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BUI MINH THUY

**THE IMPACT OF INTEGRATED MARKETING
COMMUNICATION TOOLS ON THE BRAND EQUITY OF
PRIVATE HOSPITALS IN VIETNAM**

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INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale for choosing the topic

In the healthcare sector, a prominent issue is becoming increasingly clear: hospitals are now increasingly concerned with generating more profit . This is especially evident with private hospitals, where managers or investors of private hospitals strive to optimize operating costs while maintaining service quality to generate higher profits than other private hospitals. And to do that, the way for hospitals to generate higher profits and revenue is to implement a sound marketing strategy and possess strong brand equity.

First, hospital brand equity is a new and emerging issue worldwide and is increasingly demonstrating its importance. A brand possesses strong brand equity when customers are willing to pay a higher cost or are willing to recommend the brand to others. This suggests that enhancing brand asset value will meet the needs of private hospitals focused on maximizing profits while maintaining service quality.

For private hospitals, branding is even more important when there is no state sponsorship and the number of private hospitals in Vietnam increased dramatically by 32% in just 4 years from 2018 to 2021 (Statista, 2022). Therefore, private hospitals must pay more attention to brand building due to the pressure of maximizing profits and the pressure of competition not only with other private hospitals, but also with the large number of public hospitals in Vietnam. Especially in the context of the Vietnamese private healthcare market being encouraged to expand, with the goal of increasing the number of hospital beds in private hospitals by almost 3 times by 2030 compared to 2024. This is both an opportunity and a challenge for private hospitals.

Secondly, nowadays healthcare facilities regularly utilize integrated marketing communication tools to reach target customers. Integrated marketing communications tools are often used extensively in sales campaigns.

Thirdly, integrated marketing communication tools are widely used in brand communication campaigns; however, the number of studies on the

impact of these tools on hospital brand equity is limited. Meanwhile, healthcare services, especially hospital services, are unique compared to other business sectors.

Finally, despite the challenges in optimizing profitability while simultaneously enhancing brand equity, private hospitals in Vietnam also have significant opportunities to expand and increase revenue from the growth of both domestic and international markets. The development of private hospitals in Vietnam is not limited to the domestic market but also tends to attract international patients through medical tourism services, for example, patients from countries like Laos and Cambodia (Statista, 2024).

On average, Vietnam receives approximately 300,000 foreign patients for outpatient examinations and 57,000 for inpatient treatment each year (Health & Life, 2024). Currently, Ho Chi Minh City is the most promising city, accounting for 40% of the medical tourism market share in both public and private hospitals in Vietnam (Health & Life, 2024). This requires hospitals to invest systematically in building international brands, with integrated marketing communications being one of the key tools to enhance the hospital's brand equity.

In summary, a deeper understanding of hospital brand equity can help clarify areas where hospitals need improvement such as service quality, better identification of patient needs and avoiding waste of resources and finances (Lee et al., 2008). Research to find the integrated marketing communication tools that have the greatest impact on brand equity will help hospitals optimize profits while increasing brand equity value, and help Vietnam become a medical tourism destination for many countries in the future.

2. Research Objectives and Tasks

2.1. Research Objectives

Based on the systematization of theoretical issues related to the topic, the thesis develops a research framework to measure the impact of integrated marketing communication tools on the brand equity of private hospitals in Vietnam, thereby identifying problems and solutions to optimize the brand equity of private hospitals in Vietnam in the future.

2.2. Research tasks

- Overview of research related to the topic.
- Develop a theoretical framework for measuring impact and operationalizing concepts.
- This study analyzes and evaluates the current impact of integrated marketing communication tools on hospital brand equity in Vietnam, through surveys combined with in-depth interviews at Hong Ngoc General Hospital, Hop Luc General Hospital, and Nam Saigon General Hospital from June 2023 to July 2025.
- Identify the challenges and solutions to optimize the impact of integrated marketing communication tools on the brand equity of private hospitals in Vietnam in the coming period.

3. Research Subjects and Scope

3.1. Research subjects

The subject of this thesis is the influence of integrated marketing communication tools on the brand equity of private hospitals in Vietnam today.

3.2. Scope of research

3.2.1. Spatial scope

The spatial scope of the thesis is:

- Hong Ngoc General Hospital: in the North
- Hop Luc General Hospital: in the Central region
- Nam Saigon General Hospital: in the South

Reason for selection: All three hospitals are large, reputable private general hospitals located in the North, Central, and South regions of Vietnam.

3.2.2. Time range

The timeframe for this thesis is from January 2020 to June 2025.

4. Theoretical basis and research methodology

4.1. Theoretical basis

In 2010, Kotler and Armstrong identified four integrated marketing communications tools: advertising, sales promotion, sponsorship, and public relations. However, by 2021, with the change in digital technology, Belch & Belch, in their work *Advertising and Promotion: An Integrated Marketing Communications Perspective*, had developed six integrated marketing

communications tools: (1) Advertising, (2) Direct selling, (3) Digital marketing, (4) Sales promotion, (5) Publishing/Public relations, (6) Personal selling.

There are many theories of brand equity, of which the two most widely used in both research and practical application are Aaker's brand equity model (1991) and Keller's customer-based brand equity model (1993). According to Aaker in his work *Managing Brand Equity* in 1999, brand equity includes four traditional elements: (1) Brand awareness refers to the ability of buyers to recognize or recall a brand under a certain product category. (2) Brand associations refer to mental associations associated with a brand that help customers process information (Aaker, 1996).

4.2. Research methods

4.2.1. Documentary research method

In this thesis, the literature review method (or desk research) is used to explore the overall theoretical basis and overview of previous research works to build a solid scientific foundation for the topic. This method is applied to diverse secondary data sources, including: articles and scientific research papers, both domestic and international, on integrated marketing communications (IMC) and hospital brand equity (searched via Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, ResearchGate, etc.); legal documents such as the Law on Medical Examination and Treatment, the Law on Advertising, decrees and circulars of the Government and the Ministry of Health; and reputable data reports from Statista and other official health information websites.

4.2.2. Questionnaire-based research method

In this thesis, the questionnaire research method was used as the main tool for quantitative research, conducted through two forms: direct distribution of printed questionnaires and online surveys via Google Form based on a designed scale. This method was applied to a sample of patients, their family members, and healthcare staff working or using services at three hospitals representing three regions: Hong Ngoc General Hospital (Northern Vietnam), Hop Luc General Hospital (Central Vietnam), and Nam Saigon General Hospital (Southern Vietnam), using a convenient sampling method.

4.2.3 In-depth interview research method

In this thesis, in-depth interviews were used as the primary qualitative

research method, conducted through direct individual interviews. This method was applied to two groups of subjects at Hong Ngoc, Hop Luc, and Nam Saigon General Hospitals:

- Marketing and Communications Manager: 1 person/hospital.
- Patients: 2 patients/hospital.

4.2.4. Methods for processing questionnaire data

For the quantitative data obtained from 635 valid survey responses, the thesis uses SmartPLS 4.0 software and the PLS-SEM (Partial Least Squares Linear Structural Modeling) algorithm for analysis. The data processing procedure was carried out in two main stages.

4.2.5. In-depth interview data processing method

Qualitative data were collected from in-depth interviews lasting 60-90 minutes per session with 3 managers and approximately 15 minutes per session with 6 patients.

5. Research questions and hypotheses

5.1. Research questions

- **Question 1:** How does the integrated marketing communication tool “advertising” affect the brand equity of private hospitals in Vietnam?
- **Question 2:** How does the integrated marketing communication tool “public relations” affect the brand equity of private hospitals in Vietnam?
- **Question 3:** How does the integrated marketing communication tool “direct marketing” affect the brand equity of private hospitals in Vietnam?
- **Question 4:** How does the integrated marketing communication tool “digital marketing” affect the brand equity of private hospitals in Vietnam?

5.2 Research hypotheses

- **Hypothesis 1 (H1):** Advertising has a statistically significant positive impact on brand equity.
- **Hypothesis 2 (H2):** Public relations has a statistically significant positive impact on brand equity.
- **Hypothesis 3 (H3):** Direct marketing has a statistically significant positive impact on brand equity.
- **Hypothesis 4 (H4):** Digital marketing has a statistically significant positive impact on brand equity.

6. Theoretical and practical significance of the topic

6.1. *In theory*

The thesis results contribute to opening new research directions on brand equity in the private healthcare sector based on the construction, synthesis, and testing of a comprehensive theoretical framework on the impact relationship of integrated marketing communication tools. The research model of the thesis helps to confirm the validity of scientific hypotheses, thereby providing a solid foundation for perfecting the theoretical system applied in subsequent studies on the private healthcare service sector in Vietnam.

6.2 *In practical terms*

The research findings of this thesis serve as an important reference for hospital administrators and marketing communications professionals, helping to reinforce understanding of the role of integrated marketing communications systems and thereby supplementing methods for building and protecting brand equity in today's competitive environment.

7. Novel aspects of the thesis

Firstly, the thesis systematizes and initially builds a relatively comprehensive theoretical framework on the impact of integrated marketing communication tools on the brand equity of private hospitals in Vietnam today. The novelty of the thesis lies in its approach and research subject, which have not been deeply explored in Vietnam at this stage.

Secondly, the thesis analyzes the current state of the impact of integrated marketing communication tools through quantitative and qualitative research methods. The results of the in-depth surveys and interviews in the thesis have helped to prove and test the research hypothesis regarding the impact of each tool on hospital brand equity.

Thirdly, the thesis is one of the first scientific works to comprehensively and scientifically investigate and analyze the various aspects of applying integrated marketing communication in the private healthcare sector. This is a necessary condition for private hospitals to enhance their competitiveness and improve service quality.

8. The structure of the thesis

Besides the introduction, conclusion, table of contents, and bibliography, the thesis is divided into 4 chapters and 4 sections.

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH ON THE IMPACT OF INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION TOOLS ON BRAND EQUITY

1.1 Studies related to integrated marketing communications tools

1.1.1. Studies related to advertising

Studies from 2020-2025 show that advertising in integrated marketing communications in Vietnam is experiencing strong growth in service industries, with a focus on digital and integration, contributing to building brand equity such as awareness and loyalty. However, common challenges include a lack of synchronization between advertising and other tools, as well as the need for better performance measurement in the digital economy context.

1.1.2. Studies related to public relations

Studies on public relations (PR) within the context of integrated marketing communications (IMC) in Vietnam have highlighted the role of PR as a strategic tool for building and maintaining brand equity, particularly in service industries such as tourism and higher education, where PR is integrated with other elements such as digital media and community engagement to enhance recognition and loyalty.

1.1.3. Studies related to direct marketing

Thai and Sinh (2025a) explored the impact of IMC on youth's intention to choose cultural tourism products in Ho Chi Minh City, identifying direct marketing as one of six important factors positively influencing intention.

For the higher education sector, Nguyen et al. (2025a3) showed that direct marketing such as personalized emails and SMS messages helped increase enrollment by 10.5% from 2019-2024, contributing to building customer-based brand equity (CBBE) by enhancing awareness and credibility.

1.1.4. Studies related to digital marketing

In the service industry such as tourism, Thai and Sinh (2025a) identified digital marketing as the most important factor, including livestreaming and interactive content on social media, to enhance the intention to participate in sustainable tourism.

In the higher education sector, Nguyen et al. (2025a3) also indicated that

digital marketing is identified as a core factor, including livestreaming online events and interactive content on Zalo.

In e-commerce and retail services, Bui (2025) analyzed digital marketing transformation in Vietnam, highlighting livestreaming on TikTok Shop and Facebook Live as key factors, with digital advertising spending increasing 14% annually to US\$1.3 billion in 2024.

1.1.5. Studies related to personal selling

In the banking industry, Park and Tran (2020) explored how internal marketing influences customer relationship quality, with personal selling identified as a key element in integrated marketing communications, enhancing customer awareness and trust through personalized consultations.

In e-commerce, Nguyen and Truong (2024) explored digital strategies in small businesses, emphasizing personal selling via live chat and video, helping to build brand awareness and reduce costs. The study recommends integration with integrated marketing communications to increase profit margins (Nguyen and Truong, 2024).

1.1.6. Studies related to sales promotion

From 2020 to 2025, studies on sales promotion within the context of integrated marketing communications (IMC) in Vietnam have highlighted the role of this tool as a short-term measure to stimulate purchasing behavior and build brand equity through enhanced awareness and loyalty, particularly in service sectors such as tourism, higher education, and green products, where sales promotion is integrated with digital technology post-COVID-19 to optimize effectiveness. These studies, combining domestic and international sources, show that sales promotion is shifting from traditional promotions to digital forms such as online vouchers and flash sales, but still faces challenges regarding sustainability and ROI measurement.

1.2. Studies related to brand equity in general and private hospitals in particular.

1.2.1. Factors in the theoretical model influencing the financial and brand impact of hospitals

During the period 2020-2025, studies in Vietnam on private hospital brand equity mainly inherited the models of Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993),

focusing on 5 factors according to the theoretical model: Perceived Quality, Brand Awareness, Brand Association, Brand Image, and Loyalty. Studies indicate that in the Vietnamese market, these factors are closely correlated with the cultural characteristics and healthcare behavior of the people.

1.2.2. Internal factors within the hospital affect the hospital's brand equity

Hospital brand equity is significantly influenced by many components related to healthcare in general and hospital internals in particular, including factors directly related to the treatment process, quality of healthcare services and the relationship between patients and hospital staff. These factors are important to shape patient perceptions and contribute to building a strong hospital brand.

In short, healthcare factors have a great influence on hospital brand equity, especially service quality, patient feedback, healthcare experience and green values. However, not all factors have a direct impact on patient behavior; some only have an indirect impact through trust and brand awareness.

1.2.3. External factors affecting hospital brand equity

Hospital brand equity is influenced by numerous factors outside the hospital, such as social media marketing, e-word-of-mouth (E-WOM), trust, satisfaction, integrated marketing communications tools, brand attitudes, and pricing. These factors often act as intermediaries or regulators in the relationship between brand equity components within the theoretical model and internal hospital factors, enhancing patient brand awareness, loyalty, and overall brand equity.

1.3. Studies on the impact of integrated marketing communications tools on hospital brand equity

1.3.1. The impact of advertising

In summary, while international research by Dabbous & Barakat (2020) demonstrates that digital advertising creates two-way interaction and loyalty, research in Vietnam such as the research by Le Dan & Nguyen Thi Minh Hien (2018) shows that people still consider advertising as a "one-way" source of information and less reliable than advice from relatives. This contradiction highlights the need for this thesis to conduct further research on how to optimize hospital advertising in Vietnam.

1.3.2. The influence of public relations

From international studies, public relations is a lever of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Trust. International academic studies agree that in high-risk service sectors such as healthcare, public relations is more effective than advertising in reducing customer anxiety. For example, the study by Fatma et al. (2020) in the Journal of Business Research confirms that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities are a core part of public relations, and it has a direct and strong impact on Brand Loyalty.

1.3.3. The impact of direct marketing

Direct marketing, encompassing forms such as email marketing, telemarketing, telephone marketing, direct mail, and personalized outreach, has been studied as a crucial tool in integrated marketing communications for enhancing brand equity in the healthcare sector, particularly in private hospitals.

1.3.4. The impact of digital marketing

Digital marketing, focusing on digital platforms and interactive activities such as livestreaming, has proven to be an essential tool in integrated marketing communications (IMC) for enhancing the brand equity of private hospitals, particularly through increased customer engagement and personalized healthcare services in Vietnam and internationally.

Overall, studies from 2020-2025 highlight digital marketing, with a focus on digital platforms and livestreaming, as a key factor for private hospitals in Vietnam to build sustainable brands. However, it needs to be integrated with ethical regulations and infrastructure to optimize customer engagement in the context of accelerating healthcare digitalization.

1.3.5. The impact of personal selling

In Vietnam, research by Hoang et al. (2023) exploring the reasons consumers choose private healthcare services, based on interviews with 30 stakeholders, emphasizes that personal sales through direct outreach by staff at public places such as train stations and bus terminals helps build trust and brand recognition, increasing patient numbers by 20-30% compared to public hospitals, despite the lack of strict regulations.

1.3.6. The impact of promotion

Sales promotion, encompassing activities such as discount promotions,

free samples, short-term promotions, and special events, has proven to be a crucial tool in integrated marketing for stimulating immediate demand and enhancing brand equity for private hospitals, particularly in the healthcare sector where trust and perceived value play a key role both in Vietnam and internationally.

1.4. Research topics and research gaps

1.4.1. *The researched topics*

1.4.1.1. Integrated marketing communication tools in hospitals

An overview of research shows the deep interest of the academic community in the role of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) in the healthcare sector. Previous studies have not only listed promotional tools but have delved into analyzing the mechanisms of impact of each specific tool on patient behavior and brand equity. The research conducted can be grouped based on the main tools: Advertising, Public Relations, Digital Marketing, Sales Promotion, and Personal Selling.

1.4.1.2. Other factors affecting hospital brand equity

In summary, previous studies have confirmed the mixed impact model between hospital brand equity, which are constructed from "hardware" such as treatment quality and "software" such as communication activities and social responsibility image.

1.4.1.3. Research methods previously employed

In summary, recent trends in research methodology for hospital brand equity demonstrate a clear preference for quantitative approaches and customer-based data.

1.4.1.4. Areas studied

An overview of scientific research shows that the geographical distribution of topics related to healthcare marketing and brand equity tends to be strongly concentrated in emerging economies, where private healthcare systems are rapidly developing to share the burden with the public sector.

1.4.2. *Research gap*

Firstly, there is a gap in the comprehensive research model of integrated marketing communication tools.

Secondly, there is a gap in the geographical context and survey subjects.

Thirdly, there is a gap in the specific psychological impact mechanisms of Vietnamese people.

In short, this thesis not only inherits previous research achievements but also aims to build a more complete theoretical and practical framework to solve the problem of coordinating multi-channel IMC tools in the specific context of the current Vietnamese private healthcare market.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE IMPACT OF INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION TOOLS ON THE BRAND EQUITY OF PRIVATE HOSPITALS

2.1. Concepts related to the topic

2.1.1. Private hospital

In summary, private hospitals in this thesis are defined as healthcare service providers, funded by non-state budget sources, operating under market mechanisms, and adhering to the professional standards of the Ministry of Health, with the dual objectives of providing healthcare to the community and ensuring financial efficiency.

2.1.2. Integrated marketing communications tools

Integrated marketing communications tools can be understood as a set of strategically planned multi-channel communication solutions to comprehensively impact the perceptions and behaviors of target customers. And integrated marketing communications tools include advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling and direct marketing and digital/interactive marketing.

2.1.3. Brand Equity

Brand equity studied in this thesis is based on Aaker's (1991) brand equity model with components including: brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations and brand loyalty.

2.1.4. The impact of integrated marketing communications tools on the brand equity of private hospitals

The impact of integrated marketing communications tools on brand equity is the ability to create and maintain positive or negative customer attitudes, perceptions, or behaviors toward the brand.

2.2. The political and legal basis for the impact of integrated marketing communications tools on the brand equity of private hospitals in Vietnam

2.2.1. Political base

The aforementioned political documents have shifted the healthcare system from a subsidized mechanism to a market-based system with management, creating favorable conditions for private hospitals to operate and

compete. This is a necessary prerequisite for the implementation of integrated marketing communication activities to build brand equity.

2.2.2. Legal basis

The current political and legal framework in Vietnam plays both a constructive and supervisory role in the communication activities of private hospitals. The application of integrated marketing communication tools is not simply an economic issue but also a matter of compliance. Adherence to these regulations is the first step in building credibility, the most crucial element of a healthcare facility's brand equity.

2.3. Research theory and framework on the impact of integrated marketing communication tools on the brand equity of private hospitals

2.3.1. Research theory

2.3.1.1. Integrated marketing communications tools

2.3.1.1.1. Advertisement

In the integrated marketing communications (IMC) system, advertising is always considered one of the most traditional and fundamental tools. Belch & Belch (2021) define advertising as any paid non-personal media (TV, radio, newspapers, magazines...) about an organization, product, service or idea carried out by a defined sponsor.

2.3.1.1.2. Public relations

In the Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) system, if advertising is the direct voice of the business to attract attention, then Public Relations is the art of building and maintaining understanding, trust and a positive image from the community.

2.3.1.1.3. Direct marketing

Direct marketing is a specific tool that focuses on establishing a highly personalized 1-on-1 communication channel between the brand and the customer. Conceptually, direct marketing is primarily defined as sending messages via mail, the Internet, and similar channels directly to customers. In the context of the healthcare industry, this is a tool widely used by healthcare organizations to attract and provide information to both current and potential patients about healthcare services, products, and healthcare opportunities.

2.3.1.1.4. Digital marketing

The explosion of the Internet and mobile devices has completely changed the way people communicate, search for information, and make decisions. In this context, Digital Marketing has emerged as one of the key tools and has the strongest growth rate in the integrated marketing communication system. And it is the development of the Internet and social networks that has created real-time, two-way interactive communication channels. Therefore, digital marketing tools are also known as Internet marketing or interactive marketing.

2.3.1.1.5. Sales promotion

Sales promotion refers to activities that directly create incentives and added value for products or services, while simultaneously boosting customer purchasing motivation. These include forms such as free samples, games, discounts, raffles, contests, free gifts, coupons, and many others (Ekiyor & Altan, 2020). With attractive promotional methods, sales promotion tools deliver quick results, helping to increase revenue.

2.3.1.1.6. Personal selling

Although personal selling is considered one of the integrated marketing communication tools, it does not fall under the marketing communications department of companies. Personal selling is usually managed by a different department within the company, not the advertising or marketing department (Ekiyor & Altan, 2020). Therefore, the impact of personal selling will not be measured or analyzed in this thesis.

2.3.1.2. *Brand Equity*

2.3.1.2.1. Brand awareness

Aaker (1991) and Keller (2008) both define brand awareness as the ability of customers to recall or recognize a brand or product, or simply whether customers are aware of that brand.

2.3.1.2.2. Perceived quality

For hospitals, perceived quality encompasses patients' perceptions and evaluations of the overall quality of services provided. Patient perceived quality can be built from staff attitudes and concern for patients, empathy,

communication skills, and hospital medical facilities, or from the patient-doctor relationship (Piaralal & Mei, 2015).

2.3.1.2.3. Brand association

For hospitals, brand associations play a key role in the success of healthcare facilities. One study demonstrated that in the healthcare sector, brand associations are the most impactful of the components of brand equity.

2.3.1.2.4. Brand loyalty

For hospitals, many studies have shown that loyalty is a core factor that has the strongest impact on hospital brand equity. Loyalty is also essential for service brands and plays an important role in forming brand value for healthcare providers.

2.3.2. Research framework

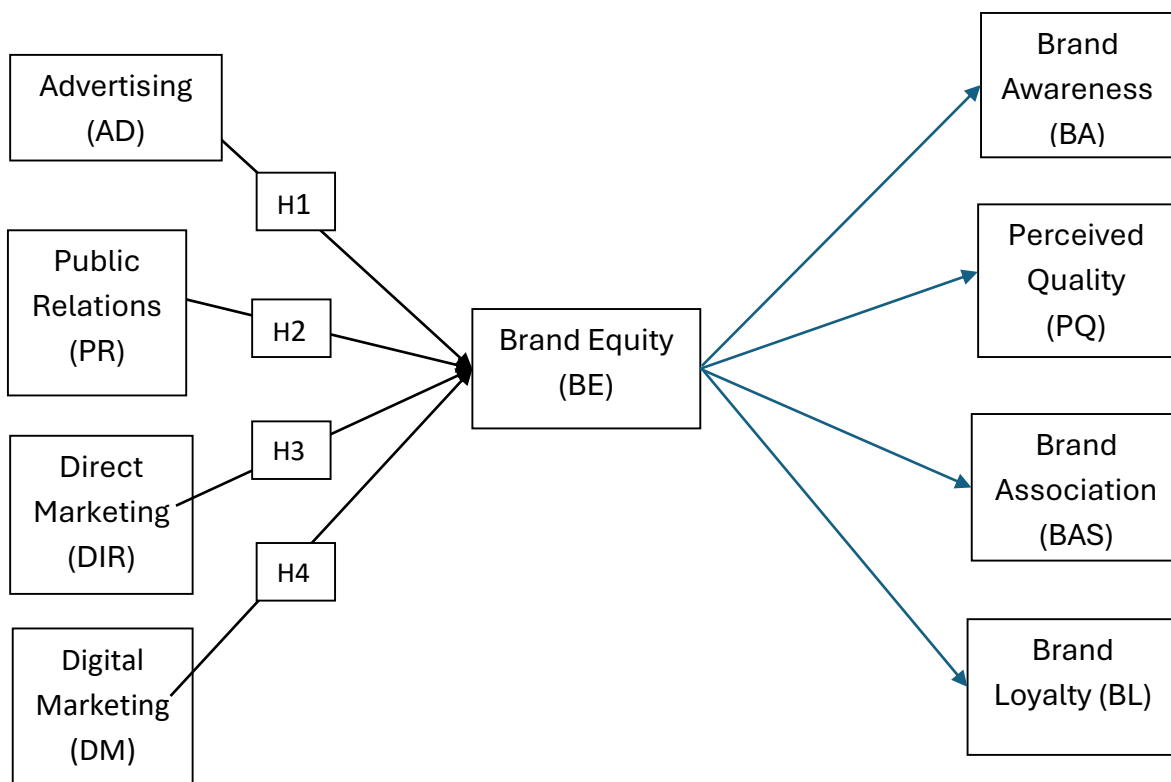


Figure 2.1: Research analysis framework of the thesis

CHAPTER 3: THE CURRENT SITUATION REGARDING THE IMPACT OF INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION TOOLS ON THE BRAND EQUITY OF PRIVATE HOSPITALS IN VIETNAM

3.1. A brief introduction to the private hospitals included in the survey

3.1.1. Hong Ngoc General Hospital

3.1.2. Hop Luc General Hospital

3.1.3. Nam Sai Gon General Hospital

3.2. Description of the research sample

3.2.1. Data collection process

The thesis collected data from January 2020 to June 2025. The data collection process was conducted simultaneously using two methods: quantitative surveys using questionnaires and in-depth qualitative interviews.

Firstly, the questionnaire survey data was collected in two forms: printed and electronic. A total of 635 valid questionnaire samples were obtained from both the printed and online versions.

Secondly, the results of the in-depth interviews with 6 patients (2 patients/hospital) and 3 heads of marketing communications departments from 3 hospitals (1 head/hospital) were used to reinforce and explain the quantitative results in the thesis.

3.2.2. Demographic characteristics of the study sample

From the 635 valid samples collected, the study gathered and categorized demographic information by gender, age, education level, brand awareness time, frequency of service use at the surveyed hospital, and frequency of exposure to the hospital's marketing communications. This information provides a specific insight into the survey participants.

3.3. Analysis and testing of the research model

3.3.1 Survey data analysis methods

This study uses SmartPLS 4.0 software and the PLS-SEM (Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling) algorithm to test the model.

The PLS-SEM method was chosen for its suitability in maximizing the explanatory variance of the dependent variables and its ability to handle complex structural models, including quadratic variables such as Brand Equity (BE), in this study. The analysis process follows two main stages: evaluating the measurement model and evaluating the structural model.

3.3.2. Evaluating the measurement model

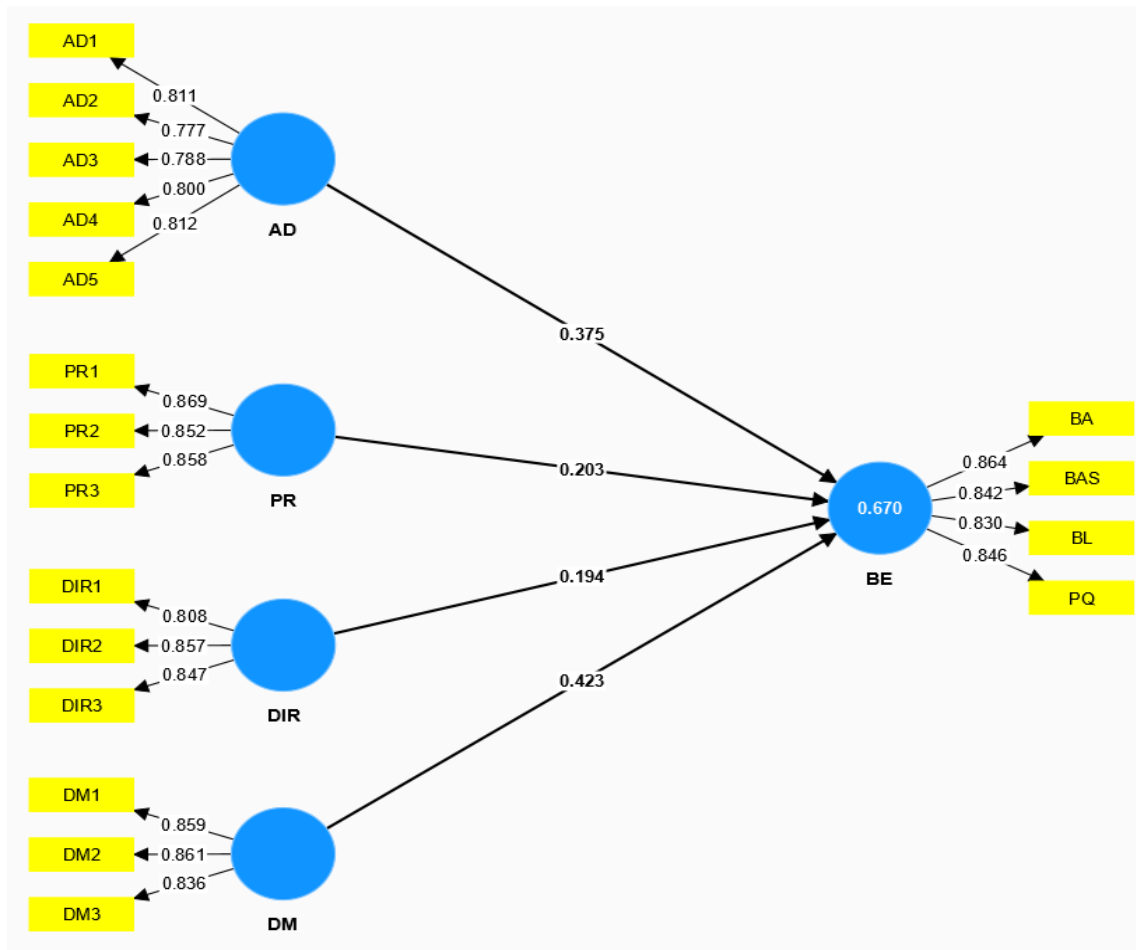


Figure 3.2. Stage 2 structural model

3.3.4. Evaluating the predictive power of the model

In addition to its ability to explain sample data well (with a high R^2 coefficient of determination), the model also demonstrates reliable predictive capabilities when applied to new real-world data. The independent variables (Advertising, Public Relations, Direct Marketing, and Digital Marketing) are not only statistically significant in their impact but also have good predictive power regarding changes in the brand equity of private hospitals..

3.4. Survey of the impact of integrated marketing communication

tools on the brand equity of Hong Ngoc, Hop Luc, and Nam Saigon General Hospitals from January 2020 to June 2025.

3.4.1. The impact of advertising on the brand equity of private hospitals.

Quantitative research results from questionnaire surveys confirm that Hypothesis 1 (H1) is true. The results also show that advertising is the second most powerful integrated marketing communication tool after digital marketing.

Qualitative research results from in-depth interviews provide crucial empirical evidence, strongly supporting Hypothesis H1 that advertising has a statistically significant positive impact on the brand equity of private hospitals.

3.4.2. The impact of public relations on the brand equity of private hospitals

Quantitative research results from questionnaire surveys confirm Hypothesis 2 (H2) is true. The results also show that public relations is the third most powerful integrated marketing communication tool after digital marketing and advertising.

Qualitative research results further strongly support Hypothesis 2 (H2), indicating that public relations (PR) plays a crucial role in building trust and reinforcing perceived quality, core elements of brand equity in the healthcare sector..

3.4.3. The impact of direct marketing on brand equity in private hospitals

Quantitative research results from questionnaire surveys indicate that Hypothesis 3 (H3) is correct. The results also show that direct marketing is an integrated marketing communication tool that impacts hospital brand equity, but it ranks last among the four tools measured in this thesis study.

Qualitative research results provide compelling evidence to support Hypothesis 3 (H3), confirming that direct marketing has a positive and significant impact on brand equity, particularly in terms of Loyalty (BL) and

Perceived Quality (PQ)..

3.4.4. The impact of digital marketing on the brand equity of private hospitals

Quantitative research results from questionnaire surveys confirm that Hypothesis 4 (H4) is true. The results also indicate that digital marketing is the most powerful integrated marketing communication tool impacting the brand equity of private hospitals in Vietnam.

Qualitative research results from in-depth interviews provide rich and multifaceted practical evidence, strongly confirming Hypothesis 4 (H4) that digital marketing has a positive and direct impact on the brand equity of private hospitals.

3.5. Assess the positive and negative impacts.

3.5.1. Positive effects and causes

The synergy of integrated marketing communication tools has helped private hospitals not only increase their daily patient numbers but also solidify their sustainable brand position in the increasingly competitive Vietnamese healthcare market.

3.5.2. Limitations and causes

The limitations mentioned in this thesis indicate that the implementation of IMC in private hospitals today remains fragmented and has not yet formed a unified whole. This requires hospitals to adopt a more strategic approach in connecting communication with actual service quality to protect and sustainably develop their brand equity.

CHAPTER 4: ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS FOR OPTIMIZING THE IMPACT OF INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION TOOLS ON THE BRAND EQUITY OF PRIVATE HOSPITALS IN VIETNAM IN THE COMING PERIOD

4.1. The issues raised

4.1.1. The uneven level of influence of integrated marketing communication tools

While hospitals may have strong brand awareness, other elements of brand equity, such as loyalty, are weak. This means awareness is widespread, but loyalty and engagement are actually fragile. Without adjusting to balance the influence of various tools, hospitals will face increasing communication costs without correspondingly building core brand value.

4.1.2. Trust in advertising

Để cấu trúc tài sản thương hiệu phát triển bền vững, các bệnh viện không thể giao phó toàn bộ trọng trách cho quảng cáo. Thay vào đó, quảng cáo phải được tái định vị, giúp đóng vai trò là cung cấp thông tin giáo dục sức khỏe, và theo sau bởi sự bảo chứng khách quan của công cụ Quan hệ công chúng (PR) cùng với trải nghiệm thực chứng từ Tiếp thị trực tiếp (DIR) để chuyển hóa sự "biết đến" thành lòng tin tưởng tuyệt đối.

4.1.3. The quality of content in integrated marketing communications

Beyond tool allocation, the quality of content delivered through integrated marketing communication channels plays a crucial role in shaping the components of brand equity. An analysis of the situation at three hospitals reveals a major challenge: the conflict between the pressure to create content that is "viral and commercially viable" and the requirement to build "medically accurate and educational" content. This disparity directly impacts perceived brand quality and brand associations.

4.1.4. Measuring the impact of integrated marketing communications tools on brand equity

The lack of tools to measure intangible value leaves private hospital marketing campaigns "blind" in terms of positioning. To build sustainable brand equity, hospitals must establish a system for periodic brand evaluation,

going beyond conventional social media interaction metrics to truly measure the level of trust and emotional connection patients have with their hospital.

4.1.5. Regional and demographic differences

The research findings indicate a major barrier to standardizing communication strategies in private hospitals: the lack of a single, effective IMC formula across the entire Vietnamese market. The diversity of regions and demographics forces private hospitals to confront the challenges of "localization" and "personalization" in their integrated marketing communications activities.

4.2. Optimizing the impact of integrated marketing communications tools on the brand equity of private hospitals in Vietnam in the coming period

4.2.1. Common solutions for private hospitals in Vietnam

In summary, the general solution for private hospitals is a seamless combination of sales-focused marketing communications and brand-building marketing communications to deliver long-term, sustainable results for the hospital, while also incorporating high-tech elements into marketing communications activities to attract and impress more patients when expanding medical tourism to foreign patients.

4.2.2. Solutions for Hong Ngoc General Hospital

The overall solution for Hong Ngoc Hospital is a harmonious combination of maximizing resources in Digital Marketing (DM) to lead the market with in-depth content; refining Advertising (AD) to ensure authenticity and reach; utilizing Public Relations (PR) to build academic credibility; and finally, selectively employing Direct Marketing (DIR) for in-depth care. This strategy strictly adheres to quantitative research findings while thoroughly addressing customer psychology issues identified through qualitative research.

4.2.3. Solutions for Hop Luc General Hospital

The solution for Hop Luc Hospital is a skillful blend of using Digital Marketing (DM) to rejuvenate the brand and reach decision-makers, using Advertising (AD) to maintain leading brand awareness, using Public Relations (PR) to strengthen its ethical foundation, and using Direct Marketing (DIR) to ensure transparency. This strategy helps Hop Luc both maintain its brand with

traditional customers and open its doors to a new generation of customers in the digital age.

4.2.4. Solutions for South Saigon General Hospital

The hospital needs to continue leveraging its strengths and developing from an emerging hospital into a solid healthcare brand in the South..

CONCLUSION

In summary, through a rigorous and scientific research process, this thesis has provided a comprehensive, specific, and highly applicable picture of the impact of integrated marketing communications (IMC) on the brand equity of private hospitals in Vietnam. The results achieved not only affirm the crucial role of IMC in the fiercely competitive environment but also provide hospital managers with practical tools to enhance their brand, optimize profits, and contribute to the overall development of the national healthcare sector. With clearly identified limitations and proposed future research directions, this thesis serves as a solid foundation for subsequent works, contributing to the body of knowledge on brand management in the specialized healthcare service sector in Vietnam.

PUBLICATIONS

1. Bui Minh Thuy. (2025). The impact of integrated marketing communications tools on the brand equity of private hospitals in Vietnam today. *Journal of Political Theory and Communication. The online journal of the Academy of Journalism and Communication*. <https://lyluanchinhtrivatruyenthong.vn/anh-huong-cua-cac-cong-cu-truyen-thong-tiep-thi-tich-hop-toi-tai-san-thuong-hieu-benh-vien-tu-tai-viet-nam-hien-nay-p29507.html>
2. Bui Minh Thuy. (2025). Enhancing the impact of integrated marketing communications on the brand equity of private hospitals in Vietnam. *Journal of Political Theory and Communication, Special Issue No. 4-2025, ISSN 1859-1485, pp. 159-164.*
3. Bui Minh Thuy. (2026). Research trends on brand equity in private hospitals and the impact of integrated marketing communication tools. *Journal of Political Theory and Communication. The online journal of the Academy of Journalism and Communication*. <https://lyluanchinhtrivatruyenthong.vn/xu-huong-nghien-cuu-ve-tai-san-thuong-hieu-benh-vien-tu-va-anh-huong-cua-cac-cong-cu-truyen-thong-tiep-thi-tich-hop-p29619.html>