

Factors affecting students' decision to choose a university: A case study of Vietnam National University, Hanoi

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Abstract

In the context of growing competition in the higher education environment, universities are increasingly focusing on attracting potential students. The study aims to explore the factors affecting students' decision to choose a university at Vietnam National University, Hanoi (VNU). The study uses the Partial Least Square- Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM) to test the fit of the model and the research hypotheses with the analytical data obtained from 460 first-year students of member universities and faculties under VNU. The study's findings indicate that student's characteristics and university-related factors such as curriculums, tuition fees, facilities and equipment, marketing activities, university personality, and university reputation have a significant impact on students' university selection. In which, three most important factors associated with institutions are the curriculums, facilities and equipment, marketing activities. Based on the research results, the study has provided a number of recommendations with the goal of enhancing the service quality and the operational effectiveness of VNU's enrollment efforts.

1. Introduction

The emergence of more and more institutions, including domestic universities, branches of foreign universities in Vietnam, and a wide range of international affiliate programs, has increased competition among universities. In addition, the trend of university autonomy and reduction of the government's budget have created considerable pressure on universities in enrollment and attracting learners. According to statistics of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET, 2020), in the 2019-2020 school year, Vietnam has 237 higher education institutions, of which

there are 172 public institutions and 65 private institutions. Meanwhile, the number of candidates taking the national high school graduation exam has been decreasing over time, from more than 1 million in 2015 to 900,152 candidates in 2020. Higher education administrators have faced the challenge of increasing national and international competition in recruiting the best students (Hemsley-Brown et al., 2016; Masserini et al., 2019; Miotto et al., 2020; Wilkins, 2020). In this context, universities employ a variety of techniques to acquire a competitive advantage in attracting potential clients- students. As a result, it is essential to explore the variables influencing the decision

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to attend a university, which serves as a basis for university to improve the efficiency of admission efforts.

A number of studies have mentioned the factors affecting the decision to choose universities. In which, some studies only focus on specific groups of factors such as social factors (Rowan-Kenyon et al., 2008; Srivastava & Dhamija, 2022), financial factors (Foskett et al., 2006; Hübner, 2012; Lillis & Tian, 2008) or factors relating to marketing activities (Rutter et al., 2016). Most studies have based on Chapman (1981) model and revealed that there are two categories of factors influencing students' decisions including (i) factors from individual students, and (ii) external factors such as the influence of important people; fixed university characteristics; and communication initiatives of the institution. In this study, besides the factors inherited from previous studies, a new factor- university personality is added in the research model. The university personality allows institutions to make a difference in competence (Rauschnabel et al., 2016; Watkins & Gonzenbach, 2013), students are able to compare universities and select the one that best fits their needs and allows them to express their individuality (Kawpong & Walee, 2020). However, relatively few research has looked into the effect of university personality in students' decision to attend a certain university. This study will attempt to fill gaps in prior research by identifying the factors influencing students' university selection, giving policy implications for university administrators in enticing potential students.

The research is divided into five sections. The background and literature review are presented after the introduction. Section 3 provides a description of the data collection and analysis procedures. The research findings and discussion are presented in Section 4. The conclusion and policy implications are found in Section 5.

2. Background and literature review

2.1. Models of decision-making in university selection

Many researchers have modeled university choice decision making under different approaches. The mentioned models include economic model, sociological model, and a combination of both above models (Kim & Gasman, 2011; Perna, 2006). Economic models emphasize the monetary implications of higher education. Sociological approaches concentrate on the impact of cultural and social capital, including socioeconomic background, government policies, the environment of higher education, educational achievements and employment prospects of students. Some researchers have taken a consumer behavior-based approach. Choosing a college is compared to the purchasing procedure, which includes distinct steps. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) proposed a three-stage university decision-making model including: predisposition, search, and choice.

Chapman (1981) - one of the foundational studies for many subsequent studies- proposed that students' college choices are impacted by a set of student traits combined with a series of external effects. In which, individual characteristics include the socioeconomic status, level of educational expectation, and the student's academic performance at the high school level. External influences are classified into three categories: (1) the influence of people important to the student (parents, friends); (2) the fixed characteristics of the institution (location, cost of study, financial aid, and environment of the institution); and (3) the institution's communication activities.

This study is based on Chapman's research model, in which the author has added and adjusted some factors to fit the research context.

2.2. Research hypothesis and proposed research model

2.2.1. Research hypothesis

a. The influence of student characteristics

Previous research suggests that factors such as student's interests, aptitude, and family's socioeconomic status have a role in their decision to attend a particular college (Lien et al.,

2015). Mehboob et al. (2012) demonstrated that the most significant factors influencing students' choice of university are their interests and professional objectives. Additionally, it has been found that a student's perception of self-efficacy has a significant role in their choice (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000).

Hypothesis 1: Student characteristics have a positive influence on university choice decisions

b. The influence of people important to the student

Choosing a university is a complicated decision, and students will think carefully about the opinions of individuals close to them before making a final selection. Before committing to a university, most students seek advice from their parents. The parents want their children to choose a college that fulfills their dream of a good job, thereby having a better quality of life (Srivastava & Dhamija, 2022). Generational groups often have similar attitudes and tendencies. They include friends, seniors, alumni of the school, and students currently attending the university. Students psychologically seek the consent and approval of their classmates, friends, and alumni (Mehboob et al., 2012; Srivastava & Dhamija, 2022).

Hypothesis 2: Surrounding people (parents, friends) have a positive influence on a student's decision to choose a university

*c. The influence of institution's characteristics
Facilities and equipment*

Abbas (2020) affirmed that students enrolling in higher education institutions expect to get a quality education therefore higher education institutions must ensure the highest standards of facilities and other conditions to support learning. Academic facilities include elements of the physical environment, classroom layout, campus appearance (Arrieta & Avolio, 2020), library and electronic resources, Internet, computers, laboratories, physical education and art spaces (Abbas, 2020; Calvo-Porrall et al., 2013; Kirupainayagam & Sutha, 2022).

Hypothesis 3: Facilities and equipment have a positive influence on students' decision to choose a university

Human resources

Gupta et al. (2022) underlined that human resources play a significantly more important role when compared to other factors in assessing the quality of education. According to Al Hassani and Wilkins (2022), the primary factor influencing students' intention to remain in a university is the quality of their professors. The capacity of the lecturers (professional expertise, updated knowledge), their information transfer abilities, and their attitudes and behaviors are all indications of the quality of the teaching personnel (Galeeva, 2016; Teerooven-gadam et al., 2016).

In addition, factors related to support staff also have an influence on students' decisions, including the level of understanding of the process and regulations (Abbas, 2020), the level of ease when accessing to support staff, convenient uptime, fast response time (Chanaka & Samantha, 2016; Sultan & Wong, 2019), the attentiveness and willingness to support students (Douglas et al., 2015).

Hypothesis 4: Human resources have a positive influence on students' decision to choose a university

Curriculums

Chapman (1981) asserted that students select a university based on the quality of its curriculums, which they believe will prepare them for employment. Then, Joseph et al. (2012) provided more evidence to support their claim that the curriculum is the primary determinant of a student's decision to attend a public institution. The educational program of a university is evaluated based on its program quality, ability to update practical knowledge (Htang, 2021), efficacy of the teaching organization and assessment quality (Arrieta & Avolio, 2020; Weerasinghe & Fernando, 2018).

Hypothesis 5: Curriculums have a positive influence on students' decision to choose a university

Tuition fees

Tuition fees have been shown by studies to be an important factor in attracting students to study at a university (Belmonte et al., 2022; H. Nguyen, 2020). Among the seven factors

indicated in the study by Belmonte et al. (2022), tuition has the most impact on students' decisions about which university to attend. Hübner (2012) showed that tuition fees have a negative impact on enrollment behavior. This result is again confirmed by Elliott and Soo (2013), high tuition reduces the number of applications.

Hypothesis H6: Tuition fees have a negative influence on students' decision to choose a university

Marketing activities

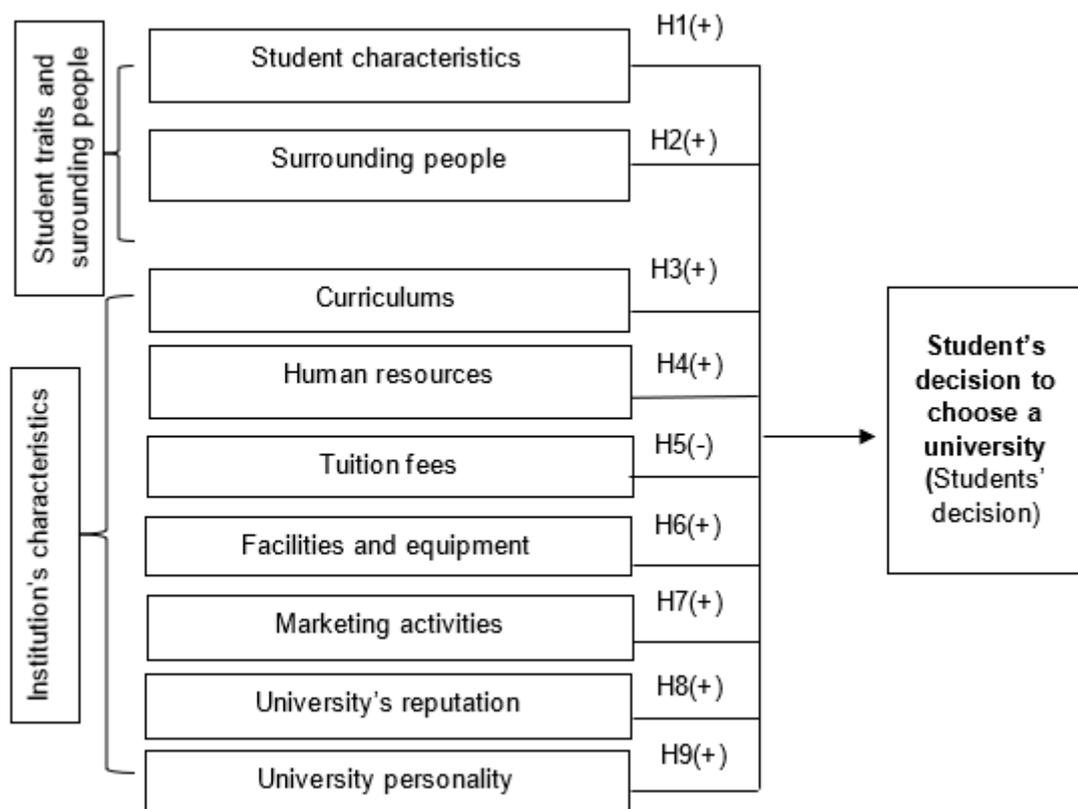
The institution's efforts to communicate with potential students have been mentioned in the research model of Chapman (1981). Subsequent studies have also confirmed the role of marketing activities in admissions process, with particular emphasis on the role of social media channels (Hall & Witek, 2016; P. D. Nguyen et al., 2021; Pinar et al., 2020). Social media interactions have a positive effect on the enrollment of potential learners (Rutter et al., 2016). Other forms of communication have

also been shown to have an impact on students' decision-making, namely planning for potential students to visit the college, organizing activities to encourage them to engage with the university's events and culture (Jois & Chakrabarti, 2022) and holding admissions counseling sessions at high schools (Green & Celkan, 2014; Stephenson et al., 2016).

Hypothesis 7: Marketing activities have a positive influence on students' decision to choose a university

University's reputation

The reputation of the institution is a key element influencing students' decision to attend a university (Belmonte et al., 2022), hence universities strive to improve their reputation in order to recruit the best students (Dursun & Altin Gumussoy, 2021). In agreement, Miotto et al. (2020) claimed that reputation is an important intangible variable in differentiating the university's competitiveness and improving the attractiveness of the program to potential can-



Source: Proposed by the author

Figure 1. Proposed research model

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didates (Al Hassani & Wilkins, 2022). University ranking is regarded as one of the indicators of a university's reputation, therefore students tend to apply to higher ranked institutions (Dearden et al., 2019; Miotto et al., 2020).

Hypothesis 8: University's reputation has a positive influence on students' decision to choose a university

University personality

Personality traits are considered very important in attracting potential students, motivating students to participate in activities that support the university (Balaji et al., 2016), requesting donations from alumni and obtaining positive public feedback (Kawpong & Walee, 2020; Sung & Yang, 2008). Duesterhaus and Duesterhaus (2014) argued that nuanced emotional attributes are a significant factor influencing students' final choice among potential universities.

Hypothesis 9: University personality has a

positive influence on students' decision to choose a university

2.2.2. Proposed research model

On the basis of inheritance and selection from previous studies, the author proposes a research model as shown in Figure 1

3. Research method

3.1. Sample size and data collection

According to VNU annual report 2022 (VNU, 2022), VNU currently has 35 members including 09 universities, 03 affiliated schools, 07 research institutes, 02 training and research centers and 16 services units. In which, there are 09 universities and 03 affiliated schools having the function of recruiting and training undergraduate students. The enrollment scale

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

	Description	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	158	34.3
	Female	302	65.7
Admission area	Area 1 (<i>ethnic minority areas, mountainous areas, communes with special difficulties in coastal and island areas</i>)	58	12.6
	Area 2 (<i>towns and cities directly under the province; towns, suburban districts of cities under the central government</i>)	157	34.1
	Area 2- rural area (<i>Localities not belonging to Area 1, Area 2 and Area 3</i>)	143	31.1
	Area 3 (<i>urban districts of cities under the central government</i>)	102	22.2
Universities	VNU University of Economics and Business	88	19.1
	VNU University of Languages and International Studies	67	14.6
	VNU University of Science	61	13.3
	VNU School of Interdisciplinary Studies	60	13.0
	VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities	57	12.4
	VNU University of Education	42	9.1
	VNU University of Law	38	8.3
	VNU University of Engineering and Technology	33	7.2
	Others universities and schools under VNU	14	3.0
Total		460	100

Source: Results from the survey data

in 2022 of VNU is 13,640 students. Applying the formula for calculating sample size of Godden (2004), the study determines the sample size to be collected as 458 first-year students. The study uses convenience sampling method. The study collects data using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire is divided into two sections. Questions concerning the respondent's background are designed in the first section. In the second section, the respondents are asked to evaluate the importance of various factors in selecting a university. The questions use a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1- Completely unimportant to 5- Completely important. The questionnaire is created online using a Google form, and then a link is provided to survey participants. The survey period is from December 2022 to February 2023. After data cleaning, the number of valid questionnaires for inclusion in the analysis was 460. The data description is shown in Table 1.

3.2. Measurement of factors

Based on references from previous studies and practical observations, the list of observed variables used to measure latent variables is shown in Table 2.

The study applies Partial Least Square - Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM) and uses Smart PLS 4.0.9.2 software (Ringle et al., 2022) to investigate the influence of factors on students' decision when choosing a university. PLS-SEM has many advantages such as it is not constrained by large sample sizes or distributional requirements (Hair et al., 2016). PLS-SEM is also used when analyzing complex research models. Specifically, a model has many overlapping relationships or many variables. Currently, PLS-SEM is popular and widely used in research with diverse fields such as finance, education, marketing, etc... (Hair et al., 2011).

Table 2. List of latent variables and observed variables

No	Latent variables	Code	Observed variables	Sources
1	Student characteristics (SC)	SC1	The student's academic ability	Chapman (1981); Lien et al. (2015)
		SC2	The student's interest	
		SC3	The student's talent	The author's recommendation
		SC4	The student's career orientation	
2	Surrounding people (SP)	SP1	Family members	Chapman (1981); Lien et al. (2015); Srivastava and Dhamija (2022)
		SP2	High school teachers	
		SP3	Friends	
		SP4	Admissions counselors	
		SP5	Alumni and current students	
3	Curriculum (CR)	CR1	Accredited curriculums	Elliott and Soo (2013); Lien et al. (2015)
		CR2	Providing actual job-related knowledge	Htang (2021); Joseph et al. (2012)
		CR3	Acquiring crucial job-related skills	Teeroovengadum et al. (2016); Weerasinghe and Fernando (2018)
		CR4	Flexible change of majors	The author's recommendation

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No	Latent variables	Code	Observed variables	Sources
4	Human resources (HR)	HR1	Well-qualified teachers	Dwaikat (2021)
		HR2	Highly skilled teaching staff	Green and Celkan (2014); Sultan and Wong (2019)
		HR3	Experienced teaching staff	Abbas (2020);
		HR4	Well-qualified administrative staff	Dwaikat (2021)
5	Tuition fees (TF)	TF1	Reasonable tuition fees	Belmonte et al. (2022); Elliott and Soo (2013)
		TF2	A stable tuition policy	The author's recommendation
		TF3	Public and transparent tuition policy	
		TF4	A flexible form of tuition payment	
6	Facilities and Equipment (FE)	FE1	Good infrastructure	Sultan and Wong (2019); Teeroovengadum et al. (2016)
		FE2	Concentrated learning lecture halls	The author's recommendation
		FE3	Up-to-date equipment for the classrooms	Dwaikat (2021); Htang (2021)
		FE4	A modern library	Dwaikat (2021);
		FE5	Modern infrastructure for sports, entertainment, and services	Teeroovengadum et al. (2016)
7	Marketing activities (MA)	MA1	Various social media chanelns	Pinar et al. (2020); Rutter et al. (2016)
		MA2	Available information about the university on the official website	Hoang and Rojas-Lizana (2015)
		MA3	Admission counseling activities at high schools	The author's recommendation
8	University's reputation (RP)	RP1	Having good reputation	Dwaikat (2021); Htang (2021)
		RP2	Having high university ranking	Dearden et al. (2019); Dwaikat (2021); Miotto et al. (2020)
		RP3	The university is a member unit/under VNU	Lien et al. (2015)
		RP4	Many successful alumni	Panda et al. (2019)
		RP5	Graduates are highly appreciated by employers	Sultan and Wong (2019)
9	University personality (UP)	UP1	Dedication and friendliness	Chanaka and Samantha (2016); Kawpong and Walee (2020)
		UP2	Excitement and dynamism	

No	Latent variables	Code	Observed variables	Sources
9	University personality (UP)	UP3	Fairness and honesty	Kawpong and Walee (2020); Rauschnabel et al. (2016)
		UP4	Prestige in training and research	
		UP5	Attractiveness of training programs	
		UP6	Internationalization	
10	Students' decision (DC)	DC1	Feelling satisfied with the decision to choose a university in comparision with the expectation	Le (2020)
		DC2	Feelling satisfied with the decision to choose a university in comparision with the ideal university	
		DC3	Deciding to study at the university is the right decision	

Source: The author summarizes and proposes

In order to analyze the research model, the re-research carried out two phases including evaluation of the measurement models and evaluation of structural model.

4. Research results and discussion

4.1. Evaluation of the measurement models

Evaluation of measurement models includes the assessment of internal consistency reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity.

Internal consistency reliability

In order to assess internal consistency reliability, the first step is to evaluate the reliability of observed variables through outer loadings. Outer loadings should be greater than or equal to 0.708. According to Hair et al. (2016), if the outer loading is in the range 0.4 to less

than 0.708, the study can consider keeping the observed variable if it does not affect the composite reliability. Based on the model test results, the author removes the variable CR4 and TF4 as the two observed variables with the smallest outer loading, moreover, the removal of these variables does not affect the composite reliability.

The next step, the study uses Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite reliability (CR) to measure the internal consistency reliability. Hair et al. (2019) stated that Cronbach's Alpha should be 0.708 or higher, Composite reliability should be in the range of 0.7 to 0.9. The results in Table 3 show that all Cronbach's Alphas are between 0.708 and 0.90, all Composite reliability are between 0.7 and 0.9, therefore the measurement models achieve internal consistency reliability.

Table 3. The results of internal consistency reliability and convergent validity assessment

Latent variables	Observed variables	Outer loadings	AVE	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability
SC	SC1	0.681	0.549	0.725	0.829
	SC2	0.730			
	SC3	0.753			
	SC4	0.794			
SP	SP1	0.725	0.528	0.782	0.848
	SP2	0.782			

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Latent variables	Observed variables	Outer loadings	AVE	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability
SP	SP3	0.750	0.528	0.782	0.848
	SP4	0.652			
	SP5	0.716			
CR	CR1	0.744	0.715	0.802	0.882
	CR2	0.894			
	CR3	0.890			
HR	HR1	0.791	0.532	0.709	0.819
	HR2	0.712			
	HR3	0.750			
	HR4	0.659			
TF	TF1	0.748	0.647	0.728	0.846
	TF2	0.847			
	TF3	0.815			
FE	FE1	0.824	0.639	0.857	0.898
	FE2	0.854			
	FE3	0.851			
	FE4	0.768			
	FE5	0.685			
MA	MA1	0.770	0.691	0.775	0.870
	MA2	0.865			
	MA3	0.856			
RP	RP1	0.755	0.613	0.843	0.888
	RP2	0.830			
	RP3	0.779			
	RP4	0.765			
	RP5	0.784			
UP	UP1	0.783	0.617	0.875	0.90
	UP2	0.728			
	UP3	0.810			
	UP4	0.825			
	UP5	0.813			
	UP6	0.749			
DC	DC1	0.782	0.627	0.702	0.834
	DC2	0.788			
	DC3	0.805			

Source: Analysis results from Smart PLS 4.0.9.2 software

Table 4. Discriminant validity

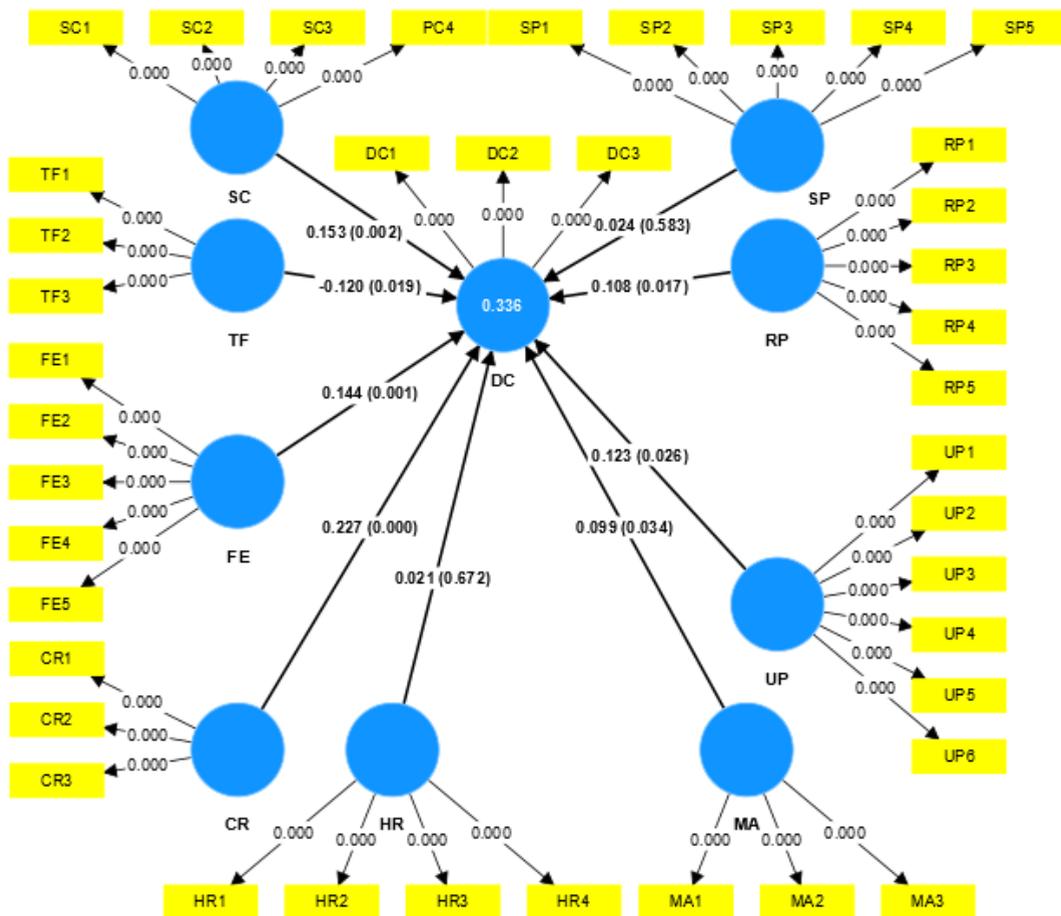
	UP	CR	DC	FE	TF	HR	MA	SC	RP	SP
UP										
CR	0.732									
DC	0.583	0.623								
FE	0.618	0.646	0.549							
TF	0.635	0.713	0.366	0.548						
HR	0.715	0.807	0.531	0.554	0.679					
MA	0.561	0.474	0.484	0.593	0.457	0.539				
SC	0.576	0.65	0.562	0.51	0.505	0.62	0.412			
RP	0.601	0.523	0.47	0.491	0.514	0.533	0.511	0.39		
SP	0.341	0.308	0.251	0.401	0.416	0.42	0.462	0.423	0.299	

Source: Analysis results from Smart PLS 4.0.9.2 software

Convergent validity

According to Hair et al. (2014), the measure-

ment models achieve convergent validity when average variance extracted (AVE) is higher



Source: Analysis results from Smart PLS 4.0.9.2 software

Figure 2. Structural model

than or equal to 0.5. In this study, AVEs exceed the threshold of 0.5, which means the measurement models ensures the convergent validity.

Discriminant validity

To assess the discriminant validity, Henseler et al. (2015) suggested using HTMT index (Heterotrait-Monotrait) instead of using the square root of AVE proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Accordingly, the measurement model ensures the accuracy of discrimination when HTMT is less than or equal to 0.85. The results in Table 4 show that the HTMT indexes are all < 0.85, which means the measurement models are suitable for the next analysis step.

4.2. Evaluation of the structural model

The results show that there is no multicollinearity when all VIFs are less than 3. R-square is 0.336, which means the model can explain 33.6% of the influence of variables on the decision to choose a university. Cross-validated redundancy Q² shows the predictive power of the model. In this study, Q² is 0.198, which shows that the model ensures the predictive power.

To determine the factors affecting the student's decision to choose a university, the study conducts Bootstrapping regression of 5,000 samples. The results of hypothesis testing are shown in Table 5.

The findings show that the factors influencing students' decision (DC) to choose a university including student's characteristics (SC), curriculums (CR), tuition fees (TF), facilities and equipment (FE), marketing activities (MA), university's reputation (RP) and university personality (UP). In which, the curriculums (CR) (Path coefficient = 0.225), student's characteristics (SC) (Path coefficient = 0.153), facilities and equipment (FE) (Path coefficient = 0.144) are three factors that have the greatest impact on the decision to choose a university. Research results confirm that the university's curriculums (CR) is the most crucial component in attracting students. The curriculums should be designed to ensure the provision of practical knowledge and necessary skills to meet the job needs of students upon graduation. This finding is in line with earlier research such as Joseph et al. (2012), Le (2020), and Stephenson et al. (2016). The current study programs of VNU have been newly built and adjusted to meet the requirements of the 4th Industrial Revolution and the needs of society. Curriculums are designed with the goal of enhancing practical time and learning through first-hand experience.

Student characteristics (SC) associated with academic performance, aptitudes, interests and career orientations are shown to have the second largest impact on students' selection. The results are consistent with the findings

Table 5. Structural model path coefficients results

Hypothesis	Path coefficients	P values	Result
H1: SC-> DC	0.153	0.002	Accepted
H2: SP-> DC	-0.014	0.583	Rejected
H3: CR-> DC	0.225	0.000	Accepted
H4: HR-> DC	0.023	0.672	Rejected
H5: TF-> DC	-0.118	0.019	Accepted
H6: FE-> DC	0.144	0.001	Accepted
H7: MA-> DC	0.096	0.034	Accepted
H8: UP-> DC	0.122	0.026	Accepted
H9: RP-> DC	0.109	0.017	Accepted

Source: Analysis results from Smart PLS 4.0.9.2 software

by Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2015) and Lien et al. (2015) who indicated that students choose a university that matches their abilities, interests and career goals.

Facilities and equipment (FE) have a positive impact on students choosing a university to attend. The previous studies also indicated that students give a high degree of importance to the university's facilities and equipment when deciding where to enroll (Dwaikat, 2021; Kirupainayagam & Sutha, 2022). In fact, although there are still many limitations in terms of facilities, VNU in general and its member universities in particular have been making efforts to improve the facilities at the lecture halls as well as build a new campus in Hoa Lac. This is one of the attempts to build a green university that attracts students.

A new point in the research is to add an intangible element- university personality (UP) in the research model. Research results show that six personality traits of the university namely (i) friendliness and dedication of lecturers and support staff; (ii) fairness, honesty; (iii) excitement and dynamism; (iv) attractiveness; (v) prestige and (vi) the degree of internationalization have a positive influence on students' decisions (DC).

Notably, it seems that students do not pay much attention to the professional knowledge and skills of the lecturers and support personnel when choosing a university ($p\text{-value} = 0.672 > 0.05$). This result is different from previous studies on the role of human resources (HR) in students' university selection (Gupta et al., 2022; Teeroovengadum et al., 2016). This can be explained that in this study, the observed variables measuring latent variables (human resources) only include aspects of knowledge and skills of lecturers and support staff. The attitude and behavior of staff is mentioned in the university personality. The findings place a strong emphasis on the importance of intangible elements such as the fairness of how students are graded and how friendly and committed professors and staff are when they talk to students (mentioned in the university brand personality factor). The results also

show that the influence of surrounding people (SP) (parents, friends) on students' choice of university is not statistically significant ($p\text{-value} = 0.583 > 0.05$). This finding is consistent with a recent study by Srivastava and Dhamija (2022). In the context of technology 4.0, students can access a wealth of information on various channels to make university selections independently of others around them.

5. Conclusion and implications

In the context of intense competition in the higher education, as well as society's growing demand for high-quality human resources, universities have increasingly concentrated on boosting educational quality in order to attract potential students. With the role of the national leader in training high-quality human resources, VNU needs to have strategies and plans in attracting high-quality students. The goal of this research is to discover the elements that influence VNU students' decision to attend university, thereby offering policy implications for university administrators. Research results have shown that factors associated with universities have an important influence on students' decision, including curriculums, facilities and equipment, university personality, tuition fee, marketing activities and university's reputation. Some suggested implications to improve the efficiency of enrollment activities are as follows: *Firstly*, curriculums must be reviewed and adjusted to meet the actual needs of society and employers in terms of specialized knowledge and necessary skills. When developing or modifying training programs, it is critical to conduct a serious and objective survey of employer needs.

Secondly, universities need to ensure the best learning conditions for students. This is associated with the improvement of facilities and equipment. Besides, additional support services such as 24/7 learner support service; catering services, housing for students; space for extracurricular activities also need to be focused.

Thirdly, the invisible factor- university person-

ality is considered to have a great influence on students' decisions. The university needs to build a friendly, fair and honest university environment.

Fourthly, in addition to the appropriate tuition policy as prescribed by the Law, universities need to diversify their financial aid and scholarship policies so that more students can access the university's educational service.

Fifthly, universities need to further increase their interest in improving university ranking indicators. To achieve this goal, educational institutions must actively innovate and improve the quality of education; promote international cooperation activities in both teaching and research; create and update a comprehensive and current data set for local and international rating organizations.

Sixth, universities need to focus on providing accurate and timely information to potential learners. In addition to their official website, universities need to expand social media channels. Furthermore, it is necessary to develop specific communication strategies with media priorities in each certain period.

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Although the study has some meaningful contributions in pointing out the factors affecting students' decision to choose a university, the study still has some limitations as follows. At the beginning, the study only collected data from students at Vietnam National University, Hanoi- a public university- and did not compare them to private universities. Future studies should broaden the respondents to include students from non-public universities and compare their findings to this study. The second limitation is that the study only applies the quantitative survey method and makes implications from the survey results for students. The following studies may also include additional approaches such as in-depth interviews and focus groups to gain a more nuanced understanding of the study problem. ■

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