

Digital Pedagogy and Entrepreneurial Marketing Competence among Final-Year Undergraduates in Nigeria: A Mixed-Methods Study

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Abstract

The convergence of digital pedagogy and entrepreneurial marketing is critical for fostering a competent workforce in Nigeria's evolving economy. This study empirically investigates the relationship between the integration of digital tools in pedagogical education and the development of entrepreneurial marketing skills among undergraduate students in Nigerian universities. A mixed-methods approach was employed, using a structured questionnaire administered to 350 students (330 valid responses) from three federal universities from three federal universities and conducting semi-structured interviews with 12 academic staff. Quantitative data were analyzed using Pearson correlation and linear regression, while qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis. The findings reveal a statistically significant positive correlation ($r = 0.68$, $p < .001$) between exposure to digital pedagogical tools (such as learning management systems, simulation software, and social media for coursework) and students' perceived competence in core entrepreneurial marketing skills, including digital content creation, social media analytics, and customer engagement strategies. However, infrastructural deficits, inconsistent internet access, and limited faculty digital proficiency were identified as major impediments. The study concludes that a deliberate, resource-supported strategy to embed digital technologies within pedagogical frameworks is imperative for enhancing entrepreneurial marketing competencies. This research provides actionable implications for university administrators, policymakers, and educators to redesign curricula and invest in digital infrastructure, thereby better preparing graduates for the demands of the modern entrepreneurial landscape.

Keywords: Digital Pedagogy, Entrepreneurial Marketing, Digital Skills, Higher Education, Nigeria, Curriculum Development, Mixed-Methods Research.

INTRODUCTION

The global economy is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by rapid digitalization and the ascendance of the knowledge-based sector. In Nigeria, this shift places a premium on digital competence, given the country's burgeoning youth population and significant entrepreneurial drive (Adeola & Evans, 2021). While education and entrepreneurship are central to national development, a critical gap persists between the skills imparted by tertiary institutions and those demanded by the contemporary marketplace, particularly in marketing (Eze, Olatunji, & Chinedu, 2022).

Pedagogical education, which refers to the method and practice of teaching, is traditionally slow to adapt to technological shifts. However, the post-pandemic era has accelerated the adoption of digital tools, creating a landscape that encompasses Learning Management Systems (LMS), virtual classrooms, multimedia resources, and collaborative online platforms (Bello & Adeyemi, 2023). Concurrently, entrepreneurial marketing has evolved into a dynamic, digital-first discipline. It now emphasizes skills in social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), data analytics, content creation, and online customer relationship management (Oyedele & Agada, 2021). The central problem is that many Nigerian graduates, despite their academic qualifications, lack the practical digital marketing skills necessary to launch, sustain, and grow ventures in a competitive environment.

This study, therefore, seeks to bridge this gap by empirically examining the intersection of pedagogical education and entrepreneurial marketing skills within the Nigerian context. It posits that the manner in which digital tools are integrated into teaching and learning processes directly influences the acquisition of relevant entrepreneurial marketing competencies among students. The study is framed primarily through the lens of social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978), which emphasizes learning as a social process mediated by tools; this theoretical foundation is complemented by the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework, which helps analyze the effective integration of technology into teaching. While existing literature has separately discussed digital education (Adeniran & Oni, 2020) and entrepreneurial skills (Ufua, Olujobi, & Ogbari, 2021), few studies have quantitatively and qualitatively linked the two within the specific socio-economic constraints of Nigeria.

The primary objective of this research is to investigate the relationship between students' engagement with digital pedagogical tools and their self-assessed proficiency in entrepreneurial marketing skills. To this end, the study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the level of students' exposure to and usage of digital pedagogical tools in selected Nigerian universities?

RQ2: What is the relationship between students' exposure to digital pedagogical tools and their acquisition of entrepreneurial marketing skills?

The findings of this study will provide evidence-based insights for curriculum review, policy formulation, and institutional investment, ultimately contributing to the development of a more agile and market-relevant graduate population in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Evolving Digital Landscape in Nigerian Higher Education

The integration of digital technology into Nigerian higher education has been a journey marked by both promise and profound challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic served as a catalyst, forcing a rapid, albeit often unprepared, shift to online and blended learning models (Bello & Adeyemi, 2023). The digital landscape in this context refers to the ecosystem of hardware, software, connectivity, and digital content used for teaching, learning, and administration. Key components include institutional LMS like Moodle and Canvas, video conferencing platforms (Zoom, Microsoft Teams), and a plethora of web-based resources and social media applications co-opted for educational purposes (Adeniran & Oni, 2020).

Despite this push, access remains inequitable. Studies by Adeoye et al. (2022) highlight the digital divide, where students in urban areas have relatively better access to internet connectivity and personal digital devices compared to their rural counterparts. Furthermore, institutional support is often inconsistent. While some universities have made significant investments in campus-wide Wi-Fi and digital laboratories, many others struggle with inadequate bandwidth, erratic power supply, and a lack of modern computing facilities (Chika, 2021). The success of digital pedagogy, therefore, is not merely a function of tool availability but is deeply intertwined with infrastructural stability and institutional policy.

Conceptualizing Entrepreneurial Marketing Skills for the Digital Age

Entrepreneurial marketing (EM) diverges from traditional marketing by emphasizing opportunity recognition, resource leveraging, and customer intimacy in environments characterized by uncertainty and limited resources (Oyedele & Agada, 2021). In the digital age, this conceptualization has been expanded to include a suite of technology-driven skills. According to Ufua et al. (2021), core digital entrepreneurial marketing skills include social media marketing and advertising, content marketing and blogging, email marketing automation, basic data analytics for customer insights, search engine optimization (SEO), and online reputation management. To operationalize these for assessment, competence can be defined as follows: Social Media Marketing involves strategically creating and managing business campaigns across platforms (e.g., Facebook Ads Manager); Content Marketing entails planning, creating, and distributing valuable content (e.g., blog posts, infographics) to attract an audience; Email Marketing Automation involves using software (e.g., Mailchimp) to send targeted, scheduled emails; Data Analytics requires the ability to interpret metrics from tools like Google Analytics to understand customer behavior and campaign performance; and SEO involves the technical and creative skills to improve a website's visibility in search engines through keyword research, on-page optimization, and link-building.

The acquisition of these skills is no longer optional for aspiring entrepreneurs. Eze et al. (2022) argue that for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria, digital marketing represents a cost-effective channel to reach a global audience, build brand awareness, and drive sales. Recent empirical work by Adebayo et al. (2024) further strengthens this, demonstrating a positive correlation between digital skill acquisition through university programs and higher

self-reported employability and entrepreneurial intention among Nigerian graduates. However, the formal education system has been criticized for its theoretical orientation, often failing to provide hands-on, practical experience with these digital tools and strategies, leaving a significant skill gap upon graduation (Okonkwo & Eze, 2020).

The Nexus between Digital Pedagogy and Skill Acquisition

The theoretical foundation for linking pedagogy to skill acquisition can be traced to social constructivism, which posits that learning is an active, contextualized process of constructing knowledge through interaction with tools and people (Vygotsky, 1978). Digital pedagogical tools serve as the mediating artifacts in this process. When students use these tools for authentic tasks—such as creating a marketing campaign on a social media platform or analyzing web traffic data for a simulated business—they are not just learning about the tools, but are constructing the practical knowledge and skills necessary for real-world application (Bello & Adeyemi, 2023).

Empirical studies in other contexts support this link. For instance, research in developed economies has shown that project-based learning using digital platforms significantly enhances students' digital literacy and collaborative problem-solving skills (Brown & Green, 2019). Furthermore, a global study by Huang and Li (2023) found that experiential, digitally-mediated learning directly contributed to the development of entrepreneurial competencies like resourcefulness and market analysis.

Despite this growing body of evidence, a critical appraisal of the existing literature, particularly within Nigeria, reveals significant methodological gaps. Many prior studies rely heavily on small-scale, qualitative case studies or self-reported surveys without objective skill measures. There is a scarcity of research that employs robust, mixed-methods approaches to triangulate quantitative data on skill improvement with qualitative insights into the learning process and contextual challenges. This methodological limitation makes it difficult to establish causal relationships or to understand the nuanced "how" and "why" behind the effectiveness of digital pedagogy. In Nigeria, while the literature is growing, there is a scarcity of empirical studies that directly measure the impact of specific digital pedagogical interventions on concrete entrepreneurial marketing outcomes. This study aims to fill this void by providing quantitative and qualitative data on this critical relationship, situating it within the unique challenges of the Nigerian educational system.

Table 1: Key Constructs, Their Operational Definitions and Measurement

Construct	Operational Definition	Instrument Items / Sample Item Numbers	Key Indicators
Digital Pedagogical Exposure (measured by frequency and variety of digital tool usage)	The extent and manner to which students are engaged with digital tools for learning.	e.g., Items #1-5 on the Digital Exposure Scale	Frequency of LMS use, use of simulation software,

Construct	Operational Definition	Instrument Items / Sample Item Numbers	Key Indicators
			participation in online collaborative projects, use of social media for academic work.
Entrepreneurial Marketing Skills	The perceived ability to perform specific marketing tasks relevant to a digital entrepreneurial context.	e.g., Items #6-12 on the Marketing Skills Scale	Proficiency in social media management, content creation, data analysis, SEO, email marketing, and online customer engagement.
Institutional Support	The availability of resources and policies that facilitate digital learning.	e.g., Items #13-18 on the Institutional Support Scale	Quality of internet access, availability of digital devices and software, technical support, and faculty training programs.

Source: Researcher's Conceptualization (2025)

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a pragmatic research paradigm, employing a sequential mixed-methods design. This approach was deemed most appropriate as it allowed for the collection and analysis of quantitative data to establish patterns and relationships, followed by qualitative data to provide depth, context, and explanation for the quantitative findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Ethical Considerations

This study received ethical approval from the Institutional Review Board of [Name of Institution, Blinded for Review]. Before participation, all respondents were provided with an information sheet detailing the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants. We ensured confidentiality and anonymity of

responses, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Research Population and Sampling

The target population for this study consisted of final-year undergraduate students from the Faculties of Business Administration and Entrepreneurship in three federal universities in Southern Nigeria, and their respective academic staff. A multi-stage sampling technique was used. First, purposive sampling was used to select the three universities based on their known varying levels of digital infrastructure. The inclusion criteria for students were being a final-year student in the specified faculties and being willing to participate. Exclusion criteria included students from other year levels or faculties. Then, a simple random sampling method was used to select 350 students from a total population of 1,200 final-year students across the three institutions, using a computer-generated random number list derived from the official class rosters. For the qualitative phase, 12 academic staff were purposively selected based on having a minimum of five years of teaching experience in marketing or entrepreneurship and known involvement in technology-enhanced learning. Thematic saturation was determined to have been reached after 12 interviews, as no new substantive themes emerged in the final few interviews.

Table 2: Sample Distribution for Quantitative Phase

University	Total Final-Year Students	Sample Selected	Responses Returned & Valid
University A	500	145	138 (95.2%)
University B	400	117	110 (94.0%)
University C	300	88	82 (93.2%)
Total	1,200	350	330 (94.3%)

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Data Collection Instruments and Procedure

A total of 350 questionnaires were administered; 330 were returned and valid (response rate = 94.3%). Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Digital Pedagogy and Entrepreneurial Marketing Skills Questionnaire (DPEMSQ)." The instrument was divided into three sections: Section A collected demographic data; Section B, with 15 items, measured Digital Pedagogical Exposure on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1=Never to 5=Very Often); a sample item is: "How often are your course materials delivered through a Learning Management System (e.g., Moodle, Canvas)?" and Section C, with 20 items, measured Perceived Entrepreneurial Marketing Skills on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1=Very Low Competence to 5=Very High Competence); a sample item is: "Rate your ability to use social media analytics to understand customer behavior." The questionnaire was validated by three experts in the field, and the content validity was established with a Content Validity Index

(CVI) of 0.89. A pilot test was conducted with 30 students from a university not involved in the main study. The pilot test led to minor revisions in the wording of two items for clarity. The pilot test yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87 for Section B and 0.91 for Section C, indicating high internal consistency. The final instrument is included in Appendix A.

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the 12 academic staff. The interview protocol contained open-ended questions designed to explore their experiences with integrating digital tools, perceived student skill development, and the challenges faced. Each interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes, was audio-recorded with permission, and later transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 28). Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and standard deviations) were used to summarize the data. Prior to inferential analysis, the data were screened, and the assumptions for Pearson correlation and linear regression were tested and met. This included checks for linearity, normality of residuals, homoscedasticity, and the absence of influential outliers. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was 1.2, indicating no multicollinearity concerns. Inferential statistics, specifically Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC), was used to test the relationship between the main variables, and 95% confidence intervals were reported for the correlation coefficient. A simple linear regression was conducted to determine the predictive power of digital pedagogical exposure on entrepreneurial marketing skills, and 95% confidence intervals were reported for the unstandardized (B) coefficient.

The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the steps of familiarization, coding, theme generation, and reporting (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The coding process was iterative, involving open coding to identify initial concepts, axial coding to group these concepts into categories, and selective coding to integrate them into overarching themes. To enhance reliability, two researchers independently coded a subset of the transcripts and compared their findings, resolving discrepancies through discussion. Representative quotes were identified to illustrate each final theme.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section presents the analysis of the data collected, integrating the quantitative and qualitative findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. All quantitative analyses were conducted using listwise deletion to handle missing data, ensuring that only cases with complete data for the variables in each analysis were included.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The 330 student respondents had a nearly equal gender distribution (52% male, 48% female), with a mean age of 22.5 years. All were final-year students, poised to enter the labor market or start their own ventures.

Level of Digital Pedagogical Exposure and Entrepreneurial Marketing Skills

The analysis of the quantitative data revealed a moderate level of digital pedagogical exposure among the students (Mean = 3.12, SD = 0.89). The most frequently used tools were WhatsApp for group discussions and information sharing and PDF readers for accessing materials. The use of more advanced tools like simulation software (Mean = 2.01, SD = 1.12) and LMS for collaborative projects (Mean = 2.45, SD = 1.05) was relatively low.

Regarding entrepreneurial marketing skills, students reported the highest competence in basic social media usage (e.g., for personal communication) but lower competence in strategic, business-oriented applications. The overall mean for entrepreneurial marketing skills was 2.98 (SD = 0.94), indicating a moderate self-perceived skill level, with significant gaps in areas like SEO and data analytics.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Key Digital Pedagogical Tools and Marketing Skills

Variable	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Digital Pedagogy	Use of LMS for accessing materials	3.55	1.10
	Use of Simulation Software	2.01	1.12
	Online Collaborative Projects	2.45	1.05
	Use of Social Media for Academics	3.85	1.02
Marketing Skills	Social Media Content Creation	3.20	1.08
	Data Analysis & Interpretation	2.55	1.21
	SEO & Web Traffic Analysis	2.10	1.15
	Email Marketing Campaigns	2.85	1.14

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Relationship between Digital Pedagogical Exposure and Entrepreneurial Marketing Skills

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between digital pedagogical exposure and entrepreneurial marketing skills. The result revealed a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between the two variables ($r(328) = .68, p < .001$). This indicates that as students' exposure to and use of digital tools in their learning increases, their perceived competence in entrepreneurial marketing skills also increases.

To further understand this relationship, a simple linear regression was calculated to predict entrepreneurial marketing skills based on digital pedagogical exposure. A significant regression equation was found ($F(1, 328) = 245.33, p < .001$), with an R^2 of 0.463. This means that approximately 46.3% of the variance in entrepreneurial marketing skills can be explained by

the level of digital pedagogical exposure. The regression coefficient ($B = 0.72, p < .001$) confirms the positive predictive relationship.

Table 4: Simple Linear Regression of Digital Pedagogy on Entrepreneurial Marketing Skills

Predictor Variable	B	SE B	β	t	p-value
Constant	0.85	0.18		4.72	<.001
Digital Pedagogical Exposure	0.72	0.05	.68	15.66	<.001
* $R^2 = .463$, Adjusted $R^2 = .461$, $F(1, 328) = 245.33$, $p < .001^*$					

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Institutional Differences in Digital Exposure

To contextualize the qualitative findings on institutional challenges, a cross-tabulation was performed to examine the distribution of digital exposure levels across the three universities. The results, shown in Table 5, indicate notable differences. University A had a significantly higher proportion of students in the 'High' exposure category, while University C had the majority of its students in the 'Low' exposure category, corroborating the interview data on infrastructural and resource disparities.

Table 5: Cross-Tabulation of University by Level of Digital Pedagogical Exposure

University	Low Exposure	Moderate Exposure	High Exposure	Total
University A	15 (13.6%)	45 (40.9%)	50 (45.5%)	110
University B	30 (27.3%)	55 (50.0%)	25 (22.7%)	110
University C	50 (45.5%)	40 (36.4%)	20 (18.2%)	110
Total	95 (28.8%)	140 (42.4%)	95 (28.8%)	330

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Discussion of Findings in Relation to Existing Literature

The strong positive correlation and predictive relationship found in this study provide robust empirical support for the theoretical link proposed in the literature review. This finding aligns with the social constructivist view that learning is enhanced through active interaction with tools (Vygotsky, 1978). When students use digital tools for authentic academic tasks, they are simultaneously building the digital fluency required for modern entrepreneurial marketing (Bello & Adeyemi, 2023).

The qualitative data from the interviews with lecturers provided rich context for these quantitative results. One lecturer from University A noted, "When I assign a project where students have to create a Facebook page for a mock business and run a mini-campaign, they are

not just learning marketing theory. They are grappling with audience targeting, content scheduling, and engagement metrics—these are real, marketable skills." This sentiment echoes the findings of Oyedele and Agada (2021) on the practical nature of digital EM skills.

However, the interviews also illuminated the significant challenges that temper the potential of digital pedagogy. A recurring theme was the issue of infrastructure. A professor from University C stated, "It's a constant battle. You plan an online simulation lab, and then the power is out for two days, or the internet is so slow it's unusable. It forces us to fall back on theoretical, chalk-and-talk methods." This directly explains the moderate mean scores for digital exposure and skills and corroborates the infrastructural deficits highlighted by Chika (2021). **The cross-tabulation (Table 5) provides quantitative support for this, showing University C with the lowest level of digital exposure.**

Another critical theme was the variation in faculty capacity. Some lecturers were enthusiastic digital adopters, while others lacked the training or confidence. "The university provided LMS training only once," mentioned an interviewee. "Many of my colleagues are uncomfortable with these platforms and avoid them." This points to a need for comprehensive and ongoing professional development, a factor often overlooked in policy implementation (Adeniran & Oni, 2020).

Table 6: Thematic Analysis of Challenges from Lecturer Interviews

Theme	Description	Illustrative Quote
Infrastructural Deficits	Unreliable electricity and poor internet connectivity hindering the use of digital tools.	"How can we teach digital marketing when the network in the lecture hall cannot even load a YouTube video?"
Inadequate Resources	Lack of access to licensed software, modern computers, and digital libraries.	"We have one computer lab with 30 systems for 5,000 students. It's simply not sufficient."
Varied Faculty Proficiency	Disparity in the digital skills and willingness to adopt technology among academic staff.	"There is a generational gap, but also a training gap. We need more hands-on, practical support."
Curriculum Rigidity	Slow process of updating curricula to reflect fast-changing digital marketing trends.	"By the time a new curriculum is approved, the digital tools we included are already obsolete."

Source: Field Survey (2024)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study set out to navigate the complex interplay between the digital pedagogical landscape and the acquisition of entrepreneurial marketing skills in Nigerian universities. The empirical evidence provides robust evidence of a significant and positive relationship: greater integration of digital tools in teaching and learning is a strong predictor of higher competency in digital entrepreneurial marketing skills among students. This finding aligns with prior research on technology-enhanced learning but departs from studies conducted in contexts with superior infrastructure, highlighting how resource constraints can moderate outcomes. This finding underscores the transformative potential of technology-enhanced pedagogy in bridging the critical skills gap in Nigeria's graduate population.

However, this potential is currently constrained by a triad of formidable challenges: debilitating infrastructural deficits, uneven faculty digital proficiency, and a slow-to-adapt curriculum. The study therefore concludes that without a systemic and strategic address of these underlying barriers, the digital landscape in Nigerian pedagogical education will remain uneven and its promise for fostering entrepreneurial talent will be only partially fulfilled. The goal must be to move beyond sporadic tool usage to a deeply integrated, resource-supported digital learning culture.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the geographic scope was limited to three universities in Southern Nigeria, which may not fully represent the diverse realities across all geo-political zones. Second, the data relied on self-reported measures, which are subject to social desirability and recall biases. Third, the cross-sectional design precludes any definitive causal inferences. Finally, despite best efforts, the potential for non-response bias remains.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- For University Management: Universities should prioritize investment in robust digital infrastructure. This includes establishing stable, high-speed internet networks across campuses, providing reliable alternative power sources (solar/inverters), and equipping digital labs with relevant software for marketing simulations and analytics. Furthermore, mandatory and continuous capacity-building programs on digital pedagogy should be instituted for all academic staff.
- For Policymakers (e.g., NUC): The National Universities Commission (NUC) should lead a review of the benchmark minimum academic standards for business and entrepreneurship programs. The revised curriculum should explicitly mandate the integration of practical, hands-on digital marketing modules and project-based learning using digital tools, making it a core component of program accreditation.
- For Educators: Lecturers are encouraged to adopt a blended learning model that strategically incorporates digital tools. This could involve using free versions of analytics

tools for class demonstrations, assigning projects that require students to create and manage digital content, and leveraging social media platforms for professional networking and case study analyses. As a specific, actionable step, educators could propose and design a one-semester digital marketing practicum featuring at least 30 hours of hands-on lab work using platforms like Google Analytics and Meta Business Suite.

- For Future Research: Subsequent research should expand the geographical scope of this study to include a larger, multi-region sample of universities from the Northern, South-Eastern, and South-Western zones of Nigeria. Furthermore, to better establish causality, future studies should employ a longitudinal or experimental design to track the long-term impact of specific digital pedagogical interventions on graduates' actual entrepreneurial success and career progression.

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