

RESEARCH ON THE APPLICATION OF THE BRANDED HOUSE MODEL IN BRAND MANAGEMENT AT TAN TRAO UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the theoretical and practical foundations for applying the Branded House model in brand management at Tan Trao University. Based on a review of international and domestic studies on university branding and brand architecture, the research clarifies the role of the Branded House model in building a consistent brand image and enhancing management effectiveness. A mixed-methods approach is employed, combining survey data with content analysis of the university's communication channels. The results indicate that although communication activities have been implemented across multiple channels, they lack consistency; the university brand has not yet played a central role, and communication resources remain fragmented. Accordingly, the study proposes the adoption of the Branded House model to standardize the identity system, strengthen communication coherence, and enhance the university's brand value in the context of autonomy and international integration.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization and the increasingly intense competition in higher education, branding is no longer merely a communication tool but has become a strategic asset of each educational institution. A university's brand reflects its academic reputation, training quality, research capacity, as well as the core values it commits to students and stakeholders. Therefore, brand management is playing an increasingly central role in enhancing the competitiveness and positioning of universities. Recent studies emphasize the growing importance of branding in influencing student choice behavior. Snadrou and Haoucha (2024) point out that brand image is one of the key factors directly affecting students' decisions when selecting higher education institutions. Students' perceptions of reputation, training quality, and the overall institutional image not only influence their enrollment intentions but also shape their level of engagement and loyalty to the brand. This indicates that branding is not only a communication tool but also a core factor in competition for attracting students among educational institutions.

In Vietnam, the process of fundamental and comprehensive reform in education and training, particularly the promotion of university autonomy, has created an urgent need for systematic, scientific, and professional brand building and management. In this context, adopting modern brand management models has become an inevitable trend to enhance governance

effectiveness and ensure the sustainable development of higher education institutions. From a theoretical perspective, Chapleo (2024) argues that university branding should be approached as a comprehensive management strategy in the context of competition and digital transformation. A brand is formed through the integration of multiple elements such as organizational identity, student experience, digital presence, and academic reputation, requiring consistency across the entire system from strategy to implementation. This implies that universities need a systematic approach, in which brand architecture plays a crucial role in coordinating and aligning brand components.

However, although there have been numerous studies on branding and brand equity in higher education, most existing research mainly focuses on measuring brand equity components or analyzing brand communication, while there is still a lack of in-depth studies on the selection and implementation of specific brand architecture models in the university context. In particular, the Branded House model-despite being widely studied in the business sector-has not yet been thoroughly and systematically examined when applied to higher education institutions with their unique characteristics in terms of structure, objectives, and operational mechanisms. Based on the above research gap, this paper aims to: (i) clarify the theoretical foundation of the Branded House model in university brand management; (ii) analyze the current application of the Branded House model at Tan University; and (iii) propose solutions to enhance consistency and effectiveness in brand management under the Branded House model in the context of university autonomy at the institution.

2. RELATED STUDIES

In the context of increasingly competitive higher education and the strong impact of institutional autonomy mechanisms (Government, 2025), branding is considered a strategic resource that contributes to enhancing academic reputation, attracting students, and strengthening the position of higher education institutions. According to Keller (2013), a brand is not merely a communication tool but also a system of values reflecting stakeholders' perceptions and experiences of an organization. In higher education, branding is often approached from the perspective of institutional branding, associated with academic identity, organizational culture, and the quality of education provided by the institution (Balmer, 2001; Hatch & Schultz, 2003).

Research on university branding can generally be classified into three main approaches. The first focuses on brand equity, analyzing components such as brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty, while examining their effects on students' choice behavior and level of engagement (Keller, 2013; Mourad et al., 2020; O'Sullivan, 2024). The second emphasizes strategic management and organizational identity, viewing the brand as the embodiment of vision, mission, culture, and organizational behavior, where consistency between organizational identity and brand image plays a crucial role (Chapleo, 2015; Clark, Chapleo & Suomi, 2023). The third approach examines branding from the perspective of brand architecture, applying models such as Branded House, House of Brands, or Endorsed Brands to analyze the structure and degree of brand centralization within an organization (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; Kapferer, 2012).

In Vietnam, studies on university branding have primarily focused on analyzing factors influencing brand management or brand equity in higher education institutions (Hoang et al., 2023; Le Na et al., 2025). Some studies also explore branding strategies in the context of competitive student recruitment and the internationalization of higher education (Nguyen & Vo, 2024).

However, research approaching university branding from the perspective of brand architecture and the Branded House model-especially when linked to an integrated evaluation framework and empirical measurability-remains relatively limited

Meanwhile, brand architecture plays a guiding role in organizing, connecting, and expressing identity elements to ensure brand consistency amid increasing autonomy and competition. Overall, the literature indicates that adopting a brand architecture approach - particularly the Branded House model - offers a promising direction for enhancing consistency and effectiveness in university brand management

3. PROPOSED METHOD

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to clarify the theoretical foundation and evaluate the practical application of the Branded House model in brand management at Tan Trao University.

Regarding the qualitative method, the study employs document analysis and synthesis to systematize both domestic and international research related to brand management and higher education branding. On this basis, it clarifies the characteristics and advantages of the Branded House model, as well as its applicability in the context of higher education institutions. For the quantitative method, based on the integration of the Branded House model with Brand Equity, the study develops a measurement scale consisting of 32 observed variables, divided into four groups: strategic identity, visual identity, communication identity, and behavioral identity. These observed variables are measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The interpretation of mean values follows the interval classification method of the 5-point Likert scale, with the interval determined by the formula $(\text{Max} - \text{Min})/5 = 0.8$. Accordingly, the evaluation levels are classified as follows: 1.00–1.80 (very low), 1.81–2.60 (low), 2.61–3.40 (moderate), 3.41–4.20 (high), and 4.21–5.00 (very high) (Likert, 1932; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The survey was conducted directly using questionnaires with 470 respondents (100% valid responses), including students from various faculties (87.23%) and a group of administrators, lecturers, and staff (12.77%). The collected data were processed using descriptive statistical methods to support analysis and evaluation of the research results. In addition, the study also utilizes supplementary data from a survey of 600 12th-grade students (in 2025 and 2026) regarding the brand recognition channels of Tan Trao University. This content was integrated into a training needs survey conducted in April and May 2025 during the university's admission communication campaigns.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1. Theoretical foundation of university branding and the Branded House model

According to Aaker (1996), a brand is not merely an identifier but also a set of functional, emotional, and symbolic values that customers associate with an organization or product. From the perspective of brand equity, Keller (2003) argues that brand equity is formed through customers' perceptions and experiences of a brand. These approaches expand the concept of branding beyond simple identification to a strategic asset capable of creating sustainable competitive advantages for organizations.

In higher education, branding is often approached from the perspective of a corporate brand, closely associated with academic reputation, training quality, research capacity, and social

responsibility (Balmer, 2001; Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Chapleo, 2010). These studies emphasize that a university brand is not only a communication tool but also reflects organizational identity and core values, playing a crucial role in attracting students and enhancing competitive positioning. In the context of globalization, Marginson (2006) affirms that branding has increasingly become a key factor determining competitiveness and international integration capacity of higher education institutions. Moreover, in the context of digital transformation, university branding is increasingly shaped through multi-channel experiences and stakeholder interactions, requiring consistency in both management and implementation (Chapleo, 2024).

Within brand management theory, brand architecture plays a vital role in organizing and orienting brand elements within an organization. According to Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000), the Branded House model is a type of brand architecture in which a master brand serves as the central driver, governing the entire system, while sub-units are developed as extensions and do not exist independently. From a managerial perspective, the Branded House model offers several significant advantages. First, it ensures consistency in brand image and messaging across the entire system, thereby enhancing brand recognition and credibility. At the same time, focusing on a single master brand allows for the optimization of communication and management resources, while also creating a spillover effect that transfers brand reputation to affiliated units. However, this model also requires centralized governance and effective control mechanisms to mitigate the risk of brand crises spreading across the system. Previous studies indicate that the Branded House model can enhance organizational brand management effectiveness, particularly in highly integrated sectors (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006; Mourad et al., 2020). In higher education-where branding is organizational and accumulative over the long term-this approach is considered suitable for ensuring alignment across teaching, research, and community engagement activities (Chapleo, 2010; Marginson, 2006).

From these theoretical foundations, it can be seen that approaching university brand management through brand architecture-particularly the Branded House model-is a meaningful direction for improving consistency and effectiveness in brand governance within higher education institutions.

4.2. Analytical framework and system of observed variables

To evaluate the effectiveness of the brand identity system, this study integrates the Branded House model with the Brand Equity framework. According to Keller (2013), Brand Equity consists of core components such as brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty. While the Branded House model provides the structural organization of the brand and ensures consistency, Brand Equity enables the measurement of brand value and effectiveness in stakeholders' perceptions. The integration of these two approaches allows for the development of an analytical framework that is both structurally grounded and measurable. Based on this foundation, the study identifies four groups of components within the university brand identity system, which are operationalized into 32 observed variables (8 variables per group) and measured using a 5-point Likert scale to support quantitative analysis in the empirical research section. Specifically:

Identity group	Evaluation criteria
Strategic Identity	This group consists of 8 variables, reflecting the foundational orientation of the brand through vision, mission, core values, positioning, identity,

	the alignment between brand strategy and institutional development strategy, and the extent to which the university's educational philosophy is expressed.
Visual Identity	This group consists of 8 variables, representing the tangible brand identity system, including the name, logo, colors, typography, recognizability, brand associations, and the level of consistency in the use of identity elements across the entire system
Communication Identity	This group consists of 8 variables, referring to how the brand is communicated externally through messaging, content, tone, communication style, channel coverage, and governance mechanisms to ensure brand consistency
Behavioral Identity	This group consists of 8 variables, reflecting the realization of the brand in practice through perceived quality, the behavior of staff and lecturers, learner experience, and the level of loyalty and engagement with the brand

4.3. Current state of brand management at Tan Trao University under the Branded House model

To assess the current state of brand management at Tan Trao University, the study conducted a survey combined with content analysis of official communication channels of the university.

Regarding brand recognition channels, survey results show that 64.4% of high school students became aware of Tan Trao University through its fanpage and social media platforms, while 15.7% accessed information through direct admission counseling activities, and 19.9% through the official website. This distribution reflects a strong shift toward digital communication and indicates that social media platforms are playing a dominant role as the primary drivers of brand awareness for the university.

From the perspective of the Branded House model, these findings suggest that the university's master brand has initially been effectively disseminated through digital channels. However, the level of brand recognition remains uneven across platforms, particularly as the official website-despite being an authoritative channel-has not yet fully fulfilled its expected role. This implies that the implementation of the Branded House model still needs to be strengthened in terms of consistency and synchronization of messaging across the entire communication ecosystem, ensuring that all channels collectively project a unified and clearly defined brand image.

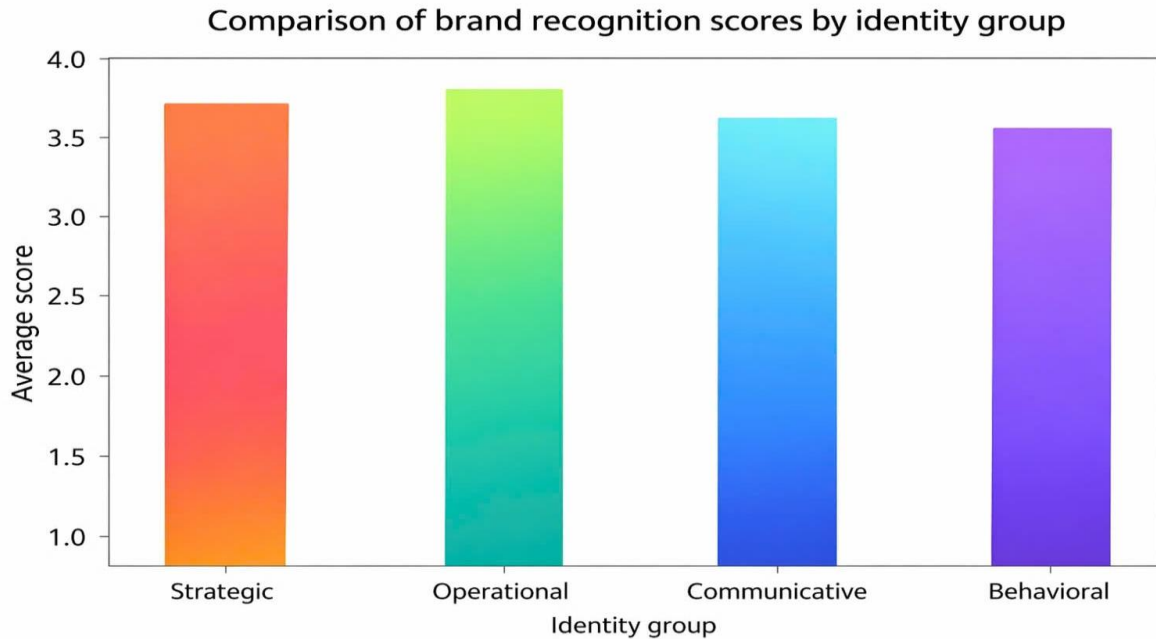


Figure 1. Survey results on Brand Identity groups of Tan Trao University

The results in Figure 1 indicate that the brand identity of Tan Trao University shows uneven development across identity groups. This reflects that the implementation of the Branded House model is currently limited to the surface level (visuals) and has not yet deeply permeated the organizational core (behavior and experience).

First, Visual Identity achieved the highest score (3.85), showing that the university has successfully established a relatively unified identity system (name, logo, colors). This aligns with the characteristics of the Branded House model, where the master brand plays a central role and is consistently represented across all touchpoints. However, the strength in visuals without proportional strength in other factors suggests that the implementation process has focused primarily on formal standardization rather than fully transforming into comprehensive brand management capability.

Next, Strategic Identity reached a fair level (3.78), indicating that the university has begun to shape its brand foundation (vision, mission, core values). This is a necessary condition for implementing the Branded House model, as it requires a clear central value system capable of guiding the entire organization. Nevertheless, the score is not yet high, suggesting that these strategic elements may not have been fully communicated or deeply embedded within the entire staff.

Regarding Communication Identity (3.62), the results highlight a critical issue in Branded House implementation: low message consistency. In this model, all communication activities must revolve around a unified "brand core." The fact that communication content is not yet truly synchronized and lacks a distinct style suggests that the brand communication management mechanism remains fragmented and lacks centralized coordination.

Most notably, Behavioral Identity scored the lowest at 3.54. This represents a core bottleneck because, in a Branded House model, a brand does not exist solely in symbols or messages; it must be realized through organizational behavior and student experience. The gap between "what the university communicates" and "what students perceive" indicates that the brand has not yet become an integral part of the organizational culture. This diminishes consistency—the key factor determining the success of the Branded House model.

From the above analyses, it can be concluded that Tan Trao University is currently in a transitional stage, moving from building brand identity toward brand management under the Branded House model, but has not yet reached a fully integrated level. The brand is currently expressed more clearly in the “visible layer” (visual identity), while the “core layer” (brand behavior and brand experience) remains limited.

Overall, the university’s brand communication activities have not yet ensured consistency and coherence in terms of messaging, communication channels, and brand tone of voice. The absence of a comprehensive brand communication strategy based on the Branded House model has led to a situation in which each unit and each communication activity presents the brand differently, thereby weakening the continuity of the master brand. As a result, the university’s core values, competitive advantages, and brand commitments have not been conveyed in a clear, consistent, and in-depth manner to students, parents, and society.

4.4. Assessment of the applicability of the Branded House model at Tan Trao University

Survey results show a relatively high level of consensus among stakeholders regarding the core orientations of the Branded House model. Specifically, 74.6% of respondents agreed on the necessity of building a unified brand identity system across the university; 71.2% believed that Tan Trao University’s brand should be positioned as the central brand in communication activities; 69.8% stated that the consistent use of the university’s name, logo, and messaging would help enhance institutional reputation; and 66.5% indicated that a centralized branding model could improve communication effectiveness and optimize resource allocation.

When compared with the results of the situational analysis, a clear alignment can be observed between the current limitations of communication activities and the characteristics of the Branded House model. Specifically, although the university’s communication activities have been implemented across multiple channels, they still lack consistency; the brand has not yet truly played a central role; and communication resources remain fragmented across units. In contrast, the Branded House model emphasizes the role of a master brand, along with the standardization of identity systems and messaging, thereby helping to address the aforementioned limitations.

The analysis also indicates that the Branded House model has the potential to generate several positive impacts on the university’s brand management. First, the consistent use of a unified brand can enhance brand recognition and memorability among learners. In addition, this model can improve communication effectiveness by creating consistency and a spillover effect across communication activities. At the same time, positioning the university brand as central can support the establishment of a more effective internal coordination mechanism among units. However, it should be noted that the Branded House model also requires a strict governance mechanism to mitigate the risk of brand crises spreading across the entire system.

In addition to perception-based evaluation, the study conducted an initial monitoring of the effectiveness of implementing several solutions aligned with the Branded House model during the period from November 2025 to 31/01/2025. The solutions were implemented on a pilot basis, including: standardizing certain brand identity elements on the fanpage (logo, color scheme, post design templates), strengthening the emphasis on the university brand in communication content, and adjusting the website information structure toward a more centralized brand focus. The initial results are as follows:

Indicator	Before implementation	After implementation
Average monthly university fanpage views	approximately	approximately

	875,000	1,800,000
The ratio of banners and website posts that use brand identity (logo, colors, etc.	46%	57,3 %
The number of units using a logo consistent with the university’s brand identity system	01	16
The number of products featuring the school’s brand identity elements	02	10
The percentage of high school students who choose the website as a channel for recognizing the school’s brand identity	19,9%	31%

Table 1. Comparison of communication indicators before and after implementation

The comparative results in Table 1 clearly show that the orientation toward using a unified brand identity system has significantly increased public reach, as reflected in fanpage views rising from under 1 million to 1.8 million views per month. At the same time, the proportion of communication products on the website complying with brand identity standards has also improved from 46% to 57.3%, indicating efforts to standardize content according to a shared “brand core.”

Notably, the number of affiliated units using a consistent logo increased from 1 to 16 units, providing clear evidence of a shift in internal awareness and actions, in line with the consistency principle of the Branded House model. Survey results also show that the percentage of high school students choosing the website as a channel for recognizing the school’s brand identity increased significantly, from 19.9% in the April–May 2025 survey period to 31% in the same period in 2026. This growth reflects a shift in students’ information-seeking behavior toward prioritizing official channels that are more reliable and provide more comprehensive and systematic information. At the same time, it also demonstrates the effectiveness of the school’s investment in upgrading website content and interface in recent years, thereby enhancing brand recognition.

Combining the analysis of Figures 2 and 3 shows that, within the same two-month period (from 01/01/2025–31/03/2025 compared with 01/01/2026–31/03/2026), the number of views across the school’s communication channels increased dramatically from 2,623,636 to 5,453,953, equivalent to a 108% increase. This strong growth in views not only reflects the effectiveness of digital communication activities but also indicates an increasing level of interest in and engagement with official information platforms.

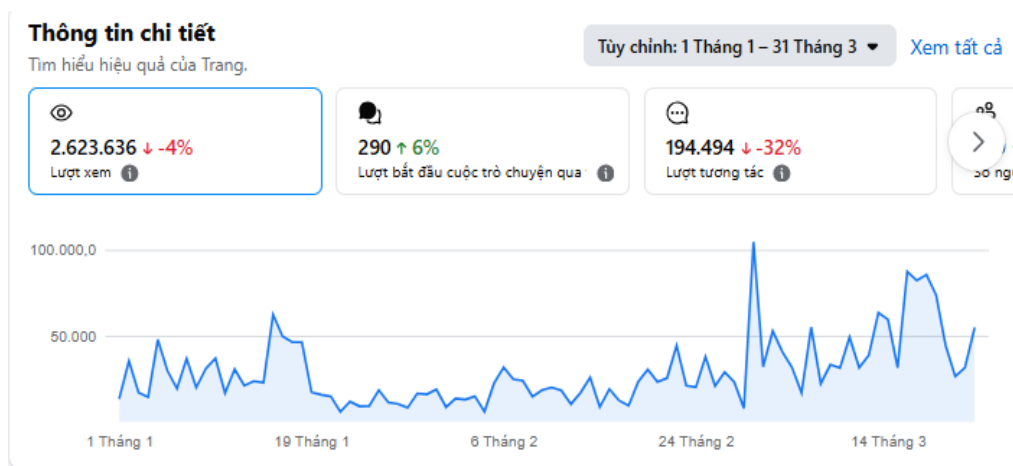


Figure 2. Statistics of views on Tan Trao University’s fanpage from 01/01/2025 to 31/03/2025

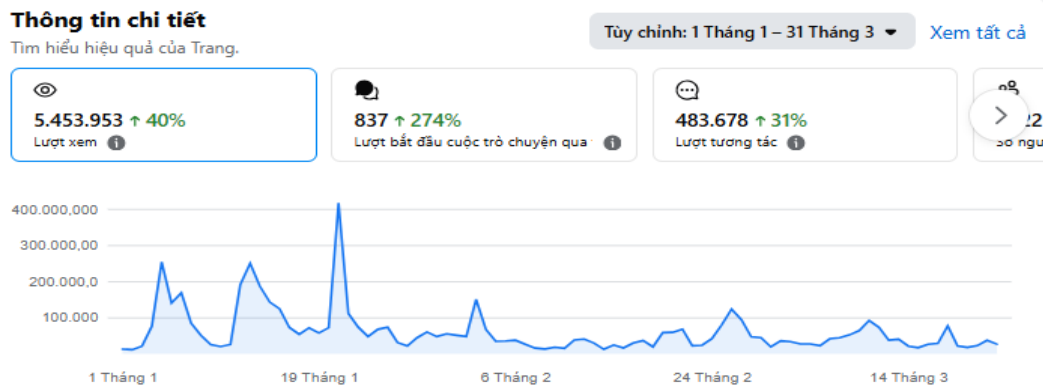


Figure 3. Statistics of views on Tan Trao University's fanpage from 01/01/2026 to 31/03/2026

These initial results show that the application of the Branded House model principles, even at a pilot scale, has contributed to improving communication effectiveness and brand recognition at Tan Trao University. However, since the implementation period is still short and the scope of application is not yet comprehensive, these findings should be considered preliminary trends only. Further long-term monitoring and evaluation are needed to draw more comprehensive conclusions about the model's effectiveness.

From these results, it can be concluded that the Branded House model is a suitable approach with potential for application in brand management at Tan Trao University. The implementation of this model should follow an appropriate roadmap, prioritizing the development of a unified brand identity system, clearly defining the central role of the university brand in all communication activities, and establishing coordination and control mechanisms for communications at the institutional level. In addition, strengthening staff capacity and applying technology in communication management are also important factors to ensure the effective implementation of the model in practice

5. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

5.1. Conclusion

The research results show that building the brand according to the Branded House model at Tan Trao University has favorable foundations, especially in terms of strategic identity and visual identity. However, factors related to brand communication and organizational behavior still need to be strengthened to ensure the consistency of the brand system. From a governance perspective, this indicates that implementing the Branded House model should not be limited to developing an identity system, but must be integrated into the entire university management system, including communication strategy, organizational culture, and the behavior of staff and lecturers.

In addition, the study still has several limitations. The applied solutions were only implemented on a pilot scale in a number of communication channels and units, so the results obtained are preliminary in nature. Moreover, the study mainly relies on survey methods and quantitative analysis, while qualitative approaches have not been sufficiently explored to better understand the behavior, perceptions, and motivations of stakeholders. These limitations provide a basis for future research to expand the scope, extend the survey period, and combine multiple research methods in order to more comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of the model in practice.

5.2. Recommendations

First, improve the brand strategy according to the Branded House model. The university should continue to consolidate and further clarify its vision, mission, and core values of Tan Trao University's brand in alignment with its overall development strategy. The university

brand should be defined as the dominant brand, playing a central role in the entire brand structure. Affiliated units such as faculties and centers should be positioned as components of the overall brand, ensuring consistency in identity and brand positioning.

Second, standardize and synchronize the brand identity system. The university should develop and issue a Brand Identity Guidelines document, clearly regulating the use of logos, colors, slogans, typography, and design elements in all communication, admissions activities, and university events. Standardizing the identity system will help enhance brand recognition and strengthen the consistency of the university's brand.

Third, enhance the effectiveness of brand communication. The communication identity group achieved an average–fair level in the survey, indicating room for improvement in the university's communication activities. Therefore, the university should develop a long-term brand communication strategy that combines traditional and digital communication channels. At the same time, it is necessary to promote promotional activities, admissions communication, cooperation with media agencies, and increase presence on social media platforms to enhance the visibility and reach of Tan Trao University's brand in society.

Fourth, develop brand culture and strengthen behavioral identity. The research results show that behavioral identity has the lowest evaluation among the four groups of factors. This indicates that expressing the brand through the behavior of staff, lecturers, and students needs greater attention. The university should build and develop a brand culture based on core values, while encouraging staff, lecturers, and students to become “brand ambassadors” in academic, research, and community service activities. Linking brand values with organizational behavior will contribute to strengthening the university's image and reputation in a sustainable manner. Fifth, establish a coordination and control mechanism for communication at the institutional level. Tan Trao University should assign a dedicated focal unit responsible for communication management to ensure consistency in implementation and to promptly address emerging issues, particularly communication crisis risks that may spread within the Branded House model. Continued investment in upgrading the website and digital platforms should also be prioritized, focusing on optimizing user experience, enhancing interactivity, and integrating multiple channels. This would help further leverage the observed trend of increasing engagement through official communication channels identified in the study

5.3. Future work

Based on the achieved results and the existing limitations, future research should focus on expanding the survey scope to a wider range of respondents (including students, lecturers, alumni, and the general public), as well as extending the observation period to assess the long-term impact of the Branded House model rather than only reflecting short-term trends. In addition, future studies should combine both quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a deeper understanding of perceptions, motivations, and behaviors related to the brand, thereby better explaining the relationship between the brand identity system and actual communication effectiveness. Furthermore, it is necessary to broaden the analysis to include aspects such as communication crisis management, engagement levels on digital platforms, and the role of organizational culture in maintaining brand consistency, thereby developing a more comprehensive and practical evaluation framework for applying the Branded House model in the context of higher education

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