



Digital Marketing Competencies for Business Education Students' Employability in Delta State

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Authors' Contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors.
All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Research Article

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the digital marketing competencies required of business education students for employability. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for study. Three research questions were raised and one hypothesis was formulated. The population of the study comprises 181 final year business education students from public tertiary institutions in Delta State. Census sampling was adopted for the study. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire on four point Likert rating scale. The instrument was validated by three experts. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach method. Arithmetic mean and standard deviation were employed to analyze the research questions. The null hypothesis was tested using independent t-test. The findings showed that business education students' current level of competence in digital marketing skills is poor; and this as a result of poor integration of digital marketing skills into business education curriculum and grossly poor provision of necessary digital marketing resources and tools. Consequent upon the findings, it was concluded that proficiency in digital marketing skills is essential for enhanced employability in the business domain but business education students have poor proficiency in digital marketing. It was recommended amongst others that business education practitioners should adequately equip the students with the knowledge and skills in digital marketing such as search engine optimization, and content market to enable them fit into the current jobs expectancy.

Keywords: Digital marketing, competencies, employability, business education,

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INTRODUCTION

In the fast-changing business environment of today, digital marketing has seemingly manifested as a crucial element for organizations pursuing to maintain competitiveness and reach their target audiences effectively. With the seeming proliferation of digital technologies and online platforms, businesses are increasingly reliant on digital technologies to strategically promote their products and services, engage with customers, and drive revenue growth. This evolution has transformed how businesses operate and engage with their target audiences. As Otamiri and Odu (2022) succinctly posited that digitalization was gradually creeping into different sectors of the (entertainment, communication, agriculture, transportation, education, etcetera). This seemingly unprecedented shift from the traditional method of promoting and marketing brand products to digitalize marketing has occasioned the prioritized demand for individuals with digital marketing skills. These skills have become integral for businesses to survive in a highly competitive market environment. The exponential growth in the demand for individuals with requisite digital marketing skills and competencies underscores digital marketing's significance and the abundance of opportunities it presents in the world of work. Weitzel and Jonsson (2017) explained that with the advent of the internet and social media platforms, businesses are moving away from traditional marketing operations to electronic or digital interface for customer engagement, brand visibility, and lead generation.

Digital marketing entails all marketing and promotional activities conducted via electronic devices or the internet. It is a multifaceted approach designed to promote products, services, or brands across variety of digital platforms

and technologies. By harnessing the internet, mobile devices, social media, search engines, emails and other digital channels, digital marketing seeks to connect with target audiences, engage them, and drive desired actions, such as purchases or inquiries (Lee & Lim, 2017). It also refers to the use of digital channels, platforms, and technologies to promote products, services, or brands to consumers. This approach encompasses diverse online techniques aimed at attracting and engaging potential customers, boosting websites traffic, generating leads, and ultimately enhancing sales and revenue. One of the key strengths of digital marketing is its ability to target specific demographics or segments of the audience with personalized messages. This is achieved through data analytics, user behaviour tracking, and segmentation strategies.

By gaining insight into their target audience's preferences and behaviour, marketers can effectively direct their messages to better connect with individual consumers, thereby enhancing engagement and boosting conversion rates. Digital marketing also provides exceptional opportunities for real-time tracking and assessment campaign performance. Marketers can use a range of analytics tools to track key performance indicators (KPIs) such as website traffic, conversion rates, click-through rates, and return on investment (ROI). This data-driven approach allows marketers to optimize their campaigns on the fly, making necessary adjustments to improve effectiveness and efficiency. Unlike traditional forms of marketing, digital marketing fosters interactive communication between brands and consumers. Platforms like social media facilitate direct engagement through connect messages, polls and contest, helping to build relationships and strengthen brand loyalty. As a continually evolving field, digital marketing

must adapt to technological advancements, shifts in consumer behaviour, and emerging markets trends. Marketers need to keep up with the latest digital tools, algorithms, and best practices to stay competitive and effective in their campaigns. Some of the digital marketing skills are search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing, video marketing, data analytics, social media marketing, mobile marketing, artificial intelligence and automation, and the likes.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the process of improving on one's website to increase its visibility in Google. SEO remains a vital and indispensable skill for any digital marketer. As search engines continually updating their algorithms, a sound marketer must adapt quickly. Now, SEO is much more than just keywords; it entails understanding user minds, voice search, it also includes AI-driven algorithms to make sure that one's content is always displaying in the top search results. Being skillful in SEO means staying tune with Google's frequent algorithm changes and mastering how to optimize for them effectively. Mihailidis and Theodoraki (2019) posited that SEO is crucial for driving organic traffic to websites and improving online visibility. Another digital marketing skill is content marketing which involves creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent online materials to attract and engage a target audience. This includes blog posts, articles, videos, infographics, podcasts, and social media posts. According to Pulizzi and Barrett (2015), content marketing is a strategic approach that builds brand awareness, establishes authority, and nurtures customer relationships over time. Content remains king and paramount, but the kingdom has become increasingly intricate. Marketers must excel in producing a variety of content such as blog articles, eBooks, podcasts and video scripts. This content must be

compelling and provide genuine value to the audience. Understanding the needs of the target audience is essential for creating materials that truly connects and stimulate.

Video marketing is a powerful strategy that involves using video content to promote a product, service, or brand. The axiom that a picture is worth a thousand words remains uncontested, but a video can convey even more. As digital platforms continue to surge, and video consumption online has soared, video marketing has become a crucial strategy for businesses to connect with their audience, enhance brand visibility, drive web traffics and increase sales. According to Chartered Association of Business Schools (2020), video marketing has seen substantial expansions with YouTube and TikTok at the forefront. Short-form videos, storytelling, and live streams have become key components of successful digital marketing.

Social media marketing focuses on utilizing platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube to engage with the target audience, increase brand visibility, and drive interactions (Evans, 2020; Kaushik, 2009). In today's digital era, managing a brand across various social media channels is vital. Each platform has its distinct characteristics, audience, and content preferences. Mastering these details enables more effective audience engagement. Skills in scheduling content, executing ad campaigns, and managing online communities are highly valuable. With the proliferation of smartphones and mobile devices, mobile marketing has become essential for businesses looking to connect with consumers on the go. This approach includes various methods such as mobile-friendly websites, applications, SMS campaigns, and location-targeted advertising. Mobile marketing empowers brands to send personalized messages, special deals, and promotions straight to

consumers' devices, which boosts interaction and increases sales. . It provides unique chances for customization and immediate engagement. By utilizing data analysis and geo-location technologies, businesses can deliver hyper-targeted content based on users' preferences, behaviours, and physical proximity (Smith & Zook, 2019). As posited by Evans (2020) that AI-powered personalization improves customer experiences by offering well-tailored content, product recommendations, as well as targeted advertisements. Automation workflows ensure timely and consistent communication with consumers across multiple channels, leading to increased efficiency and ROI for marketing campaigns.

Notwithstanding the widely acknowledged importance of digital marketing in today's business environment, there exists a notable gap in understanding the extent to which business education students possess these skills upon completion of their academic programmes and how such proficiencies enhances their employability potentials in the competitive job market. Olszewska (2019) asserted that there was a growing interest and concerns about business education students' proficiency in digital marketing skills and the extent to which they are prepared for the demands of the digital era. Moreover, the rapidly evolving nature of digital marketing platforms and strategies further complicates the assessment of students' readiness for industry roles. Consequently, there is a pressing need for empirical research that delves into the competencies of business education students in digital marketing tools and to explore the nuanced relationship between these competencies and their employability potentials. By addressing this gap, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of current educational approaches in preparing students

for the demands of digital marketing roles and informed strategies to enhance their employability in the dynamic business environment.

The main purpose of this study is to examine the competencies of business education students in digital marketing tools for their employability in Delta State's tertiary institutions. The specific measurable objectives of this study are to establish: the current levels of digital marketing tools competencies among business education students in Delta State's tertiary institutions; the extent business education curriculum adequately prepares students with digital marketing skills relevant to current industry needs in Delta State's tertiary institutions; and the perceived barriers to business education students in acquiring digital marketing skills in Delta State's tertiary institutions. Descriptive research approach was applied in empirically achieving the objectives of this study.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Digital marketing is a strategic effort taken by marketers and businesses to bring their products at the doorstep of the consumers through various online channels. As financial times (2017) expressly described digital marketing as an aspect or integral part of marketing which uses the digital marketing tools including internet and other online based digital technology like computer, mobile phone (SMS and MMS), and other digital media and platform to promote product and service. It entails all marketing and promotional activities conducted via electronic devices or the internet. It is a multifaceted approach designed to at promote products, services, or brands across variety of digital platforms and technologies. By harnessing the internet, mobile devices, social media, search engines, emails and other digital channels, digital marketing seeks to connect with

target audiences, engage them, and drive desired actions, such as purchases or inquiries (Lee & Lim, 2017). It also refers to the use of digital channels, platforms, and technologies to promote products, services, or brands to consumers. This approach encompasses diverse online techniques aimed at attracting and engaging potential customers, boosting website traffic, generating leads, and ultimately enhancing sales and revenue. One of the key strengths of digital marketing is its ability to target specific demographics or segments of the audience with personalized messages. This is achieved through data analytics, user behaviour tracking, and segmentation strategies. Digital marketing has become an essential component of business strategy in the modern economy.

Competencies or skills in digital marketing tools are crucial for business education students, as it directly impacts their employability potential. Digital Marketing proficiency is the ability that enables individuals to enhance online marketing. It is the skill, and competencies which entrepreneurs and businesses require to successfully promote a brand, product or services online through digital communication. According to McKinley Marketing Partners (2019), the digital marketing competencies that are mostly sought out for by firms include digital content creation, digital analysis, search engine optimization, e-mail and social media and cloud computing. This informs that it is only students with such digital marketing competencies or skills that could easily get employed on graduation. No wonder the digital marketing institute (2022) posit that digital marketing proficiency provides students with the opportunities of instant employment on graduation. According to them, such skills range from social media marketing skills, search engine marketing skills, content creator marketing skills, e-

mail marketing skills, mobile marketing skills, social selling marketing skill, pay-per-click marketing skills, video creation skills, strategic planning skills and digital analytic skills. They maintain that these skills would be able to drive sales for both micro and small scale business owners.

Business education involves the teaching and learning of concepts, theories, and practical skills related to various aspects of business, including management, finance, marketing, entrepreneurship, and more (Robbins, Coulter & DeCenzo, 2017). Also, Edokpolor and Owenvbiugie (2017) defined business education as an instructional programme offering diverse competencies in accounting, marketing, and Office Technology and Management (OTM). Val-Ossai and Akpomi (2017) see business education as an educational programme preparing students for business-related job entry and advancement. The authors emphasized that business education involves acquiring skills, knowledge, and proficiencies that render recipients capable. Business education is a method of teaching that promotes students innovative spirit, skills and attitudes which consequently make them after graduation to be suitable in career and become professional business creator. Similarly, Udoeye (2015) described business education as a study programme designed to provide individuals with the knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSA) needed to obtain, maintain, and advance in employment within both public and private sectors. Business education is a kind of concept which signifies not only quality education but also pay attention to the development of an individual practical ability and competency of students. Similarly, Akpan, Naboth and Nwokocha, (2019) highlighted that business education students are prepared to become global entrepreneurs; aiming to operate on an international scale. Business Education

could also be viewed as vocational training component, complementing general education, and aimed at preparing individuals for business roles and teaching business courses. Onyesom and Umuosiet (2013) defined business education as educational training that equips individual with the attitude, concepts, knowledge, understanding, and skills acquired for careers in administration, management, or teaching within the business sectors. The effectiveness of a business Education programme is often judged by how well it prepares individuals for specific job roles or establishes their own businesses upon graduation. The objectives of business education as identified by Muhammed (2014) are to enable the students to gain experience with skills such as leadership and communication and to provide students with information about all aspects of business. The author is also on the opinion that, business education is needed by students in the contemporary world because business education develops life skills for economic success and helps students to develop skills and attitudes needed for career success. As businesses continue to prioritize digital transformation, the demand for skilled professionals like in digital marketing will persist.

By enhancing business education students' proficiency in digital marketing, institutions can empower them to meet the evolving needs of businesses and contribute meaningfully to organizational growth. Through a combination of theoretical knowledge, practical experience, and hands-on training, students can develop the skills and competencies necessary to thrive in diverse roles within the digital marketing domain. Additionally, the integration of digital marketing into business education curriculum in tertiary institutions can foster innovation, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning among students, preparing them for

success in a rapidly changing business landscape (Strauss & Frost, 2017). In same vein, Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) lucidly highlighted and demonstrated how digital marketing tools proficiency or skills can enhance business education students' employability potentials through meeting industry demands, versatility and adaptability, enhanced communication and branding abilities, data-driven decision making, entrepreneurial opportunities, among others. The authors stressed that as businesses allocate more of their marketing budgets to digital channels, there is a growing need for professionals who can effectively navigate the complexities of digital marketing platforms, tools, and strategies. Business education students who possess digital marketing skills are better equipped to meet these industry demands and contribute to the success of their organizations from day one. Digital marketing encompasses a wide range of disciplines, including search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, content marketing, email marketing, and data analytics. Business education students who acquire proficiency in these areas gain a versatile skill set that can be applied across diverse industries and business sectors. Moreover, digital marketing is constantly evolving, requiring professionals to stay abreast with the latest trends and technologies. Business education students with digital marketing skills demonstrate their adaptability and willingness to embrace change, making them valuable assets to prospective employers. Digital marketing relies heavily on effective communication and branding strategies to engage with target audiences and build brand awareness. Business education students who specialize in digital marketing develop strong communication skills, both written and verbal, as they craft compelling content, engage with followers on social media

platforms, and analyze consumer feedback. They also gain a deeper understanding of brand identity, positioning, and storytelling, enabling them to create impactful marketing campaigns that resonate with consumers.

One of the key advantages of digital marketing is its ability to generate vast amounts of data on consumer behavior, preferences, and interactions. Business education students who are proficient in digital marketing learn how to collect, analyze, and interpret this data to derive actionable insights and inform strategic decision-making processes. By leveraging analytics tools and metrics, they can optimize marketing campaigns, track ROI, and identify areas for improvement, ultimately driving business growth and success. Digital marketing skills are highly sought after not only by established corporations but also by startups and entrepreneurs looking to establish their online presence and grow their businesses. Business education students with a strong foundation in digital marketing have the knowledge and expertise to launch their ventures, promote their products or services, and effectively compete in the digital marketplace. Additionally, freelancing and consulting opportunities abound for individuals with specialized digital marketing skills, offering flexibility and autonomy in their career paths. Ibukunoluwa (2019) offered some strategies for integrating digital marketing skills into business education curriculum and enhancing students' employability potential. These include incorporating digital marketing skills into business education curriculum by periodically updating course content that reflects the latest trends, technologies, and best practices in digital marketing. According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019), the fast-paced nature of digital marketing requires continuous updates in educational content to remain

relevant. These may contain modules on search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, content marketing, email marketing, digital advertising, analytics, and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) in marketing. According to research by Daugherty and Wilson (2018), AI skills are increasingly sought after in digital marketing roles. Also, Research by Strauss and Frost (2021) indicates that proficiency in data analytics is highly valued by employers in digital marketing roles.

While the integration of digital marketing skills into business education programmes offers numerous benefits and opportunities, it also presents several challenges that educators and institutions must address. These challenges stem from the dynamic nature of digital marketing, the evolving landscape of technology, and the need for continuous updates to curriculum and teaching methodologies. Generally, embracing and integrating emerging technologies into teaching and learning has been characterized with many setbacks or barriers. As succinctly posited by Otamiri and Odu (2022) who raised some issues bedeviling various efforts aimed at managing Nigerian education in a digital world amongst which are government policies; Nigeria technological level, confusion about how ripe or ready Nigeria is for educational digitalization, and high Level of Illiteracy (general education illiteracy and computer illiteracy). Similarly, Ertmer, Ottenbreit-Leftwich, and Tondeur (2015), and Mkombo, and Wahua (2024) pointed out that the challenges such as the digital divide, technological infrastructure limitations, and resistance to change among educators served as impediment to the effective integration of ICT in business education which had caused poor acquisition digital skills among higher institutions students. Ekpenyong, Ogbeide, and

Robinson (2011), and Attipoe and Wahua (2023) equally identified some challenges in the use of ICT in the learning of business education which include: Ignorance, poor infrastructural support and lack of computing skills.

Digital marketing relies heavily on technology, and the rapid pace of technological advancements presents a significant challenge for business education programmes. New platforms, tools, and algorithms emerge frequently, requiring educators to continuously update their knowledge and teaching materials to ensure relevance and accuracy. Staying abreast of the latest trends in digital marketing can be challenging for business educators who may have limited time and resources for professional development. Also, traditional business education may be resistant to integrating newer digital marketing topics due to established curriculum structures and business educators' expertise biases. Ellis-Chadwick and Doherty (2019) discuss the challenges institutions face in adapting curriculum to meet the demands of digital marketing education to include resistance to change in traditional curriculum. Also, providing students with hands-on experience through projects and internships is crucial for their readiness for the job market. However, logistical challenges such as finding suitable industry partners and coordinating placements can hinder this aspect of digital marketing education (Daugherty & Wilson, 2018). Digital marketing raises complex ethical and regulatory considerations related to data privacy, consumer protection, transparency, and online advertising practices. Business educators must ensure that business education programmes incorporate discussions and case studies on these ethical and regulatory issues to help students develop a strong ethical framework and decision-making skills. However, navigating

these topics can be challenging, particularly in rapidly evolving regulatory environments and global contexts. Tuten and Solomon (2017) argue that incorporating ethical training into digital marketing education requires ongoing updates and real-world case studies which can be very challenging.

Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from educators, institutions, industry stakeholders, and policymakers to ensure that business education programmes effectively prepare students for careers in digital marketing. By embracing innovation, collaboration, and continuous learning, business education programmes can overcome these challenges and equip students with the digital marketing skills needed to succeed in today's competitive marketplace.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is hinged on the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) propounded by Ajzen (1991). The theory offers a robust framework for understanding how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence individual behaviors. In the context of digital marketing skills competencies and the employability potentials of business education students, the assumptions of theory of planned behaviour can be directly related to how students approach the acquisition of digital marketing competencies and their subsequent employability. One of the assumptions of this theory is that behaviour is planned which means that human behavior is not random but rather a result of deliberate planning. Individuals assess their options and make choices based on beliefs about the outcomes. The implication of this assumption to this study is that business education students actively seek to develop digital marketing skills and competencies because they recognize the importance of these skills in the job market. They plan

their learning strategies, such as enrolling in relevant courses or seeking internships, to enhance their employability. Attitude toward the behavior is another assumption that individuals have a positive or negative evaluation of engaging in behaviour. Positive attitudes increase the likelihood of intention to perform that behaviour. By implication, if business education students have a positive attitude towards digital marketing—seeing it as a vital and engaging field—they are more likely to invest time and effort in acquiring these competencies and skills. For instance, students who recognize the potential of digital marketing to open lucrative career paths are more motivated to learn. Similarly, subjective norm is an assumption which emphasizes perceived social pressure to perform or not perform a behavior influences intentions. This includes the influence of peers, family, and mentors. If students perceive that their peers or potential employers value digital marketing skills, they may feel pressured to develop these skills. This can be reinforced through networking events, university workshops, or career fairs that emphasize the importance of digital marketing in the business landscape (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). In same vein, the assumption of perceived behavioural control refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing a behavior, which affects both intentions and actual behavior. Students with high perceived behavioural control regarding digital marketing—believing they have the resources, knowledge, and support to learn these skills—are more likely to engage in skill acquisition. Conversely, those who feel overwhelmed by the complexity of digital tools may shy away from pursuing them. In addition, contextual influence is an assumption that underscores the context in which behaviour occurs can significantly influence intentions and actions. It means therefore that the rapidly changing landscape

of digital marketing, influenced by technological advancements and market trends, shapes students' perceptions of the importance of acquiring digital marketing skills. Additionally, contextual factors such as access to training resources, industry demand, and employer expectations can impact students' decisions to pursue these skills (Armitage & Conner, 2001).

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

This study reviewed several empirical studies relating to digital marketing tools proficiency for employability potentials business education students. Chinwe (2024) carried out a study on the extent of acquisition of digital marketing skills among business education students in colleges of education for economic development in Anambra State. Two specific objectives and corresponding research questions guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey. The population of the study was 214 comprised 400 and 300 level bus education students. The study made use of 50% of the entire population which is 107 respondents. Thus, a proportional sampling method was used to select the sample. The instrument for data collection was a well-structured questionnaire. Findings revealed that business education student have acquired digital content and social media marketing skills but to low extent. The Chinwe (2024) study is related the current study as both focused on digital marketing skills for employability of business education students. However, they are differ in the sense that Chinwe (2024) study focused the extent of acquisition of digital marketing skills among business education students in colleges of education for economic development in college of education while the present study is carried out to ascertain the digital marketing tools proficiency for employability potentials of business

education students in both university and college of education.

Ezoem et al (2024) conducted a study to assess the digital competencies needed of business education graduates' employability prospect and job creation. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were formulated and tested. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population for the study comprised 133 business education lecturers in the five tertiary institutions in Delta State. The entire population was studied because the population size was manageable. The instrument for data collection was 21-item structured questionnaire. The findings of the study revealed that digital marketing competencies and digital social media competencies are highly needed of business education graduates' employability prospect and job creation. The Ezoem et al (2024) study is related the present study to the extent that both studies focused on digital skills for employability of business education students. However, they are differ in the sense that Ezoem et al (2024) study concentrated on the digital competencies needed of business education graduates' employability prospect and job creation while the current study is carried out to ascertain the digital marketing tools proficiency for employability potentials of business education students in both university and college of education.

Mordi (2023) carried a study to investigate digitalization and skills required by business education graduates for employability in colleges of education in delta state, Nigeria. Two research questions were formulated for the study. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 76 Business Education lecturers in Colleges of Education in Delta State and the entire population was used as the sample size. 43-item four-point scale questionnaire was used as the

instrument for the study. The findings revealed that computer operating skill Microsoft word skill; excel skill; E-payment skill; E-receipt skill; using various accounting software; among others are digital marketing skills required by business education graduates for employability. Mordi (2023) study is related the present study as both studies centred on digital skills for employability of business education students. However, they are differ because while Mordi (2023) study was based on the digitalization and skills required by business education graduates for employability the current study is carried out to ascertain the digital marketing tools proficiency for employability potentials of business education students in both university and college of education.

Langan et al (2019) conducted a study to examine the state of digital marketing in academia: an examination of marketing curriculum's response to digital disruption. the research conducts a systematic analysis of all 529 domestic AACSB undergraduate marketing programmes to understand how digital marketing courses have been incorporated into marketing programmes curricula. The findings showed a broad range of digital marketing courses adopted in a majority of business schools, and that adoption varies by institution type. Langan et al (2019) study is related the present study as both studies concentrated on digital marketing skills in academia. However, they are differ because while Langan et al (2019) study was focused on the digital marketing in the entire academia, the current study is based the digital marketing tools proficiency for employability potentials of business education students in both university and college of education.

METHODOLOGY

The design of the study is descriptive survey. This research design is considered appropriate for this study because according to Nworgu (2015), descriptive survey is a type of a research design which aims at gathering data for the reason of carefully and systematically describing the characteristics, features and facts about a given population the way they are without manipulating variables.

The population of the study comprised 181 final year business education students drawn from public tertiary institutions that offer business education programme in Delta State, Nigeria. The breakdown of the population is as follows: Delta State University, Abraka (98), University of Delta, Agbor (08), Federal College of Education (Technical) Asaba (40), College of Education, Warri (30), and College of Education, Mosogar (05)

Census method was adopted for the study because the population is of manageable size. This is in line with Agboola (2018) who posited that it is ideal to study the entire population when such population is of a manageable size.

Data was gathered using a meticulously designed questionnaire divided into two parts. Section 'A' collected respondents' Bio-data while section 'B' sought detailed responses to specific questions, employing four-point rating scale: Strongly Agreed (4), Agreed (3), Disagreed

(2), and Strongly Disagreed (1). The questionnaire underwent face and content validation by three experts from Departments of Business Education, and Measurement and Evaluation in University of Delta, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed using Cronbach alpha method, and reliability coefficient 0.73 was obtained.

Data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research question while the hypothesis was analyzed using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule is that a Mean cut off point that is equal to or greater than 2.50 falls within the acceptance region while the Mean cut off point that is less than 2.50 falls within rejection region. The decision rule was made where the t-calculated value is equal or greater than t-critical value of 1.960 at 0.05 level of significance in a given degree of freedom, then the null hypothesis is rejected but where the t-calculated value is less than the t-Critical value at 0.05 alpha level then the null hypothesis is accepted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Biodata Analysis

The bio-data analysis of the respondents was carried out using simple percentage. One hundred and eighty one (181) persons participated in the study (106 males and 75 females); and they were drawn from universities (91 participants), and colleges of education (90 participants).

Research Question 1: *What are the current levels of digital marketing competencies among business education students in Delta State?*

Table 1 shows business education students' mean responses on their current levels of digital marketing skills proficiency. The mean scores of most of the responses ranged from 1.91 - 2.36 showing disagreement to the items while two questionnaire items were answered in affirmative. The grand mean score of 2.28 shows that business education students' current level of digital marketing proficiency is poor. This approach of statistical analysis is supported by Tsekpo, and Wahua (2023). However, they agreed that proficiency in digital marketing skills is essential for enhanced employability in the business field.

Table 1:

Business education students' levels of digital marketing competencies in Delta State

S/N	Item	\bar{x}	SD	Decision
1	I am confident in my ability to use social media platforms effectively for marketing purposes.	2.13	0.41	Disagreed
2	I believe I possess adequate knowledge and skills in search engine optimization (SEO) techniques.	1.91	0.58	Disagreed
3	I am comfortable with creating and managing digital advertising campaigns (example: Google advertising, Facebook advertising).	2.15	0.55	Disagreed
4	I am proficient in analyzing digital marketing metrics (example: website traffic, conversion rates).	2.35	0.46	Disagreed
5	Proficiency in social media platforms (example: Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn) is essential for enhanced employability in the business field.	2.72	0.42	Agreed
6	I am familiar with marketing automation tools (example: HubSpot, Mailchimp).	2.36	0.54	Disagreed
7	I possess the skills to create engaging multimedia content for digital marketing purposes (example: videos, infographics).	2.10	0.51	Disagreed
8	I am proficient in utilizing analytics tools (example: Google Analytics) to track and measure digital marketing performance.	1.97	0.49	Disagreed
9	I am confident in my understanding of content marketing strategies (example: blogging, email marketing).	2.24	0.47	Disagreed
10	Knowledge and skills in search engine optimization (SEO) techniques significantly contribute to employability in the digital marketing sector.	2.94	0.78	Agreed
Average mean and Standard deviation		2.28	0.52	Disagreed

Source: Field survey (2024)

Research Question 2: *To what extent does business education curriculum adequately prepare students with digital marketing skills relevant to current industry needs in Delta State?*

The 2 above shows business Education students' mean responses on the extent do business education curriculum adequately prepare students with digital marketing skills relevant to current industry needs. The mean scores ranged from 2.52 - 3.01 showing that all the items listed were answered in affirmative. The grand mean score of 2.75 shows that business education students agreed that business education curriculum to a low extent prepare students with digital marketing skills relevant to current industry needs.

Table 2:*Relevance of business education curriculum to students' digital marketing in Delta State*

S/N	Item	\bar{x}	SD	Decision
11	The business education curriculum does not provide comprehensive coverage of digital marketing concepts and strategies.	2.73	0.59	Agreed
12	The curriculum does not include practical hands-on exercises or projects related to digital marketing.	2.87	0.68	Agreed
13	The curriculum do not incorporates the latest industry trends and technologies in digital marketing.	2.81	0.55	Agreed
14	The curriculum to a low extent effectively prepares students with the necessary analytical skills to assess digital marketing performance.	2.65	0.72	Agreed
15	The curriculum adequately addresses the ethical considerations and challenges in digital marketing practices.	2.52	0.72	Agreed
16	The curriculum offers little opportunities for students to collaborate on digital marketing projects with industry partners or professionals.	2.72	0.54	Agreed
17	The curriculum provides insufficient resources (example: textbooks, online materials, software) to support learning in digital marketing.	3.01	0.63	Agreed
18	Overall, the business education curriculum to a low extent prepares students with digital marketing skills relevant to industry needs.	2.72	0.82	Agreed
Average mean and Standard deviation		2.75	0.70	Agreed

Source: Field survey (2024)

Research Question 3: *What are the perceived barriers to business education students in acquiring digital marketing skills in tertiary institutions in Delta State?*

The data on table 3 above shows business education students' mean responses on the perceived barriers to business education students in acquiring digital marketing skills. The mean scores ranged from 2.65 - 2.83 showing that all the items listed were answered in affirmative. The grand mean score of 2.78 shows that business education students perceived the above listed barriers to acquiring digital marketing skills.

Table 3:

Business education students' perceived barriers to acquiring digital marketing skills

S/N	Items	\bar{x}	SD	Decision
19	Limited access to relevant digital marketing resources (example: software, online courses) hinders business education students' acquisition of digital marketing skills.	2.82	0.70	Agreed
20	.Insufficient practical hands-on experience opportunities in digital marketing within the academic curriculum pose a barrier to students' skill development in this field.	2.52	0.67	Agreed
21	The fast-paced nature of digital marketing trends makes it challenging for business education students to keep up with the latest industry developments.	2.85	0.63	Agreed
22	Limited availability of expert guidance and mentorship in digital marketing within the academic setting restricts students' ability to develop advanced skills in this area.	2.65	0.59	Agreed
23	Time constraints due to heavy academic workloads prevent business education students from dedicating sufficient time to learning and practicing digital marketing skills.	2.78	0.71	Agreed
24	The complexity of digital marketing concepts and tools makes it difficult for business education students to grasp and apply them effectively.	2.82	0,61	Agreed
25	Lack of integration of digital marketing courses into the core business education curriculum limits students' exposure to essential digital marketing concepts and practice	2.67	0.52	Agreed
26	Lack of expertise knowledge on digital marketing among business education lecturers is a barrier to effective instructional delivery.	2.83	0.67	Agreed
Average mean and standard deviation		2.78	0.6	Agreed

Source: Field survey (2024)

Testing of hypothesis

HO1: *There is no significant difference in the perception of business education students in the university and the college of education on the level of digital marketing skills proficiency and their employability potentials in Delta State, Nigeria.*

Table 4:

Result of hypothesis: Independent t-test comparison

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	Level of Sig.	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
University	128	2.74	0.67	179	0.05	1.351	1.960	Accept HO ₁
COE	53	2.62	0.73					

Source: Field survey (2024)

The result presented in Table 4 shows that the t-calculated value of 1.351 is less than 1.960 t-critical value ($1.351 < 1.960$) at 0.05 level of significance, and 179 degree of freedom. There is no significant difference in the perception of business education students in the university and the college of education on the level of digital marketing skills proficiency and their employability potentials in Delta State, Nigeria.

Discussion of Results

The purpose of this study was to find out the current levels of digital marketing competencies among business education students. The findings of this study revealed that business education students' current level of digital marketing proficiency is poor. This is in agreement with study by Ertmer, Ottenbreit-Leftwich and Tondeur (2015) who pointed out that the challenges such as the digital divide, technological infrastructure limitations, and resistance to change among educators served as impediment to the effective integration of ICT in business education which had caused poor acquisition digital skills among higher institutions students. These findings affirmed the concern raised by Olszewska (2019) who asserted that business education students' proficiency in digital marketing skills and the extent to which they are prepared for the demands of the digital era remain subjects of interest and concern. The findings revealed that proficiency in digital marketing skills is essential for enhanced employability in the business field. This affirmed the position of Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) who lucidly highlighted and demonstrated how digital marketing skills can enhance business education students' employability potentials through meeting industry demands, versatility and adaptability, enhanced communication and branding abilities, data-driven decision making, entrepreneurial opportunities, among others.

This study also sought to find out the extent do business education curriculum adequately prepare students with digital marketing skills relevant to current industry needs. The findings of this study reviewed that business education curriculum to a low extent prepare students with digital marketing skills relevant to current industry needs. In other words, the curriculum is not

comprehensive enough to equip business education students with the requisite digital marketing skills for the current industry needs. The findings aligned with position of Ellis-Chadwick and Doherty (2019) who pointed out the challenges institutions face in adapting curriculum to meet the demands of digital marketing education to include resistance to change in traditional curriculum, and providing students with hands-on experience through projects and internships is crucial for their readiness for the job market.

The study equally sought to find out the perceived barriers to business education students in acquiring digital marketing skills. The findings of this study reviewed that barriers such as limited access to relevant digital marketing resources (examples: software, online courses); insufficient practical hands-on experience opportunities in digital marketing within the academic curriculum; fast-paced nature of digital marketing trends; lack of integration of digital marketing courses into the core business education curriculum; lack of expertise knowledge on digital marketing among business education lecturers; among others. The finding is in agreement with Otamiri and Odu (2022) who raised some issues bedeviling various efforts aimed at managing Nigerian education in a digital world amongst which are government policies; Nigeria technological level, confusion about how ripe or ready Nigeria is for educational digitization, and high level of illiteracy (general education illiteracy and computer illiteracy). These findings also concurred with Ekpenyong, Ogbeide, and Robinson (2011) who equally identified some challenges in the use of ICT in the learning of business education which include: Ignorance, poor infrastructural support and lack of computing skills.

The null hypothesis tested showed no significant difference in the perception of

business education students in both Universities and Colleges of Education on the level of digital marketing skills proficiency and their employability potentials. This is in consonance with the study of Strauss and Frost, (2017) who reported that the integration of digital marketing into business education curriculum in tertiary institutions can foster innovation, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning among students, preparing them for success in a rapidly changing business landscape

Conclusion

From the findings, it was concluded that proficiency in digital marketing skills is essential for enhanced employability in the business field but the current level of digital marketing skills proficiency among business education students is poor. Also, the business education curriculum is not comprehensive enough to equip business education students with the requisite digital marketing skills for the current industry needs. Barriers such as limited access to relevant digital marketing resources (example: software, online courses) ; insufficient practical hands-on experience opportunities in digital marketing within the academic curriculum; fast-paced nature of digital marketing trends; lack of integration of digital marketing courses into the core business education curriculum; lack of expertise knowledge on digital marketing among business education lecturers; among

others hindered the effective integration of digital marketing skills into the business education curriculum and acquisition of same by business education students.

Recommendation

Consequent upon the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- a. Business education practitioners should adequately equip the students with the knowledge and skills in digital marketing such as search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing, data analytic, AI and automation, and social media platform to enable them fit into the current jobs expectancy.
- b. Business education curriculum should be constantly reviewed and updated to accommodate current and emerging digital marketing skills, and offers opportunities for students to collaborate on digital marketing projects with industry partners or professionals.
- c. Relevant digital marketing resources (examples: software, online courses), practical hands-on experience opportunities in digital marketing and expert guidance and mentorship in digital marketing within the academic setting should be provided and constantly emphasized.

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