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**TREND ANALYSIS AND MARKETING STRATEGIES TO INCREASE ENROLLMENT IN
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMS: A MULTI METHOD STUDY**

KAYE H. ABIAN

Saint Joseph Institute of Technology / Saint Michael College of Caraga

kaye.labian05@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-0731-2700>

ABSTRACT

This research analyzes the trends and marketing strategies used to enhance enrollment in the Business Administration program at Saint Michael College of Caraga (SMCC). Utilizing the Theory of Planned Behavior, the Self-Regulated Learning model, and ideas from Customer Relationship Management, the research used multiple approaches. Quantitative data were obtained via surveys distributed to existing and prospective BSBA students, with a five-year analysis of institutional and regional enrollment trends from SMCC and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). Five marketing techniques were tested for success using descriptive and inferential statistics. These strategies were social media, print media, radio promotion, face-to-face engagement, and referral/scholarship programs. Focus group discussions and interviews provided qualitative insights into students' perspectives of SMCC's promotional initiatives. The findings show that targeted digital ads, referral incentives, and direct contact are all important factors in students' decisions about whether or not to enroll. It suggests that to keep and boost enrollment, schools should strengthen their online presence, build stronger ties with the community, and use focused marketing strategies.

KEYWORDS

Trend Analysis, Marketing Strategies, Enrollment, Business Administration Program, Theory of Planned Behavior, Self-Regulated Learning, Customer Relationship Management, Multi-Method Approach

INTRODUCTION

Background

Marketing strategy is crucial in improving enrollment in academic institutions, just as it is in the corporate world. An effective strategy helps schools and universities attract prospective students by highlighting their programs' unique strengths and benefits. By utilizing market data and understanding the needs and preferences of potential students, institutions can identify specific target segments and tailor their marketing efforts accordingly (Furrer, 2020).

Institutions increase visibility and competitiveness by segmenting markets, positioning their unique strengths, and integrating consistent messaging across platforms. Tailored communication and coordinated resource allocation ensure a unified approach, enhance enrollment, and foster long-term stakeholder relationships in a globalized educational environment (Pasa & Shugan, 2022).

Education policy frameworks emphasize equitable access and quality education. The Philippine Constitution (Article XIV) mandates the State to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education and requires institutions to maintain systems responsive to societal needs. In higher education, quality assurance mechanisms such as voluntary accreditation systems and CHED policies support institutional accountability and competitiveness (Arcelo, 2023). Accreditation processes—including self-study and external evaluation—reinforce program credibility and institutional reputation, which are critical components of effective educational marketing.

Data-driven marketing strategies are increasingly necessary to respond to changing student expectations and intensified competition (Kotler & Keller, 2020). Institutions that fail to align marketing approaches with market demands experience declining recruitment and underperformance (Prianugraha, 2024). This challenge is more pronounced in competitive programs such as business administration, where alternative learning platforms, rising costs, and shifting preferences affect enrollment decisions. Low-income and marginalized groups are particularly vulnerable, often facing academic and financial barriers that increase dropout risks (Gomez, 2020).

As a faculty member of the College of Business Management Education, the researcher seeks to optimize marketing strategies to improve enrollment for the next academic year. Although existing literature discusses higher education marketing broadly, fewer studies address institution-specific strategies responsive to local contexts. Thus, this study evaluates the most effective marketing strategies to increase enrollment across Saint Michael College of Caraga (SMCC) programs. Using quantitative analysis, it examines how targeted strategies, digital tools, and emerging technologies can support sustainable enrollment growth.

General Objective

The study aims to assess trend analysis and marketing strategies used to increase enrollment in Business Management programs at Saint Michael College of Caraga.

Specifically it answered the following questions:

1. What is the regional enrollment trend of BSBA programs from 2019-2024 along the 3 majors?
2. What is the enrollment trend in the Business Administration program at Saint Michael College of Caraga for the past 5 years?
3. To what extent is the marketing campaign noticeable, allowing social media, print media, radio marketing, face-to-face marketing & referral and scholarship?
4. What marketing efforts from Saint Michael College of Caraga made them seriously consider enrolling in the Business Administration program?
5. What recommendations or interventions can be proposed for Saint Michael College of Caraga to improve the number of students enrolled in the Business Administration program?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study draws on the Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) model (Bruso & Stefaniak, 2016), the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), and Customer Relationship Management (CRM).

The TPB explains behavioral intention as a predictor of action, shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Chung et al., 2018; Rijati, 2020). In the enrollment context, students' intentions to enroll are influenced by perceptions of institutional value, social influences, and perceived accessibility.

CRM emphasizes building long-term, profitable relationships with stakeholders through personalized engagement and systematic management of customer interactions. Rather than focusing solely on products, CRM prioritizes sustained relationships and service quality, enabling institutions to enhance student satisfaction, loyalty, and retention (Chen & Popovich, 2022; Rai, 2012; Debnath, 2023). Together, these frameworks guide how marketing strategies influence prospective students' decision-making and long-term institutional relationships.

Review of Related Literature

Effective marketing has long been recognized as a critical determinant of institutional competitiveness and sustainability in higher education. Foundational work by Kotler and Goldgehn introduced an eight-step process for educational administrators to follow before committing resources to a marketing strategy. The steps include defining the institution's mission, identifying key audiences and markets, conducting market research, segmenting the market, selecting target markets, establishing market position, developing the marketing mix (product, price, place, and promotion), and implementing and managing the marketing plan. Community colleges that attempt to cater to everyone often experience confusion

about their goals; thus, focused positioning and interaction with various community groups improve institutional effectiveness and return on investment (Willey, 2023).

In this context, marketing is not only a business function but also an essential institutional activity that helps schools attract more students and promote their academic units. Effective marketing supports brand visibility and program awareness, particularly in specialized settings where the target audience differs from traditional markets. The integration of digital tools has become a key factor in how institutions build brand presence and communicate value (Melovic et al., 2020).

The increasing competition among public and private higher education institutions, combined with rising tuition costs and reduced government funding, has compelled universities to adopt market-oriented relationship management strategies. Institutions recognize that building strong relationships with stakeholders—especially students—enables them to navigate changing environments and sustain enrollment. Consequently, universities rely heavily on online communication platforms such as websites, email, and social media to maintain engagement with prospective students.

Central to these strategies is the marketing mix. The marketing mix is widely recognized as consisting of four elements: product, price, place (distribution), and promotion (Vasiljev, 2025). Often referred to as the “4P” framework, these components guide strategic planning and allow institutions to modify offerings to meet marketing goals. For services such as higher education, however, the traditional 4P framework requires expansion to address the experiential and relational nature of educational services. Studies emphasize that revisiting and improving the marketing mix ensures that strategies are tailored to program characteristics and the needs of target students, particularly in business management programs (Lukic et al., 2020). Simulation-based research further demonstrates that systematic and dynamic applications of the marketing mix influence enrollment outcomes and provide a foundation for more complex strategic modeling (Trinh et al., 2020).

Beyond structural strategy, service quality and institutional value significantly affect enrollment decisions. Research indicates that universities investing in infrastructural improvements, customer service excellence, and faculty qualifications create more appealing educational experiences. Market-driven programs, enhanced facilities, and consistent branding improve visibility and engagement with prospective students, resulting in increased enrollment (Brown, 2020). Similarly, institutions that align specialized programs with employment opportunities and deliver high-quality services observe stronger enrollment growth and institutional reputation (Sikalumbi et al., 2023).

Retention is also integral to sustainable enrollment. Marketing strategies must emphasize not only recruitment but also student support systems such as academic advising, mentorship, career services, and engagement initiatives. Highlighting these

services reassures families and fosters a sense of belonging among students, thereby strengthening persistence and long-term success (Talbert et al., 2020).

Among the elements of the marketing mix, pricing remains a decisive factor in students' decision-making processes. Flexible tuition structures, scholarships, installment plans, and transparent communication of financial support reduce perceived financial barriers. Positioning tuition as an investment supported by quality education, career outcomes, and return on investment builds trust and encourages enrollment. Marketing campaigns that demonstrate affordability and value are particularly effective for diverse socioeconomic groups (Pohkrel et al., 2020; Claveria et al., 2021; Fredricks et al., 2022; Joshi et al., 2024).

Place or location likewise shapes institutional attractiveness. The accessibility, safety, and surrounding environment of a campus influence perceptions of convenience and support for learning. Marketing efforts that highlight modern facilities, green spaces, specialized laboratories, and community connections enhance institutional appeal. For online programs, flexibility and remote accessibility broaden reach. Moreover, place image—including institutional identity, reputation, and brand culture—functions as a differentiating factor that fosters a sense of belonging among prospective students (Dixit et al., 2020; Joshi, 2024).

Promotion has increasingly shifted toward digital platforms. Since the beginning of the 21st century, social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram have transformed into multipurpose communication tools with extensive global reach (Agustini, 2021; Juhaidi, 2024). Educational institutions utilize these platforms to promote programs, increase interaction with prospective students and parents, and facilitate collaboration among stakeholders (Siminto et al., 2024). Social media also supports critical thinking, knowledge sharing, and academic engagement within higher education communities (Boateng & Amankwa, 2020; Gutiérrez, 2021).

Complementary digital promotional strategies—including targeted social media campaigns, search engine optimization, email marketing, and virtual events—enhance visibility and foster trust. The use of student ambassadors, alumni testimonials, and success stories strengthens credibility and demonstrates real-life outcomes. Institutions that effectively integrate information and communication technologies maintain continuous communication with prospective students and adapt more successfully to disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Joshi, 2024; Claveria et al., 2021; Lazanas et al., 2023).

Digital marketing tools further provide real-time engagement, measurable results, and personalized communication, enabling schools to run targeted campaigns and optimize interactions with families. These tools surpass traditional marketing approaches by offering data-driven decision-making capabilities and sustained stakeholder relationships (Maayah, 2024; Gordan et al., 2020).

Despite the prominence of digital strategies, traditional and experiential approaches remain valuable. Campus tours, open houses, and direct interactions allow families to experience the institutional environment firsthand and build emotional connections with faculty and staff. Personalized tours and stakeholder engagement create positive impressions that significantly influence enrollment decisions (Newberry, 2011; SSATB,

2014; Claveria, 2021). Furthermore, word-of-mouth referrals from satisfied students, parents, and alumni serve as influential marketing channels, often outweighing formal promotional efforts (Neiberger, 2020; Newberry, 2021; Jessen & DiMartino, 2020).

Offline strategies such as brochures, banners, signage, and community engagement activities continue to enhance local visibility. Integrating experiential learning with promotional efforts provides practical exposure for students while simultaneously supporting institutional marketing objectives (Manajemen et al., 2024).

Overall, the literature consistently demonstrates that integrated, data-driven, and relationship-focused marketing strategies—encompassing the marketing mix, digital promotion, pricing transparency, institutional branding, stakeholder engagement, and service quality—are essential for attracting and retaining students. These approaches collectively support sustainable enrollment growth and provide a strategic foundation for institutions seeking competitiveness in contemporary higher education environments.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study used a multi-method design integrating both quantitative and qualitative research methods to comprehensively analyze the effectiveness of marketing strategies in increasing enrollment for the Business Administration program at Saint Michael College of Caraga. Multi-method research uses multiple forms of qualitative or quantitative data (Mik-Meyer, 2020).

In the quantitative phase, a structured survey was distributed to prospective and current students, particularly first-year students, to gather data on their awareness and perceptions of the marketing campaigns. The survey assessed the extent to which the campaigns were noticeable across social media marketing, print media marketing, radio marketing, face-to-face marketing, referrals, and scholarships. Historical enrollment data for the past five years were obtained from the Registrar's Office to analyze trends in the number of enrollees. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) also provided regional enrollment data to enable comparison between local trends at SMCC and broader regional patterns.

Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to analyze the survey responses and enrollment data, providing a clear picture of the impact of the current marketing strategies on student enrollment (Henk, 2020).

The qualitative phase involved focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews exclusively with BSBA students of SMCC. These discussions adopted a phenomenological approach, focusing on students' lived experiences and perceptions regarding the school's marketing efforts. Thematic analysis was applied to identify recurring

patterns and contextualize the quantitative findings (Dawadi, 2020). Integrating both methods provided a well-rounded understanding of the issue and allowed validation of results (Vivek et al., 2021).

Context and Participants

The study was conducted from December 2024 to January 2025 at Saint Michael College of Caraga, specifically within the College of Business and Management, and focused only on BSBA students. Saint Michael College of Caraga (SMCC) is a private Roman Catholic educational institution in Nasipit, Agusan del Norte, Philippines, established in 1948 by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. The institution provides quality education rooted in Catholic values and holistic student development.

A proportionate sampling strategy was used to ensure that the sample accurately represented the different student subgroups. Proportionate sampling selects participants based on subgroup size to ensure fair representation and improve reliability. From a total population of 356 students, 107 respondents were selected: 64 from BSBA-FM, 28 from BSBA-MM, and 15 from BSBA-HRM. Additionally, 12 participants were included in interviews and FGDs to provide deeper qualitative insights. Combining proportionate sampling for surveys with qualitative discussions enhanced the comprehensiveness of the study.

Ethical Standards

Specific ethical considerations were addressed due to the study's use of human participation. Permission, confidentiality, and data protection were ensured to preserve participants' privacy. Participants were provided with an informed consent form explaining the study's title, purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits, and were allowed to decide voluntarily whether to participate.

All participant information and collected data were kept strictly confidential. Data were secured in lockable file cabinets and on encrypted, password-protected computers. All acquired data were disposed of two years after the research period. Printed copies were shredded, and digital files were destroyed. Participation proceeded only after signing the certificate of consent.

Data Collection and Tools

The study employed both primary and secondary data collection methods. Two validated researcher-made instruments were utilized: a survey questionnaire and an interview guide. The survey gathered information about experiences with SMCC marketing strategies, while the interview guide identified barriers to enrollment and informed the proposed intervention program.

The instruments were validated by five experts and pilot-tested among 15 students not included in the main sample. Reliability testing yielded a coefficient of 0.91, indicating high reliability. Descriptive statistics and mean scores were used to analyze the data, interpreted through a 4-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The data-gathering procedure included preparation, survey distribution, documentary analysis, and data integration. Enrollment records were obtained from the Registrar’s Office, and CHED regional data were collected for comparison. FGDs provided in-depth insights into perceptions and enrollment decisions. Documentary analysis identified patterns related to marketing campaigns. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. Findings from both methods were integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the overall impact of marketing strategies on enrollment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Problem 1. What is the regional enrollment trend of BSBA programs from 2019-2024 along the 3 majors?

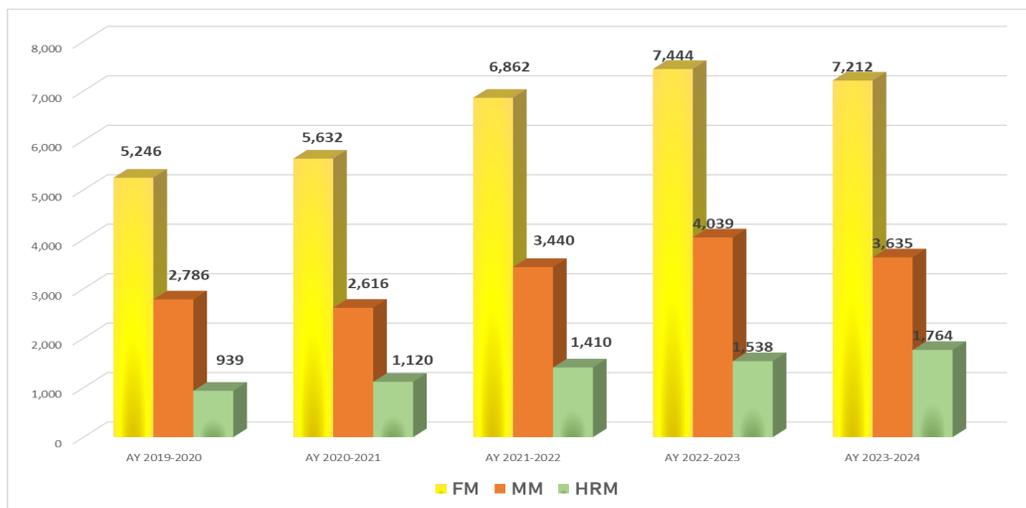


Figure 1. Regional Enrollment Trends for Five Consecutive Years

The data provided by the CHED CARAGA regional office offers valuable insights into the regional trends of enrollment across three key programs: Financial Management (FM), Marketing Management (MM), and Human Resource Management (HRM). The regional enrollment trends of BSBA programs in Caraga from AY 2019–2024 reveal a steady increase in student interest across the three majors, indicating that business education remains a consistently attractive field within the region.

Among these programs, Financial Management consistently recorded the highest number of enrollees. Beginning with 5,246 in AY 2019–2020, enrollment steadily increased

to 6,862 in AY 2021–2022 and peaked at 7,444 in AY 2022–2023 before slightly declining to 7,212 in AY 2023–2024. Despite this minor decline, FM maintained an average annual growth rate of 8.64%, reinforcing its position as the most preferred specialization. This sustained dominance suggests that finance-related careers continue to be perceived as stable, profitable, and professionally rewarding. Students often associate the field with clearer employment pathways, stronger compensation prospects, and long-term security, which traditionally drive enrollment decisions in business programs.

However, the slight decrease in the most recent academic year signals that program popularity is not immune to external pressures. Market saturation, changing economic conditions, and evolving technological demands such as fintech integration may be influencing student perceptions. The decline suggests that even established programs require continuous innovation and curricular relevance to sustain growth.

Marketing Management exhibited a positive yet fluctuating pattern. Enrollment rose from 2,786 to 4,039 before declining to 3,635. This trajectory reflects both growth and volatility, consistent with the rapid transformation occurring within the marketing profession. As digital marketing, e-commerce, and analytics reshape the discipline (Kong et al., 2020), students increasingly evaluate whether academic programs align with these emerging competencies. The fluctuation therefore may not indicate waning interest but rather sensitivity to perceived curricular responsiveness to industry demands.

In contrast, HRM demonstrated the strongest relative growth. Although it had the lowest absolute numbers, it recorded the highest average annual growth rate at 17.24%, increasing steadily from 939 to 1,764 without any observed decline. This uninterrupted upward trajectory reflects growing recognition of the strategic importance of human capital management. Modern organizations increasingly prioritize talent development, organizational behavior, and workforce sustainability, thereby elevating HRM as a viable and expanding career pathway.

Taken together, the regional data reflect differentiated specialization trajectories: FM as dominant but stabilizing, MM as responsive to industry shifts, and HRM as rapidly emerging. These findings underscore that enrollment behavior mirrors broader labor market signals and that institutions must continually adapt academic offerings to maintain competitiveness.

Problem 2. What is the enrollment trend in the Business Administration program at Saint Michael College of Caraga for the past 5 years?

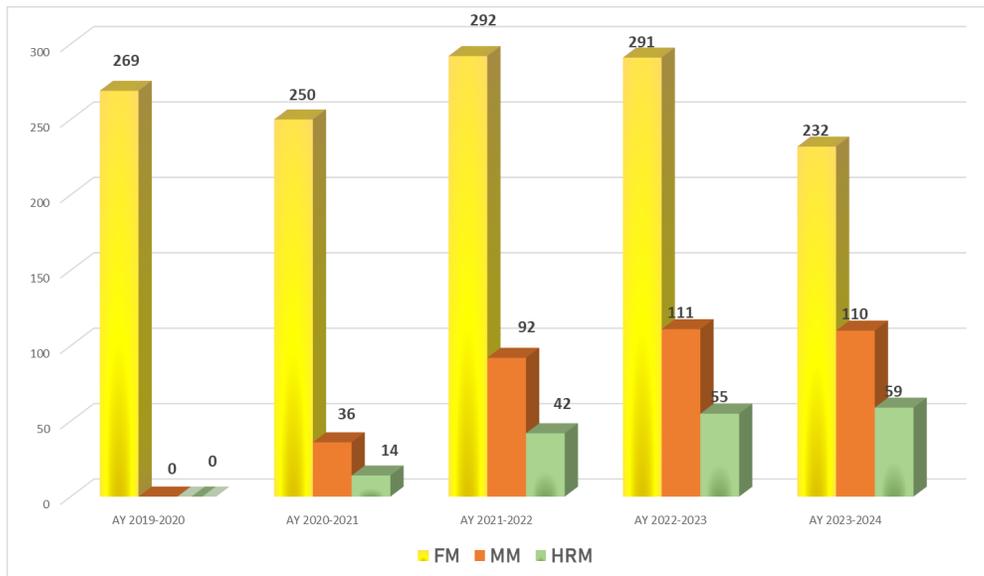


Figure 2. SMCC- BSBA Enrollment Trends for 5 years

Institutional data from SMCC reveal enrollment patterns that closely parallel the regional trends. Financial Management initially dominated enrollment, particularly in AY 2019–2020 when it was the only available specialization. However, following the introduction of MM and HRM, student distribution diversified across the three majors.

FM enrollment, while historically highest, exhibited gradual decline in recent years, decreasing from its peak of 292 to 232. This mirrors the regional softening trend and suggests that students are diversifying their academic interests. Meanwhile, MM and HRM demonstrated consistent growth following their establishment. MM rapidly increased from 36 to 110 students, while HRM grew from 14 to 59.

The alignment between institutional and regional trends indicates that SMCC’s enrollment behavior is influenced more by macroeconomic and professional demand factors than by purely local institutional variables. This congruence suggests that students respond to perceived career viability rather than marketing exposure alone. Consequently, enrollment outcomes cannot be explained solely by promotional strategies but must be interpreted within the broader context of industry alignment.

Thus, SMCC’s program diversification appears strategically appropriate. The steady growth of MM and HRM confirms that expanding specialization options aligns with evolving student preferences and workforce realities. Programs that demonstrate clear career pathways and contemporary relevance are more likely to attract sustained interest.

Problem 3. To what extent is the marketing campaign noticeable across social media, print media, radio marketing, face-to-face marketing, and referral and scholarship strategies?

Table 1. Level of Noticeable Marketing Campaign in terms of Social Media

	As student of Saint Michael College of Caraga (SMCC);	Mean	Verbal Description	Verbal Interpretation
1	I noticed the advertisements about the institution on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Youtube or SMCC pages.	3.43	Strongly Agree	High
2	I recall sponsored ads or promotions from the institution on social media.	2.80	Agree	Moderate
3	I perceive the influence of social media campaigns on the institution.	3.22	Agree	Moderate
4	My perception of the institution based on social media content shared by alumni, students, or staff.	3.11	Agree	Moderate
5	Influence of social media interactions (likes, comments, shares) on my decision to consider or recommend the institution.	3.11	Agree	Moderate
	Mean	3.13	Agree	Moderate

Social media marketing yielded a moderate overall visibility ($M = 3.13$), indicating that while students recognize SMCC’s online presence, its influence is not yet optimal. Organic exposure appears effective, as evidenced by the highest score for general advertisement visibility (3.43). However, recall of sponsored promotions registered the lowest rating (2.80), suggesting limited memorability of paid digital campaigns.

These findings imply that reach exists but conversion strength remains moderate. Students engage with institutional posts but may not perceive sufficient persuasive or differentiating value to strongly influence decision-making. The pattern is consistent with higher education marketing literature showing that peer-driven content, alumni narratives, and interactive engagement tend to outperform passive advertising (Cai et al., 2020). Thus, strengthening storytelling, video-based content, and authentic student testimonials may improve both recall and behavioral impact.

Overall, social media functions as an awareness tool rather than a decisive enrollment driver.

Table 2. Level of Noticeable Marketing Campaign in terms of Print Media

	As student of Saint Michael College of Caraga (SMCC);	Mean	Verbal Description	Verbal Interpretation
1	I noticed flyers, brochures, or posters distributed by the institution.	2.93	Agree	Moderate
2	I noticed posters or banners about the institution are in public places.	3.37	Strongly Agree	High
3	I notice magazine or newspaper advertisements about the institution.	2.91	Agree	Moderate
4	The design and content of the institution's printed materials are appealing.	3.09	Agree	Moderate
5	I recall specific print materials from the institution.	3.02	Agree	Moderate
	Mean	3.10	Agree	Moderate

Print media demonstrated moderate effectiveness (M = 3.10). High visibility of posters and banners in public spaces (3.37) indicates that location-based exposure remains functional, particularly in high-traffic areas. However, traditional formats such as newspapers and magazines showed weaker impact (2.91), reflecting declining readership and reduced relevance among digitally oriented students.

While students notice printed materials, recall and persuasion are limited. This suggests that print serves primarily as supplementary reinforcement rather than a primary recruitment mechanism. Literature supports this trend, emphasizing that contemporary student populations prioritize digital channels while print performs best when integrated into multi-channel strategies (McCune & Denny, 2021; Hernandez & Jones, 2020).

Accordingly, print marketing remains useful for visibility but insufficient as a standalone driver of enrollment decisions.

Table 3. Level of Noticeable Marketing Campaign in terms of Radio Marketing

	As student of Saint Michael College of Caraga (SMCC);	Mean	Verbal Description	Verbal Interpretation
1	I notice advertisements for the institution on local radio stations.	3.50	Strongly Agree	High
2	The frequency of radio ads makes the institution's campaigns noticeable to me.	3.43	Strongly Agree	High
3	I recall specific messages or slogans from the institution's radio campaigns.	3.15	Agree	Moderate

4	The radio ads influence my awareness of the institution's events or programs.	3.54	Strongly Agree	High
5	The radio endorsements or mentions make the institution noticeable to me.	3.50	Strongly Agree	High
Mean		3.42	Strongly Agree	High

Radio marketing recorded high noticeability ($M = 3.42$), positioning it among the most effective channels. Students strongly agreed that radio increases awareness of institutional activities, particularly events and programs (3.54). Frequent exposure through the institution's own station appears to sustain consistent recall and visibility.

The only moderate score concerned message retention (3.15), suggesting that while radio captures attention, slogans or detailed content may not be sufficiently memorable. Nonetheless, the medium effectively fulfills its core purpose—awareness generation.

These findings align with studies showing that radio remains influential in local communities, especially in regional settings where broadcast reach is extensive (Karakaya & Aydın, 2021; Sharma & Singh, 2020). For SMCC, radio functions as a reliable mass-communication channel that reinforces institutional presence beyond campus.

Thus, radio serves as a strong awareness amplifier but may benefit from more distinctive messaging.

Table 4. Level of Noticeable Marketing Campaign in terms of Face-to-Face Marketing

	As student of Saint Michael College of Caraga (SMCC);	Mean	Verbal Description	Verbal Interpretation
1	I notice representatives of the institution during school visits or events.	3.30	Strongly Agree	High
2	The institution's face-to-face campaigns at fairs, exhibits, or seminars stand out.	3.33	Strongly Agree	High
3	The personal interactions with the institution's staff or students raise awareness of its offerings.	3.26	Strongly Agree	High
4	Face-to-face promotions make the institution more noticeable than other methods.	3.20	Agree	Moderate
5	Direct communication during face-to-face campaigns leaves a lasting impression.	3.22	Agree	Moderate
Mean		3.30	Strongly Agree	High

Face-to-face strategies showed high effectiveness (M = 3.30), reflecting the strong persuasive value of personal interaction. School visits, fairs, and advocacy campaigns generated high visibility and immediate engagement. Students particularly recognized event-based promotions as distinctive and attention-grabbing.

Although students did not always perceive these methods as superior to all others (3.20), interpersonal contact clearly enhances trust, credibility, and information clarity. Direct communication allows questions to be addressed immediately, reducing uncertainty in enrollment decisions.

These outcomes corroborate research emphasizing that relational marketing strengthens institutional attachment and decision confidence (Gifford & Groening, 2021; Bennett & Darcy, 2020). In higher education contexts, personal interaction often exerts stronger influence than passive media.

Therefore, face-to-face marketing remains a critical conversion-oriented strategy.

Table 5. Level of Noticeable Marketing Campaign in terms of Referral and Scholarship

	As student of Saint Michael College of Caraga (SMCC);	Mean	Verbal Description	Verbal Interpretation
1	I notice scholarship offers through referrals from friends, family, or alumni.	3.59	Strongly Agree	High
2	Promoting scholarship opportunities is noticeable to me.	3.43	Strongly Agree	High
3	The institution's referral program creates awareness about its programs.	3.37	Strongly Agree	High
4	The referrals from trusted individuals make me aware of the institution.	3.37	Strongly Agree	High
5	The scholarship advertisements make the institution stand out in my consideration.	3.46	Strongly Agree	High
	Mean	3.44	Strongly Agree	High

Referral and scholarship marketing emerged as the most influential strategy (M = 3.44). Word-of-mouth from trusted individuals and visible financial support strongly affected awareness and consideration. Scholarship offers through personal networks achieved the highest rating (3.59), indicating that credibility and affordability are decisive enrollment factors.

Unlike other channels that primarily generate exposure, referral-based approaches directly affect choice behavior. Students tend to trust peers, alumni, and family members

more than institutional advertising. Likewise, financial incentives reduce perceived barriers, increasing the likelihood of commitment.

This aligns with evidence that word-of-mouth and scholarship accessibility are among the strongest predictors of higher education enrollment (Perkins & MacDonald, 2021; Grove & Pomerantz, 2020). Hence, referral and scholarship programs function as both awareness and conversion mechanisms.

Table 6. Summary for the Level of Noticeable Marketing Campaign

Indicators	Mean	Verbal Description	Verbal Interpretation
Social Media	3.13	Agree	Moderate
Print Media	3.10	Agree	Moderate
Radio Marketing	3.42	Strongly Agree	High
Face-to-face Marketing	3.30	Strongly Agree	High
Referral and Scholarship	3.44	Strongly Agree	High
Mean	3.27	Strongly Agree	High

Overall marketing visibility is high (M = 3.27), but effectiveness varies by channel. Referral and scholarship strategies exert the strongest influence, followed by radio and face-to-face efforts. Social media and print contribute moderate support but are less persuasive.

The pattern indicates that trust-based and interpersonal mechanisms outperform passive or broadcast media. Students respond more strongly to personal endorsements, financial incentives, and direct interaction than to traditional or purely digital advertisements. Contemporary marketing research similarly notes the rising dominance of experiential, relational, and video-driven approaches over static print formats (Education Dynamics, 2025).

Consequently, SMCC’s most impactful strategies are those that combine credibility, accessibility, and personal engagement rather than mere exposure. Strengthening these high-performing channels while refining digital and print tactics would likely optimize recruitment outcomes.

Problem 4. What marketing efforts from Saint Michael College of Caraga made them seriously consider enrolling in the Business Administration program?

Table 7. Marketing Efforts Made

Theme	Sub-theme	Verbatim Responses
Print Media on-campus facilities and resources	Visibility of Programs	R2. "You can also see that there are tarpaulins and posters, it's obvious at Buenascar. They ensure that the message reaches a broader audience, including students and parents."
	Increased Outreach	R5. "The signages that can be seen on the roads attracted me, such as major roads and public transport hubs, which increase awareness of SMCC's Programs."
	Engagement via Printed Materials	R8. "During the advocacy given by SMCC in our school, I received flyers and brochures with effective quotes like "Visit Our Campus". It encouraged me to visit and gave me a good experience, which made me realize that I am fit here."
Social Media and Online Presence	Social Media Engagement	R1. "They are very active on their Facebook page, since I'm not from Nasipit, but it reached my wall, and they are always in trend."
	Reach Beyond Campus	R3. "Very active in seminars/webinars, not just lectures in the classroom."
	Trending Content	R4. "They have outside school activities like educational tours."
Referrals Testimonials and Success Stories	Alumni Success ;	R7. "Featuring the alumni who have succeeded in the business field caught my attention since I knew that these programs are very flexible in terms of career opportunity."
	Current Students' Testimonials	R9. "During the advocacy made by SMCC, quotes from current students sharing their knowledge and experiences inspire me."
Program Highlights and Offers	Practical Considerations	R6. "SMCC is a school where many scholarships are available, and my desired course is also offered."
	Diversity of Programs	R11. "During the advocacy of SMCC, I realized that SMCC is very welcoming. They told us that "no one is left behind" because there are lots of opportunities, not just government scholarships but also for Student Scholar with zero school fees."
	Unique Opportunities	R12. "I have a friend who is an alumna of SMCC who told me that they are committed to holistic education and professional development such as OJT opportunities."

Student responses demonstrate that enrollment decisions are shaped by a combination of physical visibility, digital engagement, peer validation, and program value propositions. Print materials—tarpaulins, signages, brochures, and advocacy flyers—serve as initial awareness mechanisms by positioning SMCC prominently in public spaces and schools. Strategic placement along transport hubs and community locations increases exposure and ensures repeated recall, reinforcing institutional presence among both students and parents. Such high-visibility tactics align with findings that traditional promotional materials remain effective for institutional recognition when distributed in high-traffic areas (Kasimbara et al., 2024).

Digital channels further extend this reach. Active social media engagement, particularly on Facebook, enables SMCC to connect with students beyond Nasipit, reducing geographical constraints and enhancing accessibility. Students report that online posts, seminars, webinars, and educational tours project dynamism and institutional relevance. These practices reflect contemporary recruitment patterns in which online storytelling and interactive content cultivate relatability and emotional connection (Puja, 2024; Martinez, 2021). Experiential elements—seminars and tours—also position the institution as practice-oriented rather than purely theoretical, supporting evidence that experiential engagement strengthens institutional appeal (Yaodum et al., 2024; Taylor, 2020).

Equally influential are referrals and testimonials. Alumni achievements and current student narratives function as social proof, validating program credibility and employability outcomes. This peer-driven messaging increases trust and reduces perceived enrollment risk, consistent with research indicating that testimonials are among the most persuasive higher education marketing tools (Six Degrees Digital Media, 2023; Education Dynamics, 2022).

Financial accessibility emerges as another decisive factor. Scholarship visibility reassures students that economic constraints will not hinder participation. Programs such as government subsidies and zero-fee options enhance perceived equity and inclusivity, reinforcing the institution's commitment to access. The strong salience of financial aid corresponds with evidence that cost mitigation strategies significantly influence college choice (Education Dynamics, 2022).

Collectively, the findings indicate that SMCC's effectiveness stems not from a single medium but from an integrated approach combining print, digital, testimonial, and financial messaging. This multi-channel alignment positions the institution as visible, credible, supportive, and career-oriented, consistent with current best practices in higher education marketing (Andersen, 2024).

Table 8. Marketing Strategies That Affect Decision The Most

Theme	Sub-theme	Verbatim Responses
Social Media Marketing: Engagement and Online Presence	Social Media Impact	R5. <i>“I saw the SMCC Facebook page and was impressed by the student success stories and campus life. It made me feel like I’d belong there.”</i>
	Campus Life Shared Online	R8. <i>“The institution’s Facebook videos showcasing campus life, student activities, and academic programs made me excited to be part of the community. It felt welcoming and dynamic.”</i>
	Student Engagement	R10. <i>“Seeing real students share their experiences on Instagram stories and YouTube vlogs made the school feel more relatable. It was inspiring to see how engaged and happy the students were.”</i>
Print Marketing: Brochures and Informational Materials	Informative Brochures	R3. <i>“The brochure/ flyers I received during the advocacy gave me all the details I needed about the program. It helped me compare options and make a confident choice.”</i>
	Clear and Organized Materials	R5. <i>“I liked how the printed materials were well-organized, with clear information about tuition, scholarships, and student services. It made everything easy to understand.”</i>
Referrals: Word-of-Mouth Recommendations	Alumni and Peer Influence	R1. <i>“A friend who graduated from SMCC highly recommended it. Hearing about their positive experience convinced me to apply.”</i>
	Word-of-Mouth Encouragement	R2. <i>“A friend who is currently enrolled kept talking about the hands-on projects and internship opportunities. Their excitement made me want to be part of this program too.”</i>
Scholarships: Financial Incentives and Opportunities	Scholarship Influence	R7. <i>“The scholarship opportunity allowed me to pursue my degree here. Without it, I wouldn’t have considered this institution.”</i>
	Financial Support Awareness	R9. <i>“Seeing the actively promoted scholarships on their social media and even during the advocacy made me realize that financial support was available, which helped me decide to apply.”</i>

Students identify four primary decision drivers: digital engagement, informative print materials, peer referrals, and financial support. Social media fosters belongingness through authentic depictions of campus life and student experiences, strengthening emotional connection. Print materials complement this by delivering structured, decision-critical information such as tuition and scholarships. Referrals enhance credibility through trusted interpersonal sources, while scholarships directly reduce financial barriers.

These findings reinforce Newman’s (2022) assertion that blended marketing strategies outperform single-channel approaches. Emotional appeal (social media), informational clarity (print), trust (referrals), and affordability (scholarships) collectively create a comprehensive decision framework that guides enrollment behavior.

Table 9. The Institution’s Marketing Efforts That Addresses Concerns Or Questions About Enrolling In The Business Administration Program

Theme	Sub-theme	Verbatim Responses
Clarity on Career Opportunities and Program Outcomes	Career Path Clarity	R2. <i>“The university’s website and brochures highlighted graduates who landed jobs at top companies. Seeing real success stories convinced me this program could open doors for me.”</i> R4. <i>“The school provided clear information on career paths I could take after graduation, including marketing, finance, and human resource management roles. This made it easier to align my studies with my goals.”</i>
	Leadership Preparation	R8. <i>“I appreciated that the marketing materials didn’t just focus on academics but also highlighted how the program prepares students for leadership roles in business, giving me a clear vision of where this degree could take me.”</i>
Financial Aid and Scholarship Support	Tuition Support	R7. <i>“I was hesitant about tuition costs, but the school’s scholarship opportunities, which were well advertised on their website and flyers, made it possible for me to enroll.”</i>
	Accessible Scholarships	R10. <i>“I was worried about tuition costs, but the institution’s need-based scholarship made it affordable for me to pursue my Business Administration degree.”</i>
Accessibility of Admissions and Enrollment Support	Clear Application Process	R6. <i>“I had a lot of questions about the application process, but during the advocacy, a detailed admission guide answered everything I needed to know.”</i>
	Enrollment Guidance	R11. <i>“The step-by-step enrollment guide on the website was clear and easy to follow, so I didn’t feel lost during the application process.”</i>

Marketing efforts addressed three core concerns: employability, affordability, and procedural clarity. Career-focused messaging enhanced outcome expectations by presenting graduate success and defined pathways. Scholarship promotions mitigated financial anxiety. Structured admission guides simplified processes, reducing uncertainty. These functions collectively decrease perceived enrollment risk, consistent with findings that transparent career outcomes and financial support increase commitment to enrollment (Education Marketing Strategies, 2024).

Table 10. Improvements Suggested To The Current Marketing Strategies To Attract Prospective Students To The Business Administration Program?

Theme	Sub-theme	Verbatim Responses
Targeted Recruitment for Student-Athletes: Business and Sports Synergy	Sports Business Opportunities	R5. "As an athlete, I wanted to study business but wasn't sure if I could balance both. If they had implemented sports business opportunities and flexible class schedules would have helped me decide sooner."
Business-Sponsored Scholars: Corporate Partnerships for Student Sponsorships	Sponsored Studies and Job Opportunities	R3. "Knowing that a company would sponsor my studies and provide a guaranteed job after graduation would have made my choice much easier."
	Informational Outreach on Scholarships and Job Placements	R6. "Regularly post about internships, scholarships, job placements, and networking events to keep students informed."
Expanding Alumni and Corporate Mentorship Programs	Alumni and Corporate Involvement	R7. "Hearing from successful alumni who got scholarships or were recruited through incentive programs would have helped me see the long-term value of the business degree."
	Career Advice and Panel Discussions	R9. "Collaborate with business professionals and alumni for career advice videos or panel discussions."
Strengthening Networking Opportunities Through Sponsored Outside School Events	External Event Outreach	R2. "Highlight student experiences, internship journeys, and industry connections to give an authentic perspective."
	Event Sponsorship and Networking	R10. "During external events, SMCC must sponsor; they can showcase their programs to a broad audience, including prospective students and their parents."

Students recommend enhancements centered on specialization, employability, mentorship, and experiential visibility. Leveraging athletic success to attract student-

athletes, expanding corporate sponsorships, and strengthening alumni mentorship can differentiate SMCC competitively. Research indicates that sports achievements, mentorship networks, and interactive digital storytelling significantly increase applications and engagement (Pope, 2021; Education Marketing Solutions, 2022; Further Team, 2023).

Overall, SMCC's marketing effectiveness derives from an integrated, multi-channel strategy combining visibility, authenticity, trust, financial accessibility, and career relevance. Maintaining and refining this ecosystem—rather than prioritizing a single channel—will likely sustain and enhance Business Administration enrollment (Unibuddy, 2025).

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends the following:

1. **SMCC Administration** can utilize these recommendations to refine enrollment strategies, improve student recruitment, and allocate resources efficiently to maximize results.
2. **Marketing and Admissions Team** will benefit from a well-structured marketing plan that combines digital, traditional, and in-person engagement to attract and retain students effectively.
3. **Prospective Students and Parents** will have better access to information about programs, financial aid, and career opportunities, allowing them to make informed decisions about their education.
4. **Faculty and Program Developers** can align curricula with industry demands by introducing relevant specializations and enhancing internship opportunities to improve student employability.
5. **Alumni Network** can actively participate in student recruitment through mentorship and referral programs, strengthening their connection with SMCC while boosting its credibility.
6. **Local Businesses and Industry Partners** will benefit from stronger collaboration with SMCC, gaining access to well-trained students and future employees through internships and mentorship programs.
7. **Other Developing Schools** can use these insights as a model for improving their own enrollment strategies. Other institutions working on growth can adopt similar marketing approaches, industry partnerships, and student engagement strategies to enhance their competitiveness and student recruitment.
8. **Future Researchers** are encouraged to explore similar studies in a broader scope, possibly involving a larger population or multiple institutions to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, replicating the study in different contexts or regions may provide comparative data that can enrich the field of inquiry. It is also recommended that future researchers utilize advanced data analysis tools to ensure more accurate interpretation of results.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study indicate that both regional and institutional enrollment trends in Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA) programs from 2019 to 2024 demonstrate an overall positive trajectory, reflecting sustained student interest in business education, particularly in Financial Management due to its broad and diverse career opportunities. Although the COVID-19 pandemic caused a temporary decline in enrollments during the 2020–2021 academic year at both the regional and institutional levels, the subsequent recovery beginning in 2022 highlights the resilience of the sector and the effectiveness of strategic institutional responses. This rebound was supported by targeted interventions, including scholarship provisions and expanded digital marketing initiatives, which helped restore student confidence and accessibility to higher education.

The study further establishes that marketing channels vary in their relative influence on student decision-making. Digital marketing, especially through Facebook and related platforms, serves as a moderately effective medium for information dissemination and engagement; however, traditional and interpersonal approaches—including radio promotions, face-to-face interactions, referrals, and scholarship awareness—exert stronger influence on enrollment decisions. These findings underscore the continued importance of personalized and community-based communication strategies alongside digital outreach. Among the various efforts, consistent social media campaigns, positive alumni and student testimonials, and visible scholarship opportunities emerged as the most effective drivers of institutional appeal. SMCC’s established reputation and active community presence further strengthened these efforts, demonstrating that a multi-channel strategy integrating digital, personal, and referral-based marketing is most effective for attracting prospective students.

In light of these results, enhancing social media engagement, broadening scholarship programs, strengthening partnerships with senior high schools, improving radio outreach, and implementing student ambassador initiatives are recommended to expand recruitment reach. Moreover, the adoption of data-driven mechanisms such as enrollment dashboards may support continuous monitoring and evidence-based refinement of marketing strategies. Collectively, these measures position SMCC to sustain enrollment growth and remain responsive to evolving student preferences and market demands.

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