Journal of Contemporary Educational Research, 2025, Volume 9, Issue 11
http://ojs.bbwpublisher.com/index.php/JCER
ISSN Online: 2208-8474
ISSN Print: 2208-8466

Exploring Curriculum Design of Marketing Planning Practice in the Context of Digital Transformation

Peimei Li, Shuqi Wu*

School of International Tourism, Hainan College of Economics and Business, Haikou 571127, China

**Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.*

Abstract: Digital technologies have emerged as a key force driving industrial transformation and shaping corporate competitiveness. In response to national strategies and reforms in digital marketing education, the integration of digital thinking into the "Marketing Planning Practice" curriculum is essential for cultivating interdisciplinary marketing professionals. At Hainan College of Economics and Business, digital transformation has been embedded as a core component of this course. This paper examines the associated challenges, implementation strategies, and practical outcomes, and presents illustrative case studies. The findings provide insights for enhancing digital integration in vocational marketing education and for fostering skilled, technology-oriented marketing talent.

Keywords: Vocational education; Marketing planning; Digital transformation; Curriculum optimization

Online publication: December 8, 2025

1. Introduction

As a core course in the marketing curriculum, Marketing Planning Practice plays a vital role in cultivating students' creativity, problem-solving ability, and practical competence. Yet the current instructional resources and teaching methods remain outdated, characterized by overlapping content, obsolete case studies, and limited incorporation of contemporary marketing concepts [1]. Abstract theories and poorly defined project tasks further hinder student comprehension and engagement, resulting in inefficiencies in both learning and teaching, which particularly affects students' ability to engage effectively and apply their knowledge.

The course is designed for second-year marketing students. Despite their proficiency in digital tools and familiarity with interactive, technology-supported learning environments, these students frequently encounter difficulties in independent thinking, logical reasoning, and collaborative learning.

To address these challenges, this study proposes a revised Marketing Planning Practice course, with the aim of enhancing students' digital application capabilities, strengthening reflective and collaborative learning,

and promoting deeper integration of academic training with industrial practice.

2. Methodology: Instructional approaches and implementation

2.1. Instructional approaches

2.1.1. Integration of marketing practice into teaching content

This course aligns with the National Occupational Skill Standard for Marketing Planner and with two standards within the "1+X" certificate system: the E-commerce Data Analysis (Intermediate Level) standard and the Digital Marketing Technology Application (Intermediate Level) standard [2–4]. Using the Digital Marketing Competition of the National Marketing Skills Contest as a key entry point and following a student-centered teaching philosophy, a structured teaching team was formed in response to evolving industry trends and the competency requirements of marketing planning roles, to develop modular teaching materials and redesign the curriculum through a project-based, progressive framework that integrates ideological and political education.

2.1.2. Diagnosing learner profiles to deliver precision teaching

In response to changes in the external environment, the curriculum was redesigned to emphasize students as active participants and to strengthen the components of ideological and political education. Consequently, teaching extended beyond the traditional classroom setting, incorporating online learning environments. A flexible work manual was developed to streamline task requirements, thereby facilitating the application of theoretical knowledge in practice. To promote reflective learning, mechanisms for both self and peer evaluation were implemented. Recent research highlights that technology-enhanced, student-centered learning environments can effectively strengthen learner engagement and support the development of observable competencies [5]. Consistent with these findings, our curriculum was supplemented with practical exercises on digital marketing platforms to foster student engagement and to generate quantifiable learning outcomes.

2.1.3. Deriving learning objectives from demonstrable project outcomes

Based on the major curriculum framework, course standards, job requirements, and student profiling, the course established three-dimensional learning objectives while identifying key instructional challenges. To address these challenges, a student career-oriented design was adopted, setting up scenario-based tasks aligned with Marketing Planning Practice. A blended approach combining online and offline teaching with integrated theory–practice projects was implemented to cultivate innovation and sustainability competencies. The learning outcomes were achieved through the implementation of five structured projects. Exceptional marketing planning projects were subsequently included in the college's library case-study database and recommended to enterprises, thereby enhancing students' professional confidence.

The assessment framework followed a comprehensive, multi-dimensional "four-in-one" model, with formative evaluation accounting for 70% of the total grade and summative evaluation accounting for 30%. It incorporated student self-assessment, peer assessment, instructor assessment, enterprise mentor feedback, and client evaluation. Student self-assessment and peer review tracked progress and informed timely teaching adjustments. Process data were continuously recorded via digital learning platforms to enable ongoing monitoring. Enterprise mentors evaluated student projects based on feasibility and innovativeness while providing professional guidance. Feedback from the client was collected through the digital marketing platform, which further contributed to refining students' practical strategies.

2.2. Implementation process

2.2.1. Multi-modal instructional strategies

Multiple instructional approaches were employed in the course, including task-driven, lecture-based, situational, collaborative inquiry, and presentation. Taking the task-driven approach as an example, students were first provided with relevant background materials through the XUEXITONG (an online learning management platform). Students were instructed to preview the first task in the flexible work manual in advance, with explicit requirements outlined. Based on students' prior academic performance and abilities, groups were then formed to maximize diversity within each group and similarity between groups. The detailed task procedures were subsequently introduced. Industry mentors were invited to participate in this stage, students asked questions about the task requirements, completed the corresponding assignments, and were followed by group discussions. The instructor summarized the outcomes and provided targeted suggestions at the conclusion of each task session.

When a progressive scenario-based approach was employed, instructional activities were conducted in accordance with the planning workflow and carried out through a collaborative inquiry approach. The XUEXITONG was utilized in the development of course resources and learning activities, the integration of multiple instructional methods, and the utilization of a variety of digital tools. The instructional methodology was structured according to a three-phase "Three-Five-Two" model, divided into the following stages:

(1) Pre-class exploration: literature review, enterprise investigation, quizzes

(2) In-class practice: scenario introduction, brainstorming session, development of solutions, skills development, assessment of outcomes

(3) Post-class extension: consolidation quizzes, extended task activities

Industry mentors were invited to participate during these stages. Students asked questions regarding task requirements, completed the assigned work, and engaged in group discussions. At the conclusion of each task session, the instructor summarized the outcomes and provided targeted feedback and suggestions.

For the presentation approach, each group simulated an enterprise project presentation. The presentation order was determined by a pre-class draw. Groups reported project data, reviewed the implementation process, and presented optimization results. Industry mentors evaluated the digital marketing proposals and the corresponding optimization strategies through questioning and scoring. Additionally, customer feedback assessment was incorporated into the digital marketing training system, thereby enhancing students' engagement and strengthening their professional confidence.

2.2.2. "3-5-2" model in action

In the third task of Project 5, Product Analysis and Positioning, the "Three-Five-Two" instructional model was flexibly applied to guide the teaching implementation. Instructional activities were organized according to the planning workflow and carried out through a collaborative inquiry approach. The XUEXITONG was used to develop course resources, integrate multiple instructional methods, and utilize a variety of digital tools. The instruction was structured into three phases:

(1) Pre-class exploration:

Students conducted enterprise interviews, reviewed relevant materials, and completed test questions designed in accordance with the requirements of the Provincial Skills Competition and the "1+X" certificate assessment standards.

(2) In-class practice:

(a) Introduction (5 min): Students completed the task of optimizing product keyword entry in the training system.

(b) Analysis (15 min): New concepts were introduced, and incorrect answers from the pre-class tests were retrieved from the XUEXITONG. Furthermore, a selection of keyword classification submissions was presented with the objective of facilitating inter-group cognitive comparisons. These activities enabled students to analyze easily confused terms and address key learning difficulties.

(c) Research (20 min): Based on the analysis results, students engaged in further group discussions to refine the keyword classification schemes. Core brand terms, attribute terms, and marketing terms were extracted, and multiple techniques were employed for keyword expansion. The revised schemes were uploaded to the XUEXITONG for display and peer evaluation.

(d) Practice (30 min): First, students applied the optimized keyword schemes to the digital marketing platform. Next, guided by system prompts, students completed the task of keyword database filtering and refinement. Peer evaluation and instructor feedback were conducted to address challenges encountered. Finally, students performed search ranking optimization tasks for product pages using their refined keyword databases, with scores automatically generated upon task completion.

(e) Evaluation (10 min): Groups with lower scores presented their final schemes and results. Inter-group evaluations were conducted to summarize the key requirements for achieving higher search ranking scores.

(3) Post-class extension:

A review quiz on product keyword classification was released on the platform, and students' keyword databases were incorporated into the resource library. Additionally, students were assigned an extended task to optimize website homepages based on their keyword schemes. Online interactions were organized to facilitate knowledge internalization and skill enhancement. During group presentations, students proposed high-relevance keywords not yet included in the resource library, demonstrating active engagement and innovative thinking. Their contributions were recognized and encouraged to foster creativity.

3. Results and outcomes

3.1. Achievement of learning objectives

Through a four-dimensional evaluation method, with 70% of the total grade based on formative assessment and 30% based on summative assessment, students achieved satisfactory or higher mastery of knowledge and skills across all course tasks. For students with specific learning difficulties, such challenges can be addressed through the distribution of supplementary materials following class and the provision of online Q&A sessions, thereby facilitating the achievement of teaching objectives.

Based on the final course results, four additional students achieved Grade A, and two students advanced from Grade C to Grade B. This reflects a notable improvement in students' professional competence, providing them with the fundamental skills required for marketing planners in emerging business contexts. Moreover, the course workbook has received recognition from the industry, and its scenario-based, project-oriented teaching approach substantially enhanced students' professional confidence and promoted ideological and political education objectives.

3.2. Enhancement of students' comprehensive competence

Students' learning motivation was markedly improved, as demonstrated by proactive pre-class engagement in enterprise interviews and literature review, active participation in group discussions and peer evaluations during class, and initiative in exploring optimization strategies for digital marketing practices. Learning platform data indicated that active student participation increased by 14% in Project 5 compared with Project 4.

Students' practical skills were also developed. They were able to analyze market data, design digital marketing plans consistent with course requirements, and optimize implementation effectiveness. In addition, students explored the demands of digital marketing in emerging business contexts, emphasizing product–user relationship building and utilizing social media and search engines to create a closed-loop customer experience.

Students' professional qualities were also enhanced. Through the full cycle of "research–analysis–planning–implementation–optimization" in digital marketing projects, they cultivated rigor, dedication, innovative thinking, and a strong sense of craftsmanship.

3.3. Synergy between curriculum, competitions, and certification

In 2021, the digital marketing project was incorporated into the provincial marketing skills competition, where students achieved first place in the designated event and second place overall. In addition, students actively participated in competitions related to marketing planning, including the Internet Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition, the Provincial Skills Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition, the Marketing Skills Competition, and the Singapore Global Brand Planning Competition, in which they reached the finalist stage. Participation and award rates increased by approximately 10% year-on-year. The integration of curriculum learning, competition participation, and professional certification produced synergistic effects.

3.4. Recognition in national teaching competitions

Driven by the digital transformation, the Marketing Planning Practice course was reformed to integrate digital teaching concepts, methods, and tools into the curriculum. In collaboration with China Duty-Free Group, Hainan Zhiling Technology Co., Ltd., and Kangtai International Travel Agency, the teaching team developed the Digital Marketing Planning for Duty-Free Products course. The course was implemented in the 2021 marketing program cohort. The course won the teaching team first prize in the 2022 Hainan Provincial Teaching Ability Competition and second prize in the 2022 National Teaching Ability Competition, marking significant achievements at both provincial and national levels.

4. Innovations and contributions

4.1. Establishing a think tank for integrating industry, academia, and research

A collaborative teaching system was developed to integrate industry, academia, and research resources for the marketing program, building on the International Tourism Consumption Center Research Think Tank established by Hainan College of Economics and Business. This platform enables teaching resources to be shared between universities and enterprises, facilitates the full-process collection of student learning data, disseminates faculty research outcomes, and promotes social services. Digital marketing plans were developed by leveraging enterprise operational data embedded in the platform, tested through teaching practices and market applications, and then fed back to enterprises. This process provides industry-relevant digital marketing strategies for local businesses and fosters a sustainable ecosystem of education-industry collaboration.

4.2. Developing a multi-dimensional evaluation system

An innovative "four-dimensional integrated" evaluation system was established in order to comprehensively assess the teaching process, with a particular emphasis on diversified learning outcomes. The system has been meticulously designed to nurture students' analytical reasoning capabilities, professional report-writing skills, and practical application skills. The four evaluation dimensions comprise instructor evaluation, enterprise mentor evaluation, peer assessment, and training platform data. Furthermore, value-added assessments were performed by comparing project-based learning outcomes, pre- and post-class test scores, and student participation levels. This approach transcends conventional single-dimensional evaluation models, thereby enhancing students' professional competencies and establishing a novel standard for assessing technical and professional skills. This new standard is designed to meet the demands of marketing planning roles in the digital economy.

4.3. Integrating professional ethics and technical competence to foster students' career development

In accordance with the teaching objective of aligning professional training with value-based education, moral education elements were incorporated into the digital marketing planning project for duty-free products. The curriculum identified key integration points for ideological and political education, enriching the course with ethical dimensions. Students were guided to recognize the importance of integrity in business operations, quality service, and legal compliance, to strengthen their moral discernment, and to consciously resist unethical or illegal practices. This approach not only fosters technical proficiency but also cultivates ethical awareness, contributing to the development of a first-class, law-based business environment.

5. Conclusion

In summary, the accelerating digital transformation is reshaping not only industries but also the education sector, where advances in artificial intelligence and data-driven technologies are increasingly influencing curriculum design, instructional methods, and learning ecosystems. Recent analyses highlight that the integration of such technologies is becoming a key driver of educational innovation and institutional reform [6]. These developments place increasing demands on business educators to update and adapt their knowledge frameworks. As disciplinary content evolves and digital tools for business education advance, teaching methods must also be refined to meet the needs of the digital era. Consequently, how business educators can respond to these changes, integrate new concepts, emerging business models, and advanced technologies, and implement more diversified and digitalized teaching practices has become a pressing issue for the future development of business education. Future research may further explore curriculum design and implementation strategies that accelerate this transformation and enhance the relevance of business education in the digital era.

Funding

This work was supported by the Natural Science Foundation Youth Program of Hainan Province (723QN252) and Hainan College of Economics and Business Research Project (hnjmk2023110): Exploration and Practice of Integrating Professional Education with Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Higher Vocational Marketing and Live-Streaming Programs under the New Business Disciplines Context.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

[1] An J, Abdrahim NA, 2024, An Overview of Historical Development and Emerging Challenges of Vocational Education: A China's Higher Education Perspective. International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development, 13(4): 23239.

[2] Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security of the People's Republic of China, 2021, National Occupational Skill Standard for Internet Marketing Specialist (Draft for Public Comment).

[3] Beijing Bodao Qiancheng Information Technology Co., Ltd., 2021, E-Commerce Data Analysis Occupational Skill Level Standard (Version 2.0, Code 530002).

[4] ITMC Technology Co., Ltd., 2021, Digital Marketing Technology Application Occupational Skill Level Standard (Version 2.0, Code 530054).

[5] Kerimbayev N, Umirzakova Z, Shadiev R, et al., 2023, A Student-Centered Approach Using Modern Technologies in Distance Learning: A Systematic Review of the Literature. Smart Learning Environments, 10: 61.

[6] OECD, 2023, OECD Digital Education Outlook 2023: Towards an Effective Digital Education Ecosystem, OECD Publishing.