



## Analyzing the Efficacy of Digital Marketing Education in Augmenting the Employability of Graduates

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the efficacy of digital marketing education in augmenting the professional preparedness of business graduates. In order to accomplish this goal, data was collected from senior students attending business schools in Saudi Arabia. The data that was collected was subjected to analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings of this analysis indicated that educational curriculum, third-party certifications, and experiential learning all have a positive impact on the preparedness of graduates for the workplace. This study has conceptualized employability by identifying

four dimensions: job-specific skills, meta-skills, intellectual skills, and personality skills. The study's results demonstrated the significance of both formal academic courses provided by educational institutions and privately offered courses and certification programs in augmenting students' preparedness for the workforce. Additionally, the significance of internship programs has been highlighted. This study makes an important scholarly contribution by addressing the limited research on the impact of digital marketing education on workplace readiness. Specifically, it examines the effectiveness of academic curriculum enhancements, third-party certifications, and experiential learning in this domain. This study provides a significant contribution to the current literature by empirically investigating a comprehensive model that encompasses all three dimensions of knowledge and skill development. This study strives to examine the relationship between these dimensions and the employability of business graduates in the field of digital marketing.

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## 1. Introduction

The contemporary employment setting is imposing dynamic and constantly evolving requirements on the skills and competencies necessary for employees to effectively adapt to the changing demands of their jobs. According to Di Gregorio et al. (2019), the rapid progress in technology, digitalization, and automation has significantly transformed the methods by which businesses are conducted. In a similar vein, the discipline of marketing has undergone significant transformation, rendering conventional marketing strategies outdated, while embracing digitalization and the integration of online content (Kerr & Kelly, 2017). The field of digital marketing is experiencing rapid growth and garnering increasing attention from marketers and practitioners. Digital marketing can be succinctly characterized as the use of digital technologies to establish a cohesive, focused, and quantifiable means of communication that facilitates the acquisition and retention of customers, while concurrently fostering more profound connections with them (Wymbs, 2011). In light of the increasing significance of digital marketing as an emerging discipline, it is imperative for educational institutions, specifically those specializing in business studies such as colleges and universities, to revise their curriculum to integrate digital marketing content into their marketing courses. This adjustment is necessary to equip graduates with enhanced preparedness for the competitive job market and to facilitate their professional advancement (Langan, Cowley, & Nguyen, 2019).

In addition to conventional academic degrees, there is an increasing number of independent certifications offered by external organizations in the field of digital marketing. The courses are offered by designated vendors of programs and software, including but not limited to Google and IBM (Cowley, Humphrey Jr, & Muñoz, 2021). Furthermore, a number of online platforms are collaborating with various educational institutions to develop and offer courses based on certifications, commonly referred to as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). According to Cho et al. (2022), third-party certifications are beneficial for both skill development and job readiness of individuals. Furthermore, the acquisition of essential skills required for entering the professional realm is facilitated by an individual's internship experience (Kapareliotis, Voutsina, & Patsiotis, 2019). The current research on the enhancement of academic curriculum, third-party certifications, and experiential learning in digital marketing education, and their impact on workplace readiness, is inadequate. Therefore, additional research is needed to address this gap in knowledge. Hence, this research endeavor provides a valuable contribution to the existing body of knowledge by conducting an empirical examination of a comprehensive framework that encompasses the three dimensions of knowledge and skill enhancement. Furthermore, it investigates the correlation between these dimensions and the level of job preparedness exhibited by business graduates specializing in the domain of digital marketing.

### *Objectives of the Research*

The main objective of this study is to examine the efficacy of digital marketing education in improving the employability of business graduates. The research objectives outlined are as follows.

- To determine the influence of academic coursework on graduates' employability.
- To determine the impact of third-party certification on employability of graduates.
- To determine the influence of experience on graduates' job readiness.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Workplace Readiness

There is often a misconception regarding the distinction between job readiness and the concepts of employability and work preparedness (Caballero & Walker, 2010). Nevertheless, there exists a distinction between the concept of workplace readiness and employability. According to Prikshat, Kumar, and Nankervis (2019), an individual who possesses workplace readiness demonstrates the capability to consistently perform at the expected level with minimal supervision and make valuable contributions to the organization (p. 4). Previous studies indicate that students who possess workplace readiness exhibit a higher level of skills, abilities, and competencies, which in turn enhances their preparedness for a seamless transition into professional careers and increases their likelihood of success in the workplace (Finn, 2017; Jackson, 2016). The definition and components of employability remain a subject of ongoing debate among researchers (Daniels & Brooker, 2014).

The present study has chosen to adopt the employability integrated competence model (WRICM) in order to achieve its objectives. As stated by Prikshat et al. (2019), workplace readiness can be characterized as a comprehensive and dynamic competence that necessitates the amalgamation, synthesis, and integration of four distinct resources or dimensions. These dimensions encompass intellectual capabilities, personality traits, meta-skills, and job-specific knowledge. Graduates are expected to effectively channel these resources into a cohesive, persuasive, and individualized narrative that resonates with prospective employers (p. 6). First, in order to successfully transition into the professional realm, it is imperative to possess intellectual resources and skills. The resources encompass a range of valuable skills, including problem-solving, analytical reasoning, cognitive abilities, decision-making, and foundational proficiencies (Reid & Anderson, 2012). Additionally, personality traits and characteristics are known to play a significant role in determining an individual's level of career success. This encompasses abilities such as innovation and creativity, which involve the capacity to redefine duties in response to evolving demands. It also encompasses leadership skills, which entail the aptitude to guide and inspire individuals towards achieving organisational goals, as well as self-management skills. Moreover, meta-skills encompass proficiencies in informational technology, teamwork, political acumen, communication (both written and verbal), and system-thinking. Informational technology skills pertain to being adept at using technology, while teamwork and political skills involve interpersonal communication and relationship-building. Communication skills encompass the ability to effectively convey information in written and spoken forms. System-thinking skills entail the capacity to perceive the broader context, view entities holistically, and comprehend their interconnectedness. Finally, it is important to consider job-specific resources that encompass essential business skills and marketing skills. The collective combination of these resources and skills plays a pivotal role in determining an individual's preparedness for employment.

### 2.2. Academic Coursework and Employability

There is a need to update the curricula of graduate business studies to align with the

evolving demands of employers, particularly in the realm of digital marketing. In order to achieve success in the contemporary business landscape, it is imperative for individuals who have recently completed their education to possess a high level of proficiency in technology and possess strong analytical capabilities. The rapid pace of workplace innovations, digitalization, and automation has resulted in employers seeking a distinct skill set from new entrants, deviating from the traditionally required qualifications (Langan et al., 2019). Academic institutions, such as colleges and universities, are progressively endeavoring to revise their curricula; however, their pace of modification remains insufficient to adequately address the demands of the market, resulting in the emergence of a skills gap (Papageorgiou et al., 2020). According to O'Brien (2016), a study identified the issue concerning the existing academic curricula and the widening market disparity within the domain of digital marketing.

The study noted that individuals with a background in conventional marketing are encountering difficulties in acquiring the necessary skills, while graduates in marketing have been exposed to a syllabus that does not encompass digital techniques. Furthermore, professionals in the digital marketing field exhibit inconsistent expertise. Hence, it is imperative to integrate digital marketing expertise into the existing academic curriculum for business graduates, enabling them to effectively navigate the evolving professional landscape upon entering the practical realm. At present, a limited number of universities incorporate specialised digital marketing courses into their marketing curricula. Langan et al. (2019) conducted an analysis of universities in the United States and the United Kingdom. These universities can be classified into three categories based on the integration of digital marketing into their curriculum. The first category refers to universities that have incorporated digital marketing content into their preexisting marketing courses through the inclusion of additional case studies, readings, examples, assignments, and contemporary business subjects. Furthermore, certain universities provide optional digital marketing courses for their students majoring in business.

Universities ought to prioritize careful deliberation regarding the content and nomenclature of their courses to ensure alignment with market demands. Additionally, certain universities provide the opportunity for students to specialize in digital marketing as part of their marketing program. Lastly, it is worth noting that only a limited number of universities provide a mandatory digital marketing course, which is a prerequisite for all students pursuing a degree in marketing. A number of scholars argue for the necessity of integrating digital advancements as a fundamental component in marketing education, rather than treating it as a mere supplementary aspect (Royle & Laing, 2014; Wymbs, 2011). Papageorgiou et al. (2020) suggest that incorporating themes such as social media marketing, search engine optimization, digital advertising, content management, data analytics, and email marketing would be beneficial. The lack of inclusion of digital marketing training and skills development in the academic curriculum has resulted in a decrease in students' confidence and unease regarding their preparedness and competence in using technology for their future careers (Mishra, Wilder, & Mishra, 2017). Contrarily, the inclusion of comprehensive digital marketing education and training within the marketing curriculum of educational institutions would enhance student preparedness and equip them with the necessary skills to effectively navigate the complexities of the professional realm. Therefore, drawing from the aforementioned argument and recognizing the importance of investigating digital marketing within academic curricula

and its correlation with job preparedness for the professional environment. Therefore, it is reasonable to put forth the following hypothesis:

**H1:** Digital marketing in academic coursework has a positive influence on the job specific skills of students.

**H2:** Digital marketing in academic coursework has a positive influence on the meta skills of students.

**H3:** Digital marketing in academic coursework has a positive influence on the intellectual skills of students.

**H4:** Digital marketing in academic coursework has a positive influence on the personality skills of students.

### **2.3. Third-party Certifications and Employability**

The field of digital marketing is in its early stages of development and is experiencing significant growth. Employers have reported that digital marketing skills are highly sought after in the current job market. Nevertheless, there is a noticeable discrepancy in the skill set of individuals seeking employment in the field of digital marketing, as organisations often encounter difficulties in locating suitably qualified candidates (McKinley Marketing Partners, 2019). In response to the aforementioned skills gap observed in the market, it is anticipated that marketing curricula will undergo academic advancements. Additionally, numerous accredited courses have emerged to address this issue. These certifications provided by external entities enable professionals in the field to develop, design, and deliver the content of the course. Several certifications are available in the field, such as those provided by Google Digital Garage, LinkedIn Learning, Hootsuite Academy, HubSpot Content Marketing, and similar platforms (Cowley et al., 2021).

At the moment, there exist three distinct categories of certifications that are readily accessible within the market. Initially, it is important to note the existence of vendor-specific certifications. These certifications entail training programs provided by companies to develop skills that are directly relevant to the technologies offered by the respective vendors. For instance, notable examples include the certifications offered by Google in the areas of Google Ads and Analytics, as well as the professional training courses provided by IBM. Furthermore, there exist certifications that are specific to particular domains, emphasizing specialized knowledge that is applicable in practical contexts. Examples of such certifications include those in content marketing, social media marketing, and email marketing. In addition, Cowley et al. (2021) argue that practical certifications encompass the application of theoretical knowledge to real-world case studies and practical problems, in conjunction with a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. In addition, there exist alternative types of certifications referred to as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), which are provided by various accrediting institutions such as Harvard, MIT, Edx, Coursera, Udemy, and similar entities. The primary objective of these courses is to enhance the accessibility of education by utilising a web-based platform for distance learning. Several institutions and platforms are currently providing certifications in the field of digital marketing (Cho et al., 2022).

According to Spiller and Tuten (2019), these certifications offer a combination of pertinent coursework and hands-on learning experiences, thereby aiding in the mitigation of skill deficiencies within the market. The positive implications of third-party

certifications for students in terms of job search and career development have been highlighted in previous research (Humphrey Jr, Laverie, & Muñoz, 2021; Laverie et al., 2020). Historically, certifications have been extensively employed in the domains of project management and information technology. Nevertheless, the utilisation of certifications in the realm of digital marketing is a relatively recent phenomenon. Certifications play a crucial role in fostering the professional and academic growth of individuals, facilitating their acquisition of new skills and knowledge. According to Fawcett and Rutner (2014), these certifications serve as a means to address the disparity between the skills required by employers and the deficiencies in existing degree programmes pertaining to digital marketing. Existing literature indicates that the possession of certifications has been found to augment the likelihood of students securing their initial employment. This implies that the inclusion of verifiable evidence of certification completion from an external entity on a student's resume enhances their prospects of being hired (Cicmil & Gaggiotti, 2018; Kinsky et al., 2016). The acquisition of training and skills through these certifications equips individuals with industry-specific knowledge, thereby enabling them to effectively transition into professional environments. Therefore, it can be suggested that digital marketing certifications contribute to the development of students' job preparedness. A lack of understanding exists regarding the empirical evidence pertaining to the impact of digital marketing certificates on students' professional career development and employability (Cowley et al., 2021). Hence, the primary objective of this study is to make a scholarly contribution to the current corpus of literature in this specific area.

**H5:** Third-party digital marketing certifications have a positive influence on the job specific skills of students.

**H6:** Third-party digital marketing certifications have a positive influence on the meta skills of students.

**H7:** Third-party digital marketing certifications have a positive influence on the intellectual skills of students.

**H8:** Third-party digital marketing certifications have a positive influence on the personality skills of students.

#### **2.4. Experience and Employability**

In contemporary times, a significant number of secondary schools and postgraduate institutions, including those specialising in business education, place considerable emphasis on the value of experiential learning. Experiential learning is commonly defined as the cognitive process by which knowledge is generated through the transformative nature of firsthand experiences. According to Kapareliotis et al. (2019), the acquisition of knowledge is a consequence of both comprehending and modifying one's experiences (p. 2042). The experiential learning theory emphasises the notion that student learning should extend beyond traditional classroom instruction and scholarly resources. It posits that students should actively engage in real-world experiences to acquire practical knowledge. In order to provide students with practical experience, numerous educational institutions have integrated internships as a distinct credit-bearing course within their curricula (Shebaro et al., 2022). According to Zopiatis (2007), an internship can be defined as a brief period of practical work experience during which students undergo training and acquire hands-on knowledge in a particular field or area of interest (p. 65). Internships provide

students with the opportunity to observe and engage with authentic business challenges, as well as the tasks, operations, and skill sets required within a professional work setting (Kapareliotis et al., 2019). The primary objective of an internship is to provide students with a firsthand experience of the professional work environment, thereby preparing them psychologically for their transition into the workforce. Internships facilitate the bridging of the gap between theoretical knowledge acquired in the classroom and practical knowledge gained through real-life experiences for students. Individuals acquire knowledge and understanding by means of observation, personal encounters, and introspection. Internships provide students with the opportunity to apply and refine their technical and analytical skills, while also fostering an understanding of the necessity for ongoing adaptation and the significance of incorporating creativity within a dynamic work environment (Chen et al., 2011; Shebaro et al., 2022).

Internships offer numerous advantages in terms of students' career development. Having prior internship experience increases a student's likelihood of securing employment, as it eliminates the need for employers to provide extensive training. Consequently, applicants with internship experience are often preferred over those without such experience. Additionally, it is worth noting that there exists a potential opportunity for students to be extended a full-time employment offer by the organizations in which they undertake their internships. In addition, it is conceivable that an internship experience can lead a student to realize that a particular career trajectory is not suitable for them, or conversely, they may discover an affinity for a field previously unknown to them. Internship experience provides a range of advantages, which can be categorized into three main groups: increased employability, improved skills and competencies, and career exploration (Sanahuja Vélez & Ribes Giner, 2015). According to Zhao and Liden (2011), there is evidence suggesting that individuals who have completed an internship during their academic studies exhibit enhanced employability prospects. These individuals are more likely to secure job offers promptly upon graduation, demonstrate a clear inclination towards a specific professional domain, and receive more favorable remuneration packages. A limited number of studies have previously examined the impact of experiential learning, specifically through internships, on students' employability and career prospects (Chhinzer & Russo, 2017; Finch et al., 2013; Kapareliotis et al., 2019; Key, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2019; Varghese et al., 2012).

The primary objective of this study is to make a scholarly contribution by examining the impact of experiential learning in the domain of digital marketing on the development of students' workplace readiness. Internship programs facilitate the cultivation of skills among students, thereby equipping them with the necessary readiness to thrive in corporate environments. A limited number of studies have previously examined the impact of experiential learning, specifically through internships, on students' employability and career prospects (Chhinzer & Russo, 2017; Finch et al., 2013; Kapareliotis et al., 2019; Key et al., 2019; Varghese et al., 2012). The primary objective of this study is to make a scholarly contribution by examining the impact of experiential learning in the domain of digital marketing on the development of students' employability. Internship programs facilitate the cultivation of skills among students, thereby equipping them with the necessary readiness to thrive in corporate environments. Most internships provide students the opportunity to acquire a range of valuable skills, including but not limited to

communication, time management, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, analytical thinking, and networking. These skills are highly sought after by employers (Chhinzer & Russo, 2017). In addition, internships provide students with the opportunity to refine their technical skills. Regarding digital marketing, students have the opportunity to enhance their proficiency in various areas such as Google Analytics, content management, audience engagement, and social media platform management. Furthermore, students have the opportunity to gain practical experience in the field of search engine optimization and e-marketing campaigns (Key et al., 2019; McArthur et al., 2017). Hence, the incorporation of experiential learning, such as internships, contributes to the development of students' preparedness for the professional environment. The following hypothesis is proposed.

**H9:** Learning digital marketing through experience has a positive influence on the job specific skills of students.

**H10:** Learning digital marketing through experience has a positive influence on the meta skills of students.

**H11:** Learning digital marketing through experience has a positive influence on the intellectual skills of students.

**H12:** Learning digital marketing through experience has a positive influence on the personality skills of students.

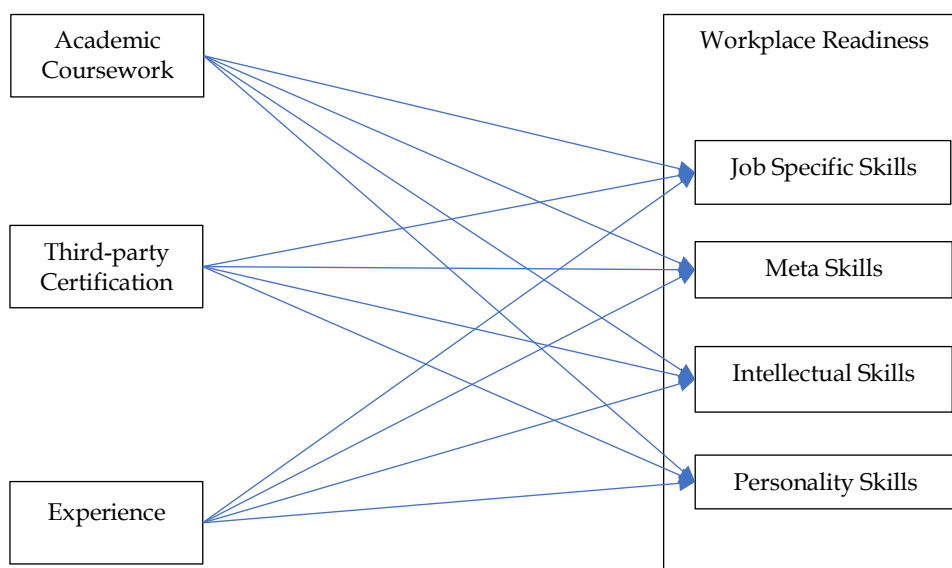


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the Study

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Instrument

The variables employed in the study were assessed using pre-existing measurement questionnaires that had been validated. The measurement of the academic coursework variable was operationalized by modifying the instrument applied in the research



conducted by [Honea, Castro, and Peter \(2017\)](#). The measurement of the variable pertaining to third-party certification was conducted by modifying the instrument applied in the research conducted by [Honea et al. \(2017\)](#). The measurement of experience was conducted by modifying the tool developed by [Honea et al. \(2017\)](#) and [McArthur et al. \(2017\)](#). The measurement of job-specific skills was conducted by utilizing the instrument developed by [McArthur et al. \(2017\)](#) and adapted by [Priksat et al. \(2019\)](#). The measurement of the variables pertaining to meta-skills, intellectual skills, and personality skills was conducted by utilizing the tool developed by [Priksat et al. \(2019\)](#). The variables were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale. [Table 1](#) below displays the measurement items/statements for each variable, along with their respective sources.

**Table 1**

*Research Instrument*

<b>Items</b>	<b>References</b>
<b>Academic Coursework</b>	<a href="#">Honea et al. (2017)</a>
During my coursework, I have gained the ability to analyze, discuss, and provide recommendations for a business case study that addressed real-world business challenges (as part of an individual or group activity)	
I have performed a business simulation (as part of an individual or group activity) which allowed me to apply theoretical knowledge of digital marketing in a simulated business world.	
I have created a digital marketing, communication or sales plan (as part of an individual or group activity)	
I have completed a digital marketing research project (as part of an individual or group activity)	
I am able to share the details of a real-world project that was completed for a nonprofit organization or actual business client that was completed during a college course (as part of an individual or group activity)	
<b>Third-party Certification</b>	<a href="#">Honea et al. (2017)</a>
I have a certification of completion of a massive open online course (MOOC) related to digital marketing (through online platforms such as EdX, Udemy, or Coursera)	
I have a recent university degree or specialization in digital marketing	
I can provide evidence of strong performance (high scores) on exams taken during academic courses in the marketing major	
<b>Experience</b>	<a href="#">Honea et al. (2017)</a> and <a href="#">McArthur et al. (2017)</a>
I have an internship or work experience in the field of digital marketing	
I have given interview(s) for job opening(s) in the field of digital marketing	
I have experience using Google Analytics to monitor online engagement and recommend modifications to drive continual improvement	

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I have a significant experience in understanding digital marketing, web content management and social media platforms

I have a strong grasp of online marketing channels with experience planning and implementing e-marketing campaigns from SEO, SEM, email and banner to latest web related channels for webinar, blog, and YouTube Channels

**Job Specific Skills**

**Core Business Skills**

I have the ability to cope up with work pressure

I have understating of the digital marketing industry

I have understanding of people-organisation relationship, and the social systems that exist and develop in an organisation

I have prior understanding/awareness of nature of digital marketing industry

I have the ability to change or be changed to fit or work better in different situations

I have the tendency to respond positively towards a certain idea/situation

I have the ability to manage, inspire, motivate and engage

I have the ability to demonstrate corporate standards of behaviour

I have the ability to perform more than one task/activity over a short period

I have the capacity of successfully managing a goal/task through its life cycle

**Marketing Skills**

I have a demonstrated understanding of business, marketing and digital strategy, including the core methods and principles

I have a strong ability to manage and develop marketing activities

I can develop strategies and plans which identify marketing opportunities

I have a proven experience writing and executing effective campaigns with accuracy

I have a demonstrated ability to use media for media releases, newsletters, brochures and flyers

I have a demonstrated experience in marketing planning and campaign development

**Meta Skills**

**Communication Skills**

I have the ability to write clearly, concisely, accurately and logically

I have proficiency in face-to-face conversations, telephone conversations, ability to participate and give presentations

I have the ability to understand and make the most effective use of language

I have the capacity to provide useful information to other people and receiving information that will help to learn more effectively

**Information technology Skills**

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McArthur et al.  
(2017) and  
Prikshat et al.  
(2019)

Prikshat et al.  
(2019)

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I have the ability to use digital technology, communication tools, and/or networks to define access, manage, integrate, evaluate and create value

I have the ability to use digital technology ethically and legally to function in a knowledge organization

I have knowledge about general networking, operating systems, new hardware, web-based technologies and wireless technology.

**System-thinking Skills**

I have the ability to view a broad, overall view or perspective of an issue or problem

I have the ability to think differently, unconventionally, or from a new perspective

I have awareness of both social and technical aspects of a system

I have understanding that work systems produce both physical products/services and social/psychological outcomes

**Teamwork and political Skills**

I have the ability to moderate responses, empathizing, building relationships of and productive interactions

I am able to network and get along well with others

I have the ability to compromise or agreement while avoiding argument and dispute

I have the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically

**Intellectual Skills**

**Cognitive Skills**

I can use generic or ad hoc methods, in an orderly manner, for finding solutions to problems.

I am skillful in conceptualising, applying, analyzing, synthesizing evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning or communication, as a guide to belief and action.

I have the ability to visualize, articulate, conceptualize or solve both complex and uncomplicated problems by making decisions.

I have the ability to make a good decision based on weighing the positives and negatives of each options/alternatives that are sensible given the available information.

I have the ability to use language, numbers, images and other means to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of an organization.

I have skills to make critical judgement and coming to reasoned conclusions based on available evidence.

I have the ability to find a single best solution to a problem.

I have knowledge and experience required in identifying and understanding cause and-effect relationships between symptoms and their underlying sources.

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Prikshat et al.  
(2019)

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I can solve problems through an indirect and creative approach, using reasoning that is not immediately obvious and involving ideas that may not be obtainable by using only traditional step-by-step logic.

**Foundation Skills**

I have the ability to reason and to apply simple numerical concepts.

I have the ability to access, understand, analyze and evaluate information, make meaning, express thoughts and emotions, present ideas and opinions.

I have the basic qualifications necessary for an employment.

**Personality Skills**

**Innovative and creativity Skills**

I have the ability to use imagination or original ideas to produce something new for organisation.

I have the ability to show initiative and resourcefulness for accomplishing different tasks/ activities.

I have the ability to accept, adapt and sustain change quickly.

I am always ready to learn, grasp new approach/ways of doing things.

I have the ability of creating, developing, and communicating ideas which are abstract, concrete or visual.

**Leadership Skills**

I have the ability to clearly move from one thought/idea to another.

I have the ability to envision and plan for future.

I have the ability to change minds, shape opinions and move others to act.

I have the ability to supervise and maintain relationships in internal organisation as well as with external stakeholders.

I have the ability to assess and initiate things independently.

**Self-management Skills**

I have the ability to convey a positive image to organisation members and to the stakeholders.

I have the ability to portray a healthy self-esteem and notion of high self-value.

I have the ability to do what needs to be done without influence from other people or situations.

I have belief or trust in my own ability.

I have the ability to exercise conscious control of time spent on specific activities, especially to increase effectiveness, efficiency or productivity.

I have the ability to monitor and control own behaviour, emotions, or thoughts, and altering them in accordance with the demands of the situation."

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Prikshat et al.  
(2019)

### 3.2. Population, Sample and Data Collection

The target of this study encompasses the final-year students enrolled in higher education institutions within Saudi Arabia. The convenience sampling method was employed to facilitate the compilation of a comprehensive list of all students. The data was obtained by making use of an online survey administered via Google Forms. The respondents' participation was completely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained

from all participants at the start of their involvement.

### 3.3. Data Analysis Technique

The data collected in this study was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The reliability tests were performed utilizing Cronbach's alpha. The correlations were assessed using Pearson's correlation test. Additionally, the study's hypotheses were examined through the utilization of simple linear regression analysis in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics of the variables in the study are presented in Table 1. The table demonstrates that the reliability statistics, specifically Cronbach's alpha, exceed the acceptable threshold of 0.7 for all variables examined in the study. This implies that the variables exhibit internal consistency, indicating that the measurement tool employed for each variable is reliable. Table 1 additionally provides the correlation statistics for all variables examined in the study.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics (Means, Standard Deviation, Reliability, correlations among study variables)*

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Reliability	1	2	3	4	5	6
Academic Coursework	2.67	1.55	0.784	1					
Degree or certification	3.21	1.67	0.761	0.24	1				
Experience	3.64	1.47	0.841	0.34	0.61	1			
Job specific skills	3.10	1.34	0.802	0.51	0.50	0.64	1		
Meta skills	2.99	1.02	0.764	0.64	0.53	0.43	0.66	1	
Intellectual skills	3.55	1.66	0.822	0.34	0.46	0.53	0.70	0.53	1
Personality skills	2.98	1.99	0.811	0.43	0.76	0.37	0.49	0.48	0.48

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

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### 4.2. Hypothesis Testing

The study employed regression analysis in SPSS to examine the hypotheses. Table 2 displays the results of the regression analysis conducted on the various independent variables in relation to the dependent variable, namely Job specific skills, which is a crucial aspect of workplace readiness. The adjusted R square value of 0.71 indicates that the combination of academic coursework, third-party certificates, and experience collectively accounts for 71% of the variability observed in the dependent variable, namely job-specific skills. The findings presented in Table 2 provide evidence that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between academic coursework and job-specific skills, thereby supporting the first hypothesis (H1) of the study. Moreover, the study findings support hypothesis H5 by demonstrating a positive and significant correlation between third-party certificates and job-specific skills. Furthermore, the findings of this study indicate a strong and positive correlation

between experience and job-specific skills, thereby providing support for Hypothesis 9.

**Table 2**

*Regression Analysis (Dependent variable: Job specific Skills)*

Regression Statistics					
Multiple R					0.66
R Square					0.51
Adjusted R Square					0.71
Standard Error					0.31
Observations					201
ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	61	60.34	8.97	48.67	6.7
Residual	39	20.11	0.40		
Total	100	80.45			
	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	
Constant	0.054	0.41	2.97	0.015	
Academic Coursework	0.043	0.38	3.27	0.019	
Degree or certification	0.027	0.32	3.69	0.027	
Experience	0.029	0.27	2.99	0.021	

P<0.05 (Hair et al., 2007), t> 1.96 (Hair et al., 2007)

Table 3 displays the results of the regression analysis conducted on the various independent variables in relation to the dependent variable, namely meta skills, which constitutes a crucial aspect of workplace readiness. The adjusted R square value of 0.64 indicates that the combination of academic coursework, third-party certificates, and experience accounts for 64% of the variance observed in the dependent variable, namely meta skills. The findings presented in Table 3 demonstrate a positive and statistically significant relationship between academic coursework and meta skills, thereby providing support for Hypothesis 2 as posited in the study. Moreover, the study's findings indicate a strong and positive correlation between third-party certificates and meta skills, thereby supporting Hypothesis 6. Furthermore, the findings of the study provide evidence that experience is strongly and positively correlated with meta skills, thereby supporting Hypothesis 10.

**Table 3**

*Regression Analysis (Dependent variable: Meta Skills)*

Regression Statistics					
Multiple R					0.48
R Square					0.32
Adjusted R Square					0.64
Standard Error					0.27
Observations					201
ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>

Regression	58	51.97	11.20	36.97	7.2
Residual	42	18.47	0.29		
Total	100	70.44			
	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	
Constant	0.038	0.38	3.01	0.010	
Academic Coursework	0.029	0.29	2.99	0.014	
Degree or certification	0.045	0.27	3.61	0.019	
Experience	0.050	0.32	2.85	0.028	

The regression analysis for all independent variables, specifically intellectual skills, which is a component of workplace readiness, is presented in Table 4. The adjusted R-squared value of 0.71 indicates that the combination of academic coursework, third-party certificates, and experience collectively accounts for 71% of the variability observed in the dependent variable, namely intellectual skills. The findings presented in Table 4 demonstrate a positive and statistically significant relationship between academic coursework and intellectual skills, thereby providing support for Hypothesis 3 as posited in the study. Moreover, the study finds a strong and positive correlation between third-party certificates and intellectual skills, thereby providing support for Hypothesis 7 (H7). Furthermore, the findings of the study provide evidence that experience is positively and significantly correlated with intellectual skills, thereby supporting hypothesis H11.

**Table 4**

*Regression Analysis (Dependent variable: Intellectual Skills)*

<b>Regression Statistics</b>					
Multiple R					0.54
R Square					0.37
Adjusted R Square					0.71
Standard Error					0.36
Observations					201
<b>ANOVA</b>					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	41	43.87	18.24	27.37	8.7
Residual	59	21.88	0.47		
Total	100	65.75			
	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	
Constant	0.026	0.27	2.61	0.025	
Academic Coursework	0.034	0.31	3.01	0.022	
Degree or certification	0.038	0.19	2.67	0.048	
Experience	0.040	0.22	2.60	0.037	

Table 5 displays the results of the regression analysis conducted on the various independent variables in relation to the dependent variable, namely personality skills, which is a crucial aspect of workplace readiness. The adjusted R-square value

of 0.49 indicates that the combination of academic coursework, third-party certificates, and experience collectively account for 49% of the variance observed in the dependent variable, namely personality skills. The findings presented in Table 5 demonstrate a positive and statistically significant correlation between academic coursework and personality skills, thereby providing support for Hypothesis 4 as posited in the study. Moreover, the study's hypothesis H8 is supported by the finding that third-party certificates exhibit a strong and positive correlation with personality skills. Furthermore, the findings of this study provide evidence that there is a positive and significant correlation between experience and personality skills, thereby supporting Hypothesis 12.

**Table 5**

*Regression Analysis (Dependent variable: Personality Skills)*

Regression Statistics					
Multiple R					0.42
R Square					0.24
Adjusted R Square					0.49
Standard Error					0.27
Observations					201
ANOVA					
	<i>df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	47	48.67	24.48	33.67	9.67
Residual	53	24.37	0.51		
Total	100	73.04			
	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	
Constant	0.019	0.26	2.60	0.048	
Academic Coursework	0.034	0.43	3.64	0.039	
Degree or certification	0.038	0.34	3.01	0.040	
Experience	0.046	0.29	3.67	0.037	

## 5. Discussion

The objective of this study was to assess the efficacy of digital marketing education in augmenting the employability of individuals upon graduation. To fulfill the objective, the data was gathered from business students in their final year, hailing from diverse higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia. The data that was gathered was subjected to analysis using SPSS software, specifically through regression analysis, in order to examine and evaluate the hypotheses of the study. The findings of the analysis indicate that academic coursework has a positive impact on all the dimensions of workplace readiness identified in this study, including job-specific skills, meta-skills, intellectual skills, and personality skills. The finding demonstrates the necessity of enhancing the marketing curriculum within business schools and integrating courses, training, and skills development programs pertaining to digital marketing. Presently, a disparity in expertise exists within the labor market, wherein enterprises seek individuals proficient in technology and possessing digital literacy, while educational institutions are failing to



produce graduates equipped with sought-after skills (Langan et al., 2019). In the contemporary landscape characterized by pervasive digitalization and automation, it is imperative to undertake a comprehensive review of the academic curriculum in marketing programs. This revision should encompass the integration of current market practices and demands. By incorporating these elements, graduating students will be equipped with the requisite skills, knowledge, and expertise to effectively navigate the dynamic landscape of digital marketing tools upon entering the professional realm. In order to accomplish this objective, it is recommended that marketing programmes incorporate a combination of elective and compulsory courses. In addition, it is imperative to incorporate contemporary digital advancements into the fundamental principles of marketing, in conjunction with the longstanding theories and models that have been imparted for several decades (Royle & Laing, 2014; Wymbs, 2011). In order to effectively navigate the evolving landscape of marketing, it is imperative for students enrolled in marketing programmes to possess fundamental understanding of various domains such as social media marketing, email marketing, content management, search engine optimisation (SEO), digital marketing tools, digital advertising, and data analytics. This breadth of knowledge equips students with the necessary skills to adapt to the latest developments in the field and confidently transition

Furthermore, the study additionally reveals that the inclusion of third-party certificates significantly enhances the various aspects of workplace preparedness among graduate students enrolled in business schools. This discovery demonstrates that in addition to the formal academic curriculum provided by educational institutions, third-party certifications also contribute to the enhancement of students' digital marketing skills and their preparedness for the professional realm. Numerous private entities and select educational establishments have developed autonomous digital marketing courses, with a predominant emphasis on online delivery to cater to learners' convenience and comfort. The digital marketing tools developed by industry experts are complemented by training and courses offered by reputable organisations such as Google, LinkedIn, HubSpot, Hootsuite, IBM, and similar entities. In addition to these, certain educational institutions have developed autonomous courses referred to as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). The aforementioned platforms, such as Harvard, MITx, Edx, Coursera, and similar platforms, provide these courses. These platforms impose a fee on learners and provide them with essential skills and knowledge pertaining to the digital marketing domain, enabling them to enter the professional realm with confidence. This phenomenon serves to mitigate the disparity in skills within the labour market, a matter that is currently inadequately tackled by conventional educational establishments (Fawcett & Rutner, 2014; Spiller & Tuten, 2019). The instructors of these third-party certifications and accredited courses primarily consist of industry professionals, enabling them to effectively transmit practical knowledge to students based on their own industry expertise. Consequently, the valuable perspectives gained from the industry, combined with the foundational theories of the field, contribute to the development of learners' skills and increase their employability.

The study's findings indicate that experiential learning among students has a positive impact on all dimensions of employability. This discovery demonstrates that students who demonstrate additional effort and engage in experiential learning acquire highly sought-after skills, thereby enhancing their preparedness for entry into the professional realm.

Experiential learning encompasses the inclusion of internships within organizations, providing students with a firsthand experience of the realities associated with professional work environments. One can engage in the process of observing and acquiring knowledge regarding the development of marketing strategies in real-time, as well as the use of digital marketing tools and techniques for the purposes of branding, advertising, and customer relationship management. Due to the established advantages associated with internships, numerous educational institutions have incorporated them as mandatory components within graduate programs, assigning them credit scores. This approach ensures that all students have the opportunity to engage in authentic workplace environments, thereby acquiring valuable professional skills (Shebaro et al., 2022). Internships provide students with the opportunity to observe the practical application of theoretical knowledge they have acquired. According to Kapareliotis et al. (2019), individuals have the opportunity to acquire the necessary skills and expertise to effectively address a wide range of situations and challenges encountered in the practical realm. Moreover, the acquisition of practical skills and knowledge through internships enhances students' prospects of securing employment, surpassing those who lack such experiential learning opportunities. This underscores the higher employability of students with internship experience compared to those without any prior professional engagement. Engaging in experiential learning or internships within the realm of digital marketing provides students with the opportunity to refine their abilities in various areas, such as Google Analytics proficiency, content management, audience engagement, and social media platform management. In addition, students have the opportunity to gain practical experience in the areas of search engine optimization and e-marketing campaigns. Hence, the acquisition of practical experience through internships contributes to the development of students' employability.

### **5.1 Theoretical Implications**

The current study offers several theoretical implications. Insufficient attention has been given to the research pertaining to the enhancement of academic curriculum, third-party certifications, and experiential learning as means to educate individuals in the field of digital marketing, and the subsequent impact these approaches have on preparing individuals for the demands of the workplace. Hence, this research study makes a valuable contribution to the existing body of literature by conducting an empirical examination of a comprehensive model that encompasses the three dimensions of knowledge and skill development. The study aims to investigate the correlation between these dimensions and the level of workplace readiness among business graduates in the domain of digital marketing.

### **5.2 Practical Implications**

The findings of the study have significant practical implications for educational institutions, specifically business schools, and students enrolled in business programs. The findings of the study emphasize the necessity for educational institutions to enhance the academic curriculum of marketing by integrating components of digital marketing into both foundational and advanced courses. Furthermore, it is imperative that the curriculum incorporates both mandatory and optional digital marketing courses in order to adequately address the demands of the professional sphere and address the prevailing deficiency in skills within the market. One potential approach to enhancing the current curriculum

involves the incorporation of theoretical foundations in digital marketing, alongside the implementation of programs aimed at fostering the development of digital skills, such as training in various digital marketing tools. In spite of this, students may consider enrolling in third-party certification programmes to enhance their employability by acquiring the essential skills required for entry into the professional workforce. Educational institutions should actively promote student engagement in experiential learning endeavours, such as internship programmes, and should establish a dedicated placement centre within the institution to facilitate convenient access to internship opportunities. Furthermore, it is imperative for students to actively pursue valuable internship opportunities by submitting applications to reputable organisations. This will enable them to gain practical experience and receive training within the authentic professional realm.

### 5.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

The present study displays certain constraints that may be effectively addressed by subsequent scholars. The current investigation has considered external variables in order to assess the employability of graduate students, specifically focusing on the academic curriculum, third-party certifications, and prior experience. Subsequent investigations may explore additional variables, such as internal factors encompassing personality traits, digital literacy, technological proficiency, and professional competencies, in order to examine their impact on the preparedness of graduate students in the domain of digital marketing for the workplace. Furthermore, the research has defined employability by considering four distinct dimensions: job-specific skills, meta-skills, personality skills, and intellectual skills. The currently available body of literature offers a range of alternative conceptualizations, providing opportunities for future research to explore the notion of workplace readiness among graduate students from alternative perspectives. This investigation has adopted a student-centric approach. Subsequent researchers may consider adopting an alternative perspective by incorporating the viewpoints and opinions of employers regarding the employability of recent graduates for the workplace.

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