

A Study on the Effectiveness of Through-The-Line Marketing in Enhancing Student Recruitment for Private Higher Education

¹ Mr. Rahul Sharma, ² Dr Shampa Nandi

¹ Research Scholar International School of Management Excellence University of Mysore

² Professor Analytics & Marketing International School of Management Excellence

Abstract: An effective marketing plan must be crafted for the university to nurture clients, boost the institutional bottom line, expand enrolment, and utilize university revenue. The research examined how well private university marketing campaigns brought in new students. This research examines how private universities may improve student recruitment via Through-the-Line (TTL) marketing. By fusing Above-the-Line (ATL) and Below-the-Line (BTL) tactics, TTL marketing seeks to provide a comprehensive strategy that merges mass media advertising with targeted, personalized outreach. The results show that TTL marketing helps get the word out and attracts more students, increasing enrolment. The research found that private universities may improve their student recruitment efforts by implementing a TTL approach that combines reaching a broad audience and creating personalized interactions.

Keywords: Postgraduates, Recruitment, Transformation, Higher Education

I. INTRODUCTION

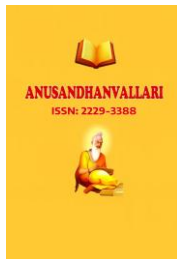
As a means of fostering social and economic progress, education has evolved into a universally valued service that all nations work hard to provide their inhabitants. There has to be a proliferation of schools, from elementary to university level, to handle the world's growing student population. Many business areas are booming today, driven by innovations such as information technology (which has seen tremendous growth) and others that aim to cater to people's daily needs and make them happy. There is a high demand for educational opportunities in the community, particularly among entrepreneurs with substantial capital, and the education sector is one of the most dynamic industries right now.

The expansion of educational institutions offering higher degrees became a prominent trend as more and more people were interested in this sector of the economy. Long-standing institutions and new businesses with no connection to education are involved in developing universities. University marketing and branding efforts should focus on attracting prospective students to differentiate themselves from the increasingly crowded marketplace of new tertiary institutions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers have access to several theoretical models that explain why and how students choose certain universities. In most cases, you may classify these models as either econometric, sociological, or hybrid. Various elements emerge due to the social, economic, and political climate, impacting students' decisions to attend HEIs [1]. In order to account for the majority of the elements impacting students' decision-making process, this research used combination models, which contain crucial indicators from both economic and sociological models [2, 3]. The literature review follows the combined models used in this study and incorporates other choice variables found by other studies. "Institutional scholarship, quality of education, image/prestige of institution, reputation of institution, communication channels, advertising, offline and online information, programs offered, cost of studying, communication channels, and facilities and services [4, 5]; sources of communication [6]; cost of living, education, and educational costs [7]; campus safety and security [8, 9, 10];

university website, direct communication from the institution, and educational facilities [11]; course reputation and, availability of work placement opportunities [12]; living expenses, quality of teaching, financial support and, city offering [13]; friends, relatives and teachers as the choice influencing factor [11]; course reputation and work placement [12]; price, people, location, reputation and, culture [14]; learning environment, staff quality, availability of scholarship and, cost of living [15]; teaching quality, quality of academic staff and, physical infrastructure [16]; accreditation status, athletic opportunities, availability of scholarship, cost of living, qualified professors, reputation of institution and, tuition fees [17]; academic and financial benefits and, quality and reputation of the university [18]; university image [19]; parents [20]; extracurricular activities and, cost of attendance/tuition fees [21]; future job prospects, teaching quality and staff expertise [18] and; expenses, city of institution, social life and quality of academic staff [22]; scholarship opportunities, facilities in campus and accreditation of programs [23]; location of institution, quality of education and advice of parents, infrastructure, reputation of university and proximity [3]; provision of sponsorship [24]; reputational characteristics, employment opportunities and the international position of institution [25]; geographical location of institution, opportunities of internship, courses offered and advice stakeholders like parents, siblings and friends [26]; advice of parents, reputation and ranking of the institution, and tuition fees ([27]; and, academic quality and programmes, financial aspects, student life, location and reputation of institution [28]." According to the literature, students consider several different aspects while deciding on a university. Pokhrel, Tiwari, and Phuyal [29] investigated various educational marketing strategies in Nepalese private colleges and reviewed the literature on student choice determinants of private higher education institutions. The advice of friends, family, and relatives, college websites, newspaper ads, extracurricular activities, library and IT facilities, professor profiles, and placement services were the most important factors in the decision to enroll. Quality of education, cultural values, and tuition prices were identified as three key decision criteria of students' choice of private education institutions in Qatar, according to Mustafa, Sellami, Elmaghraby, and Al-Qassassass [30]. Students are more likely to choose a school with high-quality programs, faculty, and service when making their decision, according to research by Hossain, Hossain, and Chowdhury [31]. According to research by Kayombo, Mudenda, Mweemba, and Nduli [32], the four most essential aspects of a university that draw in students are its reputation, the quality of its teaching, the cost of study, and its infrastructural facilities. The survey said that students' most influential people were themselves, their classmates, and family members. In contrast, students' most significant sources of information were institutional websites, social media, print media, and television. Undergraduates' decisions to enroll in private HEI are influenced by academic programs, tuition costs, the institution's location, reputation, career chances, and the availability of financial assistance (Shamsudin, Ali, Wahid, & Nadzri, [33]). Students in Malaysia choose to attend private universities for a variety of reasons, according to Krishnaswamy, Hossain, Kavigtha, and Nagaletchimee [34]: the school's reputation, its modern classrooms, its quality teaching, its socio-cultural activities, and its good infrastructural facilities. Using factor analysis, Adlia and Jos [35] recently identified six dimensions of scientific activities—ranking research, lecture quality, institution location, and overall impression—that impact Angolan college students' decisions. Major factors influencing PHEI enrolment in Kurdistan, Iraq, according to Qasim et al. [36], institution reputation, accreditation status, teaching quality, and graduate employability. The choice of students was unaffected by the expense of education. After researching what makes a private university in Vietnam appealing to Vietnamese students, Lee, Robinson, and Dobeles [37] settled on five criteria: prestige, location, facilities, field attractiveness, and media. The variables that influenced students' choice of PHEI in Hong Kong were identified by Ho & Law [38] as infrastructure, prestige of the institution, and culture of the institution. Job possibilities, instruction quality, and academic staff quality were determined to be major decision considerations for Vietnamese students by Le et al. [39]. While campus size and location were not significant selection considerations, Stalinska [40] found that course availability, accreditation, post-graduation employment prospects, extracurricular activities, and safety were. Distance to university, university location, tuition costs, scholarship availability, friends, family, and campus



visits were listed by Stalinska [40] as variables that impact students' choices to choose a private higher education school in Bangladesh.

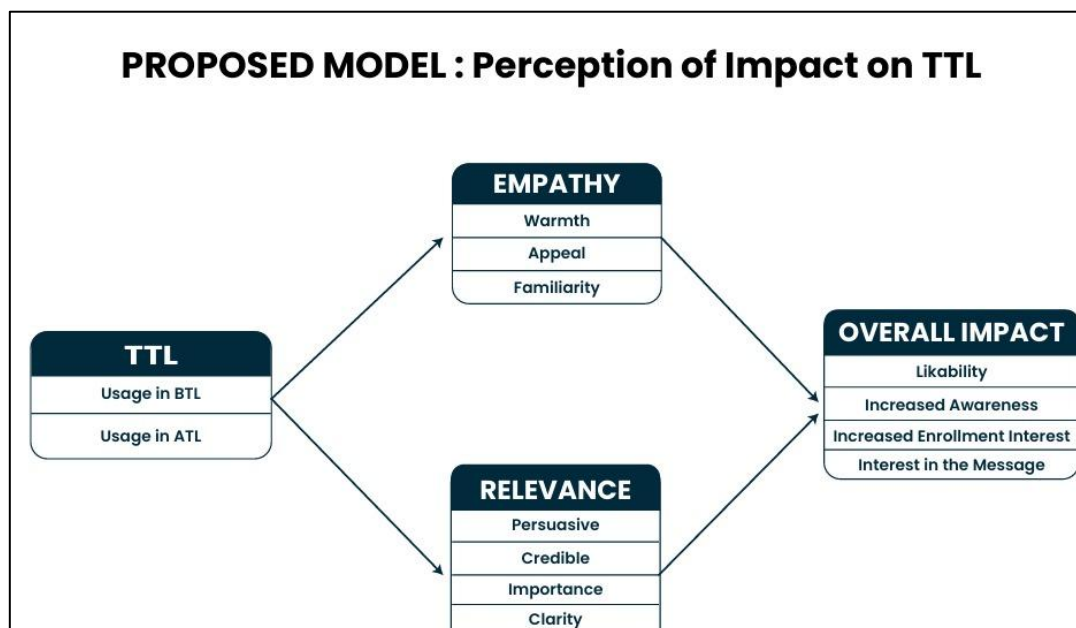
III. TTL MARKETING IN EDUCATION INDUSTRY

The complex of consumer attention and loyalty-inspiring tools is constantly being upgraded to meet existing preferences and inspire new ones. There are signs in the industry right now that we have entered the stage when our promotional toolkit is growing to include strategies that cater to specific customers rather than just mass-produced, cookie-cutter products. Today's digital media and technology allow for the accumulation of vast quantities of data on the tastes and actions of individual customers, which is essential to modern life. This technique's automation and quantitative homogenization enable the accumulation of user-informed and -stimulated individual solutions, which in turn allow the creation of mass-applicable promotional campaigns. This is because, despite consumers being very diverse, it is feasible to produce nearly equivalent stimulating complexes for each client category by combining commonalities among them. There are many reasons to implement a well-managed promotional strategy. However, some of the most important include increasing sales, speeding up product turnover, strengthening customer loyalty, building and strengthening the company's image, expanding into new markets, increasing market share, developing a competitive advantage, and improving the company's economic efficiency.

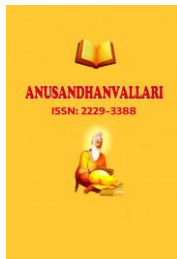
Since most businesses have different amounts of money and other resources at their disposal, and since there is no silver bullet for getting consumers to do what you want, a more holistic strategy is used to differentiate one economic actor from another. In industrialized market economies, businesses often use a hybrid of two tactics that draw on traditions to promote products and services. Before the third, a more unified method, through the line (TTL), emerged, and there were two main approaches: The line (ATL) and below the line (BTL). There is a difference in emphasis between the first two instrumental complexes; for example, the "above the line" combination uses mass media to disseminate a uniform message to more people. The events "below the line" events, on the other hand, execute actions tailored to the unique circumstances of each sales scenario. They got their name from the applied accounting method used for their first records and reports.

Last but not least, a unified strategy that goes "through the line" aims to combine the three techniques' best features to counteract the drawbacks of the individual methods or signals. Expanding the armory of promotional techniques is driven by critical concerns connected to [2, p. 256]: 1) a rise in the total cost of advertising as a result of consumers being less responsive to ads over time due to the oversaturation of the market, necessitating more sophisticated and expensive marketing tactics; 2) whereas big firms have long outsourced comparable tasks so they may concentrate on what they do best, inventive agents who focus on providing entire marketing services constitute a new division of the company; 3) a rise in made-on-the-spot purchases, influenced by factors including product perceived value and how well it performs at the point of sale; 4) As the product life cycle horizon shrank, distribution channel participants—most notably the manufacturer and the agent of ultimate exchange—were forced to tighten their grip on purchasing incentives; 5. A micro-marketing strategy, in which targeted promotions have a more significant impact in smaller, more fragmented markets than broad-based advertising; 6. The "snowball" effect, in which competitors implement promotions in a market so they do not lose their market share and positions; 7. In contrast to other parts of the marketing mix, promotions are subject to the best operational management practices. Several substantial risks come with changing the product, price, or location; 8) various promotional tactics have varied economic efficiency, which can be more appropriately assessed using contemporary digital technology. The following is a generalization about the uniqueness of individual marketing complexes: As seen in Table 1, ATL is linked to the use of mass media for brand promotion.

ATL	BTL	TTL
- reach a wide audience; - have a significant effect; - back up the image; - be applicable on a macro level; - be disseminated across many media; - be highly standardized; - support the image; - hazard analysis of the results; data is subjectively assessed at the need awareness stage; - Problems with the message's conditional objectivity, insufficient feedback, and unknown audience size are just a few examples.	- micro-level application; - non-media dissemination; - case-by-case approach; - segment target populations; - powerful impact; - customer attraction and retention; - direct evaluation of results; - mostly used in a trading context; - including an element of subjectivity in terms of effect; - handling objections and real-time offer revisions; - selecting individuals to get promotional incentives and others.	- standardized and individual approaches; - mass and targeted audiences; - simultaneous brand support image, and enhanced customer loyalty; - certain actions are expected to be evaluated indirectly and others to be evaluated directly; - both apply to macro and micro levels.



Above-The-Line (ATL) tactics seek to reach mainstream audiences, while Below-The-Line (BTL) strategies concentrate on targeted and specialised audiences. TTL blends the two. To maximise engagement and effect, TTL communication integrates various tactics to build a unified marketing plan. The model finds three



important factors—empathy, relevance, and overall impact—and shows how TTL use influences these variables to make marketing efforts successful.

TTL Usage: The Foundation of the Model

This model's foundation is TTL use, which integrates ATL and BTL communication tactics. Email marketing, social media advertisements, and in-store promotions are examples of BTL use that centre on direct, targeted communication. Marketers may target certain demographics with personalised communications using these techniques. When it comes to ATL, the focus is on reaching a large audience via various mediums such as television, radio, or print ads. This helps to build brand recognition and exposure. The combination of ATL and BTL in TTL allows campaigns to reach both broad audiences and targeted niches, which in turn sets the stage for the ensuing effects on Empathy and Relevance.

Empathy: Building an Emotional Connection

The first important factor affected by TTL use is empathy, which centres on the audience's emotional connection to the content. There are three parts to empathy in this model: Atmosphere, Charm, and Recognisability.

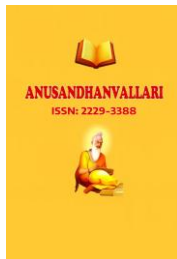
- A warm tone is one that conveys sentiments of warmth, sympathy, and caring via the tone of the message. Campaigns tackling social concerns or personal tales, which elicit warmth, establish a strong emotional connection. By using BTL approaches in particular, TTL strategies make communications seem more personalised and authentic, which strengthens this connection.
- How appealing and interesting the message is is captured by appeal. An engaging message not only captures but also keeps listeners' attention. The combination of ATL campaigns' narrative and originality with BTL communication's accuracy boosts appeal via TTL, making sure the message resonates across multiple touch points.
- How comfortable and familiar the message is with the audience is a measure of familiarity. Building recognition via repeated exposure through ATL ads is the goal of BTL initiatives, which use targeted and regular follow-ups to further reinforce this familiarity.

Audiences are more open to the ad when its creators demonstrate empathy for their plight. For the message to have an impression and stay with the listener, this link is vital.

Relevance: Making the Message Meaningful

The second important factor that TTL use affects is relevance, which measures the message's usefulness and significance to the target audience. There are four parts to relevance: Credibility, Clarity, Persuasiveness, and Significance.

- The capacity of a communication to persuade its audience of its worth is reflected in its persuasiveness. Addressing the audience's needs, providing answers to their issues, and encouraging action are all hallmarks of a convincing message. By integrating engaging ATL content with thorough, data-driven BTL communication—like product demos or testimonials—TTL increases persuasiveness.
- The message's credibility determines how trustworthy and dependable it is. Content that is based on facts, endorsements, or testimonials may do this. Trust-building long-term strategies use authoritative ATL venues to reach out and use in-depth BTL communication to reinforce the message.
- To emphasise the message's significance, emphasise its worth or need to the listener. Marketers may use TTL to divide their audience into different groups and then send each group material that is tailored to their interests, making sure that the message is current and relevant.



- A clear and unambiguous communication is one that is simple to grasp. Making sure the audience understands the main ideas fast requires clear communication. By keeping the message constant across all platforms, TTL improves clarity.

By enhancing Relevance, TTL ensures that campaigns resonate with the audience's needs and priorities, making the message not only appealing but also actionable.

Overall Impact: The End Goal

The ultimate objective of TTL communication is to achieve **Overall Impact**, which reflects the effectiveness of the campaign in meeting its goals. Overall Impact comprises four key outcomes: **Likeability**, **Increased Awareness**, **Increased Enrollment Interest**, and **Interest in the Message**.

- **Likeability** refers to how positively the audience perceives the message. Empathy plays a crucial role here by creating a warm and relatable tone, which enhances the audience's reception of the campaign.
- **Increased Awareness** is one of the primary goals of ATL strategies, as they are designed to reach large audiences. TTL communication boosts awareness further by using BTL strategies to reinforce the message among specific groups, ensuring that the audience not only recognizes the brand but also understands its offerings.
- **Increased Enrollment Interest** reflects the audience's willingness to take action, such as signing up for a service, purchasing a product, or engaging with the brand. Relevance is critical here, as audiences are more likely to act on a message that aligns with their needs and feels personally meaningful.
- **Interest in the Message** measures the audience's engagement with the campaign content. TTL sustains interest by delivering dynamic, multi-channel campaigns that keep the message fresh and compelling.

Overall Impact is the culmination of the interplay between Empathy and Relevance. When these intermediate factors are optimized, they lead to a campaign that is well-received, widely recognized, and action-oriented.

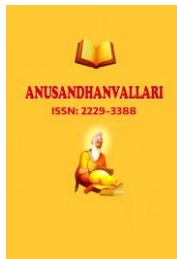
Interrelationships between Components

The model's functional pathways show the interdependent connections among TTL use, empathy, relevance, and overall impact, which are dynamic interconnections. Empathy and Relevance are intermediary characteristics that shape the audience's view of the campaign; TTL techniques directly impact these qualities. The Overall Impact, which demonstrates how well the message met its goals, is then determined by the combined effects of Empathy and Relevance.

Think of a public education campaign on the need of protecting the environment as an example. Commercials and other ATL methods use uplifting narratives and images to create a sense of familiarity and warmth (Empathy). At the same time, by offering precise information and practical advice, BTL techniques like targeted social media advertisements or email newsletters increase clarity and relevance (Relevance). Taken as a whole, these initiatives raise consciousness, pique curiosity, and motivate viewers to take action, resulting in a powerful Overall Impact.

IV. HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

When compared to other service industries, education stands out as an experiential one, with a focus on the customer's (the student's) overall impression of the organisation (the university) rather of the products or services actual usefulness [41]. Prospective students, existing students, and graduates are all considered consumers of HEIs. A student's interactions with their educational institution occur gradually throughout the duration of their academic career, and likewise, connections between students and teachers grow gradually over



time. Even though students spend a lot of time in class, higher education institutions, particularly business schools, have a much narrower window of opportunity to cultivate relationships with students who are already adults. According to Tomlinson [42], the 'student-consumer' is on the increase as a consequence of the growing commercialisation of higher education and the fact that individual students are paying for their own education. It is important to highlight that students' perspectives on higher education have evolved in this regard. The significance of how HEIs cultivate connections with students, taking into consideration the 'student-consumer' attitude, becomes apparent against the background of these evolving relationship equations between HEIs and students. The experience that students have while at the HEI is a vital part of building the connection. Every student's view of the experience's worth is shaped by the cumulative effect of a number of exchanges that take place over time [43]. Both Faranda and Clarke Iii [44] and Appleton-Knapp and Krentler [45] agree that student happiness is an important goal of education and that knowing what qualities students value in their teachers may improve the quality of their time in the classroom. It is essential for HEIs to manage their connections with students in the hopes that many of them would support the institutions via recommendations, good word of mouth, and referrals. Developing long-term partnerships is becoming more important for HEIs as they depend on alumni for regular assistance rather than sporadic one-time payments. According to Arnett et al. [46], one of the most important factors in deciding whether students will become contributors in the future is the quality of the interaction between students and teachers. One of the most important aspects of relationship marketing is keeping track of the communication between the people involved in the relationship [47]. Higher education institutions should prioritise the development of positive relationships between students and teachers, and teachers should make an effort to connect with their students on a personal level [48]. From a relational viewpoint, some researchers have examined teacher-student interactions (e.g. [49]), and some have shown that positive connections between teachers and students affect students' academic performance, which in turn increases the value of education [50]. Considerations from the relational perspective have centred on the following: the importance of trust in value creation between HEIs and their students [51], the role of gratitude in establishing relationships between HEIs and their students [52], the importance of students' identities in the success of HEIs [50], the positive effects of student-faculty interactions on satisfaction [53], the impact of parents on students' satisfaction [54-56], and the impact of students' gender on overall satisfaction. The role of faculty at HEIs is expanding beyond only sharing information due to rising competitive pressures.

V. STUDENT RECRUITMENT

The term "student recruitment" refers to the efforts made by colleges and universities to attract prospective students and convince them to enrol in their programs [57]. Student recruiting methods should prioritize gender and racial diversity. Locating potential students inside and outside the institution is an integral part of the recruiting process. Academic programs at a particular institution are actively sought by prospective students [57]. Universities must recruit qualified graduates who will complete their degrees within the allotted time so that they may participate in postgraduate degree programs, and the provision of financial aid, such as scholarships and bursaries, encourages students to do just that [26]. The institution disseminates recruiting information to potential students using recruitment channels, strategic recruitment designs, and strategic approaches. Because African institutions do not experience intense marketing rivalry, Nwedu [57] argues that more student recruiting and retention tactics should be needed. However, one may argue that the government's postgraduate goals have stoked fierce rivalry among institutions of higher learning. In their discussion of diversity and quality, Bapat and Gankar [58] note that university recruiting techniques are comparable. On the other hand, specific recruiting tactics are necessary in the postgraduate market because of its unique characteristics [26]. As a result, the government's priority groups may be more amenable to a postgraduate sector recruiting plan that is both innovative and well-targeted.

VI. DISCUSSION

In line with this conclusion, Meulemans Lim, Romsa, and Romsa [59] found that students ranked extracurricular activities as the most essential criteria when deciding on a university. In addition to their academic credentials, it is shown that students value participation in extracurricular activities. In addition to lowering stress, improving physical health, mental and social development, and forming strong social bonds, participating in extracurricular activities enables students to make meaningful contributions to their academics and society at large [60]. Due to students' preference for extracurricular activities, higher education institutions compete strongly in recruiting prospective students [61]. Consequently, schools should provide a variety of extracurricular activities for students. Job search and placement services, the employment rate of graduates, and the graduation rate made up employment prospects, the second most significant decision factor. Citation: [14] backs up this conclusion. Graduates are usually interested in hearing about job openings [62]. Graduates' unemployment rates may be significantly reduced if institutions provide job placement services. By connecting recent graduates with suitable career opportunities, universities, and colleges may significantly reduce unemployment. Finding a suitable career opportunity after graduation becomes even more challenging for students in Botswana due to the oversaturated job market and lack of relevant options. So, it is critical for schools to work on their students' graduation and employment rates. This may be achieved by providing better job placement and search assistance. Program variety, program marketability, and teacher quality are the third critical components determining program quality. Adlia & Jos [35], Hanssen and Mathisen [63], and Hussain, Hussain & Chaudhary [64] all found that university programs that are both broad and flexible are significant when choosing a school. Graduates get diverse skills and knowledge from the programs, increasing their marketability to potential employers. Institutions with accredited programs are better able to recruit students since their programs are of higher quality and meet the needs of local businesses. One important factor that improves the programs' quality is the quality of the instruction [16]. Consequently, schools should provide courses taught by qualified faculty members that are diverse and geared toward the workforce. Three crucial criteria comprise the physical aspect of the campus as a decision factor: cultural variety, the size of the town where the institution is situated, and the beauty of the campus. A big, beautiful campus is ideal for students to reach [65]. Because it raises the graduation rate, institutions should encourage cultural diversity, especially among faculty members. Opening new campuses in every major city would not be possible, so maybe the best option would be to make the current site more appealing to prospective students. Fifth on the list of considerations for pupils when deciding on a school was the opinion of their peers. This aspect is mainly affected by parental advice, academic guidance, and guidance from counsellors and instructors. This research suggests that when students decide which college to attend, they often seek advice from their parents, instructors, and guidance counselors. According to Proboyo and Soedarsono [66], parents' recommendations play a major role in college admissions decisions. When choosing a college or university, students would seek advice from faculty and guidance counselors. The accessibility of campus and its amenities, as a determinant of choice, comprises the distance to campus and the living facilities on campus. According to Islam and Sharon, students also considered the proximity to school and the availability of on-campus accommodation to be crucial criteria [67]. Due to its impact on transportation costs, an institution's proximity is a crucial consideration. Because students are less likely to register in programs far from campus, the school should consider building housing on campus to alleviate this issue. The option factors of having an admissions officer visit the school, seeing advertisements on television and radio, and having an institutional website all point to the significance of electronic media in advertising to prospective students, as does human contact. According to Ishlam and Sharon [67], students consider college advertisements, the accessibility of the college website, and campus visits by administrative staff to be significant decision-making considerations when selecting and enrolling in a school. Advertising on television and radio and the institution's website may be an efficient way to spread the word and highlight the institution's achievements [63]. Officials from the institution may personally visit the feeder schools to meet with prospective students and promote the

school's programs in the hopes that the pupils can see a future with the institution [38]. The availability of financial assistance and foreign connections are option considerations. One of the decision-making elements mentioned by Samshudddin, Wahid, and Ali [33] was the availability of financial assistance. One element that Hossain, Hossain, and Choudhary [31] found to be important was the presence of international ties. An institution's international relations might attract funds for student scholarships. While the government of Botswana has been helping worthy students with sponsorship, private organizations may also make a big difference by doing the same. Institutional fairs and publications are examples of chosen products that include publicity via print media. According to Bueno [68], print media has a role in decision considerations since they are a significant source of information. Career fairs are a deciding factor because they provide institutional information via face-to-face interaction, according to [69]. Lee [69]. Brochures and pamphlets are great forms of printed promotion since they are easy to deliver to prospective students during a well-planned institutional fair. The research found that students view institutional publications and fairs as essential when making choices. Therefore, schools could use fairs to attract faculty, parents, and students. When deciding on a school, students rank the cost of attendance as their tenth and last consideration. While Branco Oliveira & Soares [70] showed that students' choice of school was uninfluenced by cost, their findings indicated that cost and tuition price were the second key decision factor. Given these contradictory findings, it may be said that other variables impact the cost of attendance. Even though schools would rather have more money coming in via tuition increases, students would rather attend schools with lower tuition rates. Institutions should constantly aim to keep costs as low as feasible if they want to attract enough students for enrolment. The ten extracted choice variables are based on the social, economic, cultural, and environmental aspects, which mean that the results of this research are embedded in and supported by the unified theoretical decision-making model. Researching and modelling students' choices is crucial [66]. Based on the results, a ten-factor combined model of students' decision-making process while selecting a private university has been established.

VII. CONCLUSION

Encouraging more students to register in master's and PhD programs requires institutions to implement measures for recruitment and retention. Hence, institutions should align their recruiting goals for postgraduate students with the government's purpose. Public colleges and universities should prioritize increasing the number of research master's and doctoral degree holders by clarifying their policies on postgraduate education and allocating more significant resources to this end. According to the research, private universities may greatly benefit from using Through-the-Line (TTL) marketing to increase their student headcount. Using both Above-the-Line (ATL) and Below-the-Line (BTL) strategies, TTL marketing provides a holistic approach to brand exposure and personalized interaction. According to the study's authors, institutions that use TTL tactics saw an increase in enrolment, brand recognition, and student engagement.

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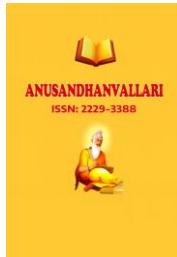
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