

## **Factors Influencing Students' Intentions to Enroll in Private Educational Institutions in Sri Lanka**

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This study examines the factors influencing students' intentions to enroll in private educational institutions in Sri Lanka, addressing the increasing demand for private education due to limited capacity in public institutions and rising competition. Understanding the key drivers of enrollment decisions is crucial for educational institutions to enhance their offerings and marketing strategies. The study explores location, price sensitivity, institutional reputation, traditional and digital advertising, recommendations, and learning facilities as determinants of enrollment intention, providing actionable insights for stakeholders in the private education sector.

A quantitative research methodology was employed, collecting data from 327 respondents aged 15 to 30 years through structured questionnaires. The sample represented a diverse demographic, encompassing both urban and rural regions of Sri Lanka. The study was guided by theoretical models, including the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), and Rational Choice Theory (RCT), to understand the decision-making processes influencing students' educational choices. Statistical techniques were used to test hypotheses and assess the relationships between independent variables (factors affecting enrollment) and the dependent variable (students' intention to enroll). Findings reveal that institutional reputation is a primary determinant of enrollment decisions, emphasizing perceived quality, alumni success, and brand recognition. Digital advertising, particularly targeted social media campaigns, significantly influences students' choices, whereas traditional advertising methods have a lesser impact. Recommendations from alumni, peers, and educators play a crucial role, highlighting the importance of word-of-mouth marketing.

Location is a key consideration, with urban institutions being preferred due to proximity to job opportunities and modern facilities. Price sensitivity also

significantly influences enrollment, with affordability and perceived value affecting decision-making. Financial aid and scholarships enhance students' willingness to enroll. Moreover, learning facilities, including modern classrooms, libraries, and extracurricular opportunities, positively correlate with enrollment intentions. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of student enrollment decisions, revealing the interplay of economic, social, and institutional factors. To attract and retain students, private institutions must adopt a holistic approach, addressing both practical concerns and emotional drivers.

The study acknowledges several limitations. As research was conducted within Sri Lanka, findings may not be fully generalizable to other cultural, economic, and regulatory contexts. While the sample size is statistically valid, it represents a subset of the population, which may not capture the full diversity of enrollment intentions. Additionally, the study focuses solely on private institutions, leaving the public education sector unexplored. Furthermore, self-reported data may be subject to respondent biases, such as overstatement of certain factors due to social desirability. While seven key variables were examined, other potential influencers, such as parental influence and societal expectations, were not explored in depth. These limitations suggest the need for caution in generalizing findings while offering opportunities for future research. The implications of this study are significant for policymakers, private institutions, and researchers. Policymakers should focus on regulating private education to ensure equitable access and quality standards, potentially introducing tax incentives for scholarships and subsidies for private institutions. For private educational institutions, findings emphasize the importance of branding, digital marketing, and infrastructure development. Institutions should strengthen their online presence, leverage alumni networks, and adopt competitive pricing strategies. For researchers, this study serves as a foundation for further exploration into student enrollment intentions. Future research could adopt a comparative approach, analyzing public versus private institutions or expanding into international contexts. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how enrollment intentions evolve over time and in response to market dynamics.

**Keywords:** *Digital Advertising, Enrollment, Learning Facilities, Location, Institutional Reputation, Price Sensitivity, Private Educational Institutions, Students' Intention, Traditional Advertising, Recommendations*