

Assessing the Adequacy of Marketing Skills Development Among BSBA Graduating Students: A Case Study

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Abstract—This study aimed to identify challenges in skills acquisition, assess confidence in marketing skills development, and determine the essential marketing skills needed for future careers or entrepreneurial ventures among BSBA graduating students at a local college in Misamis Oriental. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research employed purposive sampling to select 15 BSBA graduating students currently undergoing their on-the-job training (OJT). The researcher followed Creswell and Creswell's (2018) five-step data analysis process: (1) organizing and preparing the data for analysis, (2) reviewing all the data, (3) coding the data, (4) generating descriptions and themes, and (5) representing the descriptions and themes. The findings revealed five key themes: essential marketing skills, confidence in career readiness, the impact of academic and extracurricular activities, challenges in skill development, and recommendations for curriculum and internship improvements. This study concludes that while BSBA graduating students recognize the importance of essential marketing skills—such as communication, digital proficiency, strategic thinking, and adaptability—the transition from academic learning to industry application remains challenging. This study recommends that educational institutions enhance marketing education by integrating hands-on projects, strengthening internship programs, expanding digital marketing training, collaborating with industry professionals, providing access to industry-standard tools, and continuously updating curricula to align with emerging trends, ensuring students are well prepared for industry demands.

Keywords— Career Readiness, Curriculum Improvement, Internship Experience, Marketing Skill Development.

INTRODUCTION

The evolving business landscape necessitates marketing professionals who possess both technical expertise and soft skills. With the increasing reliance on technology, competencies in data analytics, digital advertising, search engine optimization (SEO), and social media management have become essential. Simultaneously, non-technical skills such as communication, adaptability, and strategic thinking play a pivotal role in shaping marketing graduates' career readiness. Recognizing the significance of these competencies, academic institutions, employers, and job search platforms have placed greater emphasis on workplace preparedness and professional development (Johnson et al., 2023).

Marketing graduates are expected to demonstrate a diverse set of skills upon entering the workforce. According to Johnson (2022), the most sought-after soft skills include adaptability, analytical reasoning, collaboration, written and verbal communication, critical thinking, creativity, attention to detail, interpersonal skills, leadership, problem-solving, professionalism, public speaking, resilience, teamwork, and time management. Additionally, attributes such as a

willingness to learn, dependability, decision-making, initiative, multitasking, negotiation, organization, persuasion, storytelling, and independent work are also considered valuable, albeit less frequently emphasized. Educators must integrate skill-enhancing activities into their teaching methodologies to ensure students' success in the field.

The integration of both technical and interpersonal skills is crucial for marketing graduates to thrive in their careers. Saeed (2015) emphasized that while foundational marketing knowledge is indispensable, employers place greater importance on communication and relationship-building skills, particularly in presentations, negotiations, and client interactions. As globalization and market competition intensify, business schools must continuously refine their curricula to align with industry demands. Collaboration between academic institutions and the corporate sector plays a pivotal role in ensuring that graduates acquire the necessary competencies for professional success. Moreover, many students perceive their academic performance, as reflected in their Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA), as an insufficient indicator of

job performance, further underscoring the need for curriculum enhancements.

Employability skills are fundamental in preparing business graduates for industry roles. Research by Mainga et al. (2022) identified communication skills, learning agility, a positive attitude, and problem-solving capabilities as the most essential attributes for business students seeking employment. Effective communication is particularly vital, enabling graduates to articulate ideas, collaborate efficiently, and build professional networks. Likewise, continuous learning and adaptability are critical in navigating the ever-evolving job market, where knowledge rapidly becomes obsolete. While students often feel confident in their academic foundation and teamwork abilities, challenges persist in areas such as creativity, innovation, and conflict resolution. These findings highlight the necessity of integrating both traditional and student-centered learning approaches to enhance career preparedness. Furthermore, external factors such as labor market trends influence students' perceptions of employability, reinforcing the need for higher education institutions to incorporate industry insights into their curriculum development.

A gap between academic training and industry expectations remains a concern, as graduates may not always meet the full range of skills required in the workforce. While employers recognize that graduates possess foundational competencies relevant to industry needs, some still fall short in critical areas necessary for professional success. This suggests that academic programs could benefit from further alignment with real-world demands to better prepare students for entry-level roles.

Damoah et al. (2021) found statistically significant differences between employer expectations and graduate capabilities, emphasizing the need for curriculum enhancements. Employers increasingly value not only technical knowledge but also problem-solving skills, adaptability, and effective communication—areas where some graduates may require additional development. Strengthening partnerships between educational institutions and industry can help bridge this gap by integrating practical experiences such as internships, hands-on projects, and mentorship programs. Ensuring that graduates are equipped with both theoretical knowledge and applied skills will enhance their career readiness and long-term employability.

The impact of digitalization has further reshaped the marketing field, necessitating continuous curriculum adaptation. Nuevonen & Pecoraro (2024) emphasized that the rapid evolution of digital marketing presents a challenge for academic institutions striving to keep pace with industry advancements. While digital transformation has influenced pedagogical strategies, there remains a lack of clarity regarding the precise digital marketing skills that employers prioritize. This gap between academic preparation and real-world expectations underscores the importance of strengthening collaboration between educational institutions and businesses. Identifying employer demands for digital marketing expertise is critical in refining curricula, bridging the skills gap, and enhancing graduates' career readiness in the digital economy.

Despite the wealth of literature on employability skills and industry expectations, limited research has been conducted on the adequacy of marketing skill development among graduating BSBA students. Existing studies primarily focus on general employability trends or specific technical competencies, without a comprehensive assessment of how well academic programs prepare students for the realities of the marketing profession. This study seeks to evaluate the extent to which BSBA graduating students in a local college in Misamis Oriental have acquired the necessary marketing skills for career success.

Hence, this study addressed three key gaps. First, it tackled the knowledge gap by examining the adequacy of marketing skill development among BSBA graduating students, focusing on whether their academic training equips them with industry expectations. Second, it addressed a methodological gap by employing a qualitative case study approach to gain deeper insights into students' perceptions of their marketing competencies. Third, it identified a population gap by centering on BSBA graduating students in a local college in Misamis Oriental, a group that has received limited research attention regarding industry readiness.

By exploring these gaps, this study aimed to answer critical questions about marketing skill preparedness: (1) the essential marketing skills for industry or entrepreneurial success, (2) students' confidence in their readiness for marketing careers, (3) the academic and extracurricular experiences that contributed most to their skill development, (4) the challenges they faced in learning and applying marketing skills, and (5)

recommendations for curriculum and internship improvements. The findings of this study offer valuable insights for educators, institutions, and industry professionals in refining marketing education and enhancing students' career readiness.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to assess the marketing skill development of BSBA graduating students and their readiness for industry demands. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Identify the essential marketing skills required for success in the industry or as an entrepreneur.
2. Evaluate students' confidence in their preparedness for a marketing career based on their academic training.
3. Examine the academic and extracurricular experiences that have contributed most to students' marketing skill development.
4. Explore the challenges students have encountered in learning and applying marketing skills.
5. Gather insights and recommendations for improving the curriculum and internship programs to enhance students' marketing competencies.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative case study approach, which was deemed the most appropriate method for exploring the research problem. According to Yin (2009), case studies are empirical investigations that examine a phenomenon within its real-life context. They can be categorized as descriptive, explanatory, or exploratory (Yin, 2014) and are particularly effective in addressing "how" and "why" questions when researchers have limited or no control over events (Yin, 2009). Case studies focus on the distinct characteristics and complexities of a specific case, emphasizing an in-depth understanding of the subject within its unique context rather than seeking broad generalizations (Stake, 1995). In this study, the researcher explored various factors influencing the development of marketing skills among BSBA graduating students, considering the complexities that shape their industry readiness.

RESEARCH SETTING

This study was conducted at a local college in Misamis Oriental, specifically focusing on the BSBA program. The institution offers business education designed to equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills for professional careers in marketing and related fields. The setting was chosen due to its relevance to the study's objectives, as it provides a real-world academic environment where students develop both technical and

soft skills essential for industry readiness. By examining the experiences and perspectives of BSBA graduating students within this institution, the research aimed to gain deeper insights into the effectiveness of their academic preparation in meeting industry demands.

PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY

This study involved 15 BSBA graduating students who were currently undergoing their On-the-Job Training (OJT). These participants were selected as they represent individuals transitioning from academic learning to real-world industry experience. Their firsthand exposure to workplace environments provided valuable insights into the relevance and effectiveness of their acquired marketing skills regarding industry expectations. By focusing on this group, the study aimed to assess their perceptions of career readiness and identify potential areas for curriculum improvement.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

This study utilized five semi-structured interview questions as the primary research instrument. Semi-structured interviews provided flexibility, allowing participants to express their insights while ensuring that key topics were thoroughly explored. The questions were designed to assess the participants' perceptions of their marketing skill preparedness, the challenges they encountered during their OJT, and their recommendations for enhancing the curriculum. This approach enabled the researcher to gather in-depth qualitative data while allowing for follow-up questions to clarify and expand on participants' responses.

DATA COLLECTION

The data for this study were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 15 BSBA graduating students to explore their perceptions of the adequacy of their marketing skills. The interviews provided an opportunity for participants to express their insights regarding their preparedness for the industry, the relevance of their academic training, and the specific skills they found most or least developed. Notes were taken during the discussions to capture key themes and ensure a thorough understanding of their perspectives on career readiness.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study adhered to ethical research principles to ensure the protection and well-being of all participants. Before data collection, informed consent was obtained from each participant, ensuring they fully understood the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation,

and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained, with all responses handled with discretion and used solely for research purposes. Additionally, the study followed ethical guidelines set by the institution, ensuring that all procedures were conducted with integrity and respect for the participants' rights.

DATA ANALYSIS

In qualitative research, data analysis occurs simultaneously with other aspects of the study, including data collection and the presentation of findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach relies on common interpretative methods to derive meaning from the data (Stake, 1995). Following the interviews and transcription process, participant validation was conducted to ensure accuracy. The analysis then followed the five-step process outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2018) to identify codes and develop categorical themes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings are organized into five themes: (a) essential marketing skills, (b) confidence in career readiness, (c) impact of academic and extracurricular activities, (d) challenges in skills development, and (e) curriculum and internship improvement. Each theme explores the experiences and perspectives of graduating marketing students, offering insights into the complexities of their preparation for the industry.

Theme 1: Essential Marketing Skills

Based on the participants' insights, the essential marketing skills crucial for success in the industry are communication, digital marketing proficiency, strategic thinking, adaptability, problem-solving, networking, and data analysis. Communication is a fundamental skill, as marketers must clearly articulate ideas and engage customers through persuasive messaging. Digital marketing proficiency is also vital, with participants emphasizing the importance of social media management, SEO, and online campaigns in reaching target audiences effectively. Strategic thinking allows marketers to position brands competitively, ensuring their efforts align with business goals and consumer expectations. Adaptability is another key skill, as market trends and consumer behaviors evolve rapidly, requiring marketers to stay flexible and open to new approaches. Additionally, networking and relationship-building play a significant role in business growth, as strong connections with clients and industry professionals can

lead to valuable partnerships. Finally, data analysis skills enable marketers to interpret consumer insights, optimize campaigns, and enhance overall marketing effectiveness. These skills, as highlighted by the participants, are essential for navigating the dynamic marketing landscape and achieving long-term success.

"Marketing is all about communication. You have to articulate ideas clearly to attract and engage customers." (Participant 1)

"With digital platforms evolving, having strong skills in social media management and online marketing is essential." (Participant 3)

"Strategic thinking is crucial because marketing is not just about selling—it's about positioning brands effectively." (Participant 5)

"You must be adaptable because consumer preferences and marketing trends change so quickly." (Participant 7)

"Networking and relationship-building are just as important as technical skills because partnerships help businesses grow." (Participant 11)

"Analyzing customer data helps in creating targeted marketing strategies that work." (Participant 13)

The significance of communication skills in the success of marketing graduates has been consistently emphasized across various academic and professional evaluations. Accreditation bodies outline explicit criteria highlighting the necessity of strong communication abilities, while numerous academic studies reaffirm their importance. Furthermore, feedback from key stakeholders—such as employers, college recruiters, and alumni—consistently underscores that effective communication is not merely an asset but a fundamental requirement for marketing professionals (Saeed, 2015). Given that marketing revolves around conveying messages persuasively and building relationships, mastery of both verbal and written communication is essential for career advancement and professional competence.

Digital marketing proficiency is a critical factor in enhancing the competitiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the digital era. Wulandari et al. (2025) emphasize that market orientation significantly influences digital literacy, which plays a crucial role in business performance. However, their findings suggest that digital literacy does

not act as a mediator between market orientation and business success, indicating that its impact is more direct. This highlights the need for MSMEs to enhance their digital capabilities, implement advanced marketing strategies, and utilize digital tools effectively to remain competitive. Investing in structured digital training programs and leveraging online customer engagement platforms are essential steps toward ensuring sustainable growth and operational efficiency in an increasingly digital-driven market.

Adaptability is a crucial factor in shaping career outcomes, particularly for senior undergraduate students preparing to enter the workforce. Melo et al. (2021) highlight that adaptability—encompassing concern, control, curiosity, and confidence—plays a significant role in predicting both employability and career satisfaction. While perceptions of career barriers vary based on sociodemographic factors such as sex and race, the study found that these barriers do not directly impact employability or satisfaction. Instead, students who actively develop adaptability skills are more likely to perceive themselves as employable and experience greater career fulfillment.

Networking plays a vital role in enhancing employability, particularly for vulnerable job seekers navigating an increasingly volatile labor market. Pearson et al. (2023) emphasize the significance of relational approaches in supporting unemployed individuals, such as lone parents, by fostering meaningful connections that contribute to career opportunities, learning, and overall well-being. Drawing on the concept of "relational welfare," the study highlights how building professional and social networks helps job seekers balance employment with personal responsibilities, ultimately improving their career outcomes. Effective networking facilitates access to job opportunities, mentorship, and skill development, underscoring its importance as a key employability strategy in dynamic and uncertain economic conditions.

According to Kovacs & Zarádné (2022), being data-driven or data-oriented is a crucial aspect of analytical skills in the employability skillset of marketing graduates. These skills enable graduates to interpret consumer behavior, track market trends, and make informed business decisions. In today's competitive industry, companies highly value professionals who can analyze data effectively and apply insights to marketing strategies. Without strong analytical skills, marketing graduates may struggle to meet industry expectations

and drive successful campaigns. Developing data-driven competencies is essential for enhancing employability and career success in the marketing field.

Theme 2: Confidence in Career Readiness

Participants expressed mixed feelings about their preparedness for the marketing industry, highlighting the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application.

While they acknowledged the strong foundation provided by academic theories, many felt that applying these concepts in actual business settings posed a challenge. Some participants emphasized the need for more hands-on experience, as they felt confident in their understanding of marketing principles but uncertain about executing strategies in professional environments. Concerns were also raised about the relevance of classroom learning to industry demands, with some students fearing that their education might not fully align with employer expectations.

Additionally, working with real clients emerged as a significant source of anxiety, as students felt unprepared for the professional interactions required in the marketing field. The fast-paced and dynamic nature of marketing further reinforced the need for greater exposure to real-world campaigns, allowing students to practice and refine their skills before entering the workforce. Many also pointed out the gap in training with digital tools, recognizing that employers expect proficiency in marketing technologies that were only briefly covered in their coursework. These insights underscore the importance of integrating practical experiences into marketing education to bridge the gap between academic learning and industry readiness.

"Theories provide a good foundation, but applying them in a real business setting is different." (Participant 2)

"I feel prepared in terms of marketing concepts, but I lack hands-on experience in executing strategies." (Participant 5)

"Sometimes I worry that what we learned in school won't fully match industry demands." (Participant 8)

"I am confident in my skills, but I feel nervous about working with actual clients." (Participant 10)

"Marketing is dynamic, and I think we need more exposure to actual campaigns before graduating." (Participant 4)

"Presenting ideas in class is different from pitching to real clients, and that gap makes me anxious." (Participant 6)

Confidence in career readiness is crucial for students as they transition from academia to the workforce. Edmondson and Matthews (2021) highlight that an experiential learning-based curriculum can significantly enhance students' preparedness and self-assurance in their professional capabilities. Their study proposes a three-step approach that includes experiential learning, self-reflection, and the use of ePortfolios—digital collections of a student's work, skills, and achievements—to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and workforce expectations. By engaging in real-world projects and critically assessing their learning through ePortfolios, students develop both technical and soft skills while effectively showcasing their competencies to potential employers. This approach underscores the importance of integrating hands-on learning experiences and digital tools to ensure graduates are not only knowledgeable but also confident and career-ready.

Career readiness remains a challenge for many college graduates, despite being a highly valued competency among employers. Raymond et al. (2021) highlight reverse mentoring—a learning approach where students act as mentors to company employees—as an effective strategy for bridging this gap. This applied learning experience, implemented in a qualitative marketing research course with a Fortune 500 company, enables students to acquire practical job knowledge beyond traditional classroom instruction. The study provides a structured seven-step framework for integrating reverse mentoring across various marketing courses. Findings indicate that this approach enhances students' preparedness in four key career readiness areas: critical thinking, teamwork, professionalism, and communication. By engaging in real world mentorship interactions, students develop essential workplace competencies, making them more competitive and adaptable in professional environments.

Theme 3: Impact of Academic and Extracurricular Activities

The participants emphasized how their various experiences helped them bridge the gap between theoretical learning and real-world marketing practices. Their internships played a key role in providing a deeper understanding of the true expectations within a marketing job, allowing them to gain practical

knowledge about the industry's requirements. Competing in marketing case challenges significantly improved participants' critical thinking and presentation skills, as they learned how to analyze marketing issues and communicate their ideas effectively to others. The case studies conducted in class further helped participants connect academic concepts with real-world business problems, making complex marketing strategies more tangible and easier to understand. Additionally, participating in student marketing organizations gave them the chance to practice branding and campaign management, providing hands-on experience in designing and implementing marketing initiatives. Working on marketing projects with actual businesses offered participants valuable insights into customer engagement strategies, helping them understand the importance of building strong relationships with consumers and creating tailored campaigns

"My internship experience helped me understand the real expectations of a marketing job." (Participant 6)

"Competing in marketing case challenges improved my critical thinking and presentation skills." (Participant 4)

"Our case studies in class made it easier to understand how businesses handle real marketing problems." (Participant 9)

"Joining a student marketing organization allowed me to practice branding and campaign management." (Participant 3)

"Working on marketing projects with actual businesses gave me insights into customer engagement strategies." (Participant 1)

According to Fakhretdinova et al. (2021), extracurricular activities provide students with valuable opportunities for personal development beyond academic learning, facilitating socialization and the acquisition of essential soft skills such as collaboration, conflict management, and adaptability—key competencies sought by employers. Their empirical research highlights that participation in non-academic activities, such as student organizations, volunteer work, and sports, helps students develop interpersonal and problem solving abilities that may not be effectively nurtured through traditional classroom instruction. With globalization, rapid technological advancements, and shifting workplace expectations, integrating extracurricular involvement in higher education is

crucial to preparing graduates for an evolving job market. While educational policies primarily emphasize hard skills, fostering soft skills through extracurricular activities bridges the gap between academic knowledge and real-world applications, enhancing students' readiness for professional environments. Employers increasingly value candidates with strong interpersonal and leadership skills, making it imperative for higher education institutions to recognize the role of extracurricular engagement in shaping well-rounded professionals equipped to thrive in competitive industries.

Additionally, Tomlinson & Anderson (2021) stressed that involvement in extracurricular activities strengthens graduates' employability narratives by demonstrating the real-world application of skills. Participation in student organizations, volunteering, or leadership roles outside the classroom offers opportunities for students to develop important skills such as leadership, time management, and communication, which are highly valued by employers. These activities help students build a well-rounded profile that highlights not only their academic achievements but also their ability to work in diverse teams, manage projects, and adapt to different situations. By showcasing these experiences, students can create a compelling employability narrative that demonstrates their readiness for the challenges of the workplace. Extracurricular involvement also allows students to network with industry professionals, gain insights into career paths, and access job opportunities that may not be available through traditional academic channels. In this way, extracurricular activities serve as an essential complement to academic learning, enhancing graduates' attractiveness to employers and improving their chances of securing desirable positions in their chosen fields.

Theme 4: Challenges in Skills Development

The participants shared various challenges they encountered in the marketing field, particularly regarding the rapidly evolving nature of the industry. One participant noted the overwhelming pace at which marketing trends change, especially with the rise of AI-driven strategies. This fast progression makes it difficult to keep up, leaving many feeling as though they are constantly trying to catch up with new developments and technologies.

Another participant emphasized the need for more hands-on projects with real businesses to better understand market behavior. While theoretical

knowledge is essential, they believed that real-world experiences would provide deeper insights into consumer behavior, making it easier to apply concepts in practical scenarios.

Several participants discussed the challenge of bridging the gap between learning marketing strategies in textbooks and applying them to actual campaigns. Although reading about strategies is helpful, the true difficulty lies in executing them successfully in real-world marketing efforts, where the dynamics are more complex and unpredictable. There was also a concern about the lack of training in professional marketing tools such as Google Analytics and SEO platforms. These tools are crucial in today's digital marketing landscape, and without proper exposure, students may feel unprepared to use them effectively when entering the workforce.

Some participants pointed out that certain marketing topics in the curriculum feel outdated, particularly in the fast-evolving world of digital marketing. As technology advances rapidly, these participants felt that the curriculum didn't always keep pace with the latest trends, leaving them at a disadvantage when compared to industry standards.

Lastly, marketing analytics emerged as a struggle for some participants, particularly due to the lack of exposure to data interpretation software. Understanding and applying data analytics are essential skills for marketers today, and without sufficient training, participants found it difficult to interpret and leverage data effectively in their marketing strategies.

"Marketing evolves fast, and keeping up with trends like AI-driven strategies can be overwhelming." (Participant 7)

"We need more hands-on projects with real businesses to understand market behavior better." (Participant 8)

"Reading about marketing strategies is one thing; applying them in actual campaigns is another challenge." (Participant 5)

"We didn't get enough training on professional marketing tools like Google Analytics or SEO platforms." (Participant 2)

"Balancing schoolwork, internships, and personal life while mastering marketing skills is tough." (Participant 6)

"Some marketing topics in our curriculum feel outdated, especially with digital marketing advancing so fast." (Participant 10)

"I struggle with marketing analytics because we lacked exposure to data interpretation software." (Participant 13)

Developing marketing skills presents several challenges, particularly in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and industry practice. O'Connor and Moran (2024) highlight that Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) offers a rich learning experience, yet many students struggle to develop essential workplace skills within academic settings. Their study emphasizes the value of experiential, client-based learning, where students engage in real-world IMC tasks to build competencies in leadership, motivation, communication, organization, and teamwork. However, despite these opportunities, students often remain unaware of other critical skills they acquire, such as persuasion and critical thinking. The research suggests that incorporating structured experiential learning into marketing curricula can help mitigate these challenges, ensuring students gain both theoretical understanding and hands-on experience. By actively designing tasks that embed workplace skills, educators can better prepare students for the demands of the marketing profession while enhancing their confidence and job readiness.

Ahsan et al. (2025) highlight a critical gap in life skills education that directly affects graduates' employability. While students and educators recognize the importance of life skills, training in higher education remains inadequate, often lacking depth and real-world application. This deficiency leaves graduates underprepared for the demands of an increasingly competitive job market. A key challenge is the weak integration of essential employability skills—such as communication, problem-solving, adaptability, and teamwork—into academic curricula, making it difficult for students to develop competencies needed for career success. Additionally, limited institutional accountability and insufficient research on life skills education further exacerbate the issue. Addressing these challenges requires curriculum reforms, stronger institutional support, and targeted life skills training to ensure graduates are equipped with the necessary skills to transition smoothly from education to professional life.

Theme 5: Curriculum and Internship Improvement

The participants expressed various suggestions for improving the marketing curriculum to better prepare students for the industry. One participant emphasized that more case studies and actual business projects should be incorporated into coursework. They believe that hands-on, real-world experience in addressing business challenges would offer valuable insights and better prepare students for the types of problems they will encounter in their careers. This practical exposure would help them connect theoretical concepts with real-world applications, enhancing their overall understanding.

Another participant stressed the importance of clearer learning objectives in internship programs. By having more defined goals, students would be able to gain more relevant experience during their internships, ensuring that they are learning practical skills and knowledge that align with industry expectations. Clear objectives would provide students with a structured approach, helping them focus on areas that are most beneficial for their career development.

There was also a call for more guest speakers from the marketing industry to be invited to share insights on trends and expectations. Participants felt that learning directly from professionals who are actively working in the field would provide valuable knowledge about current challenges, trends, and the skills that are in demand. These guest speakers could offer students firsthand accounts of the evolving marketing landscape, making the learning experience more dynamic and relevant.

Several participants suggested the need for a dedicated digital marketing course that covers essential topics like SEO, analytics, and social media management. Given the increasing importance of digital marketing in today's business world, they felt that such a course would provide students with the skills necessary to succeed in the fast-evolving digital marketing landscape. Understanding SEO strategies, using analytics tools to assess performance, and managing social media campaigns are all critical competencies for modern marketers.

Another suggestion was the integration of more practical workshops into the curriculum to help students build a portfolio. Participants believe that these workshops would give students the chance to apply their knowledge in practical settings, working on projects that they could

showcase in their portfolios. A strong portfolio is a powerful tool for securing future job opportunities, and having a curriculum that includes practical, project-based learning would better equip students for the job market.

The importance of networking opportunities with industry professionals was also highlighted. Networking can play a crucial role in helping students transition smoothly into the workforce, as it allows them to connect with potential employers and mentors. Establishing these professional relationships while still in school would give students an edge when entering the job market.

Finally, participants suggested that internship placements should be aligned more closely with students' career goals to maximize learning opportunities. By ensuring that internships are relevant to the student's intended career path, the experience would be more beneficial and provide practical skills directly related to their future job roles. This alignment would not only help students gain more targeted experience but also allow employers to benefit from interns who are already familiar with the specific industry or area of marketing they are working in.

"Case studies and actual business projects should be included more in our coursework." (Participant 9)

"Internship programs need clearer learning objectives so students gain relevant experience." (Participant 10)

"We should have more guest speakers from the marketing industry to share insights on trends and expectations." (Participant 3)

"A dedicated digital marketing course with SEO, analytics, and social media management training is necessary." (Participant 1)

"More practical workshops should be integrated into the curriculum to help students build a portfolio." (Participant 4)

"Networking opportunities with industry professionals would help students transition smoothly into the workforce." (Participant 7)

"Internship placements should be aligned with students' career goals to maximize learning opportunities." (Participant 5)

As per Cowley et al. (2025), the growing prominence of social media influencer marketing highlights the need for specialized education that integrates practical, hands-on learning. As the industry evolves, self-service influencer marketplaces have emerged, allowing marketers to buy and sell influencer content on platforms like Instagram and TikTok. To enhance influencer marketing education, the 4 Rs framework—Reach, Resemblance, return on Investment, and Relationship—guides strategic influencer selection. Additionally, incorporating free-to-browse influencer marketplaces into coursework enables students to develop a realistic understanding of paid media strategies. Empirical assessments show that exposure to these platforms significantly improves students' influencer marketing competencies beyond traditional learning methods, emphasizing the importance of experiential education in modern marketing curricula. To better prepare students for industry demands, marketing programs should integrate influencer marketing strategies and marketplace tools into the curriculum, ensuring alignment with evolving digital marketing trends.

The evolving landscape of the marketing industry necessitates continuous curriculum enhancements to ensure graduates possess the skills required for career success. Estrellado et al. (2025) emphasize the need for refining academic programs by incorporating specialized training in sales, customer service, account management, and advertising. These areas are critical for equipping students with practical competencies that align with industry expectations. Additionally, strengthening industry partnerships plays a pivotal role in bridging the gap between theoretical learning and real-world application. Collaborative initiatives, such as internships, mentorship programs, and industry-led workshops, provide students with hands-on experience, improving their job readiness. The study underscores the importance of integrating skill-building opportunities into marketing curricula, ensuring graduates develop essential competencies in communication, problem-solving, and strategic thinking. By aligning academic programs with market demands, educational institutions can enhance graduate employability and prepare students for dynamic careers in marketing management.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that essential marketing skills such as communication, digital marketing proficiency, strategic thinking, adaptability, and problem solving are critical for success in the industry. Participants

emphasized the importance of staying updated with market trends, networking, and analytical skills in interpreting consumer behavior and making informed decisions.

Despite their academic foundation, students expressed mixed feelings regarding their career readiness. While some felt confident in their theoretical knowledge, many highlighted the need for more hands-on experience and exposure to industry-standard tools. The transition from classroom learning to real-world applications remains a significant challenge, with students citing gaps in practical implementation and confidence in executing marketing strategies.

Academic coursework and extracurricular activities, including internships, and marketing competitions, were identified as significant contributors to skill development. These experiences provided students with opportunities to apply marketing concepts in real-world scenarios, enhancing their understanding and preparedness. However, challenges such as limited access to digital tools, keeping up with emerging trends, and balancing academics with internships were noted as barriers to skill development.

Students also pointed out areas for curriculum and internship improvement, advocating for more hands-on projects, industry collaborations, and mentorship programs. The need for a stronger focus on digital marketing and practical exposure through structured internships was highlighted to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and industry expectations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance marketing education and better prepare students for industry demands. Educational institutions should integrate more hands-on projects, case studies, and live business projects into marketing courses to provide students with real-world application opportunities. Strengthening internship programs by refining structures to align with industry expectations, ensuring clear learning objectives, and incorporating mentorship can improve students' confidence and readiness.

Expanding digital marketing education is essential, with a focus on SEO, social media management, data analytics, and digital advertising to equip students with in-demand skills. Collaborating with industry professionals through guest lectures, industry panels, and networking events can further expose students to

current marketing practices and expectations. Providing access to industry standard tools will enhance practical learning and ensure graduates are proficient in the latest marketing technologies.

To ensure curriculum relevance, marketing programs should undergo continuous updates, incorporating emerging trends such as artificial intelligence in marketing, influencer marketing, and data-driven decision making. Additionally, academic programs should implement strategies that support students in balancing coursework, internships, and personal responsibilities, potentially through flexible learning schedules and support systems. By implementing these recommendations, institutions can better prepare marketing students for a dynamic industry landscape, equipping them with the necessary skills, confidence, and experience for career success.

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