

ASSESSMENT OF DIGITAL MARKETING COMPETENCIES ACQUIRED BY BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN PUBLIC TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN KOGI STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study assessed digital marketing competencies acquired among Business Education students in public tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria. The study identified the digital marketing competencies and the level of digital marketing skills acquired by business education students in public tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria. The descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted in this study. The population for this study consisted of 519 final year Business Education students in Kogi State tertiary institutions and a total of two hundred and twenty-six (226) final year students was selected for the study using proportionate sampling technique. An instrument titled "Marketing Competencies Acquired by Business Education Students Questionnaire (MCABESQ)" was used to collect data for the study. The reliability of the instrument was determined through test-retest method to obtain a reliability coefficient of 0.80. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while inferential statistics of t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Kogi State possess predominantly low digital marketing competencies. The findings further revealed significant gender disparities in social media campaign and Search Engine Optimization competencies favoring male students, while email marketing skills show no gender-based differences. Based on the findings, it was recommended that Business education programmes in Kogi State public tertiary institutions should integrate comprehensive digital marketing modules that emphasize hands-on training in advanced skills.

Keywords: Business Education, Digital marketing, social media campaign, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), email marketing

Introduction

Business education is a significant component of technical and vocational education that exposes students to the development of marketing strategy, especially digital marketing that may be turned into financial gain. Any country's economic growth is entirely dependent on how students relate to one another in terms of entrepreneurship, vocational and technical education, and training (Sofolahan, 2023). The reason is because; it creates business and

employment opportunities for our youths.

Business education programmes play a crucial role in equipping students with this essential marketing skills (digital marketing). Business Education is a programme designed to provide students with the basic theories of management and production, and as well in business administration, human resource management, finance, and in developing general business knowledge. According Nwaodume and Udeh (2023), business

education is an aspect of total educational programme that provides knowledge, skills, understanding and attitude to individual who are expected to perform well in the business world. Business Education is more than just learning from textbooks in a classroom, it combines important business theories with actual real-life business practices. It can be simply described as a bridge that connects what students learn in classrooms to what actually happens in the business world.

Business Education represents a comprehensive vocational educational programme offered in tertiary institutions that uniquely combines theoretical knowledge with practical skills development for business and office occupations. As an integral component of vocational education, it serves the dual purpose of preparing individuals for teaching and private/industrial establishment through systematic instruction in various business disciplines, including secretarial studies, accounting, marketing, data processing, and computer analysis (Nwaodume & Udeh, 2023). The distinctive strength of Business Education lies in its ability to equip students with functional and sustainable skills while simultaneously developing the understanding of economic systems and business operations. Business education is therefore aimed at equipping an individual with specific employable skills that would enable them identify business opportunities when others see chaos. It therefore helps to create self-employment with acquisition several entrepreneurial skills, specifically marketing competencies.

Marketing competencies represent a fundamental cornerstone of Business Education in Nigeria, encompassing a comprehensive range of skills,

knowledge, and abilities that students must acquire to succeed in the contemporary business landscape. These competencies are multifaceted constructs that extend far beyond traditional understanding of marketing as merely selling or advertising, instead incorporating strategic thinking, analytical capabilities, technological proficiency, and entrepreneurial acumen that are essential for business success in the 21st century (Adefulu & Adebowale, 2020). Business Education students in Nigerian institutions are therefore, expected to develop a robust foundation in market research and analysis, which involves the ability to identify market trends, consumer behavior patterns, and competitive landscapes. Understanding these essential skills requires examining what marketing competencies actually involve and why they are so crucial for business success.

Marketing competencies encompass a broad range of skills that enable individuals/ professionals to analyze market conditions, identify opportunities, and develop comprehensive plans to achieve business objectives through effective marketing initiatives. Kotler and Keller (2023) define marketing strategy as "the marketing logic by which the business unit hopes to achieve its marketing objectives". The skills required to formulate and execute such strategies are diverse and continually evolving. At the foundation of effective marketing strategy lies the ability to conduct thorough market analysis and research. This skill involves gathering, interpreting, and applying market data to inform decision making (Malhotra, Nunan, & Birks, 2022). According to Oyerinde and Falana (2016), marketing competencies are essential abilities that entail considering how to reach the intended audience for goods and services

created by an entrepreneur. Any business owner who learns these talents would be able to make money selling these kinds of goods. A key competency that determines whether a business succeeds or fails is marketing. Marketing involves research, product development, design, and testing, and concentrates primarily on consumers or buyers, brand management, customer relationship management (CRM), especially, digital marketing skills.

Digital Marketing Skills is the ability to leverage online platforms, tools, and strategies to promote products, services, or brands through digital channels such as social media, search engines, email, and websites to reach and engage target audiences effectively. According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019), digital marketing skills now encompass a wide range of technical and strategic capabilities, including search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing, social media strategy, data analytics, and proficiency with digital advertising platforms. Modern digital marketers must understand complex algorithmic ecosystems, create compelling multimedia content, and interpret sophisticated digital performance metrics.

Digital marketing is often referred to as online marketing, internet marketing or 'web marketing' (Bhosale, Raverkar and Tamondkar, 2020). Following this point of view, Gustavsen (2022) noted that, digital marketing encompasses a wide variety of marketing tactics and technologies used to reach consumers online. According to Khan (2019), digital marketing are marketing activities conducted through electronic devices and online platforms. Organizations utilize various digital channels—including search engines, social media platforms, email communications, and corporate

websites—to engage with both existing and potential customers. In addition, Rihaan (2015) noted that digital marketing serves as a broad concept encompassing the promotion of goods or services through digital technologies, primarily via online platforms, while also incorporating mobile devices, visual advertisements, and other digital mediums. Digital marketing involves the use of online channels and methods that enable businesses and organisations to monitor the success of their marketing campaigns, often in real time, to better understand what does and does not work.

Digital marketing is popular for its low cost of operation, easy access and a wider audience. Rihaan (2015) noted that digital marketing in the digital era not only allows for brands to market their products and services but also allows for online customer support through 24 hours in a week (24/7) services to make customer feel supported and valued. In the opinion of Pratt (2017), as the world moves more fully into the digital economy, forward-thinking retailers now leverage technologies to reach and serve customers through a variety of channels. They do so by using online sales and mobile apps to identify buyers shopping via the internet or in person. Some businesses have even developed websites to enable online sales. Efficient participation and beneficial outcomes in digital marketing require possessing certain digital skills.

Staton (2016) reported that digital marketing skills required for entry-level employment and by entrepreneurs include abilities related to web analysis, email marketing, inbound marketing and social media marketing. Egajivwie and Uge (2024) also noted that digital marketing skills that provides students with the opportunity to be instantly employed after graduation are social-

media marketing skills, search engine marketing skills, digital analytic skills, content marketing skills, e-mail marketing skills, mobile marketing skills, strategic planning skills, social selling skills, pay-per-click marketing skills, and video creation skills. Within the context of this study, digital marketing skills are limited to digital content creation skills, search engine optimization skills, and social media marketing skills which are deemed sufficient for micro and small-scale business owners to connect with global customers and drive sales. The acquisition and development of these digital marketing skills may be influenced by various demographic factors, particularly gender.

Gender represents one of the significant factors that may influence the acquisition and development of marketing competencies among Business Education students. Research on gender differences in educational outcomes has yielded mixed results, with some studies indicating disparities in skill acquisition between male and female students, while others suggest minimal differences (García-Aracil, 2019). Understanding these differences is essential for developing targeted educational interventions that address any gender-based gaps in marketing competence development. Gender dynamics have been recognized as influential factors in educational environments, potentially affecting students' learning experiences, skill development, and career trajectories. In the context of marketing competency acquisition, gender may influence various dimensions, including learning preferences, self-efficacy, practical engagement, and perceived career prospects.

Understanding the role of gender in marketing competency acquisition among Business Education students in

public tertiary institutions provides valuable insights for curriculum development, teaching approaches, and student support services. By recognizing potential gender-based differences in learning experiences and skill development, educators can implement strategies that ensure all students have equitable opportunities to develop the marketing competencies required for professional success in today's competitive business landscape.

Statement of the Problem

The rapid digitalization of global commerce has made digital marketing competencies essential for business success, yet there appears to be a significant lack of understanding regarding the extent to which Business Education students in Nigerian public tertiary institutions are acquiring these critical skills. Contemporary business environments seems to increasingly demand proficiency in digital content creation, social media marketing, data analytics, and online customer engagement strategies, however, preliminary observations suggest that Business Education programmes in Kogi State may not be adequately preparing students with the comprehensive digital marketing competencies required for the modern marketplace. Without clear understanding of students' actual competency levels and the alignment between curriculum delivery and industry demands, educational institutions may continue graduating students who are inadequately prepared for contemporary business challenges, potentially limiting their employability and contribution to Nigeria's economic development in the digital age, necessitating this study to assess digital marketing competencies acquired by Business Education students

in public tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to assess digital marketing competencies acquired among Business Education students in public tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study intended to:

1. identify the digital marketing competencies acquired by Business Education students in public tertiary institutions in Kogi State;
2. determine the level of digital marketing skills acquired by business education students in public tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria;

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. What is the level of digital marketing skills acquired among business education students in public tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- i. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Business Education students on the level of social media marketing campaigns acquired in public tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria.
- ii. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Business Education students on the level of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) acquired in public tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria.

- iii. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Business Education students on the level of email marketing campaigns acquired in public tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria.

Methodology

The descriptive research design of the survey type was adopted in this study. The population for this study consisted of all 519 final year Business Education students in Kogi State tertiary institutions (2024/2025 academic session), made up of Business Education students from Prince Abubakar Audu University, Ayingba (PAAU), College of Education Technical, Kabba (COETK), Federal University, Lokoja (FULOK), Federal College of Education, Okene (FCE) and Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa (KSCOE). A total of two hundred and twenty-six (226) final year students, determined by the Taro Yamane Formular, was selected for the study. The sample was selected using proportionate sampling technique.

An instrument titled "Marketing Competencies Acquired by Business Education Students Questionnaire (MCABESQ)" was used for the collection of data for the study. The instrument was used to assess the level of digital marketing skills acquired by Business Education students with options and rating as follows: High (3), Moderate (2) and Low (1). The instrument underwent validity screening by two (2) experts from the Department of Test, Measurement and Evaluation, two (2) experts from the Vocational and Technical Education Department, and the researcher's supervisor from the Business Education unit at Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. The reliability of the instrument was determined through test-retest method to

obtain a reliability coefficient of 0.80 which was adjudged reliable for the study. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while inferential

statistics of t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of digital marketing skills acquired among business education students in public tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis Showing the Level of Digital Marketing Skills Acquired among Business Education Students in Public Tertiary Institutions

S/N	Items	High		Moderate		Low		$\bar{x}$	SD	Remarks
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%			
1	I can effectively manage social media marketing campaigns	129	57.1	35	15.5	62	27.4	2.55	0.92	High
2	I can analyze digital marketing metrics	57	25.2	48	21.2	121	53.6	1.94	0.94	Low
3	I can develop content marketing strategies	70	31.0	55	24.3	101	44.7	2.31	1.09	Low
4	I can apply Search Engine Optimization (SEO) principles	66	29.2	62	27.4	98	43.4	2.13	0.82	Low
5	I can execute email marketing campaigns	44	19.5	58	25.7	124	54.8	1.99	0.85	Low
6	I can use digital marketing platforms (e.g., Google Analytics, Facebook Ads Manager)	159	70.4	42	18.6	25	11.0	3.05	0.80	High
7	I can create landing pages for lead generation	40	17.7	52	23.0	134	59.3	1.81	0.72	Low
8	I understand mobile marketing strategies implementation	93	41.2	68	30.1	65	28.7	2.49	0.63	Moderate
9	I can manage pay-per-click (PPC) advertising campaigns	4	1.8	38	16.8	184	81.4	1.57	0.53	Low
10	I can analyze digital marketing reports	49	21.7	61	27.0	116	51.3	2.12	0.55	Low
Grand Mean								2.20		Low

Table 1 shows the level of digital marketing skills among business education students in Kogi State's public tertiary institutions. The table revealed that Business Education students in public tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria demonstrate low digital marketing skills acquisition overall, as evidenced by the grand mean of 2.20 which falls below the cut-off point of 2.50. Students demonstrated high skill

acquisition in only two areas: competency in using digital marketing platforms like Google Analytics and Facebook Ads Manager ($\bar{x} = 3.05$) and managing social media marketing campaigns ($\bar{x} = 2.55$), and moderate understanding of mobile marketing strategies implementation ($\bar{x} = 2.49$), they exhibit significant deficiencies in most other areas. The lowest skills are in managing pay-per-click advertising

campaigns ($\bar{x} = 1.57$), creating landing pages for lead generation ($\bar{x} = 1.81$), analyzing digital marketing metrics ($\bar{x} = 1.94$), executing email marketing campaigns ($\bar{x} = 1.99$), and analyzing digital marketing reports ($\bar{x} = 2.12$), with additional weaknesses in applying SEO principles ($\bar{x} = 2.13$) and developing content marketing strategies ($\bar{x} = 2.31$). This pattern suggests that while students have basic familiarity with digital marketing tools and social media management, they lack advanced

analytical, strategic planning, and specialized campaign management skills essential for comprehensive digital marketing practice.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Business Education students regarding social media campaign skills acquired in public tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria.

Table 2: t-test Showing Gender difference in the Level of Social Media Campaigns Competencies Acquired by Business Education Students in Public Tertiary Institutions

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Male	102	2.72	0.81	224	2.553*	0.011
Female	124	2.41	0.98			

$p < 0.05$ (Significant)

Table 2 shows significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Business Education students regarding the level of social media campaign skills acquired in public tertiary institutions, with $df = 224$, $t = 2.553$ and the p value = 0.011 at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Since the p -value (0.011) is lower than 0.05 alpha level, ($p < 0.05$), there is significant difference in the variables. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male

and female Business Education students regarding the level of social media campaign skills acquired in public tertiary institutions in Kogi State is rejected.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Business Education students regarding the level of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) acquired in public tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria.

Table 3: t-test Showing Gender difference in the Level of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) Skills Acquired by Business Education Students in Public Tertiary Institutions

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	P
Male	102	2.27	0.66	224	2.465	0.014
Female	124	2.02	0.91			

$p < 0.05$ (Significant)

Table 3 shows significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Business Education students regarding the level of Search Engine

Optimization competencies acquired in public tertiary institutions, with $df = 224$, $t = 2.465$ and the p value = 0.014 at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Since the

p-value (0.014) is lower than 0.05 alpha level, ($p < 0.05$), there is significant difference in the variables. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Business Education students regarding the level of Search Engine Optimization competencies

acquired in public tertiary institutions in Kogi State is rejected.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Business Education students regarding the level of Email Marketing acquired in public tertiary institutions in Kogi State, Nigeria.

Table 4: t-test Showing Gender difference in the Level of Email Marketing Acquired by Business Education Students in Public Tertiary Institutions

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	p
Male	102	2.02	.84	224	1.387	0.669
Female	124	1.98	.85			
p > 0.05 (Not Significant)						

Table 4 shows no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Business Education students regarding the level of email marketing acquired in public tertiary institutions, with $df = 224$, $t = 1.387$ and the p value = 0.669 at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Since the p-value (0.669) is higher than 0.05 alpha level, ($p > 0.05$), there is no significant difference in the variables. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Business Education students regarding the level of email marketing acquired in public tertiary institutions in Kogi State is accepted.

Discussion

The findings reveal that Business Education students in Kogi State public tertiary institutions demonstrate predominantly low digital marketing skills, which aligns with Amakaino's (2024) report of very low digital marketing skills acquisition among Business Education students at Federal University Oye-Ekiti. This pattern is further supported by Abdulkarim and Danagogo (2023), who found that business education students in Rivers

State tertiary institutions acquire digital content creation and SEO skills to a low extent, showing high competency only in social media marketing skills. The students' high competencies in digital marketing platforms and social media campaign management mirrors Abdulkarim and Danagogo's (2023) findings, indicating a consistent trend across Nigerian states where students favor accessible, user-friendly digital marketing tools. These poor performance levels stem from inadequate digital infrastructure, limited access to industry-standard software, insufficient qualified tutors with practical experience, outdated curricula, poor internet connectivity, and lack of hands-on training opportunities in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Findings revealed a significant gender difference in social media campaign competencies, with males demonstrating higher competency than females, contradicts some recent findings in digital literacy research. A study by Campos and Scherer (2024) suggest that girls outperform boys in digital knowledge and skills, indicating that the observed male advantage in social media marketing campaigns may be context-specific to business education or reflect

differential exposure to marketing-focused social media training rather than general digital competency. This finding highlights the need for targeted interventions to ensure equitable skill development in specialized digital marketing areas.

Findings also revealed significant gender difference in SEO competencies, with males scoring higher than females, aligns with broader industry patterns where 70% of the SEO industry is still dominated by men, with 64% of SEO articles written by men (Udemy, 2024). This disparity aligns with research indicating that limited digital empowerment for young enterprising women has been a major obstacle in digital marketing development (UN Women Africa, 2023). This disparity may reflect systemic barriers in technical digital marketing education and suggests that female students require additional support and encouragement to develop confidence in technical SEO skills, which are increasingly critical for digital marketing careers.

Findings revealed no significant gender differences in email marketing skills (males $M = 2.02$, females $M = 1.98$) suggests that this particular digital marketing competency does not exhibit gender-based disparities among business education students. Email marketing remains a crucial skill where 77% of marketers use personalized content based on demographics like gender and age, indicating that both male and female students are equally positioned to develop these competencies, though the overall low means for both groups suggest that email marketing instruction needs strengthening across all students regardless of gender.

Conclusion

Sequel to the findings of the study, it was concluded that Business Education students in tertiary institutions in Kogi State possess predominantly low digital marketing competencies, while students exhibit high competency in basic digital marketing platforms usage and social media campaign management, they lack critical advanced skills in areas such as pay-per-click advertising, landing page creation, digital analytics, and Search Engine Optimization implementation. The research further reveals significant gender disparities in social media campaign and Search Engine Optimization competencies favoring male students, while email marketing skills show no gender-based differences.

Recommendations

Based on the findings obtained, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. Business education programmes in Kogi State public tertiary institutions should integrate comprehensive digital marketing modules that emphasize hands-on training in advanced skills such as pay-per-click advertising, digital analytics, landing page creation, and Search Engine Optimization implementation to bridge the identified competency gaps in content marketing strategy development, email marketing campaign execution, and digital marketing report analysis. Institutions should revise curricula to include dedicated digital marketing courses with minimum contact hours for practical laboratory sessions, establish partnerships with digital marketing agencies for internship placements, procure industry-standard software and tools.

2. Institutions should develop targeted intervention programs and mentorship initiatives specifically designed to enhance female students' confidence and competency in social media campaign management through specialized workshops and peer-to-peer learning opportunities by establishing women in digital marketing clubs, organize monthly skill-building workshops facilitated by successful female digital marketers, create peer mentorship programs pairing advanced students with beginners
3. Educational institutions should implement gender-sensitive teaching approaches and create supportive learning environments with additional resources, tutorials, and practical sessions to help female students develop technical Search Engine Optimization skills and overcome systemic barriers in digital marketing education by training faculty members on gender-responsive pedagogy, establish dedicated digital marketing resource centers with extended hours for practice,
and develop supplementary online learning modules accessible outside classroom hours
4. Since both male and female students demonstrate equally low email marketing competencies, institutions should universally enhance email marketing instruction through updated course content, industry-standard software access, and practical campaign development exercises by integrating email marketing platforms into coursework, develop practical assignments requiring students to design, execute, and analyze

complete email marketing campaigns and invite email marketing specialists to conduct masterclasses.

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