

**EXPLORING THE DIGITAL AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILLS REQUIRED BY
MARKETING STUDENTS OF IGNATIUS AJURU UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION
FOR EMPLOYABILITY**

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Abstract

The rapid digitalization of business and the growing importance of entrepreneurship have reshaped employability requirements for university graduates, particularly in Marketing department. This study explored the digital and entrepreneurship skills required by Marketing students of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, to enhance employability. Specifically, the study examined how social media marketing skills and entrepreneurial skills influence employability outcomes. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, with 200 marketing students purposively sampled across different levels of study. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Digital and Entrepreneurship Skills for Employability Index (DESEI) and analyzed using Spearman's Rank Correlation at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed a significant positive relationship between social media marketing skills and employability ($r = 0.715$, $p < 0.05$), as well as between entrepreneurial skills and employability ($r = 0.702$, $p < 0.05$). The results indicate that proficiency in social media marketing enhances students' visibility, engagement, and adaptability in modern marketing contexts, while entrepreneurial skills equip them to identify opportunities, innovate, and achieve self-reliance. The study recommends integrating practical digital and entrepreneurship training into the Marketing curriculum, establishing institutional support structures such as incubation centers, and promoting experiential learning opportunities to better prepare graduates for the dynamic labor market.

Keywords: Career Development, Digital Communication, Digital Skills, E-commerce Skills, Employability, Marketing Students

Introduction

In the contemporary world, the rapid advancement of technology has significantly transformed the nature of work, employability requirements, and the expectations placed on university graduates. Today's business landscape is characterized by globalization, digitalization, and competitiveness, which have reshaped traditional marketing practices and placed greater emphasis on digital and entrepreneurial skills as critical drivers of employability. Employers now demand graduates who are not only knowledgeable in marketing theories but also competent in applying digital technologies, entrepreneurial strategies, and innovative thinking to real-world business challenges (Omodero, 2021; Obielodan & Adebayo, 2023).

Digital skills are particularly relevant to marketing students because marketing has increasingly shifted from conventional advertising and face-to-face selling to digital platforms that provide wider reach, cost-effectiveness, and customer engagement. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and LinkedIn have become essential marketing tools, while digital content creation, branding, search engine optimization (SEO), and data analytics play pivotal roles in sustaining business visibility and competitiveness (Okoro & Eze, 2022). Similarly, knowledge of financial technology (FinTech) innovations such as online payment systems, mobile money services, and blockchain applications enhances the ability of graduates to navigate the financial dimensions of modern businesses (Shafiee & Ghatari, 2023).

At Ignatius Ajuru University, the Marketing program is designed to equip students with skills for professional growth and entrepreneurship. However, like many other higher institutions in Nigeria, there are gaps in aligning academic training with labor market needs, particularly in digital competencies. While traditional marketing concepts remain valuable, the increasing demand for graduates with digital entrepreneurial knowledge underscores the need to review, redesign, and modernize curriculum delivery to meet industry expectations (Nwosu & Chukwuma, 2020). Without such an alignment, marketing graduates may face difficulties in securing jobs or creating sustainable entrepreneurial ventures in today's digital economy.

Entrepreneurial skills are equally indispensable for employability, as they enable graduates to think innovatively, identify opportunities, and establish independent ventures. Beyond preparing students for paid employment, universities have a responsibility to cultivate entrepreneurial mindsets that can stimulate self-employment, job creation, and economic development. This perspective aligns with national policies such as Nigeria's National Policy on Education, which emphasizes entrepreneurship education as a means of addressing graduate unemployment (Bello & Salami, 2023). Integrating entrepreneurship with digital competencies ensures that Marketing graduates are well-rounded and adaptable to both local and global business environments.

Despite government efforts to strengthen entrepreneurship and digital education through initiatives and reforms, there remain challenges in practical implementation within Nigerian universities. Many Marketing students still lack exposure to digital learning resources, simulation-based training, and entrepreneurial incubation centers, which are vital for developing hands-on competencies (Okafor & Ezeani, 2024). Consequently, while students may acquire theoretical knowledge, they often graduate without the practical abilities required to succeed in a competitive labor market.

Given these realities, it is important to conduct an empirical study that identifies the specific digital and entrepreneurial skills marketing students of Ignatius Ajuru University require for employability, the challenges they encounter in acquiring these skills, and the strategies that institutions can adopt to bridge the existing gaps. By equipping Marketing students with relevant competencies, universities will not only enhance graduate employability but also contribute to Nigeria's broader goals of economic diversification, innovation, and sustainable development.

Therefore, this study seeks to explore the digital and entrepreneurship skills required by Marketing students of Ignatius Ajuru University for employability, with a view to providing recommendations on curriculum integration, institutional support, and pedagogical reforms that can prepare graduates for the evolving demands of the labor market.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing digitalization of business operations has made digital and entrepreneurial skills indispensable for employability. However, Marketing students at Ignatius Ajuru University face challenges in acquiring these competencies due to the emphasis on traditional marketing theories, limited access to digital learning resources, and inadequate entrepreneurial training. While employers demand proficiency in areas such as social media marketing, e-commerce, data analytics, and FinTech applications, many graduates lack exposure to these skills during their academic programs.

In addition, although national policies promote digital literacy and entrepreneurship education, their implementation within the university remains limited, leading to a mismatch between classroom learning and labor market requirements. As a result, Marketing graduates often struggle to secure jobs or establish sustainable businesses. This study, therefore, seeks to examine the digital and entrepreneurial skills required by Marketing students of Ignatius Ajuru University for employability and propose strategies to address the identified gaps.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to explore the digital and entrepreneurship skills required by Marketing students of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt for employability. Specifically, the objectives are to:

1. Examine how social media marketing skills enhance the employability of Marketing students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt.
2. Investigate how entrepreneurial skills contribute to the employability of Marketing students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt.

Research Questions

1. How do social media marketing skills enhance the employability of Marketing students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt?
2. In what ways do entrepreneurial skills contribute to the employability of Marketing students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt?

Research Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between social media marketing skills and the employability of Marketing students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurial skills and the employability of Marketing students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt.

Review of related Literature

Conceptual Review

Employability

Employability is widely understood as the ability of individuals, particularly graduates, to obtain, maintain, and progress in employment by drawing upon a combination of knowledge, skills, attributes, and personal dispositions. While earlier perspectives emphasized subject knowledge and transferable skills, recent scholarship has shifted toward a more holistic and dynamic view of employability that accounts for personal, social, and systemic factors influencing career success.

Donald McCafferty and Baruch (2024) advance this understanding through the Employability Capital Growth Model, which highlights nine distinct forms of employability capital: social, cultural, psychological, personal identity, health, scholastic, market-value, career identity, and economic capital. This framework stresses that employability outcomes are shaped not only by an individual's competencies but also by external enablers such as career counseling, workplace inclusivity, and labor market structures.

Akkermans, Tomlinson, and Anderson (2023) further reconceptualize employability by proposing a processual and relational model. This model frames employability as an evolving construct shaped by continuous interactions between graduates and employers through mechanisms such as signalling (how graduates communicate value) and social exchange (how organizations respond). This shifts employability from a static possession to a co-created and context-dependent process.

Within the field of marketing, employability is increasingly tied to applied digital competence, creativity, and entrepreneurial orientation. Employers now expect graduates to

demonstrate capabilities in digital branding, data-driven decision-making, and customer experience management, in addition to traditional marketing skills (Tymon & Batistic, 2022). In the Nigerian context and globally, “work readiness” is now understood to include digital agility and innovation capability as critical employability requirements (Igbokwe & Oti, 2021; Mavromara, McGuinness & Fok, 2023).

Digital Skills for Marketing

Digital skills refer to a wide range of competencies required for effective use of information and communication technologies, including information literacy, communication, collaboration, content creation, online safety, and digital problem-solving (Ferrari, 2013; Van Laar, Van Deursen, Van Dijk & De Haan 2017). These skills are crucial for marketing graduates as they provide the foundation for designing, implementing, and evaluating digital marketing strategies. Eze and Eziolisa (2022) in Shaibu and Njoku (2023) believed that most graduates are deficient in terms of the necessary skills and competencies required for employment in contemporary business organizations, hence they are more or less unemployable. The development of digital skills gaps among business education students contributed to the alarming incidence of unemployment and underemployment (Njoku & Shaibu 2023).

Social media marketing is one of the most prominent digital skills in contemporary practice. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, and X have evolved into hybrid spaces that simultaneously serve promotional, service, and consumer insight purposes. The ability to leverage these platforms for brand building, customer engagement, and influencer collaborations has become a central employability requirement (Hollebeek, Sarstedt & Shankar, 2022).

In addition to social media, skills in search engine optimization (SEO), search engine marketing (SEM), and web analytics are indispensable. The increasing reliance on data-driven decision-making in marketing makes competence with tools such as Google Analytics and SEMrush vital for graduate employability (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Similarly, e-commerce operations, including knowledge of digital payment systems, logistics, and online store management, are becoming highly relevant, especially in regions like Nigeria where mobile commerce adoption is rapidly growing (Shafiee & Ghatari, 2023).

Content creation and marketing automation also play a significant role. Graduates who can produce engaging blogs, videos, podcasts, and infographics, while managing automated systems such as Mailchimp and HubSpot, stand out in the labor market (Lorenzo-Romero,

Constantinides & Alarcón-del-Amo, 2021). Collectively, these digital skills ensure that marketing students can adapt to evolving market demands and secure opportunities either through traditional employment or entrepreneurial ventures.

Entrepreneurship Skills for Marketing

Entrepreneurship skills represent the blend of cognitive, behavioral, and affective abilities that enable individuals to identify opportunities, innovate, mobilize resources, manage risks, and create economic or social value. Classic works by Neck and Greene (2011) and Morris, Kuratko, and Schindehutte (2013) frame these skills as vital not only for independent ventures but also for intrapreneurship within organizations.

Contemporary perspectives emphasize opportunity recognition, creativity, networking, resilience, and financial literacy as particularly crucial in today's uncertain labor markets. Opportunity recognition and creativity form the foundation of entrepreneurial success. The ability to detect gaps in the market and develop innovative responses is increasingly valued in competitive environment. Risk management and resilience are equally important, as entrepreneurial activity often involves uncertainty and potential setbacks. Studies in emerging economies highlight the significance of resilience in enabling graduate entrepreneurs to sustain their ventures despite challenges (Fatoki, 2019).

Resource mobilization and networking further enhance entrepreneurial capability. Building social capital through professional networks allows entrepreneurs to access financial, human, and technical resources that support business growth (Biniari, Papadopoulos & Tsirogiannis, 2022). Financial and market literacy also play a critical role, equipping graduates with the ability to manage budgets, assess risks, and make informed investment decisions. Entrepreneurship education has been shown to increase graduates' financial confidence and market adaptability (López-Núñez, García-Álvarez & Hernández-Linares, 2020).

Entrepreneurship skills positively influence employability by preparing graduates for both self-employment and intrapreneurship. Studies confirm that entrepreneurship education contributes to entrepreneurial intentions, skill development, and innovation, although the outcomes often depend on context and instructional approach (Almahry *et al.*, 2021; Zeeshan *et al.*, 2023). For marketing students, these skills are indispensable in navigating the complexities of modern labor markets while fostering creativity, independence, and sustainable career growth.

Theoretical Review

This study is anchored on the Human Capital Theory developed by Gary Becker in 1964. Becker, a Nobel Prize-winning economist, expanded upon the earlier contributions of Adam Smith and Theodore Schultz to highlight that education, training, and skill development are critical investments that enhance individual productivity and overall economic growth (Sean *et al.*, 2024). He argued that just as organizations invest in machines, tools, and infrastructure to improve efficiency, individuals and societies should invest in human capital through education and training to increase income generation and competitiveness (Obielodan & Adebayo, 2023).

According to the theory, the knowledge, skills, experiences, and competencies acquired through structured learning directly contribute to employability and career advancement. In the context of university education, particularly in Marketing, Human Capital Theory emphasizes that students who acquire digital and entrepreneurial skills are better positioned to secure employment, innovate, and add value to organizations (Okoro & Eze, 2022). Skills such as social media marketing, digital content creation, and entrepreneurial problem-solving increase a graduate's adaptability in the dynamic labor market.

For Marketing students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, this theory underscores the importance of investing in the acquisition of employability-enhancing competencies. By mastering social media marketing, students are able to create brand awareness, engage consumers, and drive business growth in a cost-effective manner. Similarly, entrepreneurial skills empower them to identify opportunities, develop innovative solutions, and establish their own ventures when wage employment is unavailable (Oladimeji & Ojo, 2024).

Human Capital Theory therefore provides the foundation for this study by explaining why digital and entrepreneurial skills are essential for graduates. It suggests that when universities integrate such skills into their curricula, students become more competitive in the labor market, thereby improving both individual career outcomes and national economic development.

Empirical Studies

Ademola and Eze (2019) examined the digital skills required by marketing students for employability in South-Eastern universities in Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined the digital competencies needed for enhancing classroom learning and workplace readiness. Two research questions guided the study. A descriptive survey design was adopted, with a

population of 132 marketing students in their final year. The entire population constituted the sample because of its manageable size. A structured questionnaire of sixty (60) items was developed and used for data collection. Mean and standard deviation were employed in answering the research questions. Findings revealed that marketing students required digital skills in online research, digital presentations, and data analysis tools to enhance employability and workplace adaptability.

Okafor and Ezeani (2024) investigated entrepreneurship and digital skills required of marketing undergraduates for employability and self-reliance in a competitive economy. Two research questions were posed and two hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study was conducted among marketing students in two federal universities in South-West Nigeria. The population comprised 210 marketing undergraduates. A survey research design was employed. A 28-item questionnaire was used for data collection, validated by experts, and tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha with a coefficient of 0.84. Out of 210 questionnaires distributed, 200 were duly completed and analyzed. The findings indicated that students required entrepreneurial skills in business plan development, social media marketing, and digital financial literacy to improve employability and enhance opportunities for self-reliance after graduation.

Iheanacho and Bello (2021) examined the digital marketing skills necessary for employability of undergraduates in Nigerian universities. The study was guided by two research questions and corresponding null hypotheses. A survey design was adopted, and the population consisted of 150 final-year marketing students in three public universities. A researcher-designed instrument titled Digital Marketing Skills for Employability Questionnaire (DMSEQ) was used for data collection. Data analysis involved mean, standard deviation, and t-test. The results revealed that digital marketing skills such as content creation, SEO, and mobile marketing were considered highly relevant for graduate employability in the marketing sector.

Nnamdi and Grace (2023) assessed entrepreneurial digital knowledge and its utilization among marketing students in Rivers State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population consisted of 280 marketing undergraduates from two universities. The entire population was purposively included in the study. Data were collected using a questionnaire tagged Students' Entrepreneurial Digital Knowledge and Utilization Scale (SEDKUS), which yielded a Cronbach Alpha reliability of 0.78. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, mean, and standard deviation were used for data analysis. Results indicated that students

possessed moderate levels of entrepreneurial digital skills but demonstrated high levels of theoretical knowledge, which they applied in areas like e-commerce and online promotions.

Moyo and Adeyemi (2024) investigated the relationship between digital skills and employability of university students in South Africa and Nigeria. A descriptive quantitative approach was employed, and data were collected through a four-point Likert scale questionnaire administered to 250 final-year marketing students. The responses were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics in SPSS. The results showed a significant positive relationship between digital competencies (such as ICT proficiency, social media management, and digital teamwork tools) and students' employability in the job market.

Suleiman (2023) studied the influence of digital skills on entrepreneurial intentions among final-year marketing undergraduates in North-Central Nigeria. The study employed a quantitative research design, using a structured questionnaire distributed to 300 students. Data were analyzed using regression and structural equation modeling. Findings revealed that digital skills significantly influenced students' entrepreneurial intentions, particularly in areas such as e-commerce and online branding. The study also discovered that entrepreneurship education played a moderating role, strengthening the link between digital competence and students' career readiness.

Methods

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. The population consisted of all marketing students of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select respondents across different levels of study. A total of 200 marketing students were sampled and used for the study. Data were collected through a primary source using a structured questionnaire titled Digital and Entrepreneurship Skills for Employability Index (DESEI). The instrument was structured on a modified four-point Likert scale with response options: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). Content validity of the instrument was ensured by two experts in Business and Marketing Education. Reliability was confirmed through a pilot study using Cronbach Alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.74. Out of the 200 copies of the questionnaire administered, 186 (93%) were duly retrieved and analyzed. The hypotheses were tested using Spearman's Rank Correlation (r) in a bivariate format, with the aid of SPSS Version 23 at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between social media marketing skills and the employability of Marketing students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt.

Table 1: Relationship between Social Media Marketing Skills and Employability

	Social Media Marketing Skills	Employability
Social Media Marketing Skills	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.
	N	186
Employability	Correlation Coefficient	.715**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	186

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researchers’ Survey, 2025.

Table 1 above shows an r-value of 0.715 at a significance level of 0.000, which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05. Since the significance value (0.000) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho1) stating that there is no significant relationship between social media marketing skills and the employability of Marketing students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, is rejected. The alternative hypothesis is therefore accepted. This implies that there is a significant positive relationship between social media marketing skills and employability among Marketing students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between entrepreneurial skills and the employability of Marketing students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt.

Table 2: Relationship between Entrepreneurial Skills and Employability

	Entrepreneurial Skills	Employability
Entrepreneurial Skills	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.
	N	186
Employability	Correlation Coefficient	.702**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	186

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researchers’ Survey, 2025.

Table 2 above shows an r-value of 0.702 at a significance level of 0.000, which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05. Since the significance value (0.000) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho2) stating that there is no significant relationship between entrepreneurial skills and the employability of Marketing students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, is rejected. The alternative hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that there is a significant positive relationship between entrepreneurial skills and employability among Marketing students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt.

Discussion of Findings

The study examined the relationship between digital and entrepreneurship skills and the employability of Marketing students at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt. Two hypotheses were tested to determine the influence of social media marketing skills and entrepreneurial skills on students' employability. The first hypothesis (Ho1) tested whether there is a significant relationship between social media marketing skills and employability. The results showed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.715$, $p < 0.05$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This implies that Marketing students who possess proficient social media marketing skills are more likely to be employable.

These findings are consistent with Ademola and Eze (2019), who reported that marketing students in South-Eastern universities required digital skills such as online research, digital presentations, and data analysis tools to enhance employability and workplace readiness. Similarly, Iheanacho and Bello (2021) emphasized that competencies in content creation, SEO, and mobile marketing significantly contribute to graduate employability in the marketing sector. These studies support the current finding that social media marketing skills equip students with practical tools to navigate modern marketing environments, improve visibility, and meet industry demands.

The second hypothesis (Ho2) examined the relationship between entrepreneurial skills and employability. The results revealed a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.702$, $p < 0.05$), confirming that entrepreneurial skills enhance the employability of Marketing students. This finding aligns with Okafor and Ezeani (2024), who highlighted that marketing undergraduates required skills in business plan development, social media marketing, and digital financial literacy to improve employability and foster self-reliance. In addition, Nnamdi and Grace (2023) found that students with entrepreneurial digital knowledge applied it effectively in areas such as e-commerce and online promotions, further supporting the link between entrepreneurship competencies and career readiness.

Suleiman (2023) also reported that digital skills positively influence entrepreneurial intentions, with entrepreneurship education strengthening the relationship between competence and employability. Moyo and Adeyemi (2024) further corroborate these results, showing a significant positive relationship between digital competencies including ICT proficiency, social media management, and collaborative digital tools and employability among university students in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study examined the digital and entrepreneurship skills required by Marketing students of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, for employability. The findings revealed that both social media marketing skills and entrepreneurial skills have significant positive relationships with graduate employability. Specifically, marketing students who possess proficiency in social media platforms, digital content creation, and online marketing strategies are more likely to secure employment and effectively navigate modern marketing environments. Similarly, entrepreneurial skills, including opportunity recognition, business planning, financial literacy, and innovation, enhance students' capacity for self-employment and career adaptability.

These results underscore the importance of integrating practical digital and entrepreneurship competencies into the Marketing curriculum. By equipping students with both theoretical knowledge and hands-on skills, universities can bridge the gap between academic training and labour market expectations, thereby improving graduate employability and fostering sustainable economic development.

Recommendations

Based on the results and conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

1. Marketing programmes should include practical courses on social media marketing, digital branding, content creation, and analytics to equip students with relevant competencies.
2. The university should integrate entrepreneurship courses that focus on opportunity recognition, business plan development, financial literacy, and risk management into the Marketing curriculum.
3. Institutional support structures such as business incubation centers, digital laboratories, and mentorship programmes should be established to provide students with real-world exposure, hands-on experience, and opportunities to translate classroom learning into practice.

- Partnerships should be developed between the university and industry stakeholders (e.g., marketing agencies, tech firms, and start-ups) to facilitate internships, workshops, and collaborative projects that enhance students' employability and career readiness.

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