

FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENTS' CHOICE OF UNIVERSITY: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON STUDENTS FROM MEKONG DELTA STUDYING IN DONG THAP UNIVERSITY

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Received:	05/5/2023	The factors affecting prospective students' decision to choose a university are very important and are especially concerned by higher education institutions. This study aims at studying the factors affecting the decision to choose a university by the students from Mekong delta who are studying at Dong Thap University (DThU). Sample size of this research is 1663 students who were first-year, second-year, third-year, fourth-year students and come from 13 provinces in the region. By using quantitative research methods through popular statistics calculation such as exploratory factor analysis (EFA), correlation analysis, especially linear regression analysis, the study identified five factors that had a positive influence on students' decision to choose a university. Specifically, the factor of job opportunities had the strongest influence on a student's decision, followed by the university's reputation and characteristics, advice from reference group, university's communication activities with its prospective students, while the lowest influence was the students' personal characteristics.
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KEYWORDS		
Choice of university		
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Advice from reference group		

CÁC YẾU TỐ ẢNH HƯỞNG ĐẾN VIỆC CHỌN TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC: MỘT NGHIÊN CỨU KHÁM PHÁ TỪ CÁC SINH VIÊN Ở KHU VỰC ĐỒNG BẰNG SÔNG CỬU LONG ĐANG HỌC TẠI ĐẠI HỌC ĐỒNG THÁP

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO		TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài:	05/5/2023	Các yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến quyết định chọn trường đại học của sinh viên tương lai có ý nghĩa rất quan trọng và đang nhận được sự quan tâm đặc biệt của các cơ sở giáo dục đại học. Nghiên cứu này nhằm tìm hiểu các yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến quyết định chọn đại học của các sinh viên khu vực đồng bằng sông Cửu Long đang học tập tại Trường Đại học Đồng Tháp, với cỡ mẫu là 1663 sinh viên từ năm thứ nhất đến năm thứ tư và đến từ 13 tỉnh khác nhau trong khu vực. Bằng phương pháp nghiên cứu định lượng thông qua các thống kê phổ biến như phân tích nhân tố khám phá, phân tích tương quan, đặc biệt là phân tích hồi quy tuyến tính, nghiên cứu đã chỉ ra năm yếu tố có ảnh hưởng cùng chiều đến quyết định chọn trường đại học của sinh viên. Cụ thể, yếu tố cơ hội việc làm có ảnh hưởng mạnh nhất đến quyết định chọn trường của sinh viên, tiếp đến là các yếu tố danh tiếng và đặc điểm trường đại học, tư vấn từ những người quan trọng, nỗ lực giao tiếp của trường đại học, trong khi đó ảnh hưởng thấp nhất là yếu tố đặc điểm cá nhân của sinh viên.
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1. Introduction

In the social context of increasing competition in higher education, universities are facing many challenges, especially the pressure to enroll enough students [1]. One of the main reasons for this competition is the increasing number of higher education institutions in recent years [2], [3], resulting in students having a lot of opportunities to choose their favorite university as well as their majors. Therefore, in order to apply effective strategies in attracting students, higher education institutions should be aware of the factors that affect students' decision to enroll in an institution [4]. According to Shah *et al.* [5], it is important to study the factors affecting students' decision to choose a higher education institution because of several reasons. Firstly, universities know why students choose a particular institution of higher education to study. Secondly, the information obtained can help universities design appropriate marketing plans. Thirdly, universities understand students' expectations and draw up specific strategies to improve students' experience during their studies.

The topic of students' decision to choose a university has been of great interest to many researchers [6] and has been shown through many of their studies with different approaches. Many research models on university choice have been proposed by researchers and they serve as a premise for studies in this field. Specifically, Litten [6] outlined a three-stage model for university choice. The first stage begins with the student's desire to study at a higher education institution, the second stage is the students' inquiries of potential higher education institutions and the final stage is a combination of the number of applications for admission, actual admission and academic enrolment [6]. Similarly, Hossler and Gallagher [7] proposed a university choice model in which students seek post-secondary educational experiences in three stages. The first stage, which is considered as an orientation stage, aims at determining whether the student himself or herself wants to continue their studies in a university, the second stage is the stage of students' gathering information about higher education institutions and the third ones is the interaction of the students in choosing an institution for registration [7]. In addition, Gorman [8] categorized the factors affecting students' university choice decisions into two main groups. The first group, which is considered as an uncontrollable group, include geographical location, natural beauty of the university and the second group, considered as controllable factors, include the institutions' quality of education and academic reputation. Chapman [9] argues that in order to understand why students choose a certain university, it is necessary to take fundamental factors into account, namely students' characteristics, student's family background, and the characteristics of the university. In particular, students' choice of university is influenced by internal factors (students' individual characteristics), as well as external ones. The former includes students' economic status, aptitude, level of educational desire/aspiration, and academic performance at high school level. The latter includes the influence of important involved persons such as friends, parents, teachers; fixed characteristics of the university such as location, cost, availability of training programs and the university's efforts to communicate with prospective students. In another study, Ming [10] suggested that students' university choice decisions are influenced by two groups of factors that are directly related to universities. The first includes fixed characteristics of universities such as location, curriculum, reputation, facilities, tuition fees, financial aid, and job opportunities. The second group deals with the university's communication efforts with students such as advertising, socializing with high schools, organization of university campus tours for potential students. Akar [11] shows that the most important factor influencing a student's choice of university is the university's academic reputation and prestige, followed by its location. In addition, students tend to choose the universities that are close to their families and their choices are influenced by various factors such as the university's website, advice from parents, peers and teachers. Moovoravit and Dowpiset [12] argue that factors such as tuition fees, parents' advice, university's location and its

reputation all have a significant influence on a student's choice of university. Similarly, Hidayat *et al.* [13] showed that along with the institution's promotion activities of brand image and teaching-learning facility had a significant influence on new students' decision to choose private universities. Meanwhile, Mustafa *et al.* [14] suggest that three factors could influence students' decision to choose higher education institutions: quality of education, cultural values, and cost of education. In addition, their study results show that, to different extents, demographic characteristics significantly predict students' choice of higher education institutions. According to Ilgan *et al.* [3], the important factors that influence students' preferences in choosing a university are future expectations for the profession, quality, and popularity of education given by universities.

In Vietnam, the issue of how students choose a university after graduating from high school has attracted the attention of many researchers. Specifically, the research by Do *et al.* [15] suggested that factors that have a significant influence on students' decision to choose a university are related to students' personal characteristics such as interests, abilities and socio-economic status. Besides, the institution's academic reputation and prestige along with its availability of high-quality training majors play an important role in their choice decision. In addition, among the affecting factors, the ones contributed by students' parents were at the first position for a number of reasons, especially for financial support. Furthermore, the university's efforts to inform and engage prospective students by using various channels such as websites, brochures, campus visits, and advisors' advice have a significant influence on a student's choice of university. In addition, Tran *et al.* [16] have identified 05 factors affecting students' decision to choose a major, ranging from the highest to lowest: personal characteristics, the media, university's characteristics and advice, career opportunities and admission possibilities. Meanwhile, Do [17] said that the factor that has the strongest impact on students' choice of university is the training cost. The factors with the lower impact were in turn the students themselves, the advice by the reference group, extracurricular activities, and the lowest impact was the university's reputation. Nguyen [18] also found that the university's reputation had the greatest impact on students' choice, followed by factors of communication activities, learning conditions, factors related to the student himself or herself and the reference group were of the least affects.

The literature review reveals that there are many different factors affecting students' choice of university. These factors are directly related to the university, to the students, and to the reference group. Dong Thap University (DthU) is a public higher education institution and is in its development stage. Although DThU is allowed to enroll students nationwide, its potential students come from the Mekong Delta region and it is in a tough competition with many other universities in terms of enrollment, so this research is conducted for two purposes. First, identifying what factors have affected the choice of DThU by students in Mekong delta. Second, identifying what factor has the strongest influence on students' decision to choose DThU.

2. Research methods

2.1. Research model

Based on the university selection model proposed by Chapman [9] and a number of other studies conducted in recent times, the author proposed a model to study the factors affecting the choice of DThU by students from the Mekong delta in Figure 1.

The determination of the independent variables in the model was done based on the results of the literature review, such as university's reputation and characteristics [8] - [12], [15], [17], [18], university's communication activities with its prospective students [2], [9] - [11], [13], [15], [16], [18], job opportunities [10], [16], [19], [20], students' personal characteristics [9], [15] - [18], and advice from reference group (parents, siblings, teachers, peers, university advisors, university alumni) [2], [9], [11], [12], [15], [17] - [19].

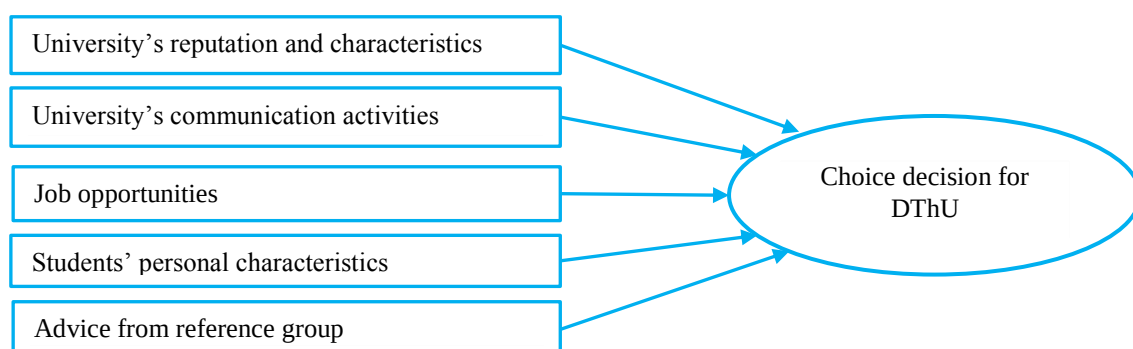


Figure 1. *Proposed research model*

Based on the identified research model above, the author proposed five hypotheses in this study. Firstly, the university's reputation and characteristics had a positive influence on the student's decision to choose a university. Secondly, the university's communication with its prospective students had a positive influence on the student's decision to choose a university. Thirdly, employment opportunities had a positive influence on student's choice decision. Fourthly, the student's personal characteristics had a positive influence on a student's decision. Finally, advice from the reference group had a positive influence on a student's decision. The test of the research hypotheses will be clearly indicated in the results of linear regression analysis and presented in the section of study results.

2.2. Data collection instrument

A two-part questionnaire was designed to gather students' feedback on issues related to their university choice decisions. The first part included the items that collected students' identification information such as gender, major of admission, year of admission, methods of admission, location of high school, grade 12 academic classification, family economic condition, parents' careers, income level of their families. The second part consisted of items belonging to six groups of factors, of which five groups represented five independent variables and one group represented the dependent variable (the student's decision to choose a university). Specifically, the university's reputation and characteristics with eight items related to prestige, seniority, teaching-learning facilities, dormitories, teaching staff, diversity of training programs, tuition fees and the university's scholarship policies were coded into DD1 to DD8 variables respectively. The university's communication activities with prospective students with five items related to activities that provide students with vital information and activities, advice on admissions were coded into GT1 to GT5 respectively. The job opportunities with six items related to the yearly announcement of the employment rate of graduates, the publication of information on the employment situation of successful alumni, the organization of job fairs, the introduction of job opportunities and recruitment needs for students after graduation coded into individual items from VL1 to VL6. The students' personal characteristics with four items related to family economic conditions, family income level, parents' careers, travel distance from home to university coded into CN1 to CN4. The advice from the reference group with eight items related to advice by parents, formed teachers, subject teachers and teachers of career orientation, high school administrators, friends, alumni of the university and university advisors were coded into TV1 to TV8 respectively. The above items were all designed in accordance with the Likert scale of five levels: 1 - Completely unimportant, 2 - Less important, 3 - Normal, 4 - Important and 5 - Very important. Besides, the dependent variable represented by five items related to the students' consideration, orientation, and satisfaction towards choosing a university were coded into QD1 to QD5 respectively. These items were designed in accordance with the Likert scale of five levels: 1 - Disagree completely, 2 - Disagree, 3 - Confuse, 4 - Agree and 5 - Completely agree. The

completed questionnaire has been designed on online mode by using the Google Form and sent to classes of full-time regular students studying in DThU via the faculty's student management staff and those from the University Student Counseling Board as assistants.

2.3. Participants' characteristics

After more than a month of conducting an online survey (from 16/11/2022 to 19/12/2022), the author received the response of 2221 full-time regular students who were studying at DThU in the enrollment courses from 2019 to 2022 (corresponding to students from the first to fourth year), including 2178 students from high schools in the Mekong Delta region. After cleaning the data, the author removed the unreliable feedback (only one level of feedback for all items) and the feedback by non-Mekong Delta students, the appropriate number of responses was retained for statistics and analysis in this study were 1663. The detailed characteristics of the students who participated in the feedback were shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Participants' characteristics*

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Duration of study	First year	849	52.0
	Second year	386	23.6
	Third year	238	14.6
	Fourth year	160	9.8
Gender	Male	553	33.9
	Female	1080	66.1
Province	Tra Vinh	26	1.6
	Bac Lieu	27	1.7
	Soc Trang	28	1.7
	Hau Giang	34	2.1
	Can Tho	37	2.3
	Kien Giang	53	3.2
	Ca Mau	79	4.8
	Tien Giang	93	5.7
	An Giang	95	5.8
	Vinh Long	100	6.1
	Long An	101	6.2
	Ben Tre	139	8.5
	Dong Thap	821	50.3

(Source: Statistics from author's collected data, 2023)

In general, the research sample was diverse in each characteristic, namely students from the first to fourth years, both male and female, especially those from 13 provinces in the Mekong Delta region. However, the sample did not have a balance between survey respondents in each characteristic. Specifically, the majority of responses came from first-year students with 849 responses, accounting for 52%, and mainly female students with 1080 responses, accounting for 66.1%. In particular, the majority of students responding to the survey graduated from high schools in Dong Thap province with 821 students, accounting for 50.3%. The disparity in the number of students from Dong Thap province and other provinces in the Mekong delta in this study was consistent with the current reality at DThU, that was almost all students in the university came from high schools in Dong Thap province.

2.4. Data analysis

The data analysis in this study was done using SPSS software, version 22.0. The data analysis process began with making descriptive statistics to determine the characteristics of the studied sample, then Cronbach's Alpha analysis was performed to evaluate the reliability of the scale as well as removed inappropriate items based on the values of Corrected Item - Total Correlation

(CI-TC) coefficient. In addition, exploratory factor analysis was performed to determine the convergence of items into factors, from which independent variables of the research model were determined. Moreover, correlation analysis was used to evaluate the degree of correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variable as well as the correlation degree between independent variables. Finally, linear regression analysis was performed in order to determine whether independent variables affected the dependent variable as well as the degree of influence of each independent variable on the dependent variable, thereby generating the results of testing proposed research hypotheses as well as the main conclusions in this study.

3. Findings and discussions

3.1. Cronbach's Alpha analysis results

The evaluation of data reliability was made based on the results of Cronbach's Alpha analysis. Specifically, the scale was accepted when Cronbach's Alpha value reached 0.6 or higher [21]. Additionally, the items in each scale were accepted when the value of CI-TC coefficient reached 0.3 or higher [22], [23]. The statistical results were shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha analysis results

Item	Content	CI-TC	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha
University's reputation and characteristics				0.91
DD1	University's prestige in Bachelor of Art (BA) training activities	0.704	0.899	
DD2	University's long history of providing BA training programs	0.697	0.900	
DD3	University's well-furnished teaching-learning facilities	0.714	0.899	
DD4	University's dormitories for students	0.615	0.908	
DD5	University's well-qualified teaching staff	0.802	0.891	
DD6	University's diversified training programs	0.736	0.897	
DD7	University's scholarship and preferential policies for students	0.766	0.894	
DD8	University's appropriate tuition	0.665	0.903	
University's communication activities				0.925
GT1	Admission information is published on website, Zalo, Facebook	0.810	0.908	
GT2	Admission information is communicated to high schools	0.861	0.898	
GT3	Admission consultancy is directly done in high schools	0.855	0.899	
GT4	Admission activities are conducted online by broadcasting livestream	0.788	0.912	
GT5	Students' questions and enquiries are answered via phone calls, Zalo, Facebook page	0.717	0.925	
Job opportunities				0.933
VL1	University's annual publication of employment rates	0.766	0.925	
VL2	University's information share about successful graduated students	0.785	0.923	
VL3	University's job fair is organized for students	0.813	0.919	
VL4	University's introduction of jobs designated for each training programs to students	0.835	0.917	
VL5	University's introduction of hiring information to students	0.829	0.917	
VL6	University's holder of training programs whose students are in strong need of employment	0.790	0.922	
Students' personal characteristics				0.845
CN1	Students' family economic conditions	0.723	0.788	
CN2	Students' family income level	0.790	0.761	
CN3	Students' parents occupations	0.602	0.847	
CN4	Students' travel distance from family to university	0.642	0.821	
Advice from reference group				0.949
TV1	Parents' and family members' advice	0.612	0.954	
TV2	Formed teacher's advice	0.865	0.939	

Item	Content	CI-TC	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Cronbach's Alpha
TV3	Advice from subject teachers in high schools	0.850	0.940	
TV4	Advice from teachers of job orientation in high schools	0.873	0.938	
TV5	Advice from principal, teachers in general in high school	0.896	0.937	
TV6	Advice from peer groups in high school	0.804	0.943	
TV7	Advice from university's ongoing students and graduated students	0.808	0.942	
TV8	Advice from university's staff of university admission counsel	0.787	0.944	
University choice decision				0.840
QD1	You have had a clear orientation for university choice	0.662	0.804	
QD2	You have carefully considered many universities before selecting DThU	0.679	0.799	
QD3	You are content with your decision on DThU	0.772	0.775	
QD4	You have no thoughts of choosing another training programs in DThU	0.461	0.873	
QD5	Learning in DThU is your best choice	0.723	0.787	
QD6	You have had a clear orientation for university choice	0.662	0.804	

(Source: Statistics from author's collected data, 2023)

Statistical results showed that the Cronbach's Alpha values of component scales were greater than 0.6 and reached values of 0.840 or higher. Moreover, the CI-TC coefficient of items in each scale were greater than 0.3 and reached 0.461 or higher. Specifically, the university's reputation and characteristics scale with eight items, the Cronbach's Alpha value was 0.910, and items with the CI-TC coefficient values were from 0.615 to 0.803. The university's communication activities scale with five items reached Cronbach's Alpha equally to 0.925, and items with the CI-TC coefficient values reached from 0.717 to 0.861. The job opportunities scale including six items with Cronbach's Alpha was 0.933, and items with the CI-TC coefficient values reached from 0.766 to 0.835. Students' personal characteristics scale including eight items with Cronbach's Alpha was 0.845, and the CI-TC coefficient values of items reached from 0.602 to 0.790. Advice for reference group consisting of eight items with Cronbach's Alpha value was 0.949, and items with the CI-TC coefficient values obtained from 0.612 to 0.896. Furthermore, the student's university choice decision scale consisting of five items had Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.840 and items with the CI-TC coefficient values ranging from 0.461 to 0.772. Thus, the component scales all had good reliability coefficients and items in each scale had satisfactory CI-TC values, so they should be retained in the scales for further analysis and evaluation in the study.

3.2. Exploratory factor analysis results

The results of the exploratory factor analysis with selected factor loading value of 0.5 formed five factors, in which all items converged on the corresponding factors as defined in the research model and all had factor loading values greater than 0.5 (Table 3). Specifically, advice from the reference group factor including eight items with factor loading values reached from 0.593 to 0.901. Additionally, the university's reputation and characteristics factor consisting of eight items with factor loading values reached from 0.640 to 0.782. Moreover, job opportunities factor including six items with factor loading values achieved from 0.681 to 0.806. Furthermore, the university's communication with students factor consisting of five items with factor loading values obtained from 0.521 to 0.825. Finally, students' personal characteristics factor including four items with factor loading values reached from 0.705 to 0.834. For the above results, all selected items were further retained in each factor for further analysis in this study. In addition, the KMO and Bartlett test had a KMO value = 0.960, satisfying the KMO condition, which was greater than 0.5 and less than 1. Moreover, the Bartlett test results with Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05 showed that the items in each component scale were correlated with the representative factor. Finally, the total variance value extracted by 71.934% > 50% showed that 71.934% of the variability of the data was explained by five factors with items in each identified factor.

Table 3. Rotated Component Matrix

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
TV5	0.901				
TV4	0.886				
TV2	0.871				
TV3	0.868				
TV6	0.824				
TV7	0.803				
TV8	0.754				
TV1	0.593				
DDT5		0.782			
DDT7		0.735			
DDT3		0.723			
DDT1		0.702			
DDT6		0.694			
DDT2		0.675			
DDT4		0.644			
DDT8		0.640			
CHVL4			0.806		
CHVL5			0.796		
CHVL3			0.737		
CHVL6			0.710		
CHVL1			0.692		
CHVL2			0.681		
GT2				0.825	
GT3				0.821	
GT1				0.817	
GT4				0.629	
GT5				0.521	
DDCN2					0.834
DDCN1					0.783
DDCN3					0.766
DDCN4					0.705
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.960				
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Sig.)	0.000				
Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings (%)	71.934				

(Source: Statistics from author's collected data, 2023)

For the factor representing the dependent variable (the student's decision to choose a university), the KMO and Bartlett test results with a KMO value = 0.829 satisfied a condition of greater than 0.5 and less than 1, the Bartlett test with a value Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05 indicated that the data was consistent with the EFA analysis. Additionally, the total variance value extracted with a value of 63,639 showed 63.639% of the variability of the data explained by the extracted factor. Furthermore, the factor loading values of items from 0.604 to 0.884 were all larger than 0.5, so they were all retained in the scale for further analysis in the study.

3.3. Results of correlation analysis and linear regression analysis

Correlation analysis was performed to determine the correlation degree between dependent variable Y - University choice decision and independent variables X1 - Advice from the reference group, X2 - University's reputation and characteristics, X3 - Job opportunities, X4 - University's communication with students, X5 - Students' personal characteristics, as well as the degree of correlation between independent variables.

Table 4. Correlation analysis results

		Y	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5
Y	Pearson Correlation	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)						
	N	1633					
X1	Pearson Correlation	0.497**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000					
	N	1633	1633				
X2	Pearson Correlation	0.601**	0.460**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000				
	N	1633	1633	1633			
X3	Pearson Correlation	0.669**	0.488**	0.686**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000			
	N	1633	1633	1633	1633		
X4	Pearson Correlation	0.571**	0.443**	0.697**	0.649**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		
	N	1633	1633	1633	1633	1633	
X5	Pearson Correlation	0.450**	0.392**	0.408**	0.516**	0.435**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	1633	1633	1633	1633	1633	1633

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(Source: Statistics from author's collected data, 2023)

The results of the correlation analysis in Table 4 showed that the dependent variable Y was statistically significant for linear correlation with the independent variables X1, X2, X3, X4, X5 with the reliability of 99% because of Sig. = 0.000 < 0.01 and because the Pearson correlation coefficients reached from 0.450 to 0.669 respectively. In addition, among the independent variables, there was also a statistically significant correlation with the reliability of 99% because of Sig. = 0.000 < 0.01, where the lowest value was the correlation between X1 - Advice from the reference group with X5 - Students' personal characteristics with a correlation coefficient value being equal to 0.392, whereas the highest degree of correlation occurred between X2 - University's reputation and characteristics and X4 - University's communication with students, with a Pearson correlation coefficient value being equal to 0.697.

Table 5. Results of ANOVA analysis

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	558.663	5	111.733	356.880	0.000 ^b
Residual	509.383	1627	0.313		
Total	1068.046	1632			

a. Dependent Variable: Y

b. Predictors: (Constant), X5, X1, X2, X4, X3

(Source: Statistics from author's collected data, 2023)

Furthermore, the ANOVA analysis results in Table 5 with Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05 indicated that the linear regression analysis was consistent with this data.

The determination of independent variables X1, X2, X3, X4, X5 affecting the dependent variable Y – Student's decision to choose a university was shown in Table 6.

The results of the linear regression analysis had Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05, and the Beta coefficients of 0.162, 0.168, 0.358, 0.113 and 0.084 were all greater than 0, which indicated that the independent variables X1, X2, X3, X4, X5 all had a statistically significant positive effect on the dependent variable Y. This showed that the higher appreciation students had for the factor of advice from the reference group (X1), University's reputation and characteristics (X2), job opportunities (X3), university's communication activities with prospective students (X4) and

students' personal characteristics (X5), the greater these factors affected student's decision to choose a university. In particular, Beta = 0.358 showed that the independent variable X3 - job opportunities had the strongest influence on a student's decision to choose a university, while Beta = 0.084 for the X5 - Students' personal characteristics had the lowest influence on a student's decision. By these results above, all five research hypotheses proposed in this study were accepted.

Table 6. Results of linear regression analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	0.636	0.084		7.538	0.000		
1	X1	0.134	0.017	0.162	7.918	0.000	0.703
	X2	0.171	0.027	0.168	6.324	0.000	0.413
	X3	0.359	0.027	0.358	13.506	0.000	0.418
	X4	0.106	0.024	0.113	4.412	0.000	0.447
	X5	0.079	0.019	0.084	4.094	0.000	0.698

a. Dependent Variable: Y

(Source: Statistics from author's data, 2023)

For students from the Mekong Delta being the study participants, the results of this study showed similarities with previous studies on factors that affected students' decision to choose a university when five factors in the study model had the same statistical and positive significance to a student's decision to choose a university. In particular, this study results showed that the university's reputation and characteristics were in favor of the results of studies [8]-[12], [15], [17, 18]. In addition, the university's communication with students supported the results of studies [2], [9]-[11], [13], [15], [16], [18]. Moreover, job opportunity supported the results of studies [10], [16], [19], [20]. Furthermore, students' characteristics factor was in favor of the results of the studies [9], [15]-[18]. Finally, advice from the reference group was consistent with the results of the studies [2], [9], [11], [12], [15], [17]-[19]. However, there was a difference between this study and other studies on the influence level of factors on students' decision to choose a university. Specifically, the factors that had the strongest influence on a student's decision in previous studies were the university's academic reputation and prestige [11], [18], students' characteristics [16], training cost [17], while the factors that had the strongest influence on a student's decision in this study was the job opportunity, although this supported the results of the study [20]. Additionally, with Beta = 0.358, the influence of the job opportunity on the student's decision was two times higher than the influence of factors X1 - Advice from the reference group with Beta = 0.162, factor X2 - university's reputation and characteristics with Beta = 0.168. Besides, the degree of influence of factor X3 - job opportunities was three times higher than the influence of factor X4 - university's communication activities with prospective students with Beta = 0.113, and four times higher than the degree of influence of factor X5 - students' characteristics with Beta = 0.084. This showed that students were very interested in job opportunities after graduation, so publishing detailed information about employment would be very important to students' decisions. With five factors identified in this study all influencing students' decision to choose a university, it showed that in order to attract more future students, universities were supposed to promote enrollment policies to give potential students their full information such as reputation and prestige of higher education training activities, teaching and learning facilities, teaching staff, training programs, especially more information related to job opportunities because having a stable job was the first consideration made by many new students before entering into a university.

4. Conclusion

This research has provided more information about the factors that affected a student's decision to choose a university, with the job opportunity factor having the strongest influence.

This was also in line with the fact that most students entering university were eager to get good jobs after graduation despite the fact that students were required to make a lot of effort during their university time as well as during their working period after recruitment in order to secure stable jobs. However, it was important in the early stages for universities alone to attract students to apply for admission and official course registration before starting training activities. To do this, higher education institutions must have an effective admission consulting strategy to reach out to students in high schools to provide them with useful information related to the university's training activities, which served as a basis for the student's orientation and selection of their favorite university, and favorite major. Although the sample size was large enough with 1663 students, the limitation of this study was that the majority of responses (more than 50%) came from students in Dong Thap province while the remaining nearly 50% of the sample were students from high schools in 12 other provinces in the Mekong Delta. Therefore, another study conducted on a larger scale, attracting the participation of students from high schools in the Mekong Delta region was suggested for future implementation.

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