

EXPLORING THE MARKETING STRATEGIES IN NEPALI PRIVATE
COLLEGES: AN INTERPRETIVE STUDY

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AN ABSTRACT

of the dissertation of *Shyam Swarup Khanal* for the *Master of Philosophy in Educational Leadership* presented on the date of *9 January 2026* entitled *Exploring the Marketing Strategies in Nepali Private Colleges: An Interpretive Study*.

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Marketization and increasing global competition in education pressure providers to adopt different marketing strategies to increase classroom occupancy. HEI leaders encounter difficulties from both local and foreign providers in attracting, influencing, and enrolling prospective students. However, it remains unclear whether leaders implement promotional activities solely to influence admissions or if they engage in expanded marketing efforts proactively.

This qualitative study used semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis to explore these dynamics in the Nepali context. From the participants' disclosed information, it was revealed that they engaged with digital and social media marketing. Furthermore, they also use personalized and direct interactions with their students during pre-admission counseling. They strategically employ their faculty members, staffs, students and other resources to ensure influence the enrollment decision.

Moreover, they shared that their automated service delivery and admission transparency through smooth, hassle-free digital procedures and assistive administrative structures influenced many students. In this case, they also found that showcasing modern facilities, like IT-labs, and highlighting campus accessibility through virtual tours influence enrollment decisions.

This research bridges the research gaps by providing information on marketing practices for leaders and policymakers to enhance strategies. Finally, the information

will help them as they navigate a complex edumarketing environment that lacks specific governing policies.

.....

9 January 2026

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शोध सार

शैक्षिक नेतृत्वमा दर्शनशास्त्रको स्नातकोत्तर डिग्रीको लागि श्याम स्वरूप खनालद्वारा प्रस्तुत शोध प्रबन्धको शीर्षक 'नेपाली निजी कलेजहरूमा बजारीकरण रणनीतिहरूको खोजी: एक व्याख्यात्मक अध्ययन' २५ पुष २०८२ मा प्रस्तुत गरिएको थियो।

.....
प्रा धनपति सुवेदी, पिएचडी

शोध निर्देशक

शिक्षाको बजारीकरण र बढ्दो विश्वव्यापी प्रतिस्पर्धाले गर्दा शैक्षिक प्रदायकहरूलाई नयाँ भर्नाद्वारा विद्यार्थी संख्याको वृद्धि गरि कक्षाकोठाको भरिभराउता वा चाप बढाउन विभिन्न मार्केटिङ रणनीतिहरू अपनाउन दबाब सिर्जना भएको छ। उच्च शिक्षा संस्थाका नेतृत्वकर्ताहरूले सम्भावित विद्यार्थीहरूलाई आकर्षित गर्न, प्रभाव पार्न र भर्ना गराउन स्थानीय र विदेशी दुवै प्रदायकहरूबाट चुनौतीहरूको सामना गरिरहेका छन्। यद्यपि, नेतृत्वकर्ताहरूले केवल भर्नालाई प्रभाव पार्नका लागि मात्र प्रवर्द्धनात्मक गतिविधिहरू लागू गर्छन् वा उनीहरू सक्रिय रूपमा मार्केटिङका विस्तारित वा बृहत्तर प्रयासहरूमा संलग्न हुन्छन् भन्ने कुरा अझै स्पष्ट छैन। यो गुणात्मक अध्ययनले नेपाली सन्दर्भमा यी गतिशीलताहरू अन्वेषण गर्न अर्ध-संरचित अन्तर्वार्ता र थैमाटिक विश्लेषणको प्रयोग गरेको छ। सहभागीहरूबाट प्राप्त जानकारी अनुसार, उनीहरू डिजिटल र सामाजिक सञ्जाल मार्केटिङमा संलग्न रहेको पाइयो। यसबाहेक, उनीहरूले भर्ना पूर्वको परामर्शको क्रममा आफ्ना विद्यार्थीहरूसँग व्यक्तिगत र प्रत्यक्ष अन्तर्क्रियाको प्रयोग गर्दछन्। उनीहरूले भर्ना निर्णयलाई प्रभाव पार्न आफ्ना संकाय सदस्यहरू, कर्मचारीहरू, विद्यार्थीहरू र अन्य स्रोतहरूलाई रणनीतिक रूपमा परिचालन गर्दछन्। यसका साथै, सहज र झन्झटमुक्त डिजिटल प्रक्रियाहरू र सहयोगी प्रशासनिक संयन्त्रहरू मार्फत उनीहरूको स्वचालित सेवा प्रवाह र भर्ना पारदर्शिताले धेरै विद्यार्थीहरूलाई प्रभाव पारेको तथ्य उनीहरूले साझा गरेका छन्। यस क्रममा, उनीहरूले आइटी-ल्याब जस्ता आधुनिक सुविधाहरू प्रदर्शन गर्दा र भर्चुअल टुरहरू मार्फत क्याम्पसको पहुँचलाई उजागर गर्दा भर्ना निर्णयहरूमा सकारात्मक प्रभाव पर्ने फेला पारे। यो अध्ययनले संस्थागत रणनीतिहरू सुधार गर्न नेतृत्वकर्ताहरू र नीति निर्माताहरूका लागि बजारीकरण अभ्यासहरूको बारेमा अन्तर्दृष्टि प्रदान गरेर अनुसन्धानको रिक्तता वा ग्यापलाई पूर्ति गर्दछ। अन्ततः, यी अन्तर्दृष्टिहरूले उनीहरूलाई विशिष्ट शासन वा नियमनकारी नीतिहरूको अभाव रहेको एक जटिल एडुमार्केटिङ वातावरण अन्वेषण गर्न सहयोग पुर्याउँछन्।

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२५ पुष २०८२

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This dissertation titled *Exploring the Marketing Strategies in Nepali Private Colleges: An Interpretive Study* presented by *Shyam Swarup Khanal* on *9 January 2026*.

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I understand that my dissertation will become a part of the permanent collection of the library of Kathmandu University. My signature below authorizes the release of my dissertation to any reader upon request for scholarly purposes.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work, and it has not been submitted for candidature for any other degree at any other university.

.....

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mentors, family, friends, and well-wishers. Their constant support made me realize the importance of guidance and mentorship in developing a successful career.

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ABBREVIATIONS

4Ps	Product, Price, Place, and Promotion (The Marketing Mix)
AI	Artificial Intelligence
BBA	Bachelor of Business Administration
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
HEI / HEIs	Higher Education Institution / Higher Education Institutions
IT	Information Technology
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MOEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (Nepal)
MOUD	Ministry of Urban Development (Nepal)
NLC	Nepal Law Commission
NPC	National Planning Commission
PPC	Pay-Per-Click
QAA	Quality Assurance and Accreditation
RQ	Research Question
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
SMS	Short Message Service
TEMPT	Triadic Educational Marketing Promotion Triangle
UGC	University Grants Commission (Nepal)
Wi-Fi	Wireless Fidelity

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Marketing in higher education institutions (HEIs) is an emerging area of research. In this regard, this opening chapter introduces the increasing need for marketing in Nepali private HEIs facing enrollment challenges. It outlines the problem and raises queries concerning the limited exploration of marketing activities in these institutions. Furthermore, it sets the purpose and research question to explore how leadership influences prospective students to enroll at their institutions. Finally, this chapter concludes with the rationales and delimitations of the study.

Background

HEI leaders experience difficulties attracting, influencing, and enrolling prospective students from heterogeneous backgrounds in their own institutions, due to both local and international providers. In this regard, the marketization and rising global competition in education pressured its providers to adopt various marketing strategies (Khanal, 2025; Subedi, 2019). Furthermore, Ivy (2008) points out that with more higher education degree options available, students have even more choices. Therefore, institutions must differentiate themselves from their competitors. In this context, marketing strategies have become increasingly essential for HEIs in recent decades to achieve their goals (Zainudin et al., 2019) and increase classroom occupancy. HEIs recognize students from two viewpoints: first, as consumers of their services, and second, as the end product of their offered programs for the job market (Chanour & Houban, 2020). In this connection, higher education is often categorized as an experience good in edumarketing studies. Its quality is difficult for a student to observe before they actually enroll and experience the service (Kiss & Kun, 2014). This unique, dynamic, and multiplex nature of academic service has compelled HEIs to proactively adopt and implement different marketing strategies to compete and position themselves as a favored option in the market (Chanour & Houban, 2020; Juhaidi, 2024; Lestari et al., 2022; Ndofirepi et al., 2020; Rana et al., 2022; Tomaszewicz & Barczyk, 2024).

Some studies (Ng & Forbes, 2009; Pokhrel et al., 2018) noted that students in higher education consider multiple aspects before enrolling. Therefore, HEI leaders are concerned about taking the right actions to address these challenges by exploring

traditional and trending marketing activities to inform, attract, and enroll students. Moreover, how they involve and engage their people to influence prospective students is a rising concern in educational marketing (edumarketing). According to Ivy (2008), even the way a telephone inquiry is handled can have a greater impact on a student's decision. In this regard, how they showcase their physical evidence through learning facilities and notify prospective students about different processes, including teaching-learning, socialization, and administrative practices they have adopted, is a critical issue (Ng & Forbes, 2009). I believe that a focused study would be constructive for understanding how leaders at Nepali HEIs carried out their marketing activities, particularly to influence prospective students.

Private HEIs compete to maximize student enrollment and face more pressure during the enrollment season (Zainudin et al., 2019) than community colleges. In this regard, I also observed that some Nepali private HEIs are making efforts to promote themselves. Awale and Shrestha (2022) also concurred that such institutions require marketing to remain competitive. Conversely, the University Grants Commission (UGC) revealed that private colleges in Nepal had more than 30% enrollment among students (UGC, 2025, p. 28); however, a significant proportion of students pursue higher education outside the country (Singh, 2024). Moreover, apprehensions have also arisen regarding the manner in which HEIs recruit staff, showcase their facilities, and make their enrollment processes student-friendly in an effort to gain competitiveness. This piqued my curiosity about how HEI leaders use edumarketing by private HEIs in Nepal.

Statement of the Problem

Private colleges have observed fewer students enrolling in recent years (De Ramos & Briones, 2024; Zainudin et al., 2019). In this context, Ivy (2008) points out that, to remain relevant, it may not be sufficient to rely solely on the classic 4Ps of marketing: product, price, place, and promotion. However, there are very few studies that analyze the role of such institutions in shaping prospective students' behavior to overcome marketing challenges (Zainudin et al., 2019). From an academic standpoint, I observe that a theoretical underpinning is often missing in these studies. In this regard, the failure to apply a persuasive marketing communications model makes it difficult to understand the logical link between college activities and student decisions. Moreover, there are college administrators who view marketing as another assignment to accomplish, such as selling, advertising, or public relations (Lestari et

al., 2022), without much emphasis on those strategic actions that actually matter to the submission of applications to colleges for higher education (Khairusy et al., 2022).

On this matter, De Ramos and Briones (2024) asserted that some HEIs approached the marketing of their institutions to overcome the aforementioned challenges. There have been studies that surveyed Nepalese students to determine the factors that attract college enrollment (Awale, 2021; Baral et al., 2024; Karki, 2024; Pokhrel et al., 2018; Pradhanang, 2022), pointing out that aspects such as advertising, branding, faculty competence, social impact, academic integrity, fast turnaround, college ambiance, or facilities are pertinent. However, it is not known whether there is planning and promotion implementation guided by a strategist's mind. It remains unclear whether leaders strategically plan their actions within a persuasive communication framework to bridge the information gap between the college and the student. It also causes confusion about whether they implement their activities solely to influence admissions or whether they proactively pursue wider efforts.

Additionally, I would like to point out that some prospective students search for the desired program and college individually before contacting the college through various marketing channels, such as social media, newspapers, college websites, educational fairs, and mass media. In this regard, some studies (Abeygunawardena, 2018; Goi, 2009; Mahajan & Golahit, 2019; Pokhrel et al., 2018; Tukur et al., 2019) advise gathering information, observing faculty, and studying their profiles and performance. Moreover, studies affirm that services and facilities such as learning materials, lodging, and recreational facilities constitute tangible evidence essential to the effectiveness of HEIs' marketing strategies. Therefore, leaders showcase their facilities through campus visits and digital or virtual tours. In addition, they identify the admissions process and the academic policies involved. According to Zainudin et al. (2019), the most important factors in admissions decisions involve people and physical evidence. There is a gap in the literature regarding Nepali private colleges that need to focus on the concept of edumarketing and its role in admissions in the post-COVID period (Khanal, 2025). Without a clear and common communication approach, these activities appear to be random acts rather than clear signals of quality. The idea here is that this study has the potential to address this gap and provide a better understanding of the marketing of HEIs, a field that has not been explored but holds vital clues for future studies.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how HEI leaders influence prospective students' enrollment decisions by implementing edumarketing strategies in private colleges in Nepal.

Research Question

The following overarching research question (RQ) addresses the study's purpose: "How do Nepali private college leaders influence students' enrollment decisions?"

Rationale of the Study

The expansion of private HEIs has become a global trend. They dominate the higher education market, enrolling more than one-third of Nepal's total students (UGC, 2025). This makes me think about how private HEIs attract and retain students through marketing to achieve enrollment goals. Pradhanang (2022) stated that digital presence and interactive engagement play an important role. These promotional activities are often the most visible part of college marketing. However, the effectiveness of promotion is increasingly dependent on other substantive factors. Students these days use social media and websites to search for different institutions for their further study. However, these platforms alone are insufficient to drive final enrollment decisions. Instead, institutions must enhance promotional strategies by involving their people to attract and inform them. I observed that word of mouth and testimonials from current and former students increase institutional trust and visibility. However, many HEI leaders still do not fully recognize the importance of promotional components and their staff in influencing student choices, especially in Nepal's complex edumarketing environment.

HEIs have also implemented different processes as an important strategy for managing enrollment and influencing new students' decisions. Ivy (2008) describes these processes as administrative and bureaucratic functions, ranging from inquiries to registration, that ensure student satisfaction. In this regard, a confusing, unclear, or inefficient application and admissions process could affect prospective students' college choices. Moreover, physical evidence such as attractive classrooms, libraries, labs, or recreational facilities also functions as a tangible approach to enhance the experience of prospective students. When leaders provide highly specific information about these facilities, it creates a competitive advantage (Kiss & Kun, 2014). Thus, this research focuses on investigating the four critical components of marketing in

academic services to provide an outline of the strategic approach used in HEIs. These components are hence the focus for analysis in the case of Nepal, as they relate to marketing in the sector. The absence of specific policies and edumarketing guidelines compels HEI leaders to develop and implement their own customized frameworks.

HEIs rely heavily on traditional advertising, which limits their ability to attract target students. Meanwhile, some HEIs have become less competitive and have recently experienced enrollment declines. In this connection, signaling theory provides a useful lens for describing how leaders (senders) communicate information to their prospective students (receivers) when there is an information imbalance before enrollment decision (Connelly et al., 2011). As a leadership scholar and faculty member at private colleges, I consider this study a valuable resource for decision-makers. It also helps HEI leaders understand how to manage admissions strategically and identify necessary activities. Their marketing teams can effectively use both traditional and digital channels (Pradhanang, 2022). Furthermore, this study benefits policymakers at different levels by informing policy development related to HEIs. My previous study also concluded that universities and colleges should support policy talks and address existing gaps to improve policies and student services (Khanal, 2025) by updating or creating supportive regulations.

Delimitation of the Study

This research is delimited to exploring the edumarketing activities through the lens of signal theory (Connelly et al., 2011). It is bounded by the PROMPT framework: promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. These are carried out by the HEIs' leadership at different private colleges in Nepal to attract, influence, and enroll their prospective students.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the research topic and provided a background. Thereafter, it also highlighted the growing importance of edumarketing in HEIs. In addition, it outlined enrollment problems and gaps in marketing practices faced by Nepali private HEIs. Finally, it defined the study's purpose, its question, rationale, and delimitations.

Organization Study

The study is organized into six chapters. The first chapter introduces educational marketing within the context of private HEIs regarding their enrollment challenges and outlines the problems faced by these institutions. It further sets the

purpose to explore how leadership influences prospective students. The chapter reviews the edumarketing body of literature from the perspective of higher education institutions' leaders. It will conclude with a theoretical model. Chapter III covers the overall methodology framework: the philosophical underpinnings, the research design, and the methods. Chapter IV presents the findings from the participants through an examination from four major thematic threads: promotion, people, process, and physical. Chapter V reflects on the common experiences of the leaders through the framework of signaling theory. It will also provide an introduction to the Triadic Educational Marketing Promotion Triangle (TEMPT). Chapter VI concludes the research, including the implications.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides an overview of the edumarketing literature from the perspectives of HEIs' leadership. It highlighted the influence of Nepal's unique and often fragmented policy environment, as well as the gaps within it that necessitated this study. This chapter discussed the theoretical and policy contexts of edumarketing. Furthermore, this chapter explored recent studies and identified critical research gaps.

Institutionalization and Higher Education Marketing in Nepal

Higher education shifted from religious and philosophical traditions to research-oriented, professional, and globally accredited learning (Altbach et al., 2009; Biswakarma & Dhakal, 2023). Moreover, the last century greatly contributed to the institutionalization of edumarketing in HEIs. This led to greater access and encouraged international collaboration. In this context, the marketing of HEIs has accelerated in recent years, both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital platforms and alternative learning practices drove it (Sahni et al., 2025). Additionally, HEIs have focused on research excellence and student-centered learning over the past few years. They revolutionized conventional education into strategic services oriented toward the marketplace and began offering job-oriented courses that rival those globally (Nguyen et al., 2023).

Higher education is one of the primary foundations of social development. In this respect, the higher education system in many countries worldwide has experienced tremendous growth. I observed that most HEIs underwent significant changes to align with evolving educational trends. Some HEIs focused on e-learning systems, annual course revisions, and facilities improvement. This raised the quality of services and academic offerings of HEIs. In this regard, some affiliated private colleges led this transformation. Regardless of these advances, HEIs faced fierce competition from foreign universities and their affiliated colleges in the local market (Khadka & Acharya, 2023). As a result, private HEIs gradually adopted proactive, market-driven strategies to survive and achieve different goals (Altbach et al., 2009). These strategies helped HEIs' leadership to attract, influence, enroll, and retain new students. In this context, branding initiatives, digital marketing, content marketing, influencer marketing, and partnership initiatives became fundamental differentiators.

Furthermore, HEI leaders used digital platforms and data analytics, customized the communication, and engaged with prospective students in impactful ways (Altbach et al., 2009; Harbi & Maqsood, 2022; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022). After reviewing the literature on higher education's institutionalization, I noticed that the HEI sector has recently evolved beyond simply being an education provider. In this context, Ivy (2008) defines the marketing mix in higher education as controllable tools that institutions use to influence demand and generate desired responses from target markets. This sector experienced a fundamental shift from being solely an academic institution to becoming a strategic entity in both home and abroad markets. As a result, Nepali private colleges became strategic organizations, in which marketing efforts helped to attract students in a highly competitive environment. In this study, higher education marketing is the managerial process implemented by HEIs' leadership to influence prospective students' enrollment decisions through the strategic application of promotional, people, process, and physical evidence activities. Therefore, analyzing such strategies became essential for interpreting their survival and growth.

Persuasive Communication and Signaling Theory

In influencing student decisions, the nature of the information institutions share plays a vital role. In this connection, signaling theory provides a fundamental lens for describing behavior when two parties, such as a college and a student, have access to different information (Connelly et al., 2011). In this regard, higher education is often categorized as an 'experience good'. Kiss and Kun (2014) point out that for experience goods, quality information is unavailable or costly for the prospective buyer before the actual purchase or enrollment. Therefore, the institution, acting as the 'sender', must decide how to communicate, or 'signal', its quality to the 'receiver', the student.

This persuasive communication process is essential because of the 'information asymmetry' that exists in the education market. According to Connelly et al. (2011), the signaling process involves the sender's intent to communicate positive, unobservable attributes through observable actions. In this respect, HEI leaders use various marketing activities as 'signals' to reduce the uncertainty prospective students feel. If the signals are credible and honest, they successfully influence the receiver's interpretation and lead to a favorable enrollment decision. In this connection, Kiss and Kun (2014) argue that institutions with higher quality are more likely to voluntarily

publish specific and transparent information because it poses less risk for them than for their weaker competitors. Thus, the quantity and specificity of information in marketing communication serve as critical indicators of institutional caliber.

Edumarketing and the Focused 4Ps Mix in HEIs

Higher education marketing has emerged as a significant tool for institutions of higher learning to differentiate themselves as distinctive brands in a global environment, attract students, and establish sustainable business models (Shrestha & Khadka, 2022). In this scenario, edumarketing is distinct from the traditional business model norms. It focuses more on relationship-building, student experience, program offerings, and long-lasting credibility of the institutions (Biswakarma & Dhakal, 2023). Administrative teams at institutions of higher learning had begun using storytelling to appeal to prospective students and their guardians (Altbach et al., 2009). Today, recruitment is highly dependent on online marketing trends such as content marketing, SEO, and online advertising (Harbi & Maqsood, 2022). Additionally, marketing for institutions of higher learning today is more diversified, reaching a wide cross-section of institutions through online networks such as the internet, online platforms, and social platforms (Shrestha & Khadka, 2022). Edumarketing, as a dimension of services marketing, is distinct from product marketing. It adopts a relationship-centric approach and focuses on the student's holistic experience. Moreover, it supports the sustainability and credibility of institutions.

In this regard, the marketing mix theory has offered a basic set of activities since its conceptualization in the 1960s. These activities were used by organizational management to elicit the desired response from target markets (Filip, 2012), primarily from the industrial or secondary sectors. This marketing mix model has always concentrated on the 4Ps (product, price, place, and promotion). However, from the 1980s onward, this model was revised, and the three Ps (people, process, and physical evidence) were added to the service/tertiary sector model. As a quintessential service industry, HEIs are inherently intangible, perishable, and indivisible (Rasa, 2025). Therefore, there has been a growing need to go beyond the traditional service marketing mix (Ivy, 2008).

This study specifically adapted the four elements of the service marketing mix framework (promotion, people, process, and physical evidence), leaving aside product, price, and place. In the context of marketing communication, these elements

serve as the primary signals HEI leaders use to reach prospective students. The selected 4Ps address the most crucial factors influencing enrollment decisions in HEIs, as they directly shape students' experience and perceptions of quality before and after enrollment. As a result, this study focused on these four elements to explore how HEI leaders influence students' enrollment decisions.

Promotion

HEI leaders utilized different activities to inform and build a brand image to attract prospective students. It was essential for them to develop a deep understanding of what students wanted to know from the institution. This helped them formulate targeted, achievable value propositions (Ng & Forbes, 2009). In this context, new students expected and sought a wide range of information across different media. From a signaling perspective, promotion becomes a means of communicating the institution's signal. In this regard, the intensity and visibility of these promotional messages impact the attention that the receiver pays to the institution (Connelly et al., 2011). For example, recommendations from friends, family, and relatives were a powerful form of word-of-mouth marketing in Nepal (Pokhrel et al., 2018). At the same time, students actively surfed the institution's websites and social media platforms and visited educational fairs. They sought information from traditional media channels like television, radio, and magazines. In addition, HEI leaders organized events, such as farewell events and networking seminars, for recent graduates and other alumni. They also offered mentorship opportunities for students' employment and entrepreneurial careers.

On the other hand, some HEI leaders have been relying on social media platforms, influencers, referral programs, email marketing, and short message service (SMS). Furthermore, they adopted targeted, paid digital advertising, branding, and more student-focused strategies (Baliyan & Mokoena, 2024; Nguyen et al., 2023; Zhuchkova et al., 2023). Subsequently, content marketing has also emerged as a key strategy. Universities and many other HEIs actively use webinars, podcasts, and virtual campus tours to show their offering and values to influence prospective students (Khadka & Acharya, 2023). These include using blogs and faculty testimonials, as well as students' achievements, to establish credibility and build an emotional connection (Nguyen et al., 2023). Furthermore, HEIs have also utilized search engine optimization (SEO) and pay-per-click (PPC) advertising to increase their online visibility. In this connection, providing highly specific information about

academic successes helps institutions to build a competitive advantage (Kiss & Kun, 2014).

People

Education is a high-contact and person-to-person service sector. In this regard, HEI leaders encompassed all individuals who interacted with prospective students and influenced their perception of the institution as key players. These individuals were faculty, managers, support staff, and students (Ivy, 2008; Ng & Forbes, 2009). Faculty and management teams were considered key service providers in the higher education sector. Prospective students often questioned the faculty's reputation, expertise, and accessibility. In addition, some studies (Abeygunawardena, 2018; Goi, 2009; Mahajan & Golahit, 2019; Pokhrel et al., 2018; Tukur et al., 2019) found that many newcomers review research profiles, publications, qualifications, professorships, achievements, and success before enrollment. In this context, the quality and professional expertise of these individuals serve as signals of signaler honesty and reliability. The prospective students use these profiles as cues to evaluate the institution's overall quality (Connelly et al., 2011).

Furthermore, Sahni et al. (2025) found that employees' estimates of the quality, effectiveness, and goodwill of administrative and student services are recognized as emerging indicators in higher education. At the same time, webinars, seminars, forums, panel discussions, research paper-sharing events, and personalized career guidance sessions for prospective and enrolled students now form a crucial part of edumarketing strategies in higher education. These activities were used to inform institutions' expertise and attract prospective students. In this context, it has been observed that some HEIs involve their students on social media platforms and online networking sites as ambassadors in their campaigns and promotions. This strategy leverages peer influence and authentic storytelling to encourage enrollment. Moreover, some HEIs have contracted with personal advisors, consultants, and agents to help prospective students with their application process. In this regard, testimonials from current students provide 'reliable signals' because they are viewed as less biased than traditional advertisements. Therefore, people's involvement in HEIs' edumarketing promoted a unique proposition and influenced enrollment decisions (Khadka & Acharya, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023; Zhuchkova et al., 2023).

Process

The process element comprises the procedures, mechanisms, and flow of activities. Educational services are delivered through these activities. In the context of edumarketing, it is primarily concerned with the student's journey, from their first contact inquiry to enrollment and post-enrollment activities. In my review of the literature and observations, HEI leaders found that they provide more insight into how they teach and deliver services to prospective students. In this connection, Edelson (as cited in Subedi, 2019) stated that the teacher now serves as a supporter, guide, mentor, and facilitator in education. Moreover, they acquired critical and logical thinking skills. Further, the college administrators explained the procedures for allocating, testing, and assessing student performance to enroll new students. Ng and Forbes (2009) further noted that many students sought information regarding socialization and administrative processes. They expected a clear, efficient, and transparent response from higher education leaders. Afterwards, the academic and admission processes played a role in influencing the choice of the prospective student

A user-friendly internet experience, an informative website, and social media updates at colleges influenced prospective students. Additionally, HEIs used customer relationship management (CRM) software to automate follow-up and personalized communication (Biswakarma & Dhakal, 2023). AI-powered Chatbots (Altbach et al., 2009) and tracking the status of admissions (Harbi & Maqsood, 2022) made the process much simpler, which was otherwise a lengthy wait. They appreciated a positive first impression, a short wait time, an information-sharing communication style, the leaders' supportiveness, and the marketing team's supportiveness (Zainudin et al., 2019). On the other hand, poorly implemented admission and study procedures led to student dissatisfaction, discouraging peers and prospective students from applying and enrolling at the institution. Meanwhile, a smooth and transparent process reduces the 'noise' or 'distortion' that can occur during signaling (Connelly et al., 2011). Consistency signals institutional quality and ensures that the student interprets the signal correctly without confusion. Therefore, the edumarketing process adopted comprehensive strategic practices to streamline services from admission to graduate career support.

Physical Evidence

Tangible, material resources of institutions that influence prospective students' choices are considered physical evidence. According to Ng and Forbes (2009) and

Pokhrel et al. (2018), these include campus infrastructure, classroom design, laboratories, and libraries. In this connection, such facilities serve as a costly signal. Signaling theory suggests that high-quality infrastructure represents a significant investment that low-quality institutions cannot easily imitate, thereby acting as a credible proof of institutional excellence (Connelly et al., 2011; Kiss & Kun, 2014). HEIs invested heavily in creating state-of-the-art campuses to shape their institutional image and increase enrollment. They focused on high-tech classrooms, well-equipped research labs, well-maintained green spaces, modern lounges, and impressive libraries (Biswakarma & Dhakal, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023). HEI leaders actively promoted their physical evidence and nearby amenities through both in-person and virtual campus tours. These amenities, such as hospitals, banks, and stores, along with their accessibility, added a key advantage to enrollment.

Furthermore, HEIs' leaders not only showcased their large-scale infrastructure and branded materials, but also the quality and design of websites and documents to influence newcomers (Ng & Forbes, 2009; Pokhrel et al., 2018; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022). The review by Zainudin et al. (2019) broadened this scope, stating that the physical environment was also conveyed through prestigious offices and scenic headquarters. Moreover, more subtle cues are identified, such as ambient conditions like temperature, color, and sound, the functionality and spatial layout of furniture and equipment, and the use of signs, symbols, and artifacts like employee uniforms, brochures, packaging, and signage (Zainudin et al., 2019). In this regard, these observable cues help prospective students calibrate their interpretation of the institution's value.

I have recognized that providing educational services is different from selling tangible products. The services are intangible and perishable, which makes the traditional 4Ps of marketing (product, price, place, and promotion) less effective. Additionally, this research introduces people, process, and physical evidence to better explain students' experiences and perceptions of quality. Along with promotional strategies, it offers more meaningful insights into these events. In this context, it is evident that the enrollment processes have been significantly influenced by the strategic integration of contemporary promotional strategies, including digital marketing (Harbi & Maqsood, 2022). Furthermore, it is noteworthy that such evolution differentiates edumarketing from other marketing models by emphasizing relationship management, the holistic experience of prospective students, and the

long-term credibility of HEIs (Biswakarma & Dhakal, 2023; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022). This study is based on the four-element model to ensure thematic coherence. This model provides a basis for the methodology section and guides data collection through interviews with HEI leaders. It ensures focus on influential marketing strategies and guides the analysis process thematically. In this respect, the study explores how leaders use edumarketing strategies to increase enrollment.

Policy Review in the Edumarketing Context

An overarching policy environment influences the marketing strategies of HEIs in Nepal. The National Education Policy, 2019, and the Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) framework are considered key documents that define the governing body's vision and significantly impact faculty, institutional leadership, and students. For example, the education policy envisions and also ensures a competitive, technology-friendly, employment-oriented, and productive education system (MoEST, 2019). This policy recognizes the role of private-sector involvement and aims to regulate this investment by effectively mobilizing, regulating, and strengthening it.

HEI leaders operate under a comprehensive regulatory framework established by the Advertisement (Regulation) Act, 2019. This legislation permits private HEIs to advertise their programs and disseminate information, provided the content is accurate and not deceptive (Nepal Law Commission [NLC], 2019). Moreover, the HEIs ensured the trustworthiness of the signals and prohibited promoting any content within their curriculum and learning resources unless it is specifically helpful in achieving educational goals. At the same time, promotion via the internet and other electronic media is governed by the Electronic Transactions Act of 2008 (NLC, 2008). This legislation establishes a legal framework for digital content and publications on the internet to promote morals and decent behavior. Acknowledgment of electronic records for online admissions includes preserving the confidentiality of the information.

Furthermore, faculty, educational leaders, and even students are heavily influenced by the National Education Policy, 2019. It mandates competency testing and training for academic faculty and staff, and links these standards to career development from recruitment through human resource management (MoEST, 2019). In addition, the QAA framework (2013) ensures that 50 percent of full-time faculty in HEIs are promoted and that a research culture is promoted. They need to be tested

before recruitment, trained, and qualified in accordance with the framework guidelines. Moreover, this framework mandates market-linked curricula and student-centered teaching methods. HEIs receive QAA accreditation after ensuring all these standards are met. In addition, institutional buildings, their structures, laboratories, libraries, and other facilities, their safety, strength, sustainability, and disability-friendliness, etc., are regulated by different frameworks and documents, including education policy (MoEST, 2019), building code (Ministry of Urban Development [MoUD], 2024), and quality assurance (UGC, 2013).

Despite these regulations, a significant gap was identified during this research. A detailed search for policies explicitly guiding HEIs' marketing elements was absent, and leaders rely on multiple, dynamic regulations. This created ambiguity when formulating and implementing marketing strategies ethically, managing enrollment data, and ensuring transparency in operations. This policy gap directly relates to my research question in this study, which is to examine how HEIs' leadership ensures prospective students' engagement in different promotional activities in the absence of specific regulatory oversight. Similarly, HEIs' leadership is forced to innovate in marketing amid a fragmented regulatory environment. After reviewing the policy context, I found that policies, such as the National Education Policy (2019), shape HEIs' marketing activities and influence students' perceptions and choices regarding enrollment.

In this connection, I observed that reports such as the Sixteenth Plan document published by the National Planning Commission (NPC) (2024) and the operational manual (UGC, 2021) serve as implicit blueprints to guide these marketing value propositions. The NPC (2024) envisions an economy that focuses on developing healthy, educated, and skilled human capital, along with productive employment, to achieve national goals. This vision compels HEI leaders to integrate the content of their admission messages with the overall developmental agenda. They also position their colleges as engines for producing the skilled workforce needed for the structural transformation of the economy. Similarly, the UGC (2021) manual guides HEIs to provide programs aligned with labor-market needs and to focus on graduates' employability. This advises the college leaders to position their marketing messages on these parameters. Additionally, the provision for poverty-targeted scholarship programs and grants for digital infrastructure equips leaders with tangible financial and physical incentives to showcase in their recruitment efforts.

Studies on HEIs Edumarketing Strategies

Recent scholarly inquiry into HEIs' marketing strategies has predominantly approached them from the perspective of students' experience or perception of edumarketing strategies and tools. However, I aimed to study from an institutional or their leadership perspective, and found few studies that contributed to this perspective in the past. Here, I reviewed from an international perspective and the domestic context of Nepal.

International Studies

A survey of 50 marketing departments in Poland explored the use of social media from an institutional perspective (Mazurek et al., 2019). It found that social media is seen as a key channel for brand building and student relationship management. However, internal barriers, such as a lack of understanding of social media's strategic importance among academic and administrative staff, were identified by marketing leaders as significant obstacles to its practical implementation. Likewise, Kisiołek et al. (2021) conducted a survey of 185 marketers at Polish and Ukrainian HEIs. Their results showed that enrollment is more dependent on digital marketing strategies. It was noted that marketing departments in both countries rely on low-cost methods such as email and digital advertising. Another study in the Malaysian private college sector surveyed 366 marketing officers (Zainudin et al., 2019). It found that an expanded marketing mix of eleven factors had a strong relationship with private college admissions. Among these, people and presentation strategies were the most influential in attracting prospective students. In fact, their multifaceted approach succeeded in meeting enrollment targets.

A multiple case study was conducted to assess six Brazilian private HEIs by interviewing institutional managers (Riccomini et al., 2021). They concluded that leaders employ marketing to identify students as consumers and to enhance competitiveness, while also strategically focusing on branding, relationships, and CRM to meet their student recruitment objectives. Additionally, Khairusy et al. (2022) studied a private university and found that university leaders invest more effort into marketing innovation and institutional competitiveness. They were more focused on developing HEIs' survival and growth strategies. In this study, an in-depth interview with representatives from three Indonesian HEIs reveals their ingenuity and innovation in accreditation and publishing, areas considered important for attracting

students (Elpisah et al., 2023). Conversely, in a qualitative study involving interviews with leaders of four institutions in Indonesia, the leaders believed the best form of marketing entailed social media marketing, quality programs, and infrastructure development.

In their study, Zhou & Alam (2024) conducted a qualitative comparison of double- and non-double-first-class universities. They interviewed 20 members of the management team and found that institutional enrollment strategies aligned primarily with government policy, revenue, and branding efforts. Furthermore, it was concluded that scholarships were the key tactic for increasing the number of students. However, in the Indian context, a theoretical framework for international positioning was developed. This research has uncovered the importance of branding and targeted marketing as crucial factors for institutional leaders to adopt (Rana et al., 2022). A research study conducted in the United Arab Emirates used a combination of secondary research and key interviews (Wilkins, 2020). The focus of this research is analyzing the competitive positioning of 42 HEIs, which indicates that they were categorized into distinct strategic groups based on factors such as accreditation. Moreover, they focus more on market segmentation and positioning, which are determined by their strategic groups.

I recently conducted a thematic analysis, synthesizing 11 articles on post-pandemic marketing practices in HEIs. The results brought forth that education marketing affected students' enrollment in HEIs across different nations (Khanal, 2025). Moreover, the study ensured the institutions adapted marketing strategies to address students' changing priorities. HEIs were exploring and considering innovative practices in managerial and financial decisions. These colleges were expanding their services globally. Furthermore, they added facilities and increased digital media exposure to attract young students. They ensured wider access to education and enhanced students' experience.

Domestic Studies

Many studies have examined marketing activities and college choice from students' perspectives. On a similar note, a quantitative study conducted by Pokhrel et al. (2018) surveyed 342 BBA and MBA students in Kathmandu and found that peer and family recommendations, along with positive word of mouth, were the most influential factors. Another study conducted among 248 students in Kathmandu identified academic programs, the quality of education, and social factors such as

employability as key factors (Silwal & Baral, 2021). Likewise, another survey of 385 business students identified the institution's efforts in reputation, facility quality, reduced costs, and job opportunities as influential determinants (Gurung et al., 2022).

In this context, a few studies have explored edumarketing from the perspective of leaders. Some research on Nepalese colleges (Gurung et al., 2022; Pokhrel et al., 2018; Silwal & Baral, 2021; Subedi, 2019) found that the HEIs are using effective marketing strategies. These include making recommendations, encouraging word of mouth, forming affiliations, emphasizing future employment opportunities, and showcasing entrepreneurial skills such as risk-taking, creativity, and innovation to meet changing market demands. Meanwhile, HEIs' leaders from other countries focus on digital channels, brand management, and relationship management. These studies show that marketing activities are essential for influencing enrollment decisions. This insight reinforces the direction of my own research and focuses on how decision-makers (leaders) in HEIs influence admissions.

Research Gaps in Literature Review

The literature review highlighted important and interconnected gaps in research on edumarketing in the higher education sector. Primarily, there was a knowledge gap regarding the study and implementation of edumarketing by institution heads in Nepal. Moreover, broad international insights were provided by existing scholarly works (Elpisah et al., 2023; Khairusy et al., 2022; Khanal, 2025; Kisiołek et al., 2021; Mazurek et al., 2019; Rana et al., 2022; Riccomini et al., 2021; Safaat & Manafe, 2023; Wilkins, 2020; Zainudin et al., 2019; Zhou & Alam, 2024), which makes me think local context was not sufficiently researched in the past. In addition, existing research on the domestic context (Gurung et al., 2022; Pokhrel et al., 2018; Silwal & Baral, 2021) has been more focused on quantitative studies and student surveys. This methodological gap was widened by the absence of a leadership perspective and a more qualitative approach.

In this regard, there were considerable gaps in the empirical and population areas. Also, the 7Ps marketing mix has been extensively studied in numerous research works (Filip, 2012). There were a few analytical studies on the fundamental service components like promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. In this connection, there is a critical research deficiency regarding the use of a persuasive communication model to analyze edumarketing activities. Most studies fail to explore how these activities function as intentional signals to overcome information

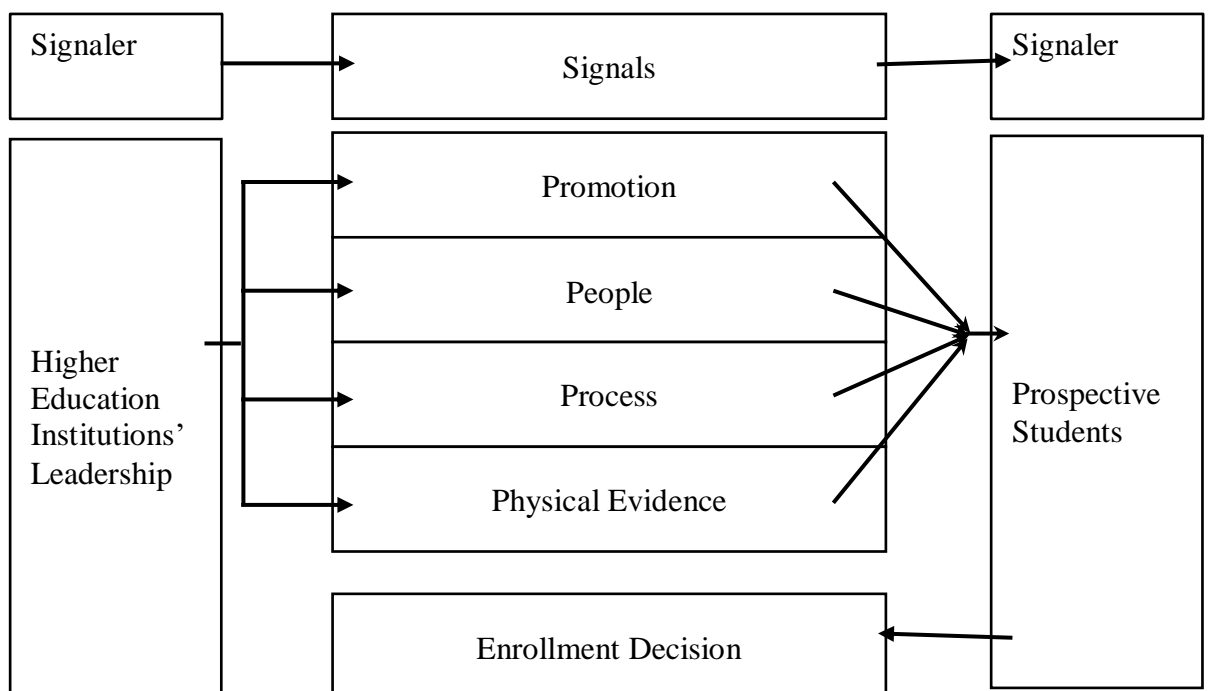
asymmetry. Additionally, a policy gap was evident due to the lack of clear government regulations for edumarketing. In this regard, HEI leaders had to innovate and develop their own strategic marketing guidelines to fill this regulatory void. Additionally, a knowledge gap emerged regarding the marketing activities and their implementation. Research on the strategies and activities of institutional leaders in the Nepali higher education sector was necessitated by the identified shortcomings.

Theoretical Framework

This framework was developed to structure the study and illustrate the relationships between key concepts in the context of HEIs' edumarketing strategies in Nepali private colleges. It is primarily grounded in edumarketing theory and the adapted 4Ps of the services marketing mix rather than its 7Ps. This framework is used as a guide to explore how HEI leaders in these institutions approach marketing to influence prospective students.

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework for HEI Edumarketing



This framework was developed to structure the study and show the relationships between key concepts in the context of HEIs' edumarketing strategies. It was primarily grounded in edumarketing theory and deliberately focused on promotion, people, processes, and physical evidence. In this connection, signaling theory provides the logical foundation for how these four elements function as

persuasive communication tools, transmitting quality signals from the institution to the prospective student. Furthermore, this framework serves as a guide for exploring how HEI leaders in these institutions approach marketing to influence prospective students.

Promotion

It is defined as the complete range of communication activities employed by an HEI leader in this study. These activities help inform, persuade, and engage prospective students in different ways (Khadka & Acharya, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023; Pokhrel et al., 2018; Zhuchkova et al., 2023). This extended far beyond the traditional 'advertisements only' as promotional activities and covers the broadcast of institutional signals, their frequency, and observability. This research explored the influence of HEIs on their prospective students using a range of promotional methods.

People This study views people as a strategic element that influences the prospective students' enrollment decisions (Khadka & Acharya, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023; Sahni et al., 2025; Zhuchkova et al., 2023). This includes faculty, administrative, and support team members, as well as current and former students. In this regard, the quality of the people involved serves as a signal of reliability and honesty. In the research, people were not studied as a human resource management unit but were considered as a marketing tool to influence new admissions.

Process

In this framework, 'process' refers to the operational systems and workflows a student encounters throughout their admission, from their first inquiry through post-enrollment activities. A focus of this study was placed on the efficiency, transparency, and user-friendliness of these procedures. A seamless, student-centric process was conceptualized as a key marketing activity across both traditional and digital platforms. Such processes ensure signal consistency and also reduce distortion and noise.

Physical Evidence

It is a collection of tangible cues that communicate signals of quality and brand identity. It includes leadership tactics used to showcase infrastructure and influence enrollment decisions (Biswakarma & Dhakal, 2023; Ng & Forbes, 2009; Nguyen et al., 2023; Pokhrel et al., 2018; Zainudin et al., 2019). In this research, physical evidence serves as a costly signal of an unobservable quality in higher

education. These elements make the intangible service more concrete, shaping perceptions and fostering a strong sense of value in prospective students' minds.

I propose that prospective students are influenced by the strategic implementation and integration of these four elements, which shape their perceptions of institutional quality, credibility, and desirability. The primary goal of this influence is to achieve a positive enrollment outcome. This model served as a guide for the study, providing a clear framework for exploring the specific actions leaders took.

Chapter Summary

This chapter explored the edumarketing literature from the perspective of HEIs. It described the institutionalization of edumarketing and introduced its concept with four key elements: promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. It explained persuasive communication through signaling theory as a way institutions convey unobservable quality to prospective students. The chapter analyzed Nepal's education policies relative to edumarketing activities. It also noted that there were no specific regulations governing HEI marketing. It reviewed recent global and Nepali studies, identified research gaps, and concluded with a discussion of the study's theoretical model.

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

This chapter presented the methodological framework for this research. It establishes the philosophical foundation for the interpretivist paradigm. Further, there was a description of the generic qualitative research design, participant selection, data collection methods, the process of conducting thematic analysis, and quality standards and ethical considerations.

Philosophical Standpoint

Fundamental beliefs and assumptions set the foundation of this study. This influences the development of knowledge and shapes the entire research process (Saunders et al., 2023). In this regard, the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis were shaped by this foundation. This foundation also shaped the interpretation of findings.

Ontology

Ontology addressed the nature of existence and reality (Saunders et al., 2023). Therefore, this study was grounded in a constructivist ontology, which assumes that reality is not singular or objective and is not waiting to be discovered. Instead, it was socially and experientially constructed by individuals. In this regard, social constructivism holds that individuals construct their own subjective understanding of reality through social interaction with others (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Therefore, edumarketing was not seen as a fixed external object but rather understood as a complex reality created, interpreted, and given meaning by HEI leaders. In this connection, the reality of enrollment is seen as a co-constructed outcome of the meanings that leaders assign to their strategic actions. This shows the leader's experiences, interactions, and decisions that influence their prospective students' enrollment decisions as they navigate the information imbalance in the market. In this way, this worldview is essential to my study, as it helps to explore how leaders construct their own realities within their specific contexts.

Epistemology

The nature of knowledge and its acquisition have been addressed in epistemological studies (Saunders et al., 2023). In this study, interpretivism aligns with the constructivist ontology. This stance posited that knowledge was subjective

and created through interaction between the researcher and participants. Furthermore, interpretivism emphasizes the meaning by separating it from physical phenomena (Saunders et al., 2023). In this regard, the purpose of this study was to explore the less-explored reality of HEI leaders as my research participants. Therefore, the knowledge was co-created through the dialogues and their interpretations. From a signaling perspective, the knowledge gained in this study is based on interpreting how leaders act as information senders to influence students. In this connection, this study focused on exploring the edumarketing activities used by HEI leaders to influence prospective students. These activities were related to promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. This was essential for my research because I had to explore the subjective meanings of HEI leaders and how they interpret their roles as communicators of institutional quality.

Axiology

Saunders et al. (2023) described axiology as the study of values and their effects on human decision-making. In addition, the role of values and transparency throughout the research was key to the integrity of an interpretivist study. Thus, this study acknowledged my own values, assumptions, experiences, and biases. I had been facilitating as a business lecturer at some private colleges in Nepal. Therefore, I closely observed multiple activities by which HEIs attract, influence, and enroll their prospective students. However, I have not yet held a leadership position that would ensure this study would not be influenced by preconceived ideas about edumarketing and its use by HEI leaders in the real world. Moreover, this focus will help me maintain my professional lens.

Research Paradigm

The above philosophical assumptions led to the development of an interpretivist research paradigm. This paradigm provided a coherent framework for guiding research and supporting the exploration of participants' own experiences. The interpretive paradigm concerns understanding the fundamental meanings attached to organizational life (Saunders et al., 2023). Instead, it led the research away from issues of measurement and generalization and shifted towards depth, context, and interpretation to create meaning. The research specifically sought to explore the subjective meanings that HEI leaders assign to edumarketing activities connected to promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. In this regard, exploring these activities as intentional signals of quality required a thorough exploration of context,

motivation, and subjective experience. Therefore, this paradigm is well-suited to exploring how HEI leaders conduct their marketing activities. It allows me to delve into the context and meaning that these activities hold for them in their specific institutions.

Method of Study

A qualitative approach was employed in this study to align with the interpretivist paradigm. The meaning and interpretation of human experiences were focused by qualitative research. It was achieved through the collection and analysis of qualitative data. These were collected through interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I consider that a qualitative approach was most appropriate for studying complicated events within the social sphere, such as edumarketing approaches, that affect aspiring HEI students in Nepal. In this respect, capturing the persuasive nature of communication between the college and the student necessitates a qualitative exploration of the leaders' intent. This was a good decision to acquire a deeper understanding of HEI leadership's perspectives. This inherent flexibility and richness in qualitative methods were essential for achieving the purpose and addressing the research question. This allows me to delve into the rich details of HEI leaders' professional experiences from interviews.

A generic qualitative research design was employed in this study. This approach was increasingly recognized as adaptable for exploring less-researched areas (Ellis & Hart, 2023; Kahlke, 2014) at the time of my design. It was particularly valuable for my research because it lacked strict boundaries and was not aligned with any single traditional design. This generic approach to research design focuses on dialogues and then moves away from participants' lived experiences, stories, and the institution's cultural studies (Ellis & Hart, 2023). Thus, this design was critical for exploring the multiple, subjective realities of edumarketing as shared by HEI leaders, who serve as the primary senders of institutional information. This also allowed me to focus on their professional strategies and institutional actions and gather rich descriptions.

Participants Sampling and Selection

The research sites for this study were private higher education institutions, which are a major part of the country's education system. They make up about half of all colleges and enroll about a third of all students (UGC, 2025). They were actively engaged in edumarketing to attract, influence, and enroll prospective students in a

competitive, dynamic environment. Moreover, this study employed a qualitative methodology and focused on the actions and dialogues participants shared regarding their marketing strategies. In this regard, I chose the leaders and their peers deliberately, based on their relevance, availability, and willingness to engage in this research. Creswell and Creswell (2018, p. 263) argued that qualitative research required an ideal number of participants to achieve data saturation in qualitative interviews. In this connection, the participants were selected as they represent the strategic mind behind the signals sent to prospective students. The study involved people holding key positions, such as college principals or directors. They shared experiences of how they influenced enrollment decisions within their college, focusing on attracting prospective students. They were able to provide vital information on marketing practices within their institutions.

The following statements included the participants' pseudonyms, their college name and code, and an introduction to their perceptions.

Ms. Aditi (College-1)

Ms. Aditi was in her office, where she discussed her experience in the management-oriented institution she led. The institution she led supported an entrepreneurship ecosystem with an urban setup linked to a Nepali university. Ms. Aditi managed the college for 20 years using a market-oriented approach. She and the team she led were responsible for innovation through technological change. However, entry into the institution she managed required merit and an entrance exam conducted within the institution, followed by interviews. This indicates that the management is optimistic about technological change and human capital for attracting students.

Mr. Bikash (College-2)

Mr. Bikash, during my visit, emphasized the college's compliance with international management standards and its association with two universities, one Nepalese and the other foreign. His position as the strategic director was visionary, stressing the concepts of value and excellence in the academic field. His philosophy revolved around the concepts of advising and networking for lifetime contacts. The recruitment procedure consisted of an entry test, and they also followed the career-focused model by using professional networking sites to promote accomplishments.

Ms. Sheetal (College-3)

At the college, which mainly offered management and technology programs in affiliation with a university in Nepal, Ms. Sheetal, a program coordinator at the

institution, was demonstrating to me the student-centric leadership style she had adopted in her work. The enrollment process was in line with the university's procedures and maintained standards by using social media to disseminate information.

Mr. Dinesh (College-4)

In the interview that I conducted with Mr. Dinesh, the individual explained the way the college operates as an affiliate of an international university in the area of information technology and management. His approach involved implementing international education programs that attracted students with global standards. Their scholarship strategies enabled such access, and online social media marketing promoted their offers to the target audience.

Mr. Indra (College-5)

I met Mr. Indra on campus, where he described how his institution offers programs in engineering and management through an affiliation with a Nepali university. Since he is a college director, his leadership style blends branding with infrastructure, both physical and technological. His team focuses on location, indicating his flexibility in marketing practices. Admission is administered through required university exams, followed by college-administered interviews. It also uses online platforms to share administrative information or academic successes.

Mr. Afjal (College-6)

During the meeting, Mr. Afjal served as a visionary proponent of innovative marketing strategies. This engineering and technology school was affiliated with a university in Nepal. Digital platforms were used to engage students, and the school emphasized efficiency. The school enrolled students based on merit, as determined by university entrance examinations and school counseling sessions. Notably, the institution incorporated members of the marketing and recruitment teams to promote the school through social networking sites.

Mr. Jeevan (College-7)

Mr. Jeevan, an administrator at his college, well known for its diversified science and management programs at one of the Nepalese universities, told me that the college maintains a human-focused, transparent approach to leading the organization. His team strives to provide the students with due respect while ensuring clarity in their financial dealings. Student admissions follow the university's

guidelines, including entrance and document reviews. They maintain their website and social media to build students' confidence through better communication.

Method of Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which enabled a broad, exploratory approach to this study. The principal method for gathering data involved conducting a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews informed by a literature review. This enabled me, the researcher, to take a flexible approach to the study, exploring themes emerging from the data, which aligned with the aim of a qualitative study to examine the human experience and interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saunders et al., 2023). In this respect, the semi-structured nature of the interviews enabled me to explore how leaders intentionally convey information to bridge the gap between their college and prospective students. The aforementioned methods enabled me to explore all four areas I am investigating in this study, namely promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. The questions posed to participants were a series of interviews informed by this study's research question: How do Nepali private college leaders influence prospective students' enrollment decisions? In this regard, open-ended questions were asked for each of the four areas to encourage interview participants to articulate their strategies and professional experiences related to their teams and colleges. Additional questions were introduced as needed to guide the interview on what activities they used to influence prospective students, how they utilized promotion-related activities, how they engaged their people, how they adopted different processes, and how they showcased physical evidence. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes, and audio recordings were made with the participants' explicit consent for verbatim transcription.

Process of Data Analysis

The data analysis process was systematic and rigorous. It follows the principles of qualitative inquiry. This method was chosen for being a foundational and flexible approach. It is used to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis involved a six-phase process. The first phase is called familiarization with the data. In this phase, I transcribed the entire audio-recorded interview data sheet, followed by extensive reading and rereading. I also coded each reply according to college, the guiding question I asked, and the participant, e.g., 'College-4-Q5-Mr. Dinesh's, meaning this was retrieved from college-4's leader, Mr. Dinesh, during his interview after I asked question 5. This

proactive process enables me to efficiently organize all data in subsequent phases and maintain a clear main audit trail.

Thereafter, during the initial code phase, I systematically coded the data into a set of statements shared by my participants. Initial code names were identified from interesting features of the data relevant to the research question. For example, data from 'College-4-Q5-Mr. Dinesh's reply was initially named a 'modern campus environment' since he shared, 'We ensure that our college premises have a modern and high-quality environment.' Subsequently, in the third phase, I was involved in collating and organizing different code names that had emerged from the previous phase. In this respect, the process was informed by the theoretical foundation of this study. While searching for themes, I looked for how leaders' actions served as intentional signals to influence students. In this phase, different codes with meaningful and overarching name patterns were searched and organized under a single sub-theme, and thereafter into the broader theme. For example, initial codes, such as 'state-of-the-art labs', 'digital library', 'modern learning spaces', and 'playing stations' were collated under the broader sub-theme of 'Showcasing Modern Facilities'. Thereafter, I proactively repeat the same process to connect different sub-themes under four guiding themes (promotion, people, process, and physical evidence) of this study.

Later in the fourth phase, all the sub-themes and themes were reviewed and refined to ensure that they were coherent and distinct from one another. For this reason, a thematic map was developed. Then, in the fifth phase of each theme, it was clearly defined and named. This involved writing a detailed analysis that captured the essence of each previously captured theme. For example, the theme was defined and organized around physical cue strategies that connect the building and premises, which were showcased to influence prospective students' enrollment decisions. Finally, the sixth phase produces the report by presenting the data and the corresponding interpretative statements (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this connection, the final report integrates the findings with the signaling lens to explain how marketing activities function as persuasive communication tools. For example, in the 'Strategic Digital Engagement' sub-theme, the report included edumarketing activities shared by HEI leaders to influence prospective students using various digital tools and social media platforms. Thereafter, it was interpreted as a multifaceted need of college leaders to influence their target.

Quality Standards and Ethical Considerations

To ensure the reliability and validity of the current qualitative study, I have employed a strategy to establish the credibility and confirmability of the findings. In this respect, the strategy of prolonged engagement with the context has been adopted in the current study, along with peer debriefing, triangulation, and member checks (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Taking these factors into account, I endeavored to facilitate transferability to equivalent academic settings by providing a thick description of the context and participants through word transcription. In addition, to ensure reflexivity, I used a reflexive journal to separate my roles as researcher and teacher, thereby managing bias (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saldaña & Omasta, 2017). This was particularly important for maintaining signal honesty in my own interpretations. Lastly, to ensure the reliability and reproducibility of the research, I used an audit trail to document the research focus, the criteria for participants, and the analysis process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2011).

In this study, ethical measures were taken to minimize harm or discomfort to participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I sought fully informed consent from the respondents without exerting any pressure. I made them aware of their right to withdraw from the data collection process at any time. In addition, I made them aware of the study's objective. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, I ensured that sensitive information about the participant and their institutions remained unrevealed. I gave them a pseudonym during data transcription. For example, I referred to the leader of college-1 as Aditi and to the leader of college-2 as Bikash, rather than using their official names. I kept the raw data stored on password-protected, encrypted devices that could not be accessed by unauthorized persons (Saldaña & Omasta, 2017). Moreover, I scheduled meetings at convenient times for the respondents. For example, conducting interviews with participants like Jeevan after class hours ensured there would be no interruptions to their duties. Another ethical issue that arose during field research was when one of the participants revealed sensitive complaints about the university's policies. In this particular situation, it was important to remain highly reflexive to avoid blurring the lines between being a researcher and a peer. This approach ensured that the professional integrity of the leaders remained intact (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Yin, 2011).

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the study's methodology, including ontological, epistemological, and axiological perspectives. It also explained a generic qualitative interpretive approach, the selection of participants, the data collection methods, and how I present and interpret the analyzed data thematically from the participants. In addition, it also addressed the quality standards that ensure trustworthiness and the ethical considerations of the research.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF PARTICIPANTS' INFORMATION

This chapter shares valuable insights from participants on edumarketing strategies designed to influence prospective students' decisions to enroll. From a persuasive communication perspective, these strategies are understood through Signaling Theory (Connelly et al., 2011), in which leaders serve as signalers, sending observable cues that shape others' perceptions of the institution's quality. The analysis of this data was organized around four key thematic strategies (promotion, people, process, and physical evidence). Moreover, subthemes emerged from a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the participants' information were grouped under these main themes. The data were carefully scrutinized, and no outliers were found that would warrant the development of a new theme.

Promotional Strategies as Ways to Influence Students' Enrollment Decisions

In the edumarketing domain, the participants reported that their promotional strategies are not just limited to advertising. Instead, they are more focused on developing communication tools to educate and influence prospective students' enrollment decisions. Through the lens of signaling theory, these tactics function as intentional signals intended to reduce information asymmetry between the institution and prospective students. Further analysis of the data indicates that HEI leaders focus on deriving key insights into student expectations to establish targeted value propositions. Therefore, this theme explores the specific strategies and activities reported by the interviewed leaders for engaging students and building a strong brand image. According to participants, HEI leaders use digital marketing efforts, direct engagement initiatives, value proposition communication, and performance tracking to refine enrollment decisions.

Strategic Digital Engagement

HEI leaders shared that they used various digital channels and approaches to reach and interact with their target prospective students. In this regard, I asked my participants what digital strategies they implement to connect with prospective students. Among them, Ms. Aditi explained the situation in this way “*We are actively involved in social media marketing. We have accounts on several platforms, including*

Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. We regularly update our accounts with postings related to our campus life, academics, and success stories.”

She stated that her college was involved in social media marketing management. She explained that her team uses Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. The college used these platforms to post information about life on campus, academic successes, and other success stories. Consequently, she framed this activity as a strategic initiative for the institution's active digital engagement. This social media management mechanism increases signal frequency and observability, enabling it to reach the intended recipient. This endeavor was recognized as a powerful medium for connecting with the new generation, building the institutional brand, and clearly expressing the organization's commitment. In addition, it is apparent that HEIs use social media platforms and digital content to build brand awareness and engage prospective students (Mazurek et al., 2019; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022).

Further, she elaborated on her college's digital approach and said:

“We also run targeted campaigns on these platforms, as well as pay for advertisements on different websites, such as Google. Furthermore, we utilize visuals and messages to persuade viewers to move beyond outdated learning and seek something new by showcasing our college references. This captures their attention and leads them to surf our platform for inquiries.”

Ms. Aditi's statement indicates that they use targeted campaigns and run paid ads across multiple platforms. This effectively supports reaching their audience. This shows that they adopted a data-driven strategy to effectively reach a specific demographic group of prospective students. These targeted campaigns serve as observable signals that capture the receiver's attention by differentiating the institution from traditional, outdated learning models. Their emphasis is on convincing viewers to move beyond outdated learning and explore something new through promotional visuals and messages. Then, they connect the message and show their own reference points to put their effort into attracting more applicants to enroll. In doing so, they challenge the existing perceptions of marketing in the educational sector. This differentiating strategy serves as a persuasive signal that positions the institution as a forward-thinking alternative in its competitive market by critically examining traditional teaching and learning models. In this regard, some studies have acknowledged that HEIs are increasingly incorporating paid online services, such as

targeted advertising, to increase visibility and interaction (Baliyan & Mokoena, 2024; Harbi & Maqsood, 2022; Zhuchkova et al., 2023).

After this, I asked Mr. Bikash about his experience, and he told me *“For promotion, we have also adopted a targeted approach. We run targeted social media campaigns for those who have recently passed their school exams. Our messages are targeted at their concerns and aspirations.”*

His words show that his team’s social media campaigns are designed to target certain groups, such as young students who have just finished secondary education. This is a friendly tone aimed at building a personal connection by discussing issues that matter to them. By tailoring messages to specific audiences, the leader can ensure they align well, addressing the information gap between the college’s service offerings and students’ needs. They are stressing their dedication to spreading motivational messages to inspire students to pursue higher education. They do this through digital channels and tailored communication, helping them effectively reach and inspire potential students (Altbach et al., 2009; Harbi & Maqsood, 2022; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022).

Ms. Sheetal added that a comprehensive online expansion strategy is needed. She noted:

We have continuously expanded our offerings across multiple disciplines, including management, engineering, arts, law, science, and technology. We blend traditional and modern strategies. We've been growing our digital presence by sharing daily updates on Facebook, TikTok, LinkedIn, and Instagram. While our website isn't updated every day, it still provides valuable, in-depth content, including messages from college leaders.

According to her statement, the institution's varied educational offerings are reflected in a digital outreach strategy. Their online strategy for daily presence ensures the signal's observability, and their commitment to effectively reaching different student groups through different platforms. It also shows how traditional content remains relevant even as digital media become more innovative and dynamic (Harbi & Maqsood, 2022; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022; Zhuchkova et al., 2023). Additionally, she verified that her college website is consistently maintained and includes extensive content, such as messages from college leaders. This showed that they maintained the depth of content and that social media was a more effective

strategy for reaching the targeted audience. They seem to be more focused on multiple programs, including management, engineering, arts, law, science, and technology.

Another participant, Mr. Dinesh, revealed their digital engagement and then shared:

We use a website, a brochure, and face-to-face meetings. Besides these, we often use our social media accounts to share our information. For example, we use our Facebook and TikTok accounts to share live events and public-interest news. Moreover, we have paid advertisements on these social media. Sometimes, we ask local influencers to share their platform with us as a favor in exchange. Furthermore, we use Viber and WhatsApp for two-way messaging.

He identified that the website, brochures, and direct meetings were utilized as important traditional activities. In addition, he further shared that they used a multidimensional digital marketing strategy via social media platforms. This multifaceted strategy is the strategic broadcasting of signals through different channels to reduce distortions and reach the maximum number of receivers. They utilized social media platforms such as Facebook and TikTok to broadcast live news programs and public-interest programs. They also ran paid social media ads, sometimes hiring influencers to promote their messages. Furthermore, platforms like Viber and WhatsApp were used for two-way message exchange. All these initiatives appeared to be implemented to express the institution's broad reach and commitment to innovative communication mediums (Baliyan & Mokoena, 2024; Harbi & Maqsood, 2022; Khadka & Acharya, 2023).

Similarly, Mr. Jeevan proposed an integrated approach and stated:

We offer our best and most suitable programs and showcase our past results and notable alumni achievements. We also share that our team uses innovative teaching and e-learning strategies through a research-driven culture led by our seasoned faculty members. Moreover, social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn help us remain visible. Additionally, these tools effectively reach our digital audience and reinforce our academic and research values.

His statement noted that program quality and research-driven cultures influence the visiting students. He further mentioned that they used multiple social media platforms to boost their visibility and engagement with different target groups.

These academic results and alumni achievements showcased by leadership serve as a reliable signal that reinforces the institution's academic values to the digital audience. They also showcase their outstanding achievements through their current and former students. This acts as a key indicator of quality in early interactions and is supported by many studies (Nguyen et al., 2023; Pokhrel et al., 2018; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022). Additionally, he explained that the institution's strong online presence increased the credibility of its promotions.

He further noted that direct outreach to the audience remains their main focus. He shared:

We provide precise details on our website regarding our programs, admissions, and facilities. We use images and videos to showcase our institution effectively. Additionally, we publish magazines and newsletters to boost our professional image and highlight our academic achievements. In this way, students can reach them easily through call, email, or other communication channels for personalized support.

He ensured that sufficient information was available online to help build trust among potential applicants. In this regard, providing accurate program details and visual evidence acts as an informative signal that helps the student (receiver) set their expectations. His team shared information about programs and facilities, along with pictures that offer valuable insights into campus life. They also published magazines and newsletters to enhance the brand's professional image and provide concrete evidence of academic development. In this way, they created direct connections with prospective students by offering personalized engagement through different messaging platforms (Biswakarma & Dhakal, 2023; Ng & Forbes, 2009; Pokhrel et al., 2018).

He further emphasized the importance of combining physical events with online promotional engagements to shape enrollment. He said:

We conduct events such as welcome events, fairs, and seminars to create digital content that enhances our online presence. These events provide us with a platform to showcase our campus life and attract students through social media. This helps us create a modern online environment for our students.

He used physical events to create engaging digital content that enhanced the institution's image across various online platforms. From a signaling perspective,

converting traditional events into digital content enhances signal observability and helps reduce the uncertainty prospective students feel about the learning environment. His team further noted that shifting from traditional event marketing to promotional engagement positively affected the institution's reputation among prospective students. This highlighted the need to display campus activities digitally to reduce uncertainty among prospective students about the learning environment. In this regard, they highlighted that integrating various digital activities and platforms was an important aspect of their outreach strategy (Khadka & Acharya, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022).

In conclusion, the participants' information has showcased their understanding and application of the dynamic digital world to broadcast persuasive signals to their prospective students. The strategies participants employ to apply digital technologies to their marketing initiatives are diverse. These include information dissemination, advertising, and other channels that optimize signal frequency. They utilize both one-way and two-way messaging platforms. Further, these were intended to develop a perception of aspiration, ensure signal fit by distinguishing the institution, and engage in direct, personalized communication with the digitally native generation and their parents. From a signaling perspective, these digital efforts bridge the information asymmetry by making the institution's unobservable quality highly observable to the receiver.

Personalized Direct Interaction

Participants identified face-to-face interactions as essential for building close connections with prospective students and their families. This serves as the main approach used in edumarketing. When I asked my research participants about the above, the following was what Ms. Aditi had to say:

We actively participate in academic fairs and exhibitions to generate initial interest. Our friendly admissions team and current students are always happy to speak directly with prospective students and their parents. They provide immediate answers and a warm, personal touch. We also host open house events at our campus, giving visitors a wonderful opportunity to explore our facilities and experience the vibrant activities firsthand.

Her statements clarified that they actively accepted establishing their presence at educational fairs and exhibitions as an effective key strategy to increase their initial reach to prospective students. From a signaling standpoint, direct interaction at fairs

acts as a high-quality signal that provides immediate feedback, thereby reducing the receiver's information uncertainty. In such events, the college's admissions team and currently enrolled students engage directly with visitors and prospective students, thereby establishing warm, lasting relationships. She expressed confidence that prospective students are slightly more influenced by immediate, personal replies during face-to-face interaction than by a ready-made, one-way message about the college. Moreover, because the targets can attend the college's open house events as guests, it becomes easier for them to learn about the college's environment and the offers it provides (Ivy, 2008; Ng & Forbes, 2009; Pokhrel et al., 2018).

Additionally, Mr. Bikash outlined pre-admission counselling sessions for prospective students, which were followed by orientation and socialization. He stated:

We have pre--counseling sessions before they are admitted, and then we follow up on them for orientation and socialization. Our counselors participate individually to tackle their worries and showcase how our programs help them in their professional careers, preparing them for a global platform.

He shared his college's strategy of clarifying academic offerings by addressing professional concerns. These individualized sessions are designed to ensure signaler honesty by addressing personal worries and aligning institutional signals with the receiver's career aspirations. This was achieved through direct engagement with counselors to prepare students for global platforms. They believed in their strategy because they knew they could demonstrate how actively their institution satisfied the needs of their target audience. In this regard, they were crucial in reaching their target audience. Thus, they influenced the choices made by the target group. They found themselves in a favorable position to play an active role (Lestari et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2023; Subedi, 2019).

In addition, Mr. Indra introduced the concept of media convergence. He stated:

Our promotion occurs in multiple ways. We submit advertisements in prominent national newspapers to increase the visibility and recognition of our brand, targeting everyone from guardians to students. Moreover, we also focus on online promotions. We perform targeted marketing on social media and on messaging applications. This makes it easy for us to connect directly with younger-generation students. Another key strategy is participating in

education fairs, where we can engage directly with students and their parents. This allows us to give prompt connection and feedback to build personal relationships with them.

He noted that his team places special importance on direct interaction with students and parents. By combining traditional newspapers with direct, face-to-face feedback, the leader ensures that institutional signals are both consistent and highly observable across different media. They adopted a strategy of advertising in prominent national newspapers to strengthen brand identity and reach. They established immediate relationships and ensured a feedback system through conversations with their prospective visitors. Moreover, they relied on their active online presence. Their market targeting on social media platforms and messaging apps made it simpler to reach the younger generation directly. Thus, diverse approaches were implemented to ensure wide accessibility of the institution and to showcase their dedication to market management objectives by focusing on building personal networks for the target market (Khadka & Acharya, 2023; Pokhrel et al., 2018; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022).

The data show that the engagement strategy employed by college leaders included initiatives such as educational fairs, open house events, and pre-admission counseling sessions. The HEI leaders demonstrate that successful enrollment depends on the strategic encoding of signals through social media platforms, individualized counseling, orientation, and socialization sessions. The need for interaction, whether physical or by a specific online platform aimed at fostering connections, addressing individual concerns, and making a personal contact, was highlighted by almost all respondents (Ivy, 2008; Zainudin et al., 2019).

Compelling Value Proposition

The HEI leaders have been concerned with how they can articulate and communicate the distinctive value of their colleges effectively in highlighting the advantages and successes that students derive from the learning programs offered by colleges (Abeygunawardena, 2018; Nguyen et al., 2023; Silwal & Baral, 2021; Zhou & Alam, 2024). At this point, Ms. Aditi noted that it is possible to articulate the value proposition based on skill-based learning. She stated:

We make promises and share that we conduct numerous field visits, workshops, and boot camps throughout every semester, as per their curriculum

requirements for pragmatic learning. Moreover, we offer extra professional classes with a small fee to enhance their skills.

She reported that her team had incorporated programs such as field visits, workshops, and boot camps in every semester to ensure practical education. In the context of Signaling Theory, these tangible promises of pragmatic learning act as observable signals that address the unobservable quality of future educational outcomes. In this way, the leaders directly addressed the expectations of prospective students who seek hands-on experience and the opportunity to apply academic knowledge to real-world problems. Moreover, her team conveyed their commitment to the overall development of all students was not just limited to the syllabus they taught. They provided extra professional classes for skill enhancement. Such measures seem to support the leadership in achieving the target audience. They focus on those seeking job opportunities and the skills for competent jobs in the future market. In short, college leaders strongly share those value propositions to influence their target students' enrollment decisions (Ng & Forbes, 2009; Nguyen et al., 2023; Silwal & Baral, 2021).

In this regard, Ms. Aditi further detailed that the communication of value could be expanded through social proof and future assurance. Unfolding this, she said:

Our national and international scholarship recipients are also prominently featured in our talks and on our digital platforms. We share their stories on our digital platform and showcase their global exposure. Additionally, our career service program plays a crucial role in influencing students by providing a firm assurance of a secure future.

She emphasized that prominently featuring national and international scholarship recipients and sharing their stories provides strong social proof of the institution's academic quality and the opportunities available. Showcasing successful scholarship students acts as a high-reliability signal, providing credible evidence of the institution's international standing. She mentioned that this initiative particularly attracts students who aspire to get international experience. Moreover, in highlighting how the career-service program ensures a secure future for students as a career service benefit, they are directly addressing those major issues that are important to be addressed in their target group: namely, how much they get in return for the investment made in education by students and parents regarding securing their job after completion of education. She observed that effective dissemination of this

information effectively facilitates guiding their enrollment choices (Gurung et al., 2022; Zhou & Alam, 2024).

I further asked about how they offer and promote their flagship programs. In this regard, Mr. Bikash shared their strategic positioning of the focused program of study:

Our main course of study is business administration. We have positioned it as a premium course. It is not just academically strong; our relationship with the industry is also solid. The curriculum has been very carefully designed to be both applicable and aligned with market demands. That is why our students graduate with the skills that companies are looking for, not just theoretical knowledge.

He explained how business administration was deliberately positioned as a premium course. Positioning a course as ‘premium’ is an attempt to signal high value and market relevance, and fills the gap between theoretical knowledge and market demand. He added that it was done in a way that reflected its exclusivity and quality. This ensures alignment of the program within the labor market and employability. It was added that this is taken into consideration to ensure that students possess the skills, not mere knowledge, that the labor market is seeking. Additionally, he added that it responds to the employability needs of students seeking the course (Chanour & Houban, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2023; Silwal & Baral, 2021).

In this regard, he also explained the institution's pricing strategy:

When it comes to fees, we have called it competitively premium to the prospective students who visit our office for their enrollment. We compare what other branded colleges nearby charge, and based on that, our fee is reasonable to match our quality and what we offer.

He disclosed that they discuss various issues with their prospective students during personal or direct meetings to influence their enrollment decision. This pricing model signals institutional prestige, conveying a value proposition that reconciles quality demands with market realities. This includes sharing their competitive and premium fees. This strategy prioritized the comparative analysis of nearby competitors and ensured that fees were rationalized for prospective students based on the value they offered. The overall commitment to delivering the pricing activity required conveying a balanced perspective on the institution's commitment to quality education and the realities of the market. This was aimed at ensuring the institution

clearly conveyed the value of its educational programs to students (Ivy, 2008; Wilkins, 2020).

Furthermore, Ms. Sheetal emphasized institutional heritage as a key strategic influence. She shared:

Our teams for career services and enterprise development focus on both academic learning and their future. In this way, we have clearly established our image of success, strategically presenting our record of over two decades of academic heritage and multiple thousands of graduates.

She described how the college's career services and enterprise development teams focused on both students' academic learning and their future prospects. Leveraging institutional heritage serves as a long-term signal of stability and reliability, helping prospective students perceive the institution as a credible choice. The institution's image of success was clearly established by strategically presenting the success of thousands of graduates over an educational legacy spanning more than two decades. Moreover, this model was intended to build students' confidence and trust in the institution. Therefore, this initiative was implemented as a key strategy to clarify the college's commitment to its students' successful future (Biswakarma & Dhakal, 2023; Gurung et al., 2022; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022).

Overall, participants recounted how their value propositions were encoded as quality signals, highlighting practical learning. They also mentioned skill enhancement and strong career service programs. It was noted that courses were offered as distinct signals of unobservable quality through strategically positioned and premium-valued services. However, they also explained that competitive pricing was ensured, and then emphasized that institutional heritage was leveraged as a reliable signal of signaler honesty. They found that this reduced the information asymmetry regarding prospective students' desires for quality and employability. In this way, the leaders of HEIs can ensure that the signals are perceived as credible and consistent with the receiver's expectations (Connelly et al., 2011; Kiss & Kun, 2014).

Data-Driven Promotional Refinement

In the context of edumarketing, HEI leaders emphasized the importance of data-driven approaches for efficient communication, including monitoring, analysis, and optimization (Biswakarma & Dhakal, 2023; Riccomini et al., 2021). When asked about the effectiveness of such promotional activities, Mr. Indra explained:

We actively use social media platforms, such as Facebook and TikTok, as well as the college website, to share our activities and notices. We also send personalized emails and share our information in a single group email. Further, we organized a conference last year and engaged with nearly 1,000 invited students from various colleges. We also share testimonials and display images and videos regarding our offerings, achievements, and research publications. We utilize data analytics and track our promotions as well.

He explained that he organized a large conference to create direct connections and said approximately 1,000 invited students attended. This systematic use of diverse platforms ensures that institutional signals are encoded effectively to capture the attention of a large audience. Moreover, he emphasized integrating these events with comprehensive digital strategies and considered this integration vital to a comprehensive action plan. In this sequence, social media platforms such as Facebook and TikTok were actively used alongside the college website. Additionally, it was shared that the emails were found to be sent for personal correspondence. However, group mail was also employed to communicate large amounts of information simultaneously. Further, testimonials, pictures, and videos related to their presentations, achievements, and research publications were also shared through digital mediums. Additionally, data analysis was used to track promotional effectiveness. This reflects their strong commitment to moving from arbitrary market management practices toward a systematic approach (Altbach et al., 2009; Biswakarma & Dhakal, 2023; Harbi & Maqsood, 2022).

He provided additional details about the tools and methods used to analyze and improve the promotional messages. He stated:

We mainly use Google Analytics and Meta Ads Manager to measure and monitor engagement, leads, and the overall performance of the campaign. These are implemented by continuously monitoring traffic sources, audience demographics, and conversion rates. We track pay-per-click advertising, promotional video view counts, and so on, and then we refine our advertising strategy using this information. This data-driven approach ensures that we reach only our focused and targeted students.

Mr. Indra explained that promotion leads were tracked using specific digital tools. He notably cited Google Analytics and Meta Ads Manager. He highlighted that data analytics allows leaders to monitor signal effectiveness and adjust their

communication strategies based on demographic feedback and conversion rates. He stated that by monitoring metrics, they could continuously refine the campaign. Consequently, he maintained that this approach enabled effective targeting of focused groups. He concluded that this action optimized influence on enrollment decisions (Harbi & Maqsood, 2022; Riccomini et al., 2021; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022).

Furthermore, Mr. Afjal highlighted collaborative team effort and shared:

Our academic and administrative team is involved in content review and its posting. They develop and share the brochures, as well as make wishes on every festival in a unique way. We tell our visitors that we have articulated our mission to foster innovation with moral values. We promote our main goal of producing qualified, skilled individuals through various media and direct interactions. This is reinforced by stating the affiliations and certifications we have achieved.

He mentioned that the academic and administrative teams collaborated to ensure the accuracy and alignment of content with institutional values. This collaborative effort in content management ensures signal consistency and aligns the institutional mission with observable marketing outputs, thereby enhancing its credibility. In this context, he indicated that the mission to promote innovation and moral values was communicated through their distributed brochures and festival greetings. This was reinforced by their affiliations and achievements. Thus, the aim was to establish credibility with prospective students through media outlets and personal interactions (Khadka & Acharya, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023; Zhou & Alam, 2024).

He further stressed the prioritization of media for promotion, and he shared:

We have a team to handle our marketing activities. Through which, we print, publish, display, etc. In this case, our team promptly updates our pages. We have even formed partnerships with social media influencers to promote our offers. Furthermore, our past targeted digital advertising efforts have resulted in successful conversions. Thus, we prioritized electronic and social media to showcase our student activities.

He reflected on adapting to modern marketing and mentioned using a dedicated team for prompt digital updates. By prioritizing electronic media and influencer partnerships, the team enhances signal observability, appealing to the digital behaviors of the modern receiver. His team noted the success of targeted

digital advertising and mentioned collaborations with influencers. Consequently, he stated that electronic and social media were prioritized and explained that this was done to showcase student activities. It was recognized that prospective students are drawn to dynamic content, which effectively shapes their perceptions and interests (Harbi & Maqsood, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2023; Zhuchkova et al., 2023).

Overall, participants placed great emphasis on the promotional refinement process. They mentioned using analytical tools to track critical performance indicators. This way, they would be able to ensure that their target was reached effectively. Additionally, the participants also favored their integrated e-content delivery. From a persuasive standpoint, these strategies are designed to ensure that the institutional signals are honest, consistent, and highly observable. By leveraging digital analytics and personalized interactions, HEI leaders effectively bridge the information gap and influence final enrollment decisions.

People Strategies as Ways to Influence Students' Enrollment Decisions

HEI leaders consider their people a strategic pillar, directly or indirectly involved in achieving their student enrollment goals. These individuals function as signalers who bridge the information asymmetry by communicating institutional quality and reliability to prospective students (Connelly et al., 2011). These new students were encouraged to apply for enrollment through strategic engagement and presentations by HEIs' people. They leverage expertise, experience, and support to build trust, describe the institution's culture, and illustrate the quality of the learning experience. In this study, I applied thematic analysis to understand the role these people play in persuading students to enroll in the private colleges they run. One of the strategies used by people is faculty positioning, authentic advocacy, staff dedication, and leveraging collective excellence, which serve as credible signals that influence the receiver's interpretation.

Strategic Faculty Positioning

This section explored how college leaders strategically leveraged faculty members' qualifications, experience, and engagement to influence enrollment. According to signaling theory, highlighting faculty excellence sends a strong message that reinforces the institution's academic reputation and alleviates stakeholders' doubts about educational quality (Kiss & Kun, 2014). In this regard, Mr. Bikash emphatically recognized faculty as a primary asset for influencing decisions. He said:

Our greatest asset is our people. No matter how good the curriculum is, it is the faculty who teach it. We have highly experienced faculty here. They possess considerable industry experience and academic qualifications. That is why we have showcased their qualifications and real-world experience in our brochures as well as on our website.

He positioned faculty members as central to the educational experience and noted that this influence extends even to curriculum design. By emphasizing industry experience and academic credentials, the leader transmits a reliable signal of academic veracity to prospective students. He spoke about the need for highly experienced professors with industry experience and excellent academic credentials. His team explained that showcasing qualifications and real-world experience in brochures and on the website was a strategic decision. It was mentioned that this serves as a primary selling point. This strategic display of faculty expertise ensures signaler honesty, as highly qualified professors act as observable proof of the institution's unobservable academic standards. He found that it affects prospective students by reassuring them of the quality of teaching (Abeygunawardena, 2018; Ivy, 2008; Tukur et al., 2019; Zainudin et al., 2019).

Similarly, I inquired about showcasing faculty expertise, then Ms. Sheetal revealed in her words and said:

We have always valued our dedicated teachers as team members and advisors, ensuring the success of our students. Their career profiles, research outcomes, and impactful messages, along with alumni testimonials, are prominently featured on our website. In addition, our digital team staff is also trained to be responsive, empathetic, and highly efficient. They ensure a consistent and supportive experience for the visitor from the first inquiry to every interaction and chat they have.

She stated that the institution empowers faculty by valuing them as team members and advisors. Her team noted that career profiles and research outcomes are prominently featured on the website alongside alumni's testimonials. These research findings and work profiles serve as visible signals that strengthen institutional credibility and academic prestige. It was explained that this highlights intellectual capital and its contribution to student success. Furthermore, she mentioned that the digital team is trained to be responsive and empathetic. This training ensures signal consistency, as every interaction provides a supportive experience that positively

influences the receiver's calibration and interpretation of the institution. Her team concluded that this ensures a consistent and supportive experience. This has an impact on prospective students from the first inquiry (Mahajan & Golahit, 2019; Sahni et al., 2025; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022).

Mr. Dinesh positioned faculty as the cornerstone of their academic reputation. He stated:

Our faculty is the cornerstone of our academic reputation, and we have a policy of hiring experienced and friendly faculty. We share these with visitors and also provide opportunities for them to meet with us to ask questions and receive guidance on higher studies. This really works better and boosts our admission numbers.

He emphasized the importance of expertise and the value of an approachable learning environment by hiring experienced faculty. By providing opportunities for direct contact between faculty members and visitors, the leader creates a signaling context where immediate feedback can mitigate information asymmetry. It was explained that prospective students can meet with faculty for guidance. His team noted that this direct interaction helps build trust. It was reported that this strategy boosted admissions by influencing enrollment decisions (Pokhrel et al., 2018; Sahni et al., 2025; Zainudin et al., 2019).

Mr. Indra reaffirmed the critical role of faculty in promotion. He characterized them as knowledgeable and committed experts. He shared:

The most important thing is our faculty. There are experienced and dedicated teachers. They are experts in their own field, and their dedication is the gem to us. They often engage by sharing our posts on their personal social media accounts.

He observed that the faculty are experienced and dedicated experts. It was noted that they often share posts on their personal social media accounts. This reveals an organic form of advocacy where faculty members act as secondary signalers, leveraging their personal social networks to broadcast the institution's quality signals. His team explained that this reveals an organic form of advocacy. It was noted that this leverages individual networks and extends the institution's reach to influence new students (Khadka & Acharya, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023; Zhuchkova et al., 2023).

Mr. Afjal emphasized that visitor demand drove faculty involvement in the pre-admission process. In this regard, he shared:

Many visitors request to meet with our faculty members before admission, and some of our seasoned faculty members support us in providing counseling. They proactively share how our learning environment is advanced and different than other colleges.

He revealed that many prospective students express a strong desire to meet faculty members directly before enrolling. These seasoned faculty members serve as persuasive signalers, offering direct counsel that provides credible insights that differentiate the institution from competitors. His team utilized the expertise of experienced faculty as a powerful motivational tool to provide mentoring. He stated that such direct expert-led interactions enable in-depth discussions of academic excellence and provide credible insights. Ultimately, this thing significantly influences the prospective students' enrollment decisions (Goi, 2009; Sahni et al., 2025; Tukur et al., 2019).

In essence, the participants' statements ensure they leveraged the faculty's excellence as a reliable signal to influence their prospective students' enrollment decisions. They also focused on confirming credibility by showcasing faculty's experience, strong academic backgrounds, and industry expertise, which serve as hard-to-fake signals of institutional honesty to shape the enrollment decisions. Precisely, a commitment to both quality instruction and advising was demonstrated through faculty profiles and direct interactions, thereby reducing information asymmetry for the receiver. Thus, the institution's academic reputation was leveraged by involving faculty as advocates to influence admissions decisions.

Authentic Peer Advocacy

HEI leadership was more focused on harnessing the achievements, experiences, involvement, and support of current and former students to shape the decisions of prospective students. Moreover, current and former students serve as authentic signals, whose personal success stories and testimonials reduce receiver uncertainty about the unobservable quality of the education (Connelly et al., 2011). In this regard, I asked how the achievements of past and current students could be used to inform decisions for prospective students. In this scenario, Ms. Aditi demonstrated a wide perspective on human resources. She presented:

We consider our teachers, staff, and students as important assets. Our strategy is to make our college known through them. Our achievements speak for themselves. For example, when our student tops in the university, when our

whole batch gets good results, our college celebrates this as our joint success. We circulate it in all forms and display it throughout our college premises. That is displayed as proof that our faculties and our whole college are successful. That's how we can assure our newcomers.

She said that the institution advertised the students' success through celebrations. This public celebration functions as an observable signal of collective success, providing social proof that validates the signaler's honesty. This was done in a way that presented it as a group activity. They said that "the display of success messages on all platforms and sites gives evidence of success. This frequent and observable display of academic excellence serves as a strong signal that mitigates information asymmetry for newcomers (Gurung et al., 2022; Pokhrel et al., 2018; Zainudin et al., 2019).

In this regard, Ms. Aditi discussed the use of student testimonials. She said "*We regularly feature testimonials from these alumni, as well as request that current students write on our website and different channels. We share their personal stories of growth and success.*"

She explained that her team employs a proactive strategy to gather authentic endorsements. Regularly featuring personal stories of growth serves as a persuasive signal that allows prospective students to calibrate their expectations based on real-world outcomes. She clarified that this is done by consistently incorporating testimonials. Current students are also encouraged to share their experiences on the website and through different channels. She noted that sharing personal stories of growth and success adds a relatable, inspiring touch to others' narratives. This offers credible evidence of the transformative impact of its education (Altbach et al., 2009; Nguyen et al., 2023; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022).

Mr. Bikash highlighted the display of academic achievements online while replying to my question about displaying academic achievements. He said: "*On our website and social media platforms, we have showcased our college and students' academic achievements. We promoted the awards and good rankings we have received. We posted video testimonials from our former students.*"

He stated that his team promotes awards and high rankings on the website and social media platforms, noting that this serves as strong social proof. From a signaling perspective, video testimonials and high rankings serve as authentic signals of institutional prestige, which help shape the receiver's perception of quality. Moreover,

they have effectively employed video testimonies to add a dynamic, human element. This allows alumni to share their positive college experiences and achievements directly. Furthermore, Mr. Bikash stated that his college team adopted this multi-format approach to build confidence. It also attracts those students who deliberately seek an academically sound and reputable institution (Elpisah et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023; Rana et al., 2022).

In this connection, Ms. Sheetal described an approach through student clubs. She shared:

We have uniquely managed student affairs clubs run by current students. These clubs foster a peer-support culture, promote innovation, facilitate extracurricular activities, and address concerns promptly through a truly student-centric approach. Our team strategically shares their experiences and testimonials, featuring reviews, videos, and success stories of alumni from diverse fields, including business and cricket.

She stated that her institution is committed to a genuinely student-centric environment. This was achieved through student-run clubs and their success stories, which act as observable signals of a vibrant and supportive campus culture that directly influences the enrollment intentions of the receiver. Participating leaders showcased how clubs foster peer support, innovation, and address student concerns. Moreover, they include sharing student life experiences, reviews, and videos of success stories from their graduates. It is the peer recommendation aspect that played a significant role in encouraging prospective students to experience a pleasant campus life (Ng & Forbes, 2009; Nguyen et al., 2023; Pokhrel et al., 2018).

In this line, Mr. Afjal added the role of word of mouth and testimonials. He shared:

Current and former students support us through sharing their word-of-mouth and testimonials. Our online section enables former students to share their memorable experiences and discuss how our institution has shaped their careers. We highlight their achievements and best projects and ensure their participation in events. Some of them voluntarily engage in counseling visitors and accompany them on college visits with permission during their free time.

He stated that his team employs a deliberate strategy to harness positive narratives. By facilitating alumni participation in counseling, the leader utilizes credible signalers who provide authentic feedback, thereby reducing the distortion

often found in traditional advertisements. He noted that this is achieved through an online alumni section. It was mentioned that this allows alumni to share memorable experiences and articulate career shaping. Moreover, it was stated that achievements should be emphasized and participation in events should be ensured to develop alumni engagement. It was stated that alumni's voluntary participation in counseling visitors symbolizes a genuine form of advocacy, helping develop trust and authentic messages (Biswakarma & Dhakal, 2023; Pokhrel et al., 2018; Zainudin et al., 2019).

In this context, participants stated that they use student and alumni achievements as indicators of collective success and consider them strong indicators of academic excellence. They featured testimonials and personal stories of growth. By showcasing rankings and fostering clubs, leaders ensure high signal observability, which helps prospective students bridge the information gap. In addition, they shared their positive experiences through word of mouth and online platforms and created stories. They concluded that credible social proof and powerful advocacy from these authentic signalers effectively shape enrollment decisions.

Holistic Staff Dedication

In private colleges, staff members' dedication, support, and professionalism truly influence the newcomers' enrollment decisions. From a signaling standpoint, the responsiveness and professionalism of the staff contribute to signal reliability by ensuring that the institution's commitment to service is observable from the first inquiry (Connelly et al., 2011). Their counseling, dealing, or interaction with prospective students determines whether prospective students join. In this regard, Mr. Bikash shared their supportive role in this way:

Our counseling and administrative team is also very smart and supportive of the student. They provide excellent guidance to students not only in academics but also in personal and career development. We have also included statements from the leaders of our partner universities on the website.

He ensured the dedicated team of counselors and administrators provides excellent support and noted that this extends beyond academics to personal and career development. This holistic guidance acts as a signal of institutional dedication, addressing the receiver's career development needs. This significantly influences prospective students by providing holistic guidance. His team ensures that statements from partner university leaders are included on the website. In addition, they highlight these as proof of the institution's quality and international linkages. These external

endorsements act as prestigious signals that reinforce the institution's reputation and global ties (Connelly et al., 2011; Sahni et al., 2025; Wilkins, 2020; Zainudin et al., 2019).

Mr. Afjal emphasized the dedication and systematic training of the administrative and supporting team.

Our administrative and support team comprises dedicated individuals who run the entire system. Further, we train them to be highly organized, efficient, and welcoming. Our regular counseling team is led by the principal himself, along with other program coordinators.

He stated that initial interactions with administrative staff shape prospective students' perception. A highly organized and efficient administrative team ensures signal consistency, minimizing distortion and creating a positive first impression for the receiver. He further noted the commitment to training staff to be highly organized, efficient, and welcoming. The counseling team includes the principal and different program coordinators. Their dedication to professional counseling for students creates a strong environment (Ivy, 2008; Sahni et al., 2025; Zainudin et al., 2019).

Mr. Afjal further highlighted the marketing team's proactive and innovative approach. He presented:

Our marketing team finds new ways to promote our college. They suggested that our directors take the rights to an artificial-intelligence-focused program from the university to attract newcomers. And, we did it, and now from this year we have a new offer.

He told his team that they have a deep understanding of market demand and innovative promotional strategies. According to him, the teams had suggested to the directors that they take up an academic affiliation focused on artificial intelligence (AI). The marketing management team said that the successful implementation of these programs would meet students' evolving expectations. By introducing market-aligned programs like AI, the marketing team encodes signals of innovation that resonate with the evolving expectations of the modern receiver. They also concluded that it would be helpful in attracting a new generation of learners (Altbach et al., 2009; Sahni et al., 2025; Subedi, 2019).

In addition, Mr. Jeevan emphasized the human-centric aspect of the institutional environment created by the teaching and support staff team. He said:

"We inform visitors that our teaching and supporting staff team created an

environment where no student felt uncomfortable, and everyone was treated with dignity and respect as a family member.”

According to him, his team had addressed the important concerns of prospective students. He noted that the faculty and support staff create an environment that makes students feel comfortable. In addition, he said that each and every student was treated with dignity and respect as part of the college family. This respectful environment serves as a social signal of institutional values, ensuring prospective students perceive the college as a supportive and dignifying place to learn. This was one of the major factors that influenced the accomplishment of the objective (Ng & Forbes, 2009; Sahni et al., 2025).

In conclusion, it is evident that comprehensive staff engagement signifies service excellence, as it directly affects the caliber of service provided when personnel are fully committed. Furthermore, the college's counseling, marketing, and administrative departments assist students through guidance and demonstrate considerable ingenuity in tailoring programs to align with market demands. Additionally, treating students as family members cultivates a respectful, hospitable environment that favorably influences their college selection process.

Leveraging Collective Excellence

Participating HEI leaders highlighted the collective success and recognition of their human resources as key to building an attractive image of their college among prospective students. This collective excellence serves as a frequent, high-intensity signal that reinforces institutional prestige. In this regard, Ms. Aditi shared that they took success as the result of team efforts, and said: *“We celebrate academic achievements as a combined effort. In this regard, all faculty, administrators, directors, and staff are engaged. We even share laddu from a sweet shop when someone becomes a university topper or second topper.”*

She said her team envisions an inclusive and supportive institutional environment. Additionally, she noted that academic achievement is celebrated not just as an individual's success but as a collective celebration of the entire college. This includes the efforts of all faculty, administrators, directors, and staff. In this regard, the collective group's achievement of academic milestones is a signal of quality and excellence. Presenting academic milestones in this way further reinforces the college's commitment to academic excellence. Furthermore, the sharing of traditional sweets such as laddu adds an emotional and authentic element to the signal of quality

(Connelly et al., 2011; Kiss & Kun, 2014; Sahni et al., 2025; Tomaszewicz & Barczyk, 2024).

Further, she spoke about faculty engagement to influence enrollment. She said:

Our active engagement extends to faculty. They share such things happily on their own social media platforms through stories and blogs. They have also referred many students to our college in the past. Additionally, they publish their research individually or as co-authors in our college journal alongside graduate students. We emphasize their expertise and the institution's dedication to academic excellence. These publications are featured on our digital platforms to boost our academic reputation and attract aspiring students at the graduation level.

She noted the core strategy that ensures the team's efforts lead to success. This approach relies on faculty volunteers. They were the proud people who came forward and happily owned the institutional achievements, sharing them on their social media platforms. Further, they refer newcomers to join the college as the best in the town. Their commitment to academic excellence was also reinforced by research publications along with their graduate students. In this regard, Ms. Aditi confirmed that this advocacy and research work had a significant impact on their academic reputation, as it attracted prospective students primarily at the graduate level (Abeygunawardena, 2018; Elpisah et al., 2023; Tukur et al., 2019). Thus, research publications and faculty blogs serve as visible signals of intellectual capital, enhancing the institution's academic reputation and attracting prospective students.

Mr. Indra discussed the faculty's commitments to the institution, and then he shared:

Some of the faculty members enrolled their family members and favorites here after fulfilling all the requirements and clearing the entrance exam. They also sometimes call to provide counseling to visitors at our college. Furthermore, all these individuals are prominently featured in our materials, including the website and other platforms. Interestingly, they even organized conferences and webinars in the past.

His response showed the faculty's deep belief in their institution's quality and in their supportive admissions role. This belief was evidenced when faculty members enrolling their own family members served as a highly credible and honest signal, as

it provided an authentic endorsement that was difficult to fake. Their readiness to call visitors and also offer counseling further highlighted their dedication and involvement. This confirmed direct and indirect influence on prospective students. These people were prominently featured in promotional materials as they collectively host conferences and webinars. These things showcased their expertise, involvement, and the vibrant academic life of their institution. All of these factors contribute to making a strong impression on potential recruits (Sahni et al., 2025; Zainudin et al., 2019).

Further, Mr. Afjal highlighted the faculty's explicit engagement, he said:

Some of our faculty actively participate in career fairs, exhibitions, webinars, and seminars, as well as serve as jury members in competitive events. Further, we provide detailed profiles and achievements of our faculty on our digital platform. Moreover, we publish and print messages from our leaders, faculty, and students.

His response indicated that faculty members actively participate in career fairs, exhibitions, webinars, seminars, and competitive events. This professional involvement in external activities acts as a prestigious signal that reinforces the institution's market position and academic reputation. They also serve as judging panels during these events. As a result, college teams showcase their faculty's professional presence in the external academic and industry environments. He stated that they showcase their people's profiles, achievements, and expertise on the college's digital platform and in print materials to ensure transparency. Moreover, testimonials and messages from their people are shared to create a cohesive voice across all media channels. This approach further reinforces the institution's values and achievements by drawing on information from multiple reputable sources. It guarantees the signaler's honesty and provides the receiver with reliable information to trust the institution (Connelly et al., 2011; Sahni et al., 2025; Tomaszewicz & Barczyk, 2024).

Then, Mr. Jeevan highlighted the faculty's experience. He shared:

Our administrator and counseling team share more about our experienced and stable team of teachers and their unique teaching methods. We highlight that their years of experience and academic quality ensure students receive a consistently high level of education. Sometimes, they themselves participate in those counseling sessions.

He reported that they directly addressed prospective students' concerns about the consistency and quality of education. Furthermore, he ensures that their college shares information about faculty members, including their experience and long-standing association with the college. These signals consistently highlight the institution's stability, instructional quality, and expertise. In this way, HEI leaders emphasize their uniqueness to reassure students. He also revealed that some faculty members volunteered to participate in those counseling sessions. He stated that this action greatly influenced the enrollment decisions of the students he counseled, with this direct expert-led signal having a significant impact (Mahajan & Golahit, 2019; Sahni et al., 2025; Tukur et al., 2019).

In short, it has been identified that the participants often focus on showcasing collective excellence as a consistent and credible signal of success. The faculty and other staff also play an important role in this regard by promoting the institution's achievements through their social networks and involving their families, thereby further enhancing social proof. Their involvement in research and other meetings further enhances academic excellence, making the signals they send seem genuine and trustworthy. This helps ensure that signals are perceived as sincere and reliable.

Overall, college leaders strategically involved their people as signalers to influence enrollment decisions. According to them, strategic faculty positioning was emphasized by showcasing qualifications that serve as credible signals of academic credibility. Furthermore, authentic peer advocacy was achieved when students and alumni served as signalers, whose testimonials reduced information asymmetry. Thus, HEI leaders relied on holistic staff dedication and collective excellence to broadcast consistent, observable signals of institutional quality, effectively shaping the receiver's enrollment decisions.

Process Strategies as Ways to Influence Students' Enrollment Decisions

In higher education, prospective students undergo different processes throughout their admission journey. HEIs' leadership shared that they design, manage, and implement diverse processes to influence admission decisions. These processes function as critical cues that ensure signal consistency and reduce the information asymmetry inherent in the college selection process (Connelly et al., 2011). Such strong process management ensures smooth progression from inquiry through receipt to admissions. Thus, the leaders stressed the strategic blend of online and offline approaches to shape early interactions and enhance enrollment. Then,

leaders report detailed process continuity through structured counseling, entrance exams, payment, and admission to influence enrollment. Later, the college team continues to manage orientation, socialization, and onboarding to support new student integration. Participants stated that the primary edumarketing objective was to provide a positive, influential experience. According to them, achieving this objective required strategic actions covering four specific areas of concern. These areas include the imperative to ensure process transparency and automate service delivery processes. Furthermore, their focus covered the necessity to establish a support framework and manage engagement activities

Ensure Admission Transparency

Participating leaders shared concerns about process design; they sought clarity and accessible information to influence students. From a persuasive communication standpoint, transparent and well-defined processes serve as observable signals of institutional reliability, helping prospective students (receivers) calibrate their trust in the institution (Connelly et al., 2011; Kiss & Kun, 2014). This strategic approach employed smooth sequenced digital procedures, clear internal administrative structures, and systematic applicant review. Consequently, Ms. Aditi advocated a core objective: creating a smooth, hassle-free admission process. She said:

Our focus is on ensuring that our admission process is smooth and hassle-free. That's why there is a straightforward guide on the website regarding inquiry and enrollment. Everything is arranged in sequence, and thereafter, a submission button automatically leads to the next step. This way, there's no ambiguity.

She stated that her college team actively works to eliminate ambiguity in the admission process. Consequently, she highlighted that clear guidelines are designed and implemented systematically from inquiry to admission. She reported that the college website's structure follows an automated, sequential approach to student guidance. In this signaling framework, this automated sequence serves as an indicator of organizational efficiency. This helps to minimize noise or distortion that prospective students might encounter during their inquiries. Such an architectural setup helps steer potential students toward enrollment through an organized, logical sequence. In addition, such an organized sequence helps students navigate the online admission process step by step. She noted that they move one step at a time, from filling out different forms. Finally, she ensured that this digital process removes

confusion and ensures a smooth user experience (Biswakarma & Dhakal, 2023; Harbi & Maqsood, 2022; Ivy, 2008).

She further unfolded her experience and said:

We build trust by clearly sharing our values. Thereafter, prospective students visit our college before enrollment. We review their online submission and assign an administrative team member for a follow-up consultation session. Our administrative structure is also clear and defined for each position. This makes daily work easier. If parents want to ask something, they get answers easily.

According to Ms. Aditi, this strategic approach signifies a highly personalized follow-up for every applicant. She disclosed that it guarantees tailored attention through a consultation with a designated team member after the initial online contact. Additionally, she highlighted a well-structured administrative framework for each staff member. This clear administrative setup signals transparency and honesty from the signaler, offering clear, readily available answers that reassure both guardians and students. This arrangement promotes internal efficiency and external responsiveness, benefiting all stakeholders involved. As a result, the transparency and responsiveness of the administrative structure significantly boost overall stakeholder trust to a high degree. She concluded that this clarity makes daily work easier and provides quick answers to parents (Ivy, 2008; Sahni et al., 2025; Zainudin et al., 2019).

Further, Ms. Sheetal described the admission process as follows: *“We believe in a positive learning environment. Thus, our admission processes are systematic and holistic. We contact each applicant through different communication tools and rigorously evaluate them for their applied program from multiple angles.”*

She stated that her team emphasizes a systematic, holistic evaluation of every applicant. This approach indicates a meticulous, careful process for student selection at the college. In this regard, a rigorous and holistic evaluation signals institutional excellence, indicating that the institution values quality over quantity. She noted that a rigorous assessment from multiple angles is carried out to ensure suitability. This ensures that the student fits well within the existing learning community and its culture. She also revealed that contact with applicants through different communication tools is included in this process. She stated that this engagement process is an integral part of their overall admission strategy. Thus, the team

prioritizes a thorough review to maintain a positive and safe learning environment (Ng & Forbes, 2009; Sahni et al., 2025).

She also detailed a multi-stage admission process and said:

Our team observes their personality and advises them on an appropriate program. All these processes begin with an online application. This is followed by a written test, as per the university's guidelines, to assess academic merit, and then we conduct an interview for entrance pass-out candidates. In this process, we offer scholarships to needy and meritorious students, which has attracted many applicants to enroll in the past.

Ms. Sheetal shared that this explanation highlights a student-centric guidance approach for all the applicants. She stated that they provide guidance on an appropriate program after the first observation of students' personalities. They use scholarship programs for deserving, financially struggling students to send a powerful signal that showcases their instructional value and merit-based reliability. She shared that this scholarship provision is one of HEI leaders' top priorities. She said that including this aspect in the process is the most significant part for them. Furthermore, she emphasized that this approach reinforces the institution's unique value proposition in the market. Consequently, these financial incentives have successfully attracted many applicants to enroll in the recent past (Gurung et al., 2022; Zhou & Alam, 2024).

Mr. Afjal added a well-organized and supportive pre-admission process and revealed: *“We have a well-organized process. We offer free preparation classes before the entrance exam. Furthermore, interested candidates and visitors can easily access information about different programs and application forms.”*

He expressed that his response showcases a firm commitment to reducing entry barriers for students. He noted that this is achieved by offering free preparation classes before the entrance exam. By offering free preparation classes, the institution signals academic support, reducing the receiver's uncertainty and building early trust. He stated that all interested candidates have easy access to program information. He also mentioned that application forms are readily available for all visitors at the college. He further stated that this action streamlines the initial stages of engagement through added convenience. In this scenario, these leaders have noticed that success stories and alumni testimonials play a crucial role in shaping prospective students'

enrollment decisions (Khadka & Acharya, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023; Silwal & Baral, 2021).

In summary, the group highlighted the need for transparent and simple admission processes as honest signals of integrity. They highlighted accessible, well-structured online information for consistency and simple internal organization, for efficiency. Some of the approaches included systematic assessments and support for organized admissions. In general, the group agreed that a transparent, fair process is a major factor in prospective students' enrollment decisions.

Automate Service Delivery

Leaders do more than just admit students; they develop thoughtful operational processes. These programs are designed not only to honor excellence but to assist students in developing over time, both academically and personally. These automated systems and experiential learning pathways act as high-quality signals that showcase the institution's long-term commitment to delivering unobservable educational outcomes. In this line, participants described processes that focus on experiential learning to influence prospective students. Also, they emphasized overall support and preparedness even after graduation as major considerations in their enrollment.

Responding to this question, Mr. Bikash added the following:

If you visit our website, you will see that all the steps of the admission procedure are clearly described. However, the pathway of a student at our institution is not limited to the above-mentioned procedure. It starts long before it, and the connection remains even after their graduation. The entire educational process has been designed to blend theoretical and practical elements. We have emphasized experiential learning.

Mr. Bikash stated that his college's perspective is to invest significantly in long-term student success. In this regard, they were not only taking admission period-focused actions to influence the students. Emphasizing a student journey that extends beyond graduation serves as a reliable signal of institutional stability and commitment to the receiver's career success. He noted that they work regularly to enhance their overall image through consistent service delivery. They designed their educational process by blending theoretical and practical elements to meet market demands. Furthermore, he emphasized experiential learning to assure prospective students of a high-quality education. Thus, this approach signals that the institution values the

entire student journey, not just enrollment (Ivy, 2008; Sahni et al., 2025; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022).

He further highlighted the distinct value proposition and said:

We have established a student-focused research culture. Every student is required to produce a research paper and participate in a real-world study through our Center for Research Excellence. We inform prospective students about this during campus visits, and it is also highlighted on our website.

Mr. Bikash stated that his team shows a strong commitment to a research-focused culture and showcases their academic quality during visits by newcomers for counseling sessions. During these meetings, they discuss their academic standards, which include writing research papers and conducting real-world studies. This is a clear indication of the college's commitment to offering an excellent academic experience. Additionally, they are dedicated to strengthening their academic credentials (Altbach et al., 2009; Elpisah et al., 2023).

Further, Ms. Sheetal added the institution's commitment to support far beyond the classroom, in her words, she said:

We extend our support far beyond the classroom. A student support desk serves as a key for resolving queries. We emphasize that this support system is crucial for student retention and satisfaction from the outset. Our career counseling and career development programs are also highly active.

She revealed that her team established a specific operational process to proactively address students' needs. In this regard, a dedicated student support desk functions as an observable signal of signaler responsiveness and reduces the information asymmetry about student support services. She noted that their administration achieved these service goals by establishing a dedicated student support desk and promptly resolving queries. This assistance helps students achieve satisfaction from the very beginning of their enrollment journey. Further, she added that they actively support the career development programs and showcase their commitment to holistic well-being. Thus, these institutional promises successfully influenced their prospective students' final decision (Ivy, 2008; Sahni et al., 2025; Zainudin et al., 2019).

In this connection, Mr. Dinesh articulated practical learning and stated:

We share with visitors that our core philosophy is practical learning, and we are not limited to books. We use real-world case studies, business simulations,

and guest lecture sessions by industry leaders. There, we share the student experience through vibrant events and a news feed. Moreover, international academic partnerships, industry-focused teaching and learning, and testimonials from different alumni are highlighted.

He said his team focuses more on sharing their practical learning than on textbooks during counseling sessions. They cover discussions with hosting industry leaders, international collaborations, and business simulations for practical experience. These strategies are effective for staying relevant in the market. They also help align career goals and connect students to real-world situations, thereby creating an impression of global opportunities for newcomers. In this context, these leaders have noted that success stories and testimonials from former students can be a major factor in influencing prospective students' enrollment decisions (Khadka & Acharya, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023; Silwal & Baral, 2021).

Mr. Jeevan highlighted the importance of transparency, and he shared his views:

We provide personal interactions and assistance to both students and their families. Then, we issue an offer letter with all financial details to the candidate, and confirm their admission only after the first installment has been paid. For the financial incentives, we have ensured merit-based, need-based, and university guidelines.

He disclosed that his team established a transparent counseling process to provide individualized attention. Issuing detailed offer letters with clear financial breakdowns acts as an honest signal that reduces signal distortion and builds institutional credibility. For this, they focused on their personal meetings with prospective students. Further, he noted that these dedicated support sessions were useful for addressing specific concerns regarding admission procedures. Then, the administrative team discussed each candidate in detail and offered a letter outlining all financial obligations. He also shared that clear communication regarding financial matters promoted transparency. Both parties get free consent on the costs and incentives. In this regard, adhering to university guidelines guaranteed accessibility and fairness throughout the entire enrollment system process. Thus, this structured, automated operational approach built significant trust and effectively influenced students to join (Ivy, 2008; Zainudin et al., 2019).

By emphasizing experiential learning, research cultures, and automated helpdesk services, leaders ensure signal reliability. They use automated methods to deliver a compelling experience that strongly influences new students' enrollment decisions. They highlighted the importance of a student-centered learning approach and a comprehensive support system for each learner as key ways to transmit strong signals. These HEI leaders ensured signal reliability by emphasizing a methodical approach to experiential learning, fostering a research culture, and implementing automated helpdesk services. It was due to these distinct service processes that prospective students gained confidence in the quality of the offerings. Additionally, they stressed that ensuring global readiness and long-term well-being is crucial. Finally, they confirmed that these automated delivery methods significantly impact enrollment decisions.

Establish Support Framework

The management has created a positive campus environment through strategic investments that directly impact enrollment, conveying a message that is clearly understood with minimal confusion. In this regard, Mr. Indra explained his methods as follows:

We crafted the student's journey to be simple and easy to follow. The aim is to ensure that the admissions process is efficient and transparent. For this reason, our website clearly organizes all the information, so that visitors can get step-by-step help.

Mr. Indra disclosed that the goal was to make the student educational journey seamless and transparent. Providing step-by-step guidance on a clear website serves as an observable signal of organizational transparency, addressing the information gap for potential applicants. He noted that their institution prioritized transparency by organizing all website information for easy access. He revealed that the entire process was made efficient and transparent from the first point of contact. Additionally, he stated that a step-by-step guide was provided to help visitors find assistance efficiently. Finally, he said these measures clarified things and made the inquiry process more efficient (Biswakarma & Dhakal, 2023; Harbi & Maqsood, 2022; Ivy, 2008).

He further shared:

We also have a counseling department for guidance. It provides support in career planning and related issues, as well as in personal matters. It is holistic

in nature. By doing this, both students and guardians feel supported and informed. Thus, the application process is easy. For all these, we have also implemented CRM software as well as grievance management in our college.

He stated that they initiated support through a counseling department to address personal needs. The use of CRM software and holistic counseling signals institutional professionalism, ensuring that the signaler's relationship with the receiver is managed consistently. He noted that this department assists students with career planning, academic advising, and personal concerns. He viewed this service as a holistic approach to make students and parents feel informed. He explained that this holistic care helped guardians feel confident in their educational investment choices. Finally, he stated that they implemented CRM software to manage these processes (Ivy, 2008; Riccomini et al., 2021; Sahni et al., 2025).

Mr. Afjal further clarified how his college addressed modern requirements: *“Our digital systems automate registration, confirmation, follow-up, and personalize communication with all students and applicants. In this way, customer relationship management, along with online payment, is made easier for young applicants these days.”*

Their digital systems had successfully automated key administrative processes such as registration, confirmation, follow-ups, and tailored communication with all students. This automation serves as a signal of institutional modernity and efficiency, catering to the digital expectations of the modern receiver. This automation was shared to strengthen CRM and to provide the convenience of online payments. This has made the enrollment process much simpler and faster for the applicants. This highlights the importance of a strategic approach that aims to enhance efficiency and adapt interactions for newcomers' digital convenience (Biswakarma & Dhakal, 2023; Harbi & Maqsood, 2022; Sahni et al., 2025).

He emphasized the significance of website design and user experience. He stated: *“We offer attractive designs as well as front-end layouts that simplify navigation. It is important to note that our optimization techniques result in the loading time of web pages being significantly reduced.”*

His comments highlighted the importance the institution placed on the online identity and online experience. A fast, well-designed website acts as a technical signal of competence, ensuring that the institutional signal is observable and easy to access without distortion. He said the initial objective was to create a visually pleasing,

simple website with easy-to-use navigation. They also work to improve digital interactions and technical features for a smooth, attractive, and fast experience across mobile and browser platforms. The team aims to make the website seamless, appealing, and quick to meet new applicants' expectations (Harbi & Maqsood, 2022; Pokhrel et al., 2018; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022).

In general, participants supported online services and CRM to improve their observability of signals, and they expected greater efficiency and transparency. They indicated that their teams employ various technologies, including interactive websites, to automate enrollment and follow-ups. These efforts show their dedication to streamlining services and minimizing information gaps with modern support systems.

Manage Engagement Activities

HEI leaders oversaw various activities aimed at influencing enrollment. These activities serve as a consistent, visible signal that reinforces the institution's image and reduces uncertainty for the receiver. In this regard, Ms. Aditi elucidated the specific procedures and shared:

Our college has strict rules, and punctuality is expected from students to their parents during admission consultations. So, they feel good. After all, aspiring students and their parents want assurance about the quality and the amount they have to pay. In most cases, they receive satisfaction and pay for the entrance exam at the university.

She disclosed that her team emphasizes their strict discipline to effectively influence parents during counseling sessions. Emphasizing discipline and timeliness acts as a normative signal of academic excellence, thereby reassuring parents of the institution's high standards. She observed that disseminating this information satisfied parents and motivated them to remit fees promptly. She believed that this disciplined methodology fostered confidence among guardians in the quality of education provided (Ivy, 2008; Sahni et al., 2025).

She further elaborated and said:

After the entrance results are announced, most of those who succeeded came to visit our college and get admitted within a few days of the results.

Afterwards, they are invited to participate in a socialization and orientation event, which is generally organized in a banquet hall.

She observed that successful candidates returned promptly to complete their admission formalities after the results were announced. Formal socialization events

and orientation programs serve as frequent signals that promote institutional belonging and reinforce the enrollment decision. She noted these students were quickly invited to a socialization event. Her team hosts these orientation programs in banquet halls to foster a sense of community. She concluded that managing these specific integration events influenced the applicants to finalize their enrollment (Ng & Forbes, 2009; Sahni et al., 2025; Zainudin et al., 2019)

Furthermore, Mr. Bikash unfolded his experience and said:

We share that we have student clubs, a research committee, and masterclasses to develop their skills and professionalism. We regularly invite professors from foreign universities to serve as guest lecturers, sharing their expertise. We proudly share our international exposure and readiness for careers with prospective students.

He revealed their commitment to students' holistic development through various clubs and research committees. Inviting international professors and providing masterclasses serve as prestigious signals that enhance the institution's academic standing. He pointed out that they shared these platforms as an investment in the foundational work of professionalism and skill-building. In addition, he said they promoted the inclusion of international expertise by featuring visiting professors. The effort aimed to increase the college's awareness and engagement with the international community. Another advantage he emphasized was global career readiness, which attracted students who wanted to study abroad (Altbach et al., 2009; Khadka & Acharya, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023).

Ms. Sheetal emphasized proactive industry connections and engaging social events as part of holistic development:

We ensure that visitors understand we proactively connect companies with students for internships and further employment opportunities. We also provide proper digital relationship management with students and all stakeholders. Also, our college organizes camps, tours, and other events. More interestingly, we organize one- or two-day socialization events outside the Kathmandu valley. Thus, we assure our prospective students regarding such events and support.

She emphasized that they proactively connect companies with students to promise necessary future internship opportunities. These proactive industry connections and off-campus socialization events act as observable signals of the

institution's commitment to students' personal and professional growth. She noted that this strategy assures prospective students of distinct employment opportunities following graduation. Furthermore, she highlighted the organization of camps and socialization events to attract students effectively. She shared these experiential activities to assure prospective students of a supportive and fun environment. In this regard, she concluded that these experiential activities influenced students' final enrollment choices (Gurung et al., 2022; Sahni et al., 2025; Silwal & Baral, 2021).

Mr. Dinesh addressed the financial pressure as a key concern. He noted: *“We know that for many families, financial affordability is a big deal. That's why we offer reasonable value to support them through different scholarship facilities for those who excel in both their studies and other activities.”*

He acknowledged the significant financial pressures that prospective students and their families face before admission. Providing scholarships to high-achieving students acts as a meritocratic signal that attracts high-caliber students to the institution. Consequently, his team implemented different specific approaches to ensure education remained accessible to needy applicants. They offer various scholarship programs to support students who excel in both academics and extracurricular activities. They also ensured reasonable fees, in line with their institutional values, to support financial viability. Financial assistance is one of the key attractions that draws prospective students with good merit. Lastly, this financial assistance process has been put in place as part of their student support services (Gurung et al., 2022; Ivy, 2008; Zhou & Alam, 2024).

Mr. Jeevan also emphasized the engagement of current and former students: *“We have shared the success stories of our alumni and their placement globally. We ensure current students' involvement through clubs and community participation in exhibitions and fairs. We also encouraged them in social work and volunteering.”*

He clarified the institution's commitment to ensuring students' overall development and effective global career preparedness. Sharing alumni placement stories and involving current students in community work are reliable signals of institutional impact. His team presented success stories from former students and their diverse global placements. He provided solid proof of the institution's capacity to prepare students for future international careers. Additionally, current student involvement helps strengthen holistic skill development through various clubs and committees. He assured that these engagements improve professionalism and also

promote social responsibility (Ng & Forbes, 2009; Nguyen et al., 2023; Pokhrel et al., 2018).

In conclusion, participants reviewed development and engagement initiatives to send persuasive signals to boost new-student enrollment. They highlighted structured orientation programs, active student clubs, and industry linkages as frequent indicators of community integration and global readiness. They also discussed making education affordable via scholarships for needy students as a merit-based signal. Overall, leaders managed these experiences to influence decisions effectively.

Overall, HEI leadership carefully designed and managed the student academic journey to improve operational efficiency and streamline processes, ensuring signal consistency. In this approach, implementing transparent admission systems and student-centric learning models reduces information asymmetry for prospective students. Further, they implemented initiatives to promote students' overall development. Their strategic investment in digital services improved their admissions processes and ensured that institutional signals were communicated clearly and persuasively. Therefore, leaders adopted a hybrid model to influence students during the admission process.

Physical Evidence Strategies as Ways to Influence Students' Enrollment Decisions

HEI leaders proudly defined physical evidence as the tangible cues and environmental elements encountered by prospective students. They highlighted the inclusion of both offline and online realms through their outstanding institutional quality, image, and offerings. By demonstrating modern infrastructure and online spaces, leaders provide observable evidence of quality to overcome information asymmetry. Hence, they willingly highlighted the significant investments made to build modern infrastructure to attract their beloved prospective students. The theme revolved around strategies that included showcasing modern infrastructure, improving campus accessibility, building an online presence, and establishing a brand image.

Showcasing Modern Facilities

Leaders passionately showcased their buildings, labs, libraries, and facilities to influence prospective students' enrollment decisions. From a persuasive communication standpoint, showcasing modern facilities reduces information

asymmetry by providing recipients with concrete evidence of academic excellence. Ms. Aditi stated that recent investments had a significant impact. She said:

We have invested heavily in our facilities over recent years. We built IT, science, and finance labs and opened a digital library featuring books, journals, and our media database, compiled during various events. We also regularly post photos and videos of these on our digital platforms.

Her statement disclosed that the institution had made strategic investments in digital initiatives to enhance student experiences. Her team reinforces the academic environment through significant investment in facilities and essential resources. Investing in advanced laboratory facilities functions as a costly signal, as it showcases institutional caliber and honesty to the receiver (Connelly et al., 2011; Nguyen et al., 2023). They celebrated the construction of modern facilities, including advanced IT, science, and finance laboratories. They noticed a strategic approach to connect traditional content management and digital media. They also created an online library of books, journals, and databases from various programs and uploaded images and videos to encourage their use (Biswakarma & Dhakal, 2023; Ng & Forbes, 2009).

Mr. Bikash emphasized their guided approach to showcasing facilities and mentioned:

During conversations with newcomers, we share our affiliations with foreign universities and also organize campus visits to showcase our buildings, labs, playing stations, and many other facilities. These guided explorations with our team members and current students allow prospective students to experience our vibrant environment firsthand.

He shared their strategic plan to attract students by showcasing facilities that meet international standards during visits. Furthermore, current students lead guided tours, offering visitors an authentic campus experience. These tours enable new students to understand campus life effectively and ensure they receive clear, welcoming signals. They also highlighted their collaborations with prestigious foreign universities. They highlight this as the institution's strong global ties and impressive facilities. Overall, these efforts create a welcoming and positive impression that genuinely connects with visitors (Ng & Forbes, 2009; Pokhrel et al., 2018).

Ms. Sheetal happily shared how they showcase their facilities to attract their target audience. She revealed:

We engage with the community as well. We often provide space for talks on local development. Besides these, our website features a digital library with a media gallery, an academic journal, and other resources. This is how we clearly show our strong focus on research and innovation and showcase our state-of-the-art facilities.

She showed how their strategy was integrated by connecting student engagement programs and activities with active and vibrant community engagement. The college participated in social activities, such as discussions on local development, to foster stronger community connections by providing access to its facilities. This combination with digital resources highlights institutional innovation aimed at enhancing affordability and showcasing their strengths. They showcased digital features on the college website, including media galleries, journals, and a library. These resources impacted prospective students by emphasizing research and innovation through digital transparency (Biswakarma & Dhakal, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023).

Mr. Indra highlighted the brand recognition and solid physical evidence of marketing advantages. He noted:

Our college is a well-known name and brand over the years. We have a prime location, accessible to all, thus attracting students from all over the city. Our premises are clean and well-organized. There are state-of-the-art labs for IT and other fields. We also have an extensive library, along with a digital library and journals. We also feature web galleries and virtual tours.

He shared that they showcased their college's branding and infrastructure as key initiatives for prospective students during their visit. He mentioned that the college has gained recognition and respect in recent years. A prime location, combined with state-of-the-art facilities, signals institutional prestige and stability. The campus is situated in a prime location and attracts a diverse group of students from various backgrounds. He mentioned their focus on cleanliness, organization, modern infrastructure, and specialized IT labs, which are designed to influence enrollment decisions. A full-fledged library with access to a vast number of electronically stored journals supports the academic foundation. His team intends to develop its infrastructure to impress visitors. Additionally, online galleries and virtual tours highlight the college's quality and vibrancy (Ng & Forbes, 2009; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022).

Mr. Jeevan presented a student-centered plan to enhance satisfaction. He stated:

Prospective students felt really happy after viewing our well-kept hostels, convenient transportation, inviting cafeteria, and our modern learning spaces designed with students in mind. Our classrooms are bright, and there is no need for electricity during daylight hours. All classrooms are designed to naturally provide fresh air. We have planted trees and created a garden for visual rest, along with sports facilities.

He outlined a campus facilities approach to achieve student satisfaction. They prioritized hostels, transport, and cafeteria services to improve student comfort. Designing bright, naturally ventilated classrooms sends a subtle signal of student well-being and environmental quality. These contributed to the development of a well-maintained contemporary learning environment. Moreover, he stressed the accessibility of sports facilities, gardens, and plantations to enhance visual attractiveness and promote relaxation. His team considers the physical setting and student well-being essential to attracting new students. He stated that the infrastructure is carefully designed to meet students' daily needs and ensure comfort. These exemplary facilities were presented as the primary attractions of the institution for prospective students (Pokhrel et al., 2018; Zainudin et al., 2019).

HEI leaders utilized the campus infrastructure as a visible sign of institutional quality to influence enrollment. The team emphasized recent developments in the IT, science, and finance labs, as well as in library facilities. Leaders organized campus tours to reduce student uncertainty through direct physical observation, thereby strengthening signal honesty (Connelly et al., 2011; Zainudin et al., 2019). The team noted that guided tours give students a firsthand experience of the institutional environment. Leaders broadened the digital footprint by incorporating online galleries and academic journals to support in-person visits. These virtual platforms underscored the college's commitment to maintaining a modern, accessible educational environment.

Highlighting Campus Accessibility

The leaders of HEI emphasized the importance of accessibility in attracting prospective students. They pointed out that the presence of nearby facilities, such as hospitals, banks, and stores, is an important factor in attracting students because they are accessible. Ms. Aditi shared her team's efforts in this area and then stated:

One of our main strengths is our location. We are situated in the heart of the city, close to a major road and easily reachable by both private vehicles and public transit. This helps ensure everyone feels comfortable and at ease during counseling sessions.

She revealed that her college is located in the city center for easy access. Her team proudly highlights this strategic location as a main attraction. High accessibility serves as a functional signal that ensures ease of contact for the receiver during enrollment. They reported that parents and students are satisfied with the counseling sessions due to their convenient accessibility. She emphasized the importance of informing people about the availability of essential facilities, such as hospitals and banks. Her team noted that college accessibility is a key factor influencing enrollment decisions (Pokhrel et al., 2018; Zainudin et al., 2019).

Mr. Bikash leveraged the institution's heritage as a key selling point to impress potential applicants:

We have our own land and building in this core area of the city. Our identity is that we are one of the pioneers in starting a business program and a well-known college with a strong sense of heritage and reliability. This is our history, and we have always connected to our messages.

He said that his institution's strategy is to bank on its heritage and credibility to attract students. They also revealed that their institution owns the land and the structure, and is located in a prime area. Ownership of physical assets and historical heritage serves as an honest signal of long-term reliability. He introduced his college as one of the first to offer a business program. They continually work to incorporate this historical identity into their messaging to prospective students. His team is actively utilizing online platforms to communicate these offline strategies and improve value delivery (Shrestha & Khadka, 2022; Zainudin et al., 2019).

Ms. Sheetal highlighted the strategic location as a key advantage in the competitive educational market. She said:

Our physical campus is in a central educational hub in Kathmandu. We consistently highlight this as a key strength, enabling us to reach and access our location with greater ease. Further, we have also featured a virtual tour on our college website. We request visitors to experience our modern buildings and facilities from their own devices. Furthermore, our media team ensures to cover facilities through daily posts and events.

She promoted geographic advantage as a strength and noted easy access as a practical advantage. Virtual tours enhance signal observability by allowing prospective students to experience the physical environment remotely. This established location became a key part of the institution's strategy to attract and retain students. She proudly announced that her campus is located in Kathmandu's educational hub. She also mentioned that their team has added a virtual tour feature to the college website for visitors. This initiative gave visitors a way to experience the modern building from their own devices. She reported that the media team ensured the facilities were covered daily (Ng & Forbes, 2009; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022; Zainudin et al., 2019).

Furthermore, Mr. Indra highlighted the importance of brand and location convenience to attract students. He noted:

Our college has emerged as a reputable institution and brand in recent years. Furthermore, we are located in a very convenient and accessible area, which attracts students from all over the city. Our premises are clean and organized. We have state-of-the-art labs for IT and other fields. Additionally, we have an extensive library and digital journal archives. We also feature photo galleries and virtual tours.

He outlined specific strategies to highlight the convenience by emphasizing the college's well-known brand identity and its campus. His team used electronic library systems and journals as central strategies to illustrate academic rigor and modernization, ensuring signal reliability. His team promoted the availability of advanced technical laboratories and a comprehensive library to showcase a high-quality learning environment to prospective students. He also mentioned that their team relied on electronic library systems and journals as central strategies to illustrate academic rigor and modernization. Furthermore, he provided simulated campus walkthroughs to create a more inclusive and accessible experience for everyone to experience the modern campus facilities. His administration was responsible for enhancing the institution's image and creating a welcoming environment (Ng & Forbes, 2009; Pokhrel et al., 2018; Zainudin et al., 2019).

Participants noted the college's central city location as a key recruitment advantage. Their team noted that this easy arrival made the college more attractive to students seeking better local institutional connectivity. They reported that convenient on-site reach and simulated walkthroughs helped build institutional trust through

observable quality (Shrestha & Khadka, 2022; Zainudin et al., 2019). Their team emphasized that the college's history, reputation, stability, and dedication to achieving all goals enhanced the institution's overall academic credibility. Overall, they agreed that institutional reach was a key part of their recruitment efforts to leave a lasting, very positive impression.

Exhibiting Digital Presence

HEI leaders used digital platforms to showcase their facilities. Ms. Aditi spoke openly about this topic to engage a broader audience. She stated: *“We have virtual tours of campus premises and facilities on our website. These allow aspiring students from across the state to explore our state-of-the-art facilities. These virtual tours offer an immersive experience to the surfer.”*

She emphasized satisfying curiosity and gaining trust before campus visits through more immersive virtual tours. Virtual engagement minimizes the information gap by providing a high-quality immersive experience. These provided a holistic experience. They maximized engagement during the early stages through innovation and transparency. She stressed that virtual engagement was essential for attracting students on this specific day. They provided interactive virtual tours with innovative technology to recreate campus experiences. She believed that early trust-built enrollment and positive relationships. Her team regularly updated virtual content to mirror campus developments and made virtual engagement essential for marketing and recruitment. They monitored tour effectiveness and maintained contact with prospective students to improve the experience and tools (Ng & Forbes, 2009; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022).

In addition, Ms. Sheetal advocated for virtual tours as the best way to show off their facilities. She stated: *“We have also featured a detailed and engaging virtual tour on our college website. We request all prospective visitors to experience our modern buildings and excellent facilities from their own devices.”*

She mentioned that her college took a proactive approach by increasing student engagement through different digital communication channels. Promoting immersive campus experiences through electronic devices allows for transparent communication of unobservable quality. Her team promoted immersive campus experiences by allowing visitors to access detailed walkthroughs through their own personal electronic devices. This strategic effort showcased the institution's commitment to technological progress and maintained a very high level of transparent

communication. They were also involved in improving their online presence to align with the increasing reliance on online information sources by prospective students. Her group helped to foster a clear and positive perception of the college using these contemporary approaches (Biswakarma & Dhakal, 2023; Connelly et al., 2011; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022; Zainudin et al., 2019).

Mr. Afjal shared their digital approach to showcase impressive facilities, and said:

We have a gallery on our website to showcase facilities. Further, some of our influencers use our premises for their content and promote our college offerings. We too have virtual tours of our college. Further, our team manages the quality and aesthetic attractiveness of the website and online platform.

He revealed that his institution consistently prioritized providing prospective students with a comprehensive experience. Other collaborations with influencers and ensuring aesthetic appeal on online platforms increase signal visibility. Their approach was based on digital projects and a web gallery to showcase all physical facilities. Additionally, some social influencers were engaged to promote the campus by creating virtual tours for their content. Therefore, his team regularly highlighted the need to maintain the website's quality and visual appeal. This initiative reflected the institution's strong commitment to a technology-oriented, transparent communication system for students (Ng & Forbes, 2009; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022; Zainudin et al., 2019).

HEI leaders widely utilized different online platforms. They showcase their physical structures and institutional achievements to large audiences across a wide area. Their team organized virtual campus tours as the main activities to allow prospective students to engage with the modern educational context. Their team arranged campus virtual tours and online galleries as main activities. This also allowed prospective students to engage with the modern educational context. They used social media and achievement banners to enhance exhibitions and create authentic content that influences many students' enrollment decisions. Additionally, they believe that regularly monitoring aesthetic standards and the institution's visual appeal is crucial for maintaining a robust online presence and achieving institutional objectives.

Reinforcing Brand Image

Participants noted that branding, visual aids, and collaborations enhanced the institution's image and appeal to prospective students. Ms. Aditi highlighted the importance of key collaborations in promoting facility development and attracting students. She stated:

We value meaningful and innovative collaboration through agreements with our neighboring colleges for partnership. This allows us to utilize more facilities, including futsal facilities, at partner colleges. This also makes it easier for our students to participate in sports and cultural events. We enjoy the use of a large playground and auditorium, which we share with prospective students and their parents.

She disclosed a collaborative leadership approach with nearby colleges to expand access to different physical facilities. Resource sharing with neighboring colleges serves as a collaborative signal that expands the institution's perceived capacity. As she mentioned, her team aimed to increase student participation in different sports by sharing resources with neighboring institutions. They provided shared access to the sports ground and the auditorium for prospective students to explore their interests during their visits. This effort was incorporated into a holistic plan intended to improve the student experience using transparent and effective management (Ng & Forbes, 2009; Zainudin et al., 2019).

She further stressed the collaborative facilities to highlight the additional benefits available to their students. She stated: *In our message, we share this as our extended facilities. This has given our students the opportunity to access a broader range of experiences and resources. This is a win-win situation for everyone.*

The leadership clearly confirmed and validated their approach towards improving the availability of the facilities to benefit their students. Sharing extended facilities through institutional messages ensures that the receiver interprets the institution as having a resource-rich environment. She explained that the facilities gained through the collaboration had been shared with prospective students via messages. This approach has enabled the students to access more experiences and resources that are essential for development (Ng & Forbes, 2009; Zainudin et al., 2019).

Mr. Dinesh affirmed a commitment to a modern and high-quality environment within the college premises, and he shared that: *"We ensure that our college premises*

have a modern and high-quality environment. There are facilities like advanced labs, a cafeteria, and libraries. All of these support a well-rounded student life.”

He pointed to the vast opportunities that the students had and the modern facilities that were simply the best. Showcasing physical assets as tangible proof of a positive environment creates a strong signal of academic caliber. He was also happy to note that such facilities had contributed immensely to campus life. His team ensured these physical assets served as tangible proof of the positive environment they fostered. It painted a warm picture of a supportive, enriching, and lively learning and living space (Ng & Forbes, 2009; Pokhrel et al., 2018; Zainudin et al., 2019).

Mr. Indra highlighted the strategic use of visual cues to reinforce achievements and environmental quality. He stated: *“You have already seen banners showcasing our achievements from the parking area to the office in between alley. These give visitors an authentic glimpse of the high-quality environment they will experience during their studies.”*

He revealed that his institution boosted visitor engagement by strategically positioning achievement banners across the campus, including one in the parking lot featuring a success story. Tactically positioned banners serve as frequent signals that reinforce institutional achievements throughout the signaling environment. He mentioned that these banners were carefully crafted to create an authentic campus vibe. The visuals projected a sense of class and excellence and, as such, were quite influential in shaping prospective students' impressions. The method has been quite effective in conveying the impression of the quality and reliability exuded through real visuals, serving as an unremarkable ambassador for the institution (Ng & Forbes, 2009; Zainudin et al., 2019).

The excellent infrastructure facilities and learning environment of the college will be highlighted by Mr. Afjal, he stated:

We present our outstanding infrastructure and share our quality learning environment. We invite all interested students to visit our college and take a guided tour of our facilities. Our lab has internet access through a Wi-Fi facility, the library is well-stocked with books for all programs, and our canteen maintains a hygienic environment.

He revealed his institution's core strategy, which focused on showcasing outstanding physical infrastructure. Invitations to guided tours ensure that the signals of institutional quality are personally verified by the receiver, reducing information

asymmetry. Accordingly, all interested students received a formal invitation to a guided tour of the facilities. They were provided with a guided tour of all facilities, including the library and a clean canteen. The Wi-Fi internet access available in the laboratory was specifically prioritized for student use. This process was viewed as a strategic effort expressing the institution's commitment to student welfare (Ng & Forbes, 2009; Pokhrel et al., 2018).

They also pointed out that they utilize their facilities as signals to attract visitors and influence decisions. By allocating resources to improve facilities and state-of-the-art labs, leaders send a strong message about the institution's quality. Furthermore, they showcased that they allocated resources to infrastructure improvements, increased accessibility, and the development of sophisticated laboratories. Additionally, they adopted a collaborative approach with neighboring institutions, creating resource-rich environments. They offered guided tours both in person and virtually. In addition, there were mentions of investments in their online presence to promote their tangible assets, in partnership with social media influencers, and in maintaining reputable online platforms and web galleries.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides evidence of the edumarketing approach used by HEI managers to reach potential students. It has been categorized into four elements: promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. In this context, these edumarketing strategies were interpreted as intentional signals used to reduce information asymmetry. The promotion theme included digital engagement, tailored communications, strong value propositions, and analytics-based promotion refinement. Next, the people strategies involved faculty positioning, peer advocacy, staff commitment, and collective excellence. The process theme focused on transparent admissions, automation, support frameworks, and engagement management as important considerations in enrollment decisions. Finally, this chapter revealed how physical evidence factors such as facilities, accessibility, digital presence, and branding influenced students' decisions.

CHAPTER V

KEY INSIGHTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter highlights key insights from HEI leaders' shared experiences with edumarketing strategies they used to influence prospective students' enrollment decisions through a signaling theory lens (Connelly et al., 2011), explaining how these strategies function as persuasive communication processes. The interpretation is organized around four main themes: promotional, people, process, and physical-evidence strategies. Adopting a social constructivist perspective, this analysis views edumarketing as a complex social reality formed by leaders' interactions. Moreover, it incorporates my values as a business faculty member and draws on insider knowledge to reveal the realities of leadership.

Influential Strategies Through Promotional Tools

Virtual platforms have become essential tools for institutional leaders seeking to build a strong presence in today's educational market. In the context of signaling theory, developing social media as an engaging space for building personal relationships is a strategic way to broadcast signals and reduce information asymmetry between the college and the student. They have turned social media from just a means of sharing information into a platform for personal interaction. Collected perspectives from participating leaders suggest that highlighting personal connections online makes it easier to project a friendly institutional image. According to Mazurek et al. (2019), it is key for such individuals to be active online to meet the expectations of digital natives who value authenticity. For this reason, I often see videos of college leaders on Facebook and TikTok that showcase digital engagement. It is evident that HEIs are actively using social media platforms and content to build their brands and engage their target audiences (Mazurek et al., 2019; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022). By sharing these specific details, leaders ensure signal observability, making the unobservable quality of their institution more apparent to the receiver (Kiss & Kun, 2014). I remember once watching a live event on TikTok where the principal of one such college described the objective of their institution as remaining focused on shaping students' futures, which many young minds can relate to. Moreover, contemporary leadership in educational institutions is making the most of social media platforms to promote college culture and students' success stories, rather than

relying solely on conventional marketing. All these showcase how the college is not only an institution for learning but a living, participating community.

Moreover, personalized communication is further strengthened through the use of instant messaging services and market management. This direct interaction serves as a high-quality signal that provides immediate feedback, thereby reducing students' uncertainty about institutional offerings. This type of communication is a major motivator for higher enrollments (Biswakarma & Dhakal, 2023; Connelly et al., 2011). During my field observations, I saw edumarketing in action as some members of the digital team addressed students' leads. This rapid, around-the-clock responsiveness is just one aspect of the personal attention given to students, which can create an emotional bond that can turn enrollment decisions. As Kiss and Kun (2014) show, the efficacy of edumarketing in Nepal depends on the specificity of the information shared rather than generic advertisements, because highly specific information serves as a more reliable signal of quality. In addition, Harbi and Maqsood (2022) note that using analytical tools such as Google Analytics enables management to refine their communication efforts to a high level. This data-driven approach allows signalers to monitor signal frequency and adjust their messages based on the receiver's digital behaviors to ensure signal fit. This analytical approach not only ensures that messages reach the intended target groups but also further strengthens asset allocation by reducing unnecessary advertising costs. In this connection, recent studies acknowledge that HEIs increasingly rely on paid digital features, including targeted advertisements, to enhance their visibility and engagement (Baliyan & Mokoena, 2024; Harbi & Maqsood, 2022; Zhuchkova et al., 2023). Ultimately, the practical value of this strategy was highlighted by a participant who used Facebook Pixel data to drive higher conversion rates, demonstrating that modern enrollment efforts are now built around applicants' specific digital behaviors.

Effective digital management relies on maintaining consistent content schedules and operational efficiency. This consistency across platforms prevents distortion and helps prospective students (signal receivers) accurately assess the quality (Connelly et al., 2011) from their own locations, particularly following the pandemic-restricted period (Khanal, 2025). During college visits, I noticed that the marketing team's physical calendar appears inconsistent with its virtual calendar activities. These college leaders ensure that the virtual impression lacks neither depth nor the actual quality offered by the institution. With the advancement of college

journals, research, and a vibrant college life, they have closed the gap between academic excellence and relationship-building marketing. According to Obasuyi (2025), educational signals serve as evidence of potential productivity, informing the receiver of the institution's strategic efficacy. As a result, the institution's overall virtual management helps strengthen its credibility by providing a holistic view of student life. In doing so, it effectively serves prospective candidates seeking a balanced, reputable educational environment for their future studies. This implies that institutional leaders target messages to sway decisions by tailoring communication to engage prospective students in impactful ways (Altbach et al., 2009; Harbi & Maqsood, 2022; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022).

Influential Strategies Through People Engagement

Institutional leaders recognize people as the organization's greatest asset because they create a unique identity and impression in the market. From a persuasive communication standpoint, faculty and staff act as primary signalers whose expertise and behavior communicate the institution's honesty and reliability to the prospective students (Connelly et al., 2011). Zainudin et al. (2019) emphasize that these leaders paint a picture of a secure educational future in students' minds by showcasing the profiles of their experienced professors. At that time, I observed that college principals engaged in counseling to boost enrollment, which constituted an exemplary instance of leadership participation. When the top-level management participates directly, it sends a prestigious signal that strengthens the institution's dedication to student success (Obasuyi, 2025). Observing leadership and counseling personnel serving tea to students and planning in the counseling room further indicates a sense of belonging to the institution. According to Khadka and Acharya (2023), the internal cohesion, coordination, and collaboration of the academic staff are crucial to expanding the institution's influence. The combined efforts of the whole team, from administration to faculty, toward a single aim make the environment dynamic, which is a positive signal to the outside. I would not dispute the importance of this human factor, which is the basis for the capital required for student development. The management looks upon it as the foundation for support.

Partnership activities with former students and current student clubs are also key to building a credible, trustworthy institutional image. Testimonials from alumni function as reliable signals of unobservable quality because they provide authentic proof of the institution's success in the labor market (Kiss & Kun, 2014; Obasuyi,

2025). Pokhrel et al. (2018) observe that prospective students trust the experiences of their peers or seniors more than traditional advertisements. Therefore, I have witnessed a student who graduated a few months ago actively taking a newbie to the college corridors. This depicts the individual's capacity to demonstrate a deep sense of love for the institution when mentoring juniors. These collaborative activities with alumni networks keep the institution's success story alive and boost the confidence of prospective students. Furthermore, extracurricular activities organized by various student clubs showcase the college's lively atmosphere, which attracts new students. By leveraging these authentic peer voices, leaders facilitate countersignals that confirm institutional claims and reduce information asymmetry. In this respect, leadership has implemented a community-based, transparent marketing approach by involving students as important partners in marketing the institution. By staff and faculty members sharing such events on their personal social media platforms, they can increase the institution's credibility in the true sense.

Leaders also recognize faculty members as the main conduits of information, as students often rely heavily on teachers' personal recommendations. Faculty qualifications and professional achievements serve as hard-to-fake signals of academic caliber, ensuring signaler honesty in a competitive environment (Connelly et al., 2011). In my professional experience, I have also observed that students make enrollment decisions more quickly and confidently based on these suggestions. When faculty members and counselors help students resolve career-related dilemmas, they foster a sense of emotional attachment to the institution. This indicates that leaders have strategically valued human networks to ensure that word of mouth is rooted in genuine excellence. In some colleges I have visited, current students themselves take responsibility for guiding prospective students during campus visits and answering questions. I learned from discussions with leaders that staff members recommending their own institution to family members serves as a strong endorsement of its quality. Such personal endorsements act as the most credible signals because the signaler incurs a high social cost if the information is dishonest (Kiss & Kun, 2014). Such collective accountability not only builds trust between the institution and students but also elevates the institution's reputation as an educational leader. The tradition of the entire team celebrating mutual accomplishments has fostered a strong family-like atmosphere within the institution. The professionalism and commitment of

faculty, staff, and alumni members form a strong basis for continuous improvement and steady enrollment.

Influential Strategies Through Process Management

A student-friendly administration and efficient processes are the keys to successful enrollment. In edumarketing, an open and efficient enrollment process is a signal of reliability, helping applicants assess the quality of the college's organization. Efficient processes and simple procedures are the foundation of successful admission. In this context, Ng and Forbes (2009) suggest that when leaders present the admission process as helpful and welcoming, it positively impacts the institution's reputation. I have personally observed students and parents who came to enroll after passing the entrance exam smiling as they quickly completed their paperwork. Their positive reaction shows that a transparent application process significantly reassures new students about the institution's organized approach. By ensuring process transparency, leaders minimize the noise and distortion that often occur when new students encounter complex bureaucracies. Moreover, leaders emphasize that online admission guides and applications have made the process much easier for students from distant locations to join the learning society. Through transparency, parents can understand fees and services, which builds confidence.

Technological advancements, such as CRM software, have started a culture of modernization, where the needs of every learner are met individually. Automating service delivery ensures signal consistency, enabling the institution to communicate a unified, professional message across all student touchpoints (Kiss & Kun, 2014). According to Harbi and Maqsood (2022), the technological aids introduced at the institution not only facilitate administrative tasks but also enhance the institution's capacity to meet students' requirements. During interactions with leaders, I observed that the administrative team often handles visits and counseling independently, which has improved efficiency. This streamlined process reduces information asymmetry by providing prospective students with timely, accurate data on their enrollment status. They leverage these technology systems to ensure that college information and results are delivered to students and their parents instantly. This is a showcase of the process efficiency. Documenting students' interests and educational backgrounds using software has made it easier for leadership to guide and plan for the future. Such technological transformation has met the expectations of modern students and helped position the institution as a dynamic organization in the market. This administrative

effectiveness not only exemplifies the institution's academic integrity but also encourages more students to enroll in the college.

Leaders consider orientation and socialization programs vital strategic tools for building long-term relationships within the scholarly community. Engagement activities serve as continuous signals that reinforce the enrollment process and build loyalty from the very start (Obasuyi, 2025). Silwal and Baral (2021) note that these post-enrollment processes help students adjust to college life and plan their futures. I have attended orientation events for new students at some colleges, where student enthusiasm was remarkable. Recently, they have increased the tendency to make orientation programs one or two days long, include educational games at different locations, and hold personality development sessions. These programs inform students of policies and conduct at the colleges while giving them a sense of being an integral component of this higher education environment. According to Kiss and Kun (2014), providing such specific and immersive experiences poses less risk for high-quality institutions and signals that weaker competitors cannot easily replicate. This move by the leaders of these institutions fulfills the need for balance that these students have made known. Moreover, inclusive recruitment processes are achieved by bettering institutional processes that cater to different student groups. I once interacted with another fellow at an orientation program who had just returned from working abroad to study there, feeling extremely satisfied with the college's dynamic institutional recruitment process. This proves that the leadership has been quite successful at including lifelong learners right alongside traditional learners. All the efforts put into improving the offer and making this whole process flawless have placed this institution at a distinct advantage in this fiercely competitive marketplace. At the end of it all, leadership recognizes this institutional recruitment process as just the beginning of a student's entire educational experience.

Influential Strategies by Showcasing Physical Evidence

Physical facilities serve as a visual mirror of institutional quality and have an immediate impact on parents and students. High-quality infrastructure sends a costly signal because it is very expensive and cannot be afforded by low-quality institutions, making it a credible signal of institutional excellence (Connelly et al., 2011; Kiss & Kun, 2014). Zainudin et al. (2019) find that displaying modern laboratories and classrooms equipped with technology provides prospective students with strong evidence of academic seriousness. I noticed that leaders tend to highlight their

strengths to showcase strategic asset utilization. Simply keeping these facilities as clean and modern helps leave a positive impression on visitors. They use these areas for strategic communication and branding, which helps create a unique identity. Visible signals, backed by tangible evidence, help reduce information gaps, leading students to form realistic expectations (Obasuyi, 2025). The presence of state-of-the-art labs and smart classrooms helps build pride and reassure students that they are getting the best education in their own backyard. In this manner, physical evidence clearly reflects academic excellence and stability for individuals seeking a reputable institution to study at.

The leaders highlight accessibility and location as vital for convenience and safety, with a prime location indicating ease of contact and visibility (Kiss & Kun, 2014). In this context, parents consider prime locations near them as trustworthy indicators (Khanal, 2025). For students from distant areas who cannot visit the campus in person, these leaders have organized virtual tours that offer an authentic college experience from home. This digital presence ensures signal observability, enabling the institution to showcase its physical quality to a broader audience without geographic limitations. This combination of online and offline access has greatly helped students choose an institution and explore its educational environment. The availability of transportation and campus safety create an environment where parents feel comfortable sending their children to college.

Moreover, by combining physical presence with online access, the leadership has effectively made the institution feel more approachable to prospective students who might otherwise see a gap. Visual cues such as college signage serve as constant signals of achievement, reinforcing the institution's success within its signaling environment. Additionally, successful photographs displayed on walls and signboards communicate institutional accomplishments more effectively than simple advertisements (Connelly et al., 2011; Safaat & Manafe, 2023). I also observed that seeing a large photo of a top student and their achievements right at the entrance naturally increases respect for the institution. This strategic management of the physical environment provides a clear and impactful image of the colleges' intangible promises. Obasuyi (2025) argues that the attractiveness of a signal depends on its level of honesty and the cost of the signal. I heard a student complain about the lack of a playground, and a coordinator reassured them by pointing out that they already had a land lease agreement. Even if such improvements are not immediately visible,

they show how leaders handle physical scarcity through effective communication. The majority of leaders focus on improving the physical learning environment as a strategy to enhance their value and create an exceptional learning experience for all their learners. This is an informed decision on the students' part, since the institution's appearance and prestige convey academic excellence.

Knowledge Contribution

The proposed research makes an original contribution to the existing body of knowledge in educational management by presenting a complex, social-constructivist understanding of how Higher Education Institution (HEI) leaders construct influence through edumarketing activities. This research transcends transactional marketing approaches, which tend to regard prospective students as passive objects, and presents edumarketing as an active site for reality construction by leaders within an institution. This study specifically contributes to the field by operationalizing Signaling Theory (Connelly et al., 2011) to explain how HEI leaders intentionally encode quality signals to influence receiver interpretation in an information-asymmetric market. This research adds to the theoretical body of knowledge by illustrating that leaders' marketing activities are not administrative duties but are deeply rooted in the social construction of the institution's identity and value in a competitive marketplace (Ivy, 2008; Khanal, 2025). This proposed research, in terms of methodology, presents an insider-practitioner perspective and employs a qualitative approach to understand the tacit knowledge and meanings that leaders assign to their communications.

In terms of application, this research frames the resulting framework as a strategic signaling system that helps leaders manage institutional credibility through a holistic model of influence. This proposed research, with its emphasis on the HEI perspective rather than the conventional perspective, which focuses on students, reveals the internal workings of power and narratives in an institution, which underpin edumarketing, thereby filling an existing void in the body of knowledge for interpretive studies in educational management (Zainudin et al., 2019; Zhou & Alam, 2024). In terms of application, HEI leaders can benefit from the study's findings by deconstructing specific edumarketing processes that shape potential students' perceptions within the socially constructed world. As a lecturer in business, I have, in the professional realm, held a set of beliefs about the subject that have focused on academic and market relevance. These beliefs have proved an essential reflexive tool

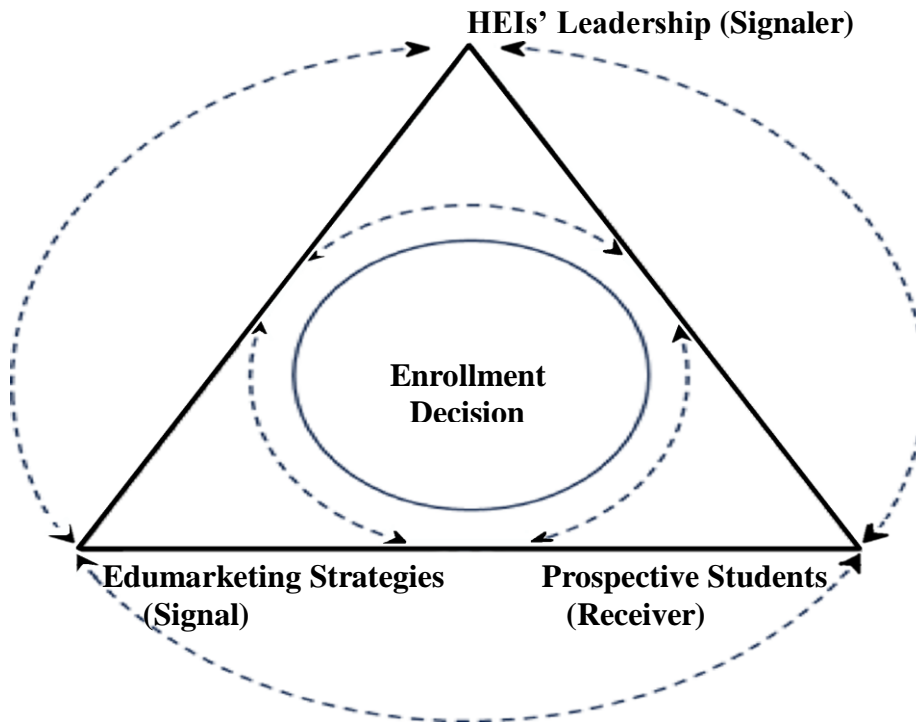
throughout the analysis. This has provided interpretive insight into leaders' practice, bridging the gap between the principles of the marketplace and the HEI code of practice. The results are not merely theoretical; they translate directly into practical application. Leaders can then tailor their marketing strategy to be perceived as far more pertinent to the collective reality of their professional world (Biswakarma & Dhakal, 2023; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022). As I position myself within the business community, its research provides a genuine and clear exploration of how edumarketing is practiced in contemporary institutions.

Triadic Educational Marketing Promotion Triangle (TEMPT)

The Triadic Educational Marketing Promotion Triangle (TEMPT) is proposed as an original and significant contribution to the knowledge of educational leadership and management in Nepal. The model focuses on three important angles that represent the framework of an effective persuasive communication system in higher education. The first angle is 'HEIs' Leadership', acting as the 'Signaler' responsible for encoding institutional values, academic quality, and instructional excellence into meaningful messages. The second angle denotes the 'Edumarketing Strategies' carried out by leadership; these strategies cover the focused 4Ps of promotion, people, process, and physical evidence, which function as the institutional 'signal'. The third angle shows 'prospective students' as the 'receiver' in the process of interpreting the visible signals in accordance with their varying goals. At the apex of this triangular diagram, the 'enrollment decision' has been placed as the point at which the intention of the leaders and the interpretation by the prospective students intersect. In addition, the diagram includes inner and outer curved arrows that highlight the dynamic nature of the signaling process in edumarketing. The arrows emphasize that edumarketing is not an isolated or linear process but an ongoing, feedback-driven process in an ever-changing environment between the college and its potential stakeholders.

Figure 2

Triadic Educational Marketing Promotion Triangle (TEMPT)



This framework embodies the fundamental principles that underlie signaling theory, as explicated by Connelly et al. (2011). These tenets have been modified to meet the specific

challenges and demands of edumarketing in the Nepali higher education market. The use of both inner and outer two-way curvy arrows demonstrates the two-way interaction in signaling theory. The outer arrows, on the one hand, depict the broadcasting of institution-based signals through various publicity tools and physical stimuli to attract the attention of receivers in an increasingly competitive market. Conversely, the inner arrows depict the internal feedback mechanism that enables institution-based leaders to continually assess and improve their strategies based on receivers' understanding and institution-based outcomes. This circularity is an integral constituent of the framework because it emphasizes that edumarketing is an ongoing dialogue, not an episodic administrative activity. The triadic interaction ensures that institution-based leaders remain reflexive, tracking signal reliability, and responding to stakeholders' aspirations regarding the 4Ps. For instance, Ms. Aditi made the signal more visible through social media, while Mr. Bikash used faculty expertise as a

genuine indicator of quality. Keeping this two-way dialogue ongoing enables leaders to close the information gap and position the institution as credible and reputable (Connelly et al., 2011).

The strength of this three-sided approach lies in its ability to turn unobservable academic promises into clear, convincing signals. It's been noted that when leaders share detailed, transparent information about their facilities and academic heritage, it sends a credible signal of quality that distinguishes them from weaker competitors (Kiss & Kun, 2014). This targeted strategy functions as a persuasive mechanism, explaining how leaders methodically influence enrollment choices (Obasuyi, 2025). Additionally, incorporating student achievements and alumni testimonials offers credible social proof that enhances honesty and minimizes signal distortion. Therefore, the TEMPT model makes the invisible quality of an institution visible through specific cues, which affects the final enrollment decision in a competitive setting (Pokhrel et al., 2018). Even though it was developed for Nepali private colleges, this model and its explanation could be applied effectively in the higher education sector, which often suffers from information asymmetry.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides evidence of the edumarketing approach used by leaders in HEIs to influence potential learners' enrollment choices across four broad categories: promotional, people, process, and physical evidence. In this context, these edumarketing strategies were interpreted as intentional signals that reduced information asymmetry through persuasive communication. The promotion theme included digital engagement, tailored communications, strong value propositions, and analytics-based promotion refinement. Next, the people strategies involved faculty positioning, peer advocacy, staff commitment, and collective excellence. The process theme focused on transparent admissions, automation, support frameworks, and engagement management as important considerations in enrollment decisions. Finally, this chapter revealed how physical evidence factors such as facilities, accessibility, digital presence, and branding influenced students' decisions.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter concludes the study's understanding and offers implications for HEI leaders, policymakers, investors, employers, and future researchers. The study concludes that the strategic implementation of the 4Ps (promotion, people, process, and physical evidence) serves as the primary mechanism for influencing student enrollment in Nepali private colleges.

Conclusions

Based on this study's findings, one can conclude that trust is an underlying assumption of the edumarketing process in the Nepali market. Further, it was clear that trust is an imperative, especially when choosing a private college, where the underlying contract between the family exists, and this can only be achieved through a strategic edumarketing approach centered on the 4Ps. In this regard, promotional efforts, people's expertise, the efficiency of processes, and the quality of physical evidence serve as 'signals' that bridge the information gap between the institution and the student (Connelly et al., 2011). I believe it is essential for HEI institutions to be managed comprehensively, with an emphasis on marketing, as highlighted by some studies (Pokhrel et al., 2018; Sahni et al., 2025). Therefore, I conclude that each element of the 4P mix functions as a tool for projecting a genuine image. By utilizing these 4Ps to communicate unobservable quality, leaders ensure that their institutional signals are perceived as honest and reliable by prospective students (Kiss & Kun, 2014). The best possible approach to this situation is for those individuals to connect through talks, which will ensure that the mental obstacles they can withstand are limited. Consequently, the proposed 'Triadic Educational Marketing Promotion Triangle' (TEMPT) concludes that edumarketing is a co-constructed social reality; it is not merely about selling a degree but about constructing a credible institutional identity through the 4Ps to address the challenges of the competitive market.

The other significant finding is the blurring of the boundary between the institution's physical and virtual existence. The administrators were keen to highlight that contemporary Nepalese students view a quality website and an effective response to virtual inquiries as a symbol of effective administration (Biswakarma & Dhakal, 2023; Shrestha & Khadka, 2022). Institutions that demonstrate 'physical evidence and

promotion online have successfully signaled their quality and strong presence. In my view, the strategic display of infrastructure and labs serves as a 'costly signal' that provides observable proof of academic excellence (Connelly et al., 2011). Also important for institutions functioning in a competitive market is the transparency of the 'process' with automated services. Institutions offering fully automated services on the virtual platform have demonstrated professionalism that reduces 'signal distortion' and creates an impression of trustworthiness (Altbach et al., 2009). Therefore, my final conclusion is that the advancement of higher education in Nepal is subject to the iterative loop of the TEMPT model, in which the 4Ps complement the promise communicated by the leadership. In this case, the integrated model effectively influences the final enrollment decision (Obasuyi, 2025).

Implications

The following implications, based on insights from HEI leaders, offer ways to improve the effectiveness of edumarketing in Nepal.

For HEI Leaders

The leaders must focus on integrating marketing communications to ensure a unified message is conveyed through the 4Ps points of contact (Baliyan & Mokoena, 2024; Harbi & Maqsood, 2022). I propose that the leaders adopt the TEMPT model and combine their business objectives with academic integrity. By considering "promotion" and "physical evidence" as behavioral markers, leaders can shape potential students' perceptions of the institution's quality. They must create a messaging framework that focuses on unique value propositions, such as curriculum streams that match industry requirements. The reliability of these 'signals' centers on the accuracy of the data regarding expertise and facilities (Obasuyi, 2025). To improve student enrollment, it would be advisable to provide staff members with specialized training to enhance communication skills. Further, inculcating a sense of shared ownership of student enrollment targets among existing students and alumni can result in more honest 'people' signals. Additionally, incorporating more contemporary CRM software can help make more informed decisions that lead to more optimal 'process' management (Abeygunawardena, 2018; Biswakarma & Dhakal, 2023). Finally, it would also be advisable to align more on educational and virtual infrastructure to build trust among would-be students, as few studies (Nguyen et al., 2023; Zainudin et al., 2019) have indicated.

For Policymakers

Policymakers and governing bodies can come together to develop guidelines for edumarketing in Nepal's private higher education sector (Subedi, 2019). A code of conduct can be developed based on the transparency aspect of the 'process' and 'promotion' elements. A specific code of conduct for the marketing of HEIs would help to protect the student population from false claims by promoting the concept of 'signal honesty'. Policymakers should also encourage the adoption of digital governance frameworks to increase transparency in the enrollment process (Shrestha & Khadka, 2022). Linking an institution's promotional claims to its actual performance in 'physical evidence' and 'people' metrics would reduce information asymmetry and improve the country's reputation (Kiss & Kun, 2014; Obasuyi, 2025). In this manner, by crafting a regulatory texture, they can materially improve the stature of higher education in Nepal (Zhou & Alam, 2024).

For Stakeholders and Employers

The industry must be actively involved with the edumarketing environment by entering into partnerships with private colleges operating in the country (Rana et al., 2022). By engaging with the TEMPT framework, employers can help address the brain drain by highlighting local career pathways. The relationship with employers through an advisory board is significant in order to achieve alignment between 'process' and 'people' results with employer requirements. This is viewed as providing a 'countersignal' that confirms the market viability of programs offered by an educational institution. They can demonstrate their viability, e.g., through internships, thereby creating opportunities for leaders in the industries the HEI serves to make an appropriate impact on students (Gurung et al., 2022; Silwal & Baral, 2021). This bridges the gap between academic 'Signals' and professional practice, thereby facilitating the graduates (De Ramos & Briones, 2024). Additionally, their ongoing feedback also helps colleges improve their 'process' and administrative support systems (Chanour & Houban, 2020). This intersectoral collaboration makes the institution's 4Ps mix more attractive to prospective applicants. This is especially true regarding the sense of job security the collaboration provides, thereby making the institution more attractive to those interested in their professional development.

For Future Research

Future research could expand the study by comparing how the four attributes in the TEMPT model influence outcomes (Ndofirepi et al., 2020). Specifically, it is

crucial to assess how well the TEMPT model applies to public universities versus other regional contexts. Moreover, differences between public and private higher education institutions, especially regarding the TEMPT model, need to be taken into account. In addition, the relationship between the 'signals' in the 'promotion' category of the TEMPT model and the retention of enrolled students needs to be considered. Finally, as technology continues to improve, it would be interesting to see more studies on how AI can influence 'promotion' and 'process' through automation (Harbi & Maqsood, 2022). In conclusion, it would be helpful to see how comparisons are made regarding both student and parental perspectives on the 4P elements (Karki, 2024; Pokhrel et al., 2018).

My Journey and Reflection

I began my career as a business lecturer at a public campus over seven years ago, and five years of teaching at private colleges laid the foundation for this research. My everyday life in these colleges during those years allowed me to observe firsthand how institutions enroll new batches of students within the Kathmandu Valley. Although personal and professional delays caused a temporary pause in my study journey, returning to this work recently with a fresh perspective allowed for a more reflexive interpretation of the findings. Consistent with the social constructivist perspective by Saunders et al. (2023), edumarketing is more than a checklist of marketing activities. It is a complex, messy social reality that is shaped by human interactions. My perspective on edumarketing is therefore as follows: influence is a subjective process between institution leaders and students as they seek to establish a bond of trust, as proposed by Creswell and Creswell (2018). From a Signaling Theory perspective, the 4 Ps constitute a series of signals from institution leaders to students to reduce uncertainty, as proposed by Connelly et al. (2011).

My study showcases how promotion, people, process, and physical evidence provide a series of symbolic signals through which stakeholders understand institution quality. In this regard, I admire Ivy (2008) for identifying how these service elements directly shape the entire student experience. One important takeaway is the need for leadership reflexivity to keep the institution's actions academically grounded. In my earlier study (Khanal, 2025), the need to collaborate with stakeholders to produce narratives addressing the student outflow has been reinforced. The proposed TEMPT framework represents the ultimate integration of the 4Ps, providing a dynamic model for persuasive communication in the higher education market. This learning process

has also taught me that leading effectively means building a credible scholarly community in a transparent manner. The completion of my dissertation is a significant achievement in my profession, which also provides a clear guide for the future of education in Nepal.

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