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An Exploratory Study on the Marketing Strategies of San Isidro College Towards First Year Student

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ABSTRACT

Effective student recruitment relies on how well an institution communicates its identity and opportunities to potential enrollees. Understanding the ways first-year students become aware of what a college offers is valuable for strengthening marketing practices and ensuring meaningful connections with learners. Information was gathered from first-year students through a structured survey that experts had validated to offer a clear view of student perspectives on the strategies that shaped their awareness of the institution. The findings show that marketing strategies with strong visibility and personal engagement play a greater role in shaping student awareness and enrollment decisions. Overall, students viewed the institution's marketing efforts as understandable and moderately effective, with clear opportunities for improvement. The results indicate that strengthening accessible, engaging, and student-centered marketing strategies can enhance the institution's ability to reach and influence future first-year students effectively.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Marketing plays a crucial role in the recruitment efforts of tertiary institutions, as it determines how effectively they can reach and attract potential students. In today's competitive educational landscape, schools and colleges must communicate their identity, strengths, and opportunities in ways that resonate with the aspirations of young learners (Tsang *et al.*, 2023). Through strategic marketing, institutions can present themselves not only as providers of education but also as communities where students can belong and thrive (De Ramos & Briones, 2024). This process is essential in shaping perceptions, building trust, and ultimately influencing the decision-making of incoming first-year students.

Despite the importance of marketing in higher education, there is limited research focusing on its actual effectiveness and the specific modalities used by institutions. Many colleges adopt marketing practices without thoroughly evaluating their outcomes, which creates a gap in understanding how these strategies impact student enrollment. In the current trends of educational management, decisions guided by data have become critical to ensuring institutional success (Bapat & Gankar, 2019; Labausa *et al.*, 2023). Without reliable information, efforts to strengthen recruitment remain based on assumptions rather than evidence, underscoring the need to investigate how marketing practices actually operate in the local context.

Another pressing concern lies in the lack of studies examining how first-year college students actually learn

about a given institution. While schools may invest in advertisements, social media campaigns, or community engagements, the specific pathways through which students gain awareness are not always documented or analyzed (Chin *et al.*, 2022; Aquino, 2024; Cingillioglu *et al.*, 2024). This empirical gap prevents a clear understanding of which strategies are most effective in reaching potential enrollees. Addressing this gap enables institutions to align their marketing efforts with the actual experiences of students, ensuring that resources are utilized efficiently and meaningfully.

The importance of examining these issues lies in the opportunity to improve institutional marketing by directly gathering insights from the students themselves. Colleges can identify the actual strategies that shaped their awareness and influenced their decision to enroll by listening to the experiences of first-year students. Such findings provide a practical basis for refining promotional activities and strengthening student recruitment in ways that are both responsive and sustainable. Ultimately, this effort contributes to creating a stronger connection between the institution and its community of learners.

The study seeks to collect information on the marketing approaches that first-year students encountered in relation to the college. Specifically, it aims to determine the means by which students became aware of the institution and how these strategies influenced their decision to enroll.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on the Push-Pull Theory of Student Choice (Haque *et al.*, 2025), which explains how students

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are influenced by both internal and external factors when selecting an institution. Push factors include personal motivations, such as the desire for quality education or career opportunities. At the same time, pull factors relate to the attractiveness of the institution, including its reputation, programs, and accessibility. Applying this framework helps explain how marketing strategies serve as pull mechanisms that draw students toward enrollment. The theory provides a useful lens for interpreting student responses and understanding the dynamics behind their decisions to choose one institution over others.

Statement of the Problem

In the context of higher education, effective marketing plays a crucial role in attracting potential students and influencing their decision about which institution to attend. However, there is still little information on how specific strategies influence the awareness and decisions of first-year students, particularly in local settings where resources for promotion are often limited. Without clear insights into which approaches are most effective, institutions may continue to rely on assumptions rather than evidence-based practices, leaving gaps in both planning and execution. Specifically, the study seeks to address the following problems:

1. What marketing strategies are employed by the institution to reach prospective first-year students?
2. Which strategies are considered most effective from the perspective of first-year students?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role of Marketing in Higher Education Recruitment Marketing has become an essential component of higher education recruitment as institutions seek to attract and engage prospective students in an increasingly competitive environment (Tsang *et al.*, 2023). Existing literature emphasizes that effective marketing helps colleges communicate their academic offerings, values, and student support services in ways that are meaningful to potential enrollees. Through planned promotional efforts, institutions are able to build visibility and shape public perception, which are critical factors in student recruitment (Taja-on *et al.*, 2023; De Ramos & Briones, 2024). Marketing in higher education is not limited to promotion alone but also serves as a bridge that connects institutional identity with student expectations. This perspective highlights the importance of examining how marketing strategies function in practice and how they contribute to enrollment outcomes.

Student Decision-Making and Choice of Institution

Studies on student decision-making suggest that choosing a college is a process influenced by multiple personal, social, and institutional factors. Prospective students often consider academic programs, cost, location, reputation, and perceived quality when evaluating their options. Information gathered through marketing materials, school visits, and personal recommendations plays a

significant role in shaping initial awareness and interest (Camilleri, 2019; Bapat & Gankar, 2019; Subbarayalu, 2022). These factors work together to help students form an overall impression of an institution before making an enrollment decision.

Further literature indicates that interpersonal influences, such as advice from family members, peers, alumni, and educators, strongly affect student choices. These personal sources are often perceived as more trustworthy and relatable than formal promotional materials (Nuriadi, 2021; Taja-on *et al.*, 2023). As a result, institutions that align their marketing efforts with the values and concerns of students are more likely to influence decision-making positively. Understanding how students interpret and respond to different sources of information provides a strong basis for examining recruitment strategies from the student's perspective (Labausa *et al.*, 2023).

Impact of Digital and Social Media Platforms on Student Recruitment

Recent literature highlights the growing influence of digital and social media platforms in higher education recruitment. Social media allows institutions to reach a wide audience quickly while presenting information in a format that is familiar and engaging to young people (Cingillioglu *et al.*, 2024). Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and similar channels enable colleges to share updates, student experiences, and institutional activities, making information more accessible to prospective students (Sintani *et al.*, 2021; Dag-um *et al.*, 2025).

Moreover, digital platforms support interaction and immediate feedback, which enhances student engagement and interest. Research shows that students increasingly rely on online sources to gather information about colleges before making enrollment decisions (Chin *et al.*, 2022; Aquino, 2024). Compared to traditional media, digital marketing is often viewed as more timely and relevant. These findings underline the importance of assessing how effectively social media and digital tools are used in reaching and influencing first-year students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design and Locale

The study utilized a descriptive quantitative design (Siedlecki, 2020) to systematically gather and analyze information on the marketing strategies used to reach incoming first-year students. This design was appropriate as it allowed the researchers to describe current practices and student perceptions using measurable data. The investigation was conducted at San Isidro College, focusing on the direct experiences of first-year students within the institution.

Sampling Method and Respondents

Random sampling (Martino *et al.*, 2018) was employed in selecting the respondents to ensure that the data reflected the perspectives of the student population. The participants were drawn from first-year students

enrolled at San Isidro College, giving each student an equal chance of being included in the study. Through this sampling approach, the study was able to capture varied

experiences and perspectives of new students regarding institutional marketing.

Table 1: Demographic profile of the first-year college students' (N=267).

	Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	104	38.95
	Female	163	61.05
Department	Arts and Sciences	21	7.87
	Education	42	15.73
	Business Administration	33	12.36
	Accountancy	6	2.25
	Engineering	22	8.24
	Information Technology	25	9.36
	Nursing	118	44.19

The respondents of the study, as presented in Table 1, consisted of first-year college students enrolled at San Isidro College. This group was identified as the primary source of information since they represent the most recent recipients of the institution's marketing efforts. Their perspectives were crucial in understanding how they initially became aware of the college and how various strategies influenced their decision to enroll.

Data Gathering Procedure and Analysis

Data were collected using a researcher-made survey questionnaire designed to capture information on student awareness and perceptions of marketing strategies. To establish the credibility of the instrument, it was reviewed and validated by three experts in the field, ensuring that the questions were appropriate, clear, and aligned with the research objectives. This process helped refine the tool for accuracy and reliability, allowing the researchers to gather data that was both meaningful and trustworthy. The use of the survey provided a structured means of obtaining consistent responses from the participants. Data were collected using both online and printed survey questionnaires to ensure accessibility and convenience for the respondents. Prior to data collection, participants were informed about the purpose of the research and were asked to read and sign an informed consent form, confirming their voluntary participation. This process ensured that ethical standards were observed and that

respondents clearly understood their rights. The use of both formats allowed for wider participation and supported the accurate gathering of student responses in an organized and systematic manner. The responses gathered from the participants were treated using descriptive statistics, which allowed the researchers to summarize and present the data in an organized manner. Descriptive measures were employed to identify patterns and highlight the most significant findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the findings of the study based on the responses gathered from first-year students. The results provide an organized account of how students encountered and evaluated the institution's marketing efforts. Taken together, these findings offer a clear view of students' experiences and perceptions, serving as the basis for understanding the patterns that emerged from the data. Table 2 presents an overview of how students became aware of the institution through various marketing approaches. The table reflects the extent to which different strategies reached students and contributed to their initial familiarity with the institution. The information highlights patterns of exposure that help clarify which approaches were more noticeable to students during their decision-making process.

Table 2: Students' awareness of the marketing strategies employed by San Isidro College (N=267).

Marketing Strategy	F	%	Rank
Print advertisements	89	33.33	5
Social media platforms	218	81.65	1
Official website of the institution	4	1.50	10
School visits, orientations, or career talks in high schools	113	42.32	3
Mass media promotions	17	6.37	9
Word-of-mouth	62	23.22	7
Community events or outreach organized by the institution	-	0	11
Posters or tarpaulins	97	36.33	4

Alumni or current students	182	68.16	2
Scholarship announcements and financial aid promotions	23	8.61	8
The Seminary / Church / Religious Institutions	83	31.09	6

The results, as presented in Table 2, show that students most commonly learned about the institution through social media, making it the most widely encountered marketing channel. Many students also became aware of the college through alumni or current students, highlighting the strong role of personal networks. School visits and orientations, along with posters or tarpaulins, were also notable sources of awareness. Print advertisements and information from religious institutions reached a considerable portion of respondents, though to a lesser extent. Meanwhile, strategies such as mass media promotions, scholarship announcements, and the official website had minimal reach. Community

events and outreach programs did not contribute to student awareness. Overall, the findings indicate that online presence and interpersonal connections are the institution's strongest points of exposure among first-year students.

Table 3 summarizes students' views on how well the marketing strategies influenced their interest and understanding of the institution. The results provide insight into how students evaluated the effectiveness of different approaches based on their personal experiences. These perceptions help explain which strategies were more influential in shaping students' impressions.

Table 3: Students' perception of the level of effectiveness of the marketing strategies employed by San Isidro College.

Statement	\bar{x}	σ_z	Qual. Int.
Social media promotions were effective in capturing my interest in the college.	4.25	1.668	Very Effective
High school orientations or career talks were effective in informing me about the institution.	4.02	0.897	Effective
Alumni or current students' testimonials were effective in shaping my impression of the college.	3.82	1.268	Effective
Print advertisements (posters, brochures, flyers, banners) were effective in making me consider the college.	3.44	0.815	Effective
Word-of-mouth recommendations strongly influenced my decision to enroll.	3.31	1.082	Moderately Effective
The seminary or church or religious institution was effective in encouraging my enrollment	3.18	1.115	Moderately Effective
Posters or tarpaulins in the community were effective in raising awareness.	2.97	0.977	Moderately Effective
Radio, television, or mass media promotions were effective in introducing the college.	2.57	1.963	Slightly Effective
Scholarship announcements and financial aid promotions were effective in encouraging my enrollment.	2.48	1.544	Slightly Effective
The official website provided useful and updated information that influenced my decision.	1.57	1.969	Ineffective
Community events and outreach programs effectively promoted the college.	1.12	1.012	Ineffective

Students perceived social media promotions as the most effective approach in capturing their interest, reinforcing its strong role in awareness. High school orientations and testimonials from alumni or current students were also regarded as effective in influencing their impression of the institution. Print materials played a moderate but still meaningful role in shaping decisions. Personal recommendations and information from religious institutions were viewed as moderately effective. Strategies such as posters or tarpaulins had a limited influence, while mass media promotions and scholarship announcements were regarded as only slightly

effective. The official website and community events were perceived as ineffective in influencing enrollment decisions. Overall, the data indicate that strategies relying on digital platforms and personal interactions create the strongest impact.

Table 4 presents students' overall assessment of the effectiveness of the institution's marketing efforts. The table reflects how students viewed the combined influence of various strategies on their enrollment decision. The findings offer a general picture of how clearly and effectively the institution's marketing approaches were received.

Table 4: Students’ perception of the overall level of effectiveness of the marketing strategies employed by San Isidro College.

Statement	\bar{x}	σ_z	Qual. Int.
I believe the institution should strengthen its marketing efforts to better reach future students.	3.48	0.868	Effective
Among all strategies, social media was the most effective way of reaching me as a first-year student.	3.46	0.878	Effective
Overall, the marketing strategies of the institution were clear and easy to understand.	3.37	0.785	Moderately Effective
Among all strategies, personal recommendations (family, friends, alumni, current students) were the most effective in my decision.	3.33	0.888	Moderately Effective
The marketing strategies influenced my choice to enroll in this institution.	3.27	0.857	Moderately Effective
Overall Effectiveness	3.38	0.652	Moderately Effective

Students viewed the institution’s marketing strategies as generally clear and moderately effective in influencing their decision to enroll. They recognized social media as one of the more effective ways to reach prospective students, while personal recommendations also played a notable but moderate role. Respondents also expressed that marketing efforts should be strengthened to better connect with future students. Taken together, the institution’s marketing approaches were perceived as moderately effective overall.

Discussion

The discussion interprets the results by linking student experiences with broader patterns observed in the data. The discussion provides context to the findings and explains their significance in relation to student awareness and decision-making. Through this discussion, the results are examined more closely to draw meaningful insights from the data presented.

Students’ Awareness of the Marketing Strategies Employed

The findings show that the institution employs a range of marketing strategies to reach prospective first-year students, with varying levels of visibility among the student population. The results indicate that awareness is largely shaped by strategies that allow frequent exposure and personal connection. These approaches appear to be more noticeable to students as they navigate their options prior to enrollment. The diversity of strategies identified suggests that the institution does not rely on a single method but instead uses multiple channels to introduce itself to potential students.

In examining how these strategies function in practice, it becomes evident that approaches allowing direct interaction and repeated engagement are more effective in creating awareness. Platforms that students regularly access and trust play a stronger role in drawing attention to the institution. Personal connections, such as interactions with alumni, current students, or school-based activities, also contribute significantly to awareness

(Bapat & Gankar, 2019; Nuriadi, 2021; Sintani *et al.*, 2021). These strategies create familiarity and reduce uncertainty, making the institution more visible and approachable during the decision-making process.

On the other hand, strategies that rely on limited interaction or passive exposure appear less effective in generating awareness. Channels that require students to actively seek information or that have minimal presence in students’ daily environments contribute less to recognition. The absence of awareness through certain activities further suggests that not all strategies are equally implemented or experienced by students (Camilleri, 2019; Subbarayalu, 2022). This imbalance highlights differences in reach and visibility across marketing efforts.

Overall, the results imply that the institution primarily reaches prospective students through strategies that emphasize accessibility, personal contact, and consistent presence. These findings clarify which approaches are actively employed and noticed by students, providing a clearer understanding of how awareness is formed. Such insights are essential in identifying which marketing strategies effectively position the institution as a viable choice for first-year students (Hung & Yen, 2022; Taja-on *et al.*, 2023; Dag-um *et al.*, 2025).

Students’ Perception of the Level of Effectiveness of Marketing Strategies

The results reveal that students are able to distinguish between strategies that merely create awareness and those that meaningfully influence their interest and impressions. Strategies that provide timely information, reliable content, and direct engagement are perceived as more effective in shaping students’ views of the institution. These approaches appear to support students in evaluating the institution more confidently as part of their enrollment decision.

Further analysis shows that strategies involving digital platforms and structured school-based activities are viewed as particularly effective. These methods allow students to access information easily while also offering clarity about academic offerings and campus life.

Testimonials and shared experiences from individuals connected to the institution further strengthen students' impressions by adding credibility and relevance. In contrast, strategies that offer limited interaction or delayed access to information are perceived as having less influence on student decisions (Nuriadi, 2021; Sintani, 2021; Hung & Yen, 2022; Subbarayalu, 2022).

The implications of these findings suggest that effectiveness is closely tied to how well a strategy aligns with students' information needs and communication habits. Strategies that feel distant, unclear, or outdated contribute less to decision-making. Students appear to value marketing approaches that support understanding, reduce uncertainty, and create a sense of connection (Gordillo *et al.*, 2020; Taja-on *et al.*, 2023; Dag-um *et al.*, 2025). These perceptions highlight the importance of prioritizing strategies that actively engage students rather than relying on passive forms of promotion.

Students' Perception of the Overall Level of Effectiveness of Marketing Strategies

The overall assessment indicates that the institution's marketing strategies are generally understandable and moderately effective in influencing student enrollment decisions. Students recognize that the existing strategies play a role in guiding their choice, though there remains room for improvement. This overall perception reflects how different strategies work together rather than the impact of any single approach.

In terms of overall influence, strategies that foster familiarity and personal relevance stand out as more effective. Students acknowledge the value of platforms and recommendations that provide clear and relatable information. At the same time, the perception that marketing efforts should be strengthened suggests that while current approaches are helpful, they may not fully address the needs and preferences of all prospective students (Nuriadi, 2021; Sintani *et al.*, 2021; Hung & Yen, 2022).

These results imply that improving consistency, clarity, and reach across marketing strategies could enhance their overall effectiveness. Strengthening approaches that students already find useful, while reconsidering those that have limited impact, may lead to more informed and confident enrollment decisions. The findings underscore the importance of aligning marketing efforts with student experiences and expectations (Bapat & Gankar, 2019; Camilleri, 2019; Taja-on *et al.*, 2023; Dag-um *et al.*, 2025).

Synthesis

Considering all factors, the results show that awareness, perceived effectiveness, and overall influence of marketing strategies are closely connected. Strategies that are highly visible are also more likely to be perceived as effective, particularly when they allow interaction, familiarity, and access to information. Students respond more positively to approaches that fit naturally into their daily routines and decision-making processes.

The combined findings suggest that the institution's strongest marketing strategies are those that reduce distance between the institution and prospective students. Personal connections, digital engagement, and school-based activities help students feel informed and supported as they consider enrollment. At the same time, strategies with limited reach or engagement contribute less to awareness and decision-making. Overall, the results provide clear direction for understanding which marketing strategies are currently employed, which are most effective from the students' perspective, and how these strategies influence enrollment choices.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings show that students became aware of the institution through multiple marketing strategies, with greater awareness associated with approaches that were more visible and closely linked to students' regular interactions. Strategies that allowed repeated exposure and personal contact were more noticeable, while those with limited reach or engagement were less evident. When students evaluated these strategies, approaches that provided clear information and direct engagement were perceived as more effective in shaping interest and enrollment decisions, whereas less interactive strategies had minimal influence. Taken together, the results indicate that the institution's marketing efforts are varied and generally understandable, but their effectiveness differs based on accessibility and relevance to students' experiences.

The study demonstrates that marketing strategies are most effective when they support familiarity and reduce uncertainty during the enrollment process. However, the findings are based on self-reported data from first-year students and are limited to a single institution, which may affect broader application. Given these results, it is recommended that the institution strengthen strategies that promote visibility and personal engagement, particularly through platforms frequently accessed by students. Continuous assessment using student feedback may further support data-informed improvements in recruitment practices.

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