. Attitudes towards a particular subject or service are expressed in favor or rejection of that object (Davis, 1993). Attitude is considered an essential factor in predicting behavior. The assumption of the existence of a causal relationship between attitudes and intentions in the theory of rational action and planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991). According to TRA, TPB suggests that attitudes can predict behavior and proposes that a positive university attitude will positively affect a student's ability to choose a college for enrollment. Therefore, the study presents the following hypothesis:

H5: Attitude towards with university has a positive impact on intention to choose university.

The research model is presented in figure 1.

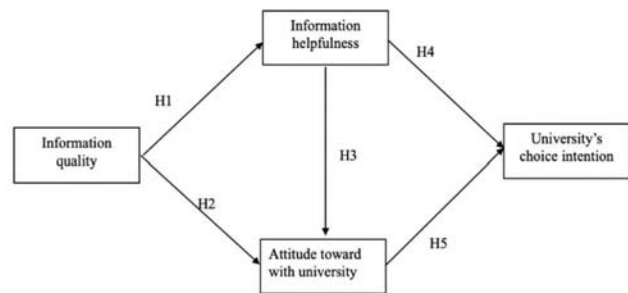


Figure 1: Research Model

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

The scales are designed based on Filieri, McLeay, Tsui, and Lin (2018) study with three items on information helpfulness. Information quality was measured by five items referenced from Kim, Lee, Shin, and Yang (2017). Attitude towards the university is measured by five items referenced from Hiatt et al. (2018). And the intention to choose a university is measured by four items referenced from Hiatt et al. (2018). The study uses a 5-point Likert scale with 1- strongly disagree; 5- strongly agree. Data were collected for first-year university students. Because this is an audience that has just gone through the university choice process, they will have the closest perception and assessment of the intention to choose a university through university

information distribution. The questionnaire was collected from February 2021 to May 2021.

3.2. Data

Student survey results show that female students make up the majority, with 177 students (68.3%), and male students are 82 students (31.7%). In addition, information about parents' education was also surveyed. The results show that most parents of students surveyed have university (120 people, accounting for 46.3%). Next is the education level below high school with 97 people, accounting for 37.5%, and the lowest level is the college level with 42 people, accounting for 16.2%. The detail information is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Description of Student Characteristics

		Frequency	%
Gender	Female	177	68.3
	Male	82	31.7
Education level of Parents	< High school	97	37.5
	College	42	16.2
	University	120	46.3

3.3. Data Analysis

To ensure the reliability of the analyzed data, reliability tests are performed with two criteria: (1) Cronbach's Alpha coefficient greater than 0.6 and (2) composite reliability (CR) greater than 0.7 (Bui & Nguyen, 2022). In addition, the constructs need to ensure convergence through the factor loading index greater than 0.5 and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) greater than 0.5. Finally, before entering into the PLS-SEM analysis, the discriminant validity test was also used with the square root index of AVE being greater than the corresponding correlation coefficient between the factors. The primary benefits of PLS-SEM include the relaxation of distributional assumptions required by the maximum likelihood method used to estimate models using covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) and the ability of PLS-SEM to estimate much more complex models with smaller sample sizes. Therefore, PLS-SEM is applied in this study based on the advantages as mentioned earlier. At the same time, with a sample size of just over 200 respondents, PLS-SEM is considered more suitable than CB-SEM.

Qualitative

After having the results of the PLS-SEM analysis, we conducted qualitative research by interviewing some learners about their information, attitude, and intention to choose the university. This qualitative study is only intended to supplement and explain the research results in-depth. The authors conducted random interviews with 16 first-year students and synthesized opinions to clarify the quantitative results. The qualitative analysis in this study did not focus

on discovering new factors. Therefore, verbatim citations of typical interview responses will be included in the discussion section.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. The Reliability Test

Items will be included in the analysis for reliability. The analysis results show that all constructs are reliable and convergent with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients all greater than 0.6, CR all greater than 0.7, AVE all greater than 0.5, and factor loading all greater than 0.5. The results of reliability test in table 3.

Table 3: The Reliability Test

Items	Loading
Attitude towards with university (iCronbach's Apha=0.906 ; CR=0.93 ; AVE = 0.727)	
ATT1_ You think this university choose is good	0.831
ATT2_ You think this university choose is smart	0.892
ATT3_ You think choosing this university is beneficial	0.847
ATT4_ You think this university choose is desirable	0.861
ATT5_ You think choosing this university is worthwhile	0.828
Information helpfulness (Cronbach's Apha=0.823 ; CR=0.824 ; AVE = 0.655)	
IH1_ Media information channel to help you evaluate the university you intend to choose	0.777
IH2_ Information channel to help you familiarize yourself with the university you intend to choose	0.867
IH3_ Media information channel to help you understand the activities of the university you intend to choose	0.812
IH4_ In general, the media helps you decide to choose your current university	0.777
Intention to choose (Cronbach's Apha=0.912 ; CR=0.938 ; AVE = 0.791)	
INT1_ Are you planning to choose your current university to complete your undergraduate program	0.870
INT2_ Your goal is to complete your undergraduate program at your current university	0.908
INT3_ Are you planning to complete your undergraduate studies at your current university	0.887
INT4_ In general, did you intend to choose your current university before taking the university entrance exam	0.893
Information quality (Cronbach's Apha=0.814 ; CR=0.871 ; AVE = 0.575)	
IQ1_ You see the media channel providing general information about the university	0.791
IQ2_ You find the media to provide relevant information about the university	0.813
IQ3_ You see the media channel providing timely information about the university	0.791
IQ4_ You see a media channel that provides complete information about the university	0.709
IQ5_ You find the media channel providing interesting information about the university	0.680

4.2. Discriminant Test

The table 5 shows discriminant validity. The analysis results indicated that the value of square root of AVE were all greater than the correlation between any constructs. This presented that the constructs in the model achieved discriminant validity. Table 5).

Table 5: Discriminant Validity

	ATT	IH	INT	IQ
ATT	0.852*			
IH	0.594	0.809*		
INT	0.639	0.513	0.890*	
IQ	0.656	0.67	0.465	0.759*

* Square root of AVE.

4.3. Testing the Hypotheses

The results of the PLS-SEM model analysis show that information quality has a positive impact on information helpfulness and attitude towards universities. ($\beta_{IQ-IH} = 0.670$; $\beta_{IQ-ATT} = 0.468$) and are both statistically significant at 5%. Therefore, hypotheses H1 and H2 are both accepted. The IH also has a positive effect on ATT and INT ($\beta_{IH-ATT} = 0.281$; $\beta_{IH-INT} = 0.207$) and are both statistically significant at 5%. Hypotheses H3 and H4 are also accepted. Finally, ATT has a positive effect on INT ($\beta_{ATT-INT} = 0.516$) and is statistically significant at 5%. Hypothesis H5 is also accepted. The results is shown in table 6 and figure 2.

Table 6: The Result of PLS-SEM

	Beta	Std	T-stats	P-Values
ATT -> INT	0.516	0.063	8.149	0.000
IH -> ATT	0.281	0.073	3.840	0.000
IH -> INT	0.207	0.069	3.012	0.003
IQ -> ATT	0.468	0.061	7.646	0.000
IQ -> IH	0.670	0.046	14.664	0.000

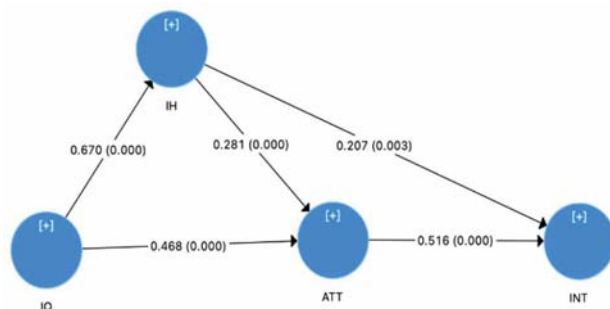


Figure 2: The Result of PLS-SEM

4.4. Discussion

Information quality has a positive effect on information helpfulness. This result same with the study of Erkan and Evans (2016). When the school releases complete information about the university, its services, programs, or student benefits while attending the university, it will give students enough details to know if they are a good fit for the school. The information provided will attract students. Such information will be really helpful for students to provide all the positive information that students need in choosing the university they will attend. In addition to complete and detailed information, providing timely information to students makes them more active in choosing a university. "First come first serve" is one of the advantages of the university's timely information release. Information becomes valuable when the univeristy provides it in a comprehensive, attractive, and timely manner.

The results from the interview also show that information quality has a positive meaning in increasing information usefulness.

"When I receive information related to enrollment as well as study programs, this is really the information I think is most useful to learners. Besides, I only see information that really matters to me when it is sent to me at the right time when I am looking for information and have not made a decision on my choice of univerisity."

Information quality has a positive effect on attitudes towards universities. This also shows that when students receive good information from the university, they also have a good attitude. In other words, students' affection for the university will increase when students receive information about the university's communication or marketing. Furthermore, it is a positive sign for transmitting good information from the university to the students on time. At the same time, the helpful information factor also positively affects the attitude towards the university. This result shows that when students find the information provided by a helpful university, they consider the university attractive. From there, students have a good attitude towards the university and come to the intention to choose the univerity to attend (attitude towards the university and useful information both have a positive impact on the intention to choose university). This result same with the study of Erkan and Evans (2016). The interview results also support the results of this study.

"When I think that the information is of good quality, really helpful to me in my decision to choose the university, I have really good feelings for that university. I would almost consider it as one of the univercitites that I would choose. From there, it increased my intention to choose the university."

"Before choosing the university I will attend, I often search the internet for information related to my interests"

and schools that match those interests. Then, after I have the right schools, I will filter the information of universities that match my academic ability. Next, I will learn about admissions and training programs. Finally, if the information about any school is helpful to me, I will consider applying to that university. Therefore, it can be seen that the usefulness of the information provided by the university is important in my choice of university."

Attitudes towards the university are increased by helpful information and good quality information. This result indicates that the increase in intention to choose a school also comes from useful information and a good attitude about the university. Therefore, it can be seen that the important role of information on university choice intention.

5. Conclusion and Implications

5.1 Conclusion

This study has answered the research objective set out. First, the study has systematized the theory of distribution of information to increase the intention to choose a university. Second, the study has built a research model and research hypotheses about the relationship between distribution information. And the intention to choose a University. Tuesday, the survey research on 259 first-year students has once again confirmed the importance of media information and university choose intentions. The study answered the following objectives: (1) Information quality has a positive effect on attitudes and information helpfulness; (2) Useful information has a positive effect on attitude towards university and intention to choose the university; (3) Attitude towards university has a positive effect on the intention to choose the university. At the same time, research has shown that the important participatory university selection comes from the information factors that the university emits. These signals will help students have a lot of information needed to choose a university.

From the results of this study, the authors also give some implications to help improve the intention to choose the university.

5.2. Theoretical Implications

This study shows that the theory of information asymmetry can occur and is well handled through the signal information distribution factor. A student's lack of information is needed to access and evaluate before making a school choice. This will be found and provided by the school with complete information, better reducing the information asymmetry factor. Therefore, the study proves that the theory of information asymmetry exists in the

enrollment problem of universities.

5.3. Practics Implications

First, schools need to develop good communication content related to the school and the curriculum in a readily receptive way. Second, univeristy determine the time to release university information at the right time to bring timely information to students. Third, the university's positive information and the right audience will help students have a good feeling and attitude towards the university. Fourth, provide information that is considered helpful to students, or the information given should be the correct information that students need in choosing a university. With the existence of information asymmetry theory in enrollment. This will help students reduce this negative impact by collecting information from the school. Moreover, reliable information will be a good reference for school selection. At the same time, attitudes that have a positive effect on the intention to choose a university will positively improve the perception of the university through communication channels.

6. Limitations and Future Research

Although the study has met the research objective, certain limitations still exist. Firstly, the number of samples is not large due to pandemic factors that can make the survey more difficult. Second, the study only focused on universities in the north and central regions but not in other areas (south), so comparing regions is still difficult. Third, the survey object is a first-year student. Still, no 12th-grade student is preparing to choose a university, so the results do not fully reflect the entire audience who intends to choose a university. So there won't be any other factors except the attitudinal factor, which is used mainly in behavioral intention models.

Therefore, the authors also recommend future research: expand the survey sample size more widely over more geographical areas to bring more comprehensive results. In addition, the survey subjects extended to the 12th-grade target audience for more detailed results in choosing a school.

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