

APPLICATION OF THE TWO-STEP FLOW THEORY IN UNIVERSITY ADMISSION COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS IN VIETNAM'S DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the application of the two-step flow theory in university admission communication strategies, particularly in the context of university autonomy in Vietnam. The two-step flow theory, developed by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), emphasizes the role of opinion leaders in transmitting messages from the information source to the target audience. In addition to analyzing the core elements of the theory and the methods of identifying and utilizing influential individuals within the educational community, this study proposes solutions for applying digital tools to support communication processes. These solutions include optimizing content and search engine tools, organizing both online and offline communication events, and closely coordinating with opinion leaders to implement proactive, flexible, and creative admission communication campaigns that are sustained throughout the process. Consequently, the study aims to enhance the quality of university admissions in the context of digital transformation.

Keywords: application of two-step flow theory, digital context, opinion leaders, university admission communication, university autonomy

1. Introduction

In the current context of university autonomy in Vietnam, the autonomy of universities is influenced by various factors, including public policies aimed at optimizing resources and aligning teaching and research activities with societal needs. This objective is being actively pursued through a series of mechanisms and policies that serve as a legal basis for universities to exercise their autonomy. Notably, policies related to financial autonomy, the Education Law of 2005, the Higher Education Law of 2012, the amended Higher Education Law of 2019, and various legal documents have recognized the granting of autonomy and accountability to universities (Do Duc Minh, 2018). This has encouraged universities to take a more proactive approach in branding communication and implementing more effective admission communication strategies, which are key elements in ensuring the survival and development of higher education institutions.

The two-step flow theory is one of the important communication theories that has been proven effective in conveying messages from information sources to the public through intermediaries (opinion leaders). This theory not only emphasizes the role of mass communication channels but also focuses on the use of influential individuals to disseminate messages to target public groups in a more profound and reliable manner.

The rapid development of digital technology and social media has transformed the nature of the communication process. While communication used to be a one-way process from the source to the receiver, it has now evolved into a more complex, multidimensional, and interactive process. The public not only receives messages but also responds in various ways. The effectiveness of communication now depends not only on the quality of the message but also on the culture and experiential context of individuals. However, through our research, we have found that most higher education institutions in Vietnam have relied heavily on traditional experience-based communication, without giving due attention to updating new, purposeful communication methods to keep pace with the evolving trends of the era.

This study analyzes and proposes methods for applying the two-step flow theory in university admission communication strategies. The focus is on clarifying the key elements of the theory, the methods for identifying and utilizing influential individuals, as well as the digital tools and main communication channels that support this process. Through this, we aim to enhance the effectiveness of admission communication campaigns, helping universities attract more high-quality prospective students.

2. Research overview

The two-step flow theory is one of the most influential communication theories used in campaigns by organizations, governments, and businesses. This theory emphasizes the role of influential individuals in shaping public opinion. Research has shown that the theory has been widely applied and successfully used in fields such as marketing, politics, and healthcare. Katz and Lazarsfeld highlighted the intermediary role of opinion leaders in conveying information from mass media to the public. Instead of directly reaching the entire audience, media messages are first received by opinion leaders, who then disseminate them to different groups in ways that are more accessible, understandable, and persuasive (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). Nisbet's research also demonstrated that opinion leaders can significantly influence voters' views and behaviors (Nisbet, 2009). In marketing, this theory has been used to develop marketing campaigns, particularly in the digital media environment, where social media and online platforms play a crucial role in spreading messages (Chu & Kim, 2011).

In the context of enrollment communication, research has shown that using influential individuals can increase trust and improve the reach of target audiences. This is especially important in the digital media environment, where students and parents often rely on trusted sources of information when making decisions about educational institutions and programs. Chu and Kim (2011) highlighted the interaction between opinion leaders and the public on social media, which helps build trust and fosters positive behavior towards educational products and services. These findings suggest the potential of the two-step flow theory to enhance the effectiveness of university enrollment communication campaigns.

In Vietnam, research related to the two-step flow theory is still limited. Through our survey, we found that recent studies mention the role of digital media and how universities can leverage technology to improve enrollment efficiency (Nguyễn Thanh, 2024). However, this research is primarily theoretical and lacks substantial evidence of the practical application of the theory in specific enrollment communication campaigns.

Overall, the application of the two-step flow theory in university enrollment communication campaigns in Vietnam has not received adequate attention. The practical applications in recent years at educational institutions have not been systematically coordinated, resulting in less-than-optimal effectiveness. Therefore, it is crucial to intensify research and application of the two-step flow theory in the rapidly developing digital technology landscape. This will not only optimize the effectiveness of communication campaigns but also foster deeper connections with target audiences, ultimately improving the quality and quantity of university admissions.

3. Research Methodology

This paper employs a combination of methods to analyze the application of the two-step flow theory in university enrollment communication campaigns in Vietnam's digital media environment.

First, the document analysis method is applied to review previous studies related to the two-step flow theory, particularly those concerning communication campaigns and university enrollment communication in educational institutions. These materials provide an essential theoretical foundation and specific guidance for analyzing modern enrollment communication campaigns.

Next, content analysis is conducted on the enrollment communication messages of several universities. These messages are collected from social media, websites, email marketing, and online advertisements to identify how the messages are designed and delivered. The analysis focuses on clarifying the role of "opinion leaders" in the dissemination of enrollment messages to target audiences, assessing the effectiveness of the communication strategy based on the two-step flow theory.

Based on the results of content analysis, the study proposes that universities develop communication strategies with layered and interactive approaches between different target groups. Specifically, universities should utilize "opinion leaders" within the educational and social media communities to convey enrollment messages to larger public target groups, thereby amplifying the message's impact.

4. Two-Step Flow Theory in Communication

The two-step flow theory was proposed by sociologists Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet in the 1940s. As described by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), communication messages do not reach the public directly but rather through influential individuals, known as opinion leaders. These individuals receive information from the media and then transmit it to smaller groups within society. This model differs from the "hypodermic needle" model, which views mass communication effects as direct and powerful; instead, the two-step flow theory emphasizes the intermediary role of people in the communication process" (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955).

In the field of science communication, Nisbet (2009) described the use of opinion leaders as intermediaries between scientists and the public. These opinion leaders include teachers, businesspeople, lawyers, policymakers, community leaders, students, and media professionals who can reach the public more effectively due to their close ties with their communities. Initiatives like the Science & Engineering Ambassadors program, funded by the National Academy of Sciences, and the Science Booster Club, coordinated by the National Center for Science Education, are prime examples of this approach (Nisbet, 2009).

The two-step flow hypothesis in communication illustrates the intermediary process between communication messages and audience reactions. Opinion leaders often share characteristics with those they influence, based on personality, interests, demographics, or socioeconomic factors. They have the ability to alter the attitudes and behaviors of others through their influence. This theory aids in predicting how communication messages impact audience behavior and explains why certain communication campaigns may fail to change public attitudes as expected.

5. Key Elements of the Two-Step Flow Theory

The two-step flow theory, grounded in sociological communication theory, outlines how communication information spreads and influences the public through opinion leaders within communities and society. According to Rogers (2003), the main elements that contribute to the uniqueness and effectiveness of this theory include:

Mass Media Channels: These include traditional forms such as newspapers, television, and radio, as well as contemporary digital platforms like social media, mobile apps, personal blogs, and news websites. These channels serve as the initial sources of information and are the primary data providers for influential individuals.

Opinion Leaders: These are individuals with significant influence within a community, often possessing extensive knowledge and credibility in a particular field. They have the ability to access, interpret, and decode information from the media, then relay it to the public. Opinion leaders can be teachers, entrepreneurs, journalists, community leaders, or anyone who holds credibility and is trusted within a specific social group.

The Public: This group represents the ultimate target audience for communication messages. They receive information that has been processed and transmitted by opinion leaders, rather than directly from the mass media.

Similarity Between Opinion Leaders and Their Influenced Audience: Opinion leaders typically share characteristics with the public they influence, including personality traits, interests, demographics, or socioeconomic factors. This similarity enhances trust and effectiveness in message transmission.

Interaction Between Opinion Leaders and the Public: This process goes beyond one-way information transmission, encompassing conversations, discussions, and debates, which reinforce, clarify, and make the message more easily accepted by the public.

These elements create a complex yet effective system, wherein information from mass media is filtered through opinion leaders, who then modify and transmit it in a more understandable and relatable way to the public, ultimately leading to changes in attitudes and behaviors (Rogers, 2003).

From the analysis of university autonomy in the context of Vietnam, the realities of university admission communication, and the two-step flow communication theory discussed above, this study raises the following research questions: 1) How can the two-step flow theory be applied to optimize university admission communication strategies in Vietnamese universities in the digital age? 2) What is the role of opinion leaders in shaping the admission decisions of potential candidates? 3) What factors influence the effectiveness of using opinion leaders in university admission communication?

The research methods employed to address these questions include:

5.1. Applying the Two-Step Flow Theory to Optimize University Admission Communication Strategies in Vietnamese Universities During the Digital Era

Literature Review: This method involves collecting, synthesizing, and analyzing scholarly articles, monographs, and previous research related to the two-step flow theory, digital communication, and university admission communication strategies. The aim is to identify how the two-step flow theory has been successfully applied in other fields while exploring the potential adjustments needed to tailor the theory to the context of university admissions in Vietnam. The literature review also helps establish a theoretical foundation for subsequent research and affirms the relevance of the two-step flow theory in the digital era.

Case Study Analysis: This method is used to examine successful university admission communication campaigns where the two-step flow theory has been effectively implemented. By selecting and analyzing case studies from both Vietnamese and international universities, the research highlights key factors, application methods, and challenges that were overcome during the implementation process. The results from these case studies provide valuable insights and lessons that can be applied to the context of university admissions in Vietnam.

5.2. The Role of Opinion Leaders in Shaping the Admission Decisions of Potential Candidates

Survey of Candidates and Parents: Design and conduct surveys targeting candidates and their parents to assess the influence of opinion leaders on their admission decisions. Survey questions may focus on the level of trust, the extent of influence, and the role of opinion leaders in their choice of university.

Statistical Analysis: Utilize statistical analysis methods to determine the relationship between factors such as the presence of opinion leaders and the candidates' decision to choose a university.

In-Depth Interviews: Conduct in-depth interviews with candidates, parents, and opinion leaders themselves to gain a deeper understanding of the influence process and how these individuals impact admission decisions.

5.3. Factors Affecting the Effectiveness of Using Opinion Leaders in University Admission Communication

Literature Review: Evaluate previous studies on the role of opinion leaders in communication, particularly in the fields of education and university admissions.

Data Analysis: Use data from surveys and case studies to identify the key factors influencing the effectiveness of opinion leaders in admission communication strategies. These factors may include the opinion leader's popularity, trustworthiness, relevance to the education sector, and the communication methods utilized by universities.

This structured approach aims to comprehensively address the research questions, providing a robust framework for understanding and optimizing the role of opinion leaders in university admission communication strategies in Vietnam's digital age.

6. Proposing a Process for Applying the Two-Step Flow Theory in University Admission Communication Strategies

The practical experience indicates that the two-step flow theory is a valuable tool for disseminating messages through opinion leaders, enhancing the credibility and effectiveness of communication campaigns. In this article, I propose a process for applying the two-step flow theory to university admission communication strategies, enabling universities to increase their influence, brand reputation, and attract the interest of prospective students. This process not only focuses on market analysis and target audience identification but also places special emphasis on selecting opinion leaders, personalizing messages, and optimizing communication channels. By implementing this process, universities can improve the effectiveness of their admission communication campaigns, thereby attracting more high-quality students and building sustainable relationships with opinion leaders and target audiences. The process includes the following steps:

6.1. Admission Communication Planning

Planning is a crucial step in the success of any strategy, including the application of the two-step flow theory in admission communication. This step helps clearly define the content (target audience, suitable opinion leaders, message content, communication channels, etc.), the method of implementation, and the timeline for carrying out communication activities to achieve the set objectives.

TABLE 1: Admission Communication Planning

No.	Content	Method	Time	Notes
1	Market and Target Audience Analysis	Market research, surveys with students and parents	January - February	Classify target audiences by demographics
2	Identifying Influencers	Search and evaluate influencers in the education field	February - March	Carefully select to ensure credibility
3	Developing Communication Messages	Define and customize messages suitable for target groups	March - April	Emphasize the strengths of the university
4	Selecting Communication Channels	Use social media, website, email marketing, and online ads	April - May	Choose channels that align with target audience
5	Collaborating with Influencers	Media collaboration, sharing success stories	May - June	Invite them to participate in online events
6	Organizing Online and In-Person Events	Online seminars, admission open days at the university	June - July	Ensure influencer participation
7	Content and SEO Optimization	Create quality content, optimize SEO for the website	July - August	Use appropriate keywords
8	Measuring and Adjusting Strategy	Monitor data, analyze effectiveness, adjust strategies	August - September	Use data analysis tools

6.2. Market and Target Audience Analysis for University Admission

Market and target audience analysis is the crucial first step in developing an effective communication strategy. According to Nguyen Thanh (2024), market analysis includes the following steps: collecting primary data, analyzing secondary data, SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), competitor analysis, utilizing technology and data analytics, testing, and evaluation (Nguyen Thanh, 2024). However, based on practical experience and the flexibility of applying the theory, we propose the following process outlined in the planning table:

TABLE 2: Market and Target Audience Analysis

No	Content		Method	Timeline	Notes
1	Secondary Data Collection	Utilize reports from educational organizations and government agencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sources: Reports from educational organizations, government agencies, academic research, and market reports. - Objective: Identify market trends, competition among universities, and the current enrollment situation. 	January - February	-
2	Survey and Interviews	Online surveys, in-depth interviews.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Approach: Online surveys, distributing questionnaires to high school students, parents, and teachers; in-depth interviews with key individuals to better understand the decision-making process for choosing a university. - Objective: Understand the needs, expectations, and factors influencing the decision-making process of students and parents when selecting a university. 	February - March	Representative sample selection.
3	SWOT Analysis	Evaluate internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as the competitive environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content: Identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the university compared to its competitors. - Objective: Leverage strengths, improve weaknesses, seize opportunities, and mitigate threats. 	March	-
4	Market Segmentation	Demographic, psychographic, and behavioral segmentation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demographic Segmentation: - Criteria: Age, gender, geographic location, family income level. 	March - April	Customize segmentation on criteria.

			<p>- Objective: Identify specific target groups for communication and message design.</p> <p>Psychographic Segmentation:</p> <p>- Criteria: Interests, values, lifestyle, attitudes towards education.</p> <p>- Objective: Understand the motivations and priorities of different target groups.</p> <p>Behavioral Segmentation:</p> <p>- Criteria: Information-seeking behavior, level of interaction with media channels, stage in the decision-making process for choosing a university.</p> <p>- Objective: Adjust communication strategies to effectively reach target groups at different stages.</p>		
5	Target Audience Identification	Identify high school students, parents, teachers, and counselors.	<p>- Objective: Provide detailed and appealing information about academic programs, career opportunities, and learning environments.</p> <p>Parents:</p> <p>- Characteristics: Concerned about the quality of education, tuition costs, and job prospects after graduation.</p> <p>- Objective: Emphasize the university's reputation, financial aid programs, and employment rates of graduates.</p>	April	-
6	Reporting and Recommendations	Summarize analysis results and propose communication strategies.	<p>- Content: The analysis of the market and target audience helps clearly identify target groups and their needs. This provides a solid foundation for developing effective communication strategies that are well-targeted.</p> <p>- Objective: Continue monitoring and updating market information to adjust strategies promptly, ensuring relevance and effectiveness in recruitment communication campaigns.</p>	April - May	Detailed and comprehensive report.

This plan will ensure that the process of market and target audience analysis is conducted systematically and efficiently, providing a solid foundation for the implementation of subsequent recruitment communication campaigns.

6.3. Identifying and Leveraging Opinion Leaders in the Higher Education Market

In the competitive landscape of higher education, attracting students depends on effective communication strategies, in which opinion leaders play a crucial role. These individuals, trusted and respected by the public, have the ability to lend credibility to the messages they convey. When an opinion leader recommends a university or a program, that message is more likely to be accepted and trusted compared to traditional advertising methods.

Opinion leaders can quickly and effectively reach a large audience through social media channels, personal blogs, and other online platforms. The dissemination of information through these channels is not only widespread but also highly personalized, making it easier for the message to reach the right target audience.

Opinion leaders often have undergone their own educational journeys and have achieved significant success in their specialized fields. They can share personal stories, learning experiences, and accomplishments gained from attending certain universities. These stories can motivate and inspire candidates, encouraging them to enroll and pursue their academic paths.

Opinion leaders also help ease the pressure of choosing a university by providing detailed information, objective evaluations, and useful advice, giving candidates a more comprehensive view and greater confidence in making their decisions. Additionally, they help candidates connect with networks of students, alumni, and professionals in their fields of study and career, offering support, guidance, and opportunities for internships or employment (Chu & Kim, 2011).

Overall, opinion leaders play a key role in enhancing the effectiveness of university recruitment communication campaigns. By increasing trust, spreading information effectively, motivating, supporting decision-making, and connecting networks, they help universities attract and retain potential candidates. In the context of advancing digital technology and social media, collaborating with opinion leaders has become an indispensable strategy to ensure success in university recruitment.

6.4. Developing Communication Messages

Communication messages are a key element in influencing the decision-making process of students and parents when choosing a university. Below is a process for developing effective communication messages based on the two-step flow theory, utilizing opinion leaders to guide and shape public opinion.

Identifying Message Objectives:

Primary Objectives: Enhance brand recognition and reputation of the university; attract the interest of students and parents in academic programs; motivate registration and enrollment at the university.

Specific Objectives: Convey the values and benefits offered by the university; address questions and provide detailed information about academic programs; build trust and inspire students through success stories.

Market Segmentation and Target Audience:

High School Students: Seeking information on academic majors and career opportunities.

Parents: Concerned about the quality of education and tuition costs.

Teachers and Counselors: Have significant influence over students' university choices.

Crafting the Core Message:

Main Message: "Study at [University Name] – The Beginning of a Bright Future" or "Together with [University Name], Conquer Your Career Dreams."

Tailoring the Message by Audience:

For students: "Discover your passion, develop your potential with diverse programs at [University Name]." or "Study in a dynamic, creative, and advanced environment."

For parents: "Ensure a bright future for your child with top-quality education" or "Invest in education today, succeed tomorrow."

For teachers and counselors: "Introduce your students to great learning opportunities at [University Name]" or "Join hands with [University Name] in nurturing talented youth."

Utilizing Opinion Leaders:

Selecting Opinion Leaders: Teachers, successful alumni, industry experts.

Collaboration Methods: Invite them to share personal stories, learning experiences, and achievements gained from studying at the university.

Communication Channels: Social media, personal blogs, YouTube videos, and live events.

Distributing Messages through Media Channels:

Social Media: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube.

University Website: Update detailed information on academic programs and success stories.

Email Marketing: Send tailored messages to potential students and parents.

Online and Offline Events: Workshops, open days, campus tours.

Measuring and Adjusting:

Tracking Effectiveness: Use analytical tools to monitor engagement and feedback from target audiences.

Adjusting the Message: Based on feedback and collected data, adjust the message to make it more relevant and effective.

TABLE 3. Communication Message Development Plan

No.	Content	Methodology	Timeline	Notes
1	Identifying message objectives	Group discussion, survey	January	-
2	Segmenting target audience	Market research, demographic, and psychographic analysis	January - February	-
3	Developing the main message	Workshop, brainstorming	February	-

4	Customizing the message by audience	A/B testing, feedback collection	February - March	-
5	Selecting and collaborating with influencers	Research and approach influencers, sign collaboration contracts	March	-
6	Distributing the message	Utilize social media, website, email marketing, events	March - May	-
7	Measuring and adjusting	Use analytical tools, collect feedback, adjust the message	May - June	Periodic adjustments based on data

Overall, building communication messages based on the two-step flow theory not only enhances communication effectiveness but also creates a deeper connection with the target audience. Collaboration with influencers is a key factor in guiding public opinion and shaping the audience's direction, helping the university attract and retain potential candidates.

6.5. Selecting Admission Communication Channels

The two-step flow theory emphasizes the role of influencers in spreading communication messages to the public. Therefore, choosing the appropriate communication channels for influencers to use effectively is crucial. Below are suitable admission communication channels when applying the two-step flow theory.

Social Media:

Facebook: As a popular social network, it offers many features such as live streaming, event creation, and sharing posts and images. Facebook remains a favored platform for communicators to share personal experiences, live Q&A sessions, and organize online events.

Instagram: A social network focused on images and short videos, reaching a younger audience. Influencers share stories, images, and videos about university life, using Instagram Stories and Reels to create engaging content.

YouTube: A major video platform with the ability to deliver detailed and vivid content. Influencers create videos introducing the university, vlogs about their study experiences, and interviews with alumni and faculty.

TikTok: A platform for sharing short videos, with creative and easily viral content. Influencers create short videos about school activities and events, challenges, and trends related to education.

Personal Blogs and Websites:

Personal Blogs: A place for detailed, personalized writing. Influencers write about their study experiences, success stories, and offer advice for students.

University Website: The official site where all information about the university is concentrated. It features articles from influencers, creating sections like “Success Stories” and “What Alumni Say.”

Live and Online Events:

Workshops and Open Days: These events provide opportunities for direct interaction with students and parents. Influencers are invited to participate, share their experiences, answer questions, and lead activities.

In conclusion, selecting the right communication channels is a critical step to ensure the effectiveness of an admission communication campaign. By leveraging influencers and applying the two-step flow theory, the university can effectively reach its target audience, build trust, and motivate them to enroll.

6.6. Collaborating with Influencers

The two-step flow theory underscores the importance of opinion leaders in conveying messages to the public. To effectively apply this theory in university admission communication, a well-coordinated strategy with influencers is necessary.

Identifying Influencers:

Selection Criteria: Choose individuals trusted by the public with credibility in the education sector; those with a large following and active engagement on social media platforms; and those with experience and knowledge in education, successful alumni, teachers, and consultants.

Establishing Partnerships:

Approaching and Inviting Collaboration: Send official collaboration invitations, introducing the university and the objectives of the communication campaign; organize direct or online meetings to discuss partnership details.

Building a Collaboration Agreement: Clearly define the responsibilities and benefits for both parties; agree on content, format, and posting schedules.

Creating Communication Content:

Building the Main Message: Create a core message based on the university's core values and strengths; tailor the message to the style and tone of each influencer.

Diversifying Content: Include personal experience sharing posts; videos introducing the university and its programs; live Q&A sessions addressing admission and study concerns; blog posts and social media updates.

Distributing the Message:

Utilizing Communication Channels: Social Media: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube; Personal Blogs: Writing detailed articles, sharing success stories; Live and Online Events: Hosting workshops, open days, webinars, and live streams.

Measuring and Evaluating Effectiveness:

Using Analytical Tools: Track engagement metrics, views, shares, and feedback from communication channels; measure the growth in enrollment numbers and interest in the university.

Collecting Feedback: Gather feedback from students, parents, and influencers; adjust strategies and messages based on the collected data and responses.

TABLE 4. Influencer Collaboration Plan

No.	Content	Methodology	Timeline	Notes
1	Identifying Influencers	Research, surveys, data analysis	January	-
2	Approaching and Inviting Collaboration	Sending invitations, organizing meetings	January - February	-
3	Establishing Collaboration Agreement	Discussions, signing agreements	February	-

4	Developing Messages and Content	Workshops, brainstorming, tailoring to each influencer's style	February - March	-
5	Distributing the Message	Utilizing social media, blogs, email marketing, events	March - May	-
6	Measuring and Evaluating Effectiveness	Using analytical tools, collecting feedback	May - June	Regular adjustments based on data

Coordinating with Influencers is a key strategy in applying the two-step flow theory for university admissions communication. By building strong partnerships, creating diverse communication content, and distributing it effectively, universities can leverage the credibility and trust of influencers to reach and persuade their target audience. Measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of the campaign also helps optimize and adjust strategies to achieve the best results.

6.7. Organizing Online and Offline Events

The two-step flow theory emphasizes the importance of influencers in conveying messages to the target audience. Organizing online and offline events is an effective way to apply this theory in university admissions communication.

TABLE 5. Plan for Organizing Online and Offline Events

TT	Event Type	Content	Influencers	Method	Timeline	Notes
1	Webinar	Introduce the university, programs, scholarships	Alumni, faculty, education experts	Promote via social media, email, website; use Zoom, Teams, Google Meet	March - April	Record video for future sharing
2	Livestream	Live Q&A, showcase university life	Current students, alumni, department heads	Use Facebook Live, Instagram Live, YouTube Live	May - June	Ensure video and audio quality
3	Admissions Seminar	Present training programs, showcase facilities	Faculty, alumni, education experts	Promote via social media, email, website; organize at the university or conference center	June - July	Prepare materials and souvenir gifts
4	Open House	Campus tours, facility introduction, direct counseling	Current students, alumni, faculty	Organize at the university, set up tour and experience areas	July - August	Create small tour groups, provide guides

Organizing both online and offline events with the participation of influencers is an effective strategy for applying the two-step flow theory in university admissions communication. These events not only enhance trust and connection with the target audience but also create opportunities for direct interaction, providing students and parents with a more comprehensive view of the university and its programs.

6.8. Content and SEO Optimization

The two-step flow theory highlights the importance of opinion leaders in message dissemination. To optimize content and SEO in recruitment communication, it is

essential to combine engaging content strategies with effective SEO techniques, leveraging the influence of opinion leaders to enhance reach and interaction.

TABLE 6. Content and SEO Optimization Plan

TT	Content	Method	Timeline	Notes
1	Identify Main Content	Introduce the university, programs, student life	January	-
2	Use of Influencers	Share success stories, study experiences	February	Invite alumni, faculty, current students
3	Diversify Content Formats	Blog, video, infographic, podcast	March	-
4	Keyword Research	Primary and secondary keywords	January	Use keyword research tools
5	Optimize Content	Titles, meta descriptions, heading tags, images	February	-
6	Enhance External Links	Collaborate with influencers, guest posting	March - April	-
7	Social Media Promotion	Share articles, videos, livestream events	April - May	-
8	Generate Engagement	Contests, surveys, Q&A sessions	April - May	-

Optimizing content and SEO in university enrollment communication according to the two-step flow theory enhances the effectiveness of reaching and engaging with the target audience. By creating high-quality content, optimizing SEO elements, and leveraging social media for promotion, the university can harness the influence of key opinion leaders to deliver its message more powerfully and effectively.

6.9. Measuring and Adjusting Strategy

Measuring and adjusting the strategy is crucial to ensuring the effectiveness of enrollment communication activities, especially when applying the two-step flow theory.

TABLE 7. Strategy Measurement and Adjustment Plan

TT	Step	Content	Tools Used	Time	Notes
1	Setting KPIs	Conversion rate, website traffic, social media engagement	-	Beginning of the enrollment period	-
2	Using measurement tools	Google Analytics, Facebook Insights, Instagram Insights	Google Analytics, Facebook Insights	Daily, weekly	-
3	Data analysis	Compare with goals, trend analysis, feedback from influencers	Google Analytics, internal reports	Monthly	-
4	Content optimization	Adjust content, communication channels, enhance collaboration	-	Monthly	Based on analysis results
5	A/B testing	Conduct tests to check the effectiveness of minor changes	Google Optimize	As needed	-
6	Adjustments based on feedback	Collect and analyze feedback from students and parents	SurveyMonkey, Google Forms	Ongoing	-

7	Regular reporting	Produce monthly, quarterly reports	Internal reports, Google Data Studio	Monthly, quarterly	-
8	Comprehensive evaluation	Conduct a comprehensive evaluation after each enrollment cycle	Internal reports, data analysis	After each enrollment cycle	-

Measuring and adjusting strategies in the application of the two-step flow theory helps optimize the effectiveness of university enrollment communication activities. By setting clear KPIs, utilizing effective measurement tools, and carefully analyzing data, universities can ensure that their strategies are continually refined to meet the needs of students and parents, while also maximizing the influence of key opinion leaders in conveying enrollment messages.

7. Conclusion

This study analyzes and proposes the systematic and professional application of the two-step flow theory in university enrollment communication strategies in Vietnam. By emphasizing the role of influencers, this theory optimizes message delivery, enhances engagement, and fosters trust among potential candidates. The integration of modern digital tools and innovative communication approaches based on the two-step flow theory contributes to positive outcomes in attracting quality students while assisting universities in maintaining and enhancing their competitive position. The proposals and findings of this research establish the necessary conditions and criteria for applying the two-step flow theory in enrollment communication strategies, helping universities adapt to the challenges and opportunities in the current context of digital transformation and university autonomy.

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