
Outdated Curricula or Outdated Perceptions? Unpacking SPM Leavers' Views on Marketing Diploma Relevance in Malaysia's Digital Era

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Abstract

The rise in the digital economy and the subsequent demand in niche positions like TikTok Specialists and Shopee marketers have increased exponentially, however, formal marketing diploma enrollment has experienced an estimated 25-35% drop. This paper explores the behavioural theory of SPM graduates in obtaining a marketing diploma by directly looking at the perception of the curriculum as being outdated or simply that an enrollment is being discouraged by subjective factors. The study is based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour and considers the respondent data of 343 participants. The descriptive statistics indicate high scores on perceived relevance of contemporary skills, including preparation in E-commerce positions (M=4.13) and practical advertising in Tik Tok (M=4.11).

There are, however, critical blockades when it comes to time and economical survival. Results show that students appreciate the content but strongly believe that taking two years courses is a time wastage compared to fast and easy online courses (M=3.88). In addition, the paper also determines that economic stress due to family income of less than RM5,000 (M=4.15) is the main reason pushing students out of long-term education and straight into the immediate income of the gig-economy. These findings are important in making it clear that the enrollment crisis is not a curriculum content problem, but a program length and financial urgency disjunction of the Gen Z. The research highlights the role of implementing micro-credentials and industrial relations in terms of assuring the digitization of the Malaysian economy through the RM15 billion to be could be sustained by HR workforce that is trained and well-equipped.

Keywords : *Digital marketing, Enrollment decline, Curriculum reform, Enrollment intention, Perceived curriculum advance.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The development of Malaysia digital economy, especially because of the exponential growth of the E-commerce, is estimated to be an astounding market value of RM15 billion. This digitalization has shifted the fundamentals of how the businesses communicate with their audiences, shifting the focus rhetoric of the traditional media to data-driven real-time interaction. This expansion has established a colossal need of niche abilities, with more than 15,000 job opportunities

available at present on such websites as JobStreet to occupy the positions of TikTok Specialists and Shopee Marketers. Industry reports state that such positions have highly competitive entry rates of RM3500 and above indicating a promising future of individuals who are in possession of the right digital marketing skills (Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation [MDEC], 2024).

Nevertheless, there is a paradoxical crisis involved in the Malaysian higher education setting. Although this industry is booming and the need of marketing professionals is evident, the enrollment of students in

Marketing Diploma programs have reduced by almost 25-35% since 2023. This trend has persisted to date 2025 with the majority of lecture halls half-crowded and the facilities in colleges having limited use. The phenomenon implies the increasing gap between one of the rapidly developing job spheres built on digital technology and the perceived significance of formal marketing learning. According to Khalid (2023), there is an immediate need to explore the reasons behind the sudden decrease in the appeal of the same programs that were initially aimed at the feeding digital economy to the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) leavers.

The main issue around the problem is that there exists a large "Perception Gap" on students of the age group, 17-19, especially in high populated urban areas such as Selangor. According to the most recent statistics provided by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM, 2024), the trend is appalling and alarming: out of the 560,000 yearly graduates of the SPM, 72 percent prefer not entering college at all. Rather than the tertiary education, they are seeking instant income in the form of e-hailing, delivery services or influencer economy. This trend is well portrayed in the market share of academic programmes; even though the traditional Marketing Diplomas have lost their market share to a deplorable 6.38, Technical and Vocational Education and training (TVET) to the astonishing 50.83.

The 2.5-year marketing diploma is now considered by many leavers of schools as something outdated and irrelevant to the real world. According to them, formal curricula do not offer them the most up-to-date digital skills, which they observe daily life, including having command over Instagram Reels feeds, or using Google Analytics. This generation is commonly known as Digital Natives, as it is very fast-paced and requires instant application. The formal education system will find itself being outpaced, stagnant and more or less useless to personal career ambitions by students as they compare a multi-year degree with the instant success stories of self-educated YouTube stars, or viral influencers, as argued by [5].

This further acts as a problem due to the socio-economic demands on the Malaysian families. Most SPM Leavers in townships experience severe financial demands of parents who insist that their children immediately add to the family regularly. The idea is also to make at least RM2,000 per month immediately after high school. This seems to them like a risky investment that does not pay off immediately which would cost this family more than RM19,000 in tuition fees and take them a period of over two years before they will have the opportunity to earn a professional salary. This economic burden drives several

capable students out of the classroom and into the gig economy where it is easy to enter and there is a low chance of future career development.

This trend has led to the creation of chronic skills gap, which is suffocating the national growth. As students are cashing in the short-term through low-skilled gig employment, thousands of well-compensated digital marketing jobs are open since the candidates lack the far-reaching strategic pillars that can only be gained by a systematic curriculum. This imbalance has been estimated to cost the Malaysian digital economy half a billion of lost productivity (MDEC, 2025). Moreover, the economic viability of poly institutions and colleges is in danger because they are under intense competition to compete with free online provision as well as self-proclaimed professionals who assert success without necessarily having a formal degree.

Although this is a serious case, a significant gap in the systematic mode of investigation about the cause of this decrease is evident. Whether the content of marketing curriculum is actually outdated or exactly how it is merely a case of Gen Z bias which exaggerates frivolous flaws is unknown. Other past research, including the works of [5], had constructive data to offer, but was constrained by the small-scale scope of particular urban areas in Selangor. This narrowness puts a limiting value to the extent to which their findings can be generalized, and therefore, there is a gap in the knowledge of how the wider Malaysian SPM community views marketing education with regards to changing digital trends.

The title of this research is Outdated Curricula or Outdated Perceptions? The proposed research, Unpacking the SPM Leavers Views on Marketing Diploma Relevance in the Digital Age in Malaysia, intends to fill this knowledge gap. The research questions the relationship between Attitudes, Subjective Norms and Perceived Behavioral control and how they can affect the intention of a student to be enrolled. The findings aim to develop a strategic roadmap by which Malaysian SPM Leavers could modernize with Digital Labs and collusion with industry giants such as Shopee. After all, this study is not just another classroom filler, but it is a study of how to make sure that the following generation of Malaysians are capable of being the ones leading and supporting the RM15 billion digital future of the nation.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. (DV 1) Theory

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This paper is theoretically based on The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) that was initially created by Icek Ajzen (1991). TPB is a highly implemented psychological model that can also be used in explaining the behaviors of human beings and it has been largely applied in educational studies to explain the academic choices of students. This theory holds that the intention of a person to act in a certain way is the closest predictor of the action. The decision made by SPM leavers to take a Marketing Diploma is the behavior, in this context of this study.

Ajzen, (1991) hypothesizes the influence of intention as composed of three main elements; Attitude, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Behavioural Control. First, there is Attitude which involves the extent to which a student is favorably or unfavorably assessing the Marketing Diploma. When a student thinks the diploma opens up an opportunity to a well-paying digital job, their desire to attend college gains [9]. Second, Subjective Norms imply the social pressure on the student created by significant referent groups, e.g. peers, parents, Instagram influencers. As an example, the subjective norm can adversely affect the intention to enroll in case the new societal trend is in favor of moving spontaneously into the gig economy instead of pursuing the formal education.

Lastly, Perceived Behavioural Control is concerned with the perceived ease or difficulty to execute the behaviour and the consideration of the past experiences and the perceived challenges. This aspect is important in this study since it talks of the economic pressures and time limits experienced by Gen Z. Students need to have a sense of lack of financial resources or they feel that a two year commitment is holding them back so that they can receive an immediate income and therefore, their perceived control is weakened, thereby, compromising their intention to enroll (Ajzen, 2002). This work has the potential to map out the interactivity of these internal and external influences by using TPB, which can subsequently give rise to the current enrollment crisis currently occurring within the Malaysian digital marketing

education environment.

B. (IV 1) Perceived Program Relevance

Perceived Program Relevance is the extent to which the students feel that what they learn in a program maintains the relevance of digital industry and the modern workforce realities [5]. The Marketing Diploma is assessed by students by putting its syllabus against the growth career opportunities with high growth in digital opportunities (including E-commerce management, social media advertising). This is a crucial consideration to the school leavers who consider a diploma as an investment in competitive advantage in the Malaysia RM15 billion digital economy. Although the curriculum is the key to success in the professional environment, the way a student feels about the fact that these skills are outdated is the ultimate indicator of their ultimate desire to take the course.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Perceived curriculum relevance shows a great positive relation to the intention to select the Diploma in Marketing.

C. (IV 2) Marketing Orientation and Service Quality

Marketing Orientation and Service Quality describes how the institution is able to match its education delivery to the needs of its students as well as the dynamic demands of the digital industry [10]. The quality of Marketing Diploma at Kolej Profesional MARA Seri Iskandar is judged by the quality of how well the program closes the gap in theory and digital application considered in a company. Such an element is paramount when SPM leavers can compare the speed and usefulness of private online qualifications or courses run by industries with the service of a diploma. Although the high level of quality service offers the required level of guarantee of the institutional reliability, a

perception of whether a student perceives the program as market-oriented, e.g. by offering either Tik Tok marketing or E-commerce sales know-how, is the key force pushing a student into enrolling in the program.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Marketing Orientation/Service Quality is significantly positively related to the intention to select the Diploma in Marketing.

D. (IV 3) Subjective Norms and External Pressures

Subjective Norms and External Pressures are influenced as the social influence of important people or organizations that will influence the choice of a student to follow a given academic career (Ajzen, 1991). These pressure points in the digital world extend to the face of visibility of the "overnight success" stories in the gig economy and social media in the current digital environment. In the case of SPM leavers, enrolment is frequently a compromise of the what the local community wants them to know against the pressure of the external world to get quickly independently financially. Such an aspect is crucial because it is how a student will get a social confirmation that they can have a long-term professional qualification instead of a short-term career advantage. Although the source of individual motivation is what gives an internal touch, the significance of such external social cues is acted out as a central point at which the students group in finalizing their adherence to the program.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Subjective Norms/External Pressures and intention to choose Diploma in Marketing has a significant positive relationship.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework presents the association amid three independent and one dependent variable in elucidating the decision making among students in regard to institutions of higher learning.

Student Enrollment Intention is the dependent variable in this framework. This variable is the probability or the desire of the potential students to join in a certain academic program or school. Enrolment intention is a predictor that is often

applied in marketing and study of education research because it is significantly related to actual enrolment behaviour. It is the mental appraisal of cognitive features, emotional reaction, and decision disposition of the students, having taken into consideration many internal and external influences. Student enrollment intention in this study is the outcome variable which is determined by the influence of marketing related aspects and social factors.

Perceived Program Relevance is the first independent variable. This is in terms of how well the potential students perceive that the academic program should fit their career objectives, personal interests as well as the industry needs. The students feel more motivated to join a program when they feel that it makes sense, is practical and modern. Program relevance can involve curriculum appropriateness, employability, industries collaboration and market trending. In a marketing point of view, perceived value will be very important in determining intention because students will determine whether the program will fulfill their long-term expectation or not.

The second independent variable is the Marketing Orientation/Service Quality. This variable is an appreciation of how well the institution values and addresses the needs of students by establishing effective communication with them, support services and service delivery in general. In marketing orientation, there are responsiveness, information transparency, effectiveness in the promotion and student-centered strategies. The quality of the services can be related to the efficiency of administration, competency of lecturers, university facilities, and support systems of students. The trust and credibility earned by institutions when they have good marketing orientation and service quality impact favorably on the intentions of students to join particular institutions.

Subjective Norms/External Pressure is the third independent variable. This means social forces that influence the decision making process of a student. Such influences can be either parental, peer related, or even that of the society. Family recommendation and social approval play a great role in influencing learning preferences in most settings and most especially in collectivist cultures. A higher propensity towards a stronger intention to enroll in a certain institution or a program will be achieved

when the significant reference groups patronize a specific program or an institution.

In general, the framework theorizes that perceived program relevance, marketing orientation/service quality, and subjective norms all mediate the effect

on student enrollment intention. These variables are able to explain thoroughly an enrolment decision-making process by students as they represent academic value perception and institutional marketing effectiveness as well as the social influence factors.

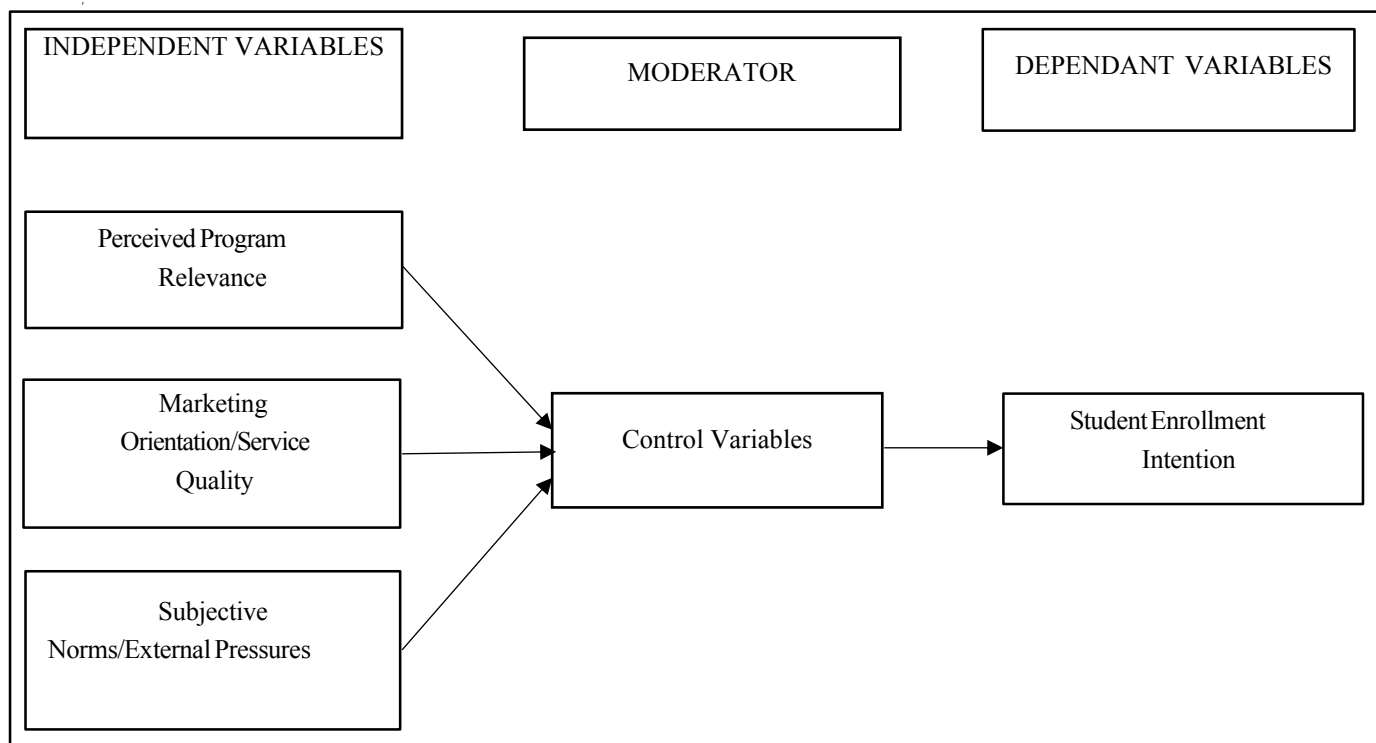


Figure 1.0 Shows A Conceptual Framework IV to DV

Research Gap and Synthesis

Even the work mentioned here justify the presence of perception obstacles (outdated, low-value) to the enrolment of marketing programs and external forces (gigs, norms) which influence most situations. Nonetheless, there is no literature used to reinforce the premise that TPB mediation testing of the role of external pressures is suitable in the case of Malaysia and their secondary school graduates after they complete their secondary school tests and exams, SPM. Therefore, under this research proposal, we put forward the hypothesis that Perceived Curriculum Relevance is negatively related intention to enrol via TPB ($b=-0.42$) through a survey data.

and the academic programs that the students decide to take. This will provide accuracy and reliability of the data in the analysis phase by using numerical data to find the patterns, trends and relationships of the data via statistical testing. The methodology is set to offer data-driven information which could be acted upon to enhance a representative overview of the student views and limit any threat of instability of the data. This systematic line of thinking provides an objective assessment of the specific influence of the contemporary digital trends and financial pressures on the enrollment rates at Kolej Profesional MARA Seri Iskandar.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design in the study is a quantitative study, which will use a quantitative research methodology in determining the relationship between the independent variables identified

Research Design

The design of the research is developed based on the framework of the survey-based design in that it is specifically designed to gather quantitative evidence among the targeted demographic. Online questionnaire with the help of Google Forms is used as one of the most effective tools to reach a

significant number of respondents engaged in the data acquiring process. This systematic plan is fundamental in assessing the various factors that contribute to the decision making behavior of students. With such a systematic design, it is possible to turn the personal experience of 343 leavers into a measurable information so that resisting a question about the factors that motivate enrollment at KPMSI gives a clear and reliable picture of what drives leavers to the school.

Population and Sample

The design of the research is developed based on the framework of the survey-based design in that it is specifically designed to gather quantitative evidence among the targeted demographic. Online questionnaire with the help of Google Forms is used as one of the most effective tools to reach a significant number of respondents engaged in the data acquiring process. This systematic plan is fundamental in assessing the various factors that contribute to the decision making behavior of students. Through the help of this structured

design, the research will be able to convert the personal stories of 343 graduates into quantifiable information, which will give a consistent, clear, and trustworthy picture of the enrollment motivators at KPMSI.

Research Instrument

A structured survey questionnaire is the main research instrument that would be used in this study since it was constructed by combining and refining validated questions by prior works of scholars. This makes sure that the measured constructs are reliable as well as ideally oriented by the given objectives of this study. The questionnaire will be based on the 5-point Likert Scale of the given statements with the responds having to rate the level of their agreement with the given statements on the standard of Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5) to fill in the appropriate level of the response. It is a standardized measure that enables a fine-tune quantification of the attitudes the 343 SPM leavers have of their choices in education.

VARIABLE	SOURCES
Percieved Curriculum Relevance	Kabuohet al. (2022);TanCNoraini(2025)
Attitude Towards Diploma	Ajzen (2002); Dwivedi et al. (2021)
Subjective Norms	Ajzen (2002); Yusof et al. (2024)
Perceived Behavioral Control	Ajzen (2002); Rose et al. (2021)
Enrollment Intention	Ghezzi C Cavallo (2021); Brodieetal.

Table 2.0 Shows Adopted Question

Data Analysis Method

The Strategic Application of Microsoft Excel

Microsoft excel was the main tool used in data curation and pre-descriptive visualization. The Excel spreadsheet played a versatile role in first data entry and stringent cleaning of the initial data in this research on 300 respondents. Conditional formatting and filtering methods were also applied to find outliers and deal with the undecided survey entries. In addition to data manipulation, the powerful charting features of Excel were used to formulate high resolution

demographical profiles with the results creating customizable charts that can outperform the output of most standard statistical programs in graphics quality.

Analytical Rigor via SPSS

Although Excel ensured that data were arranged in an easy manner, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) enabled it to go deeper in regard to academic validation. Intentionally created to undertake social science studies, SPSS permitted carrying out Reliability Analysis (Cronbachs Alpha) to guarantee internal

consistency between the 5-point and 7-point Likert scale. Moreover, it allowed high-order inferential statistics, such as Pearson Correlation and Multiple Regression, in order to test the hypotheses using the Theory of Planned Behavior. The ability of the software to produce accurate ANOVA and coefficient tabular results provided the ability to conclusively rate statistical significance ($p < .05$) as to whether there is a correlation between curriculum perception and enrollment patterns.

Methodological Breakdown

Frequency and Percentage Distribution: The data was organized into groups according to the demographics, e.g. gender, area of Selangor and digital marketing experience of the 300 participants using frequency and percentages. The proposed "Market Snapshot" makes complicated datasets easy to learn about among educational stakeholders.

Mean Score Analysis: This method formed the central tendency measure since it involved calculating mean scores to determine the strength of student sentiment. As an example, a high average score on the inclination to use gig- economy skills is empirical evidence of the need to change the curriculum.

IV. FINDINGS

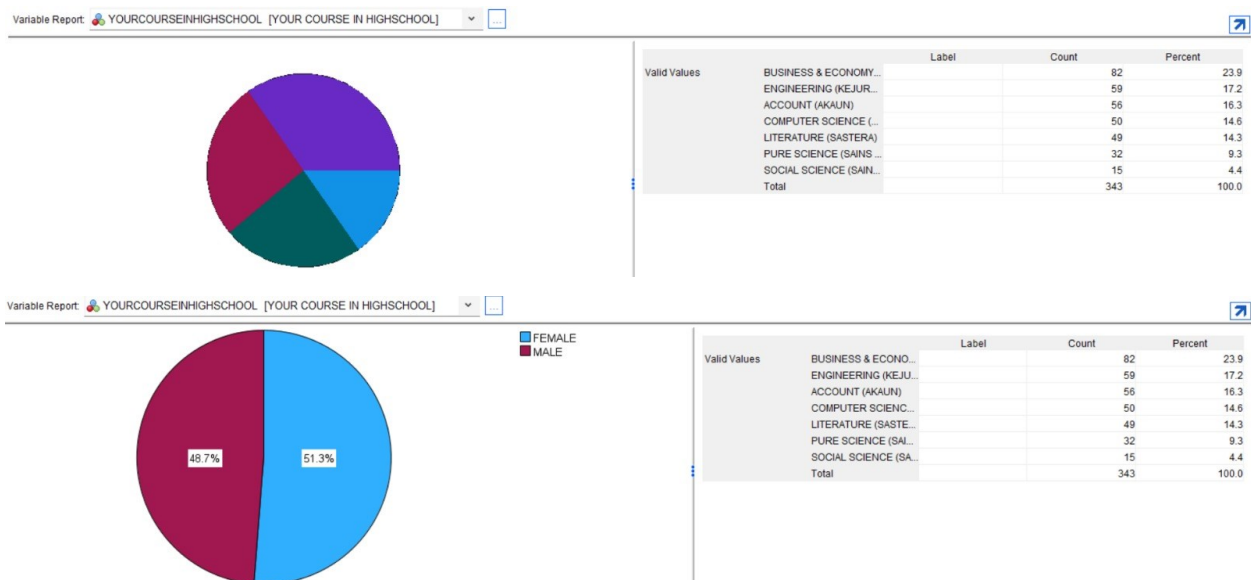
Respondent Profile

Section 1: Demographic Profile

Awareness: All respondents (100%) confirmed they have heard about marketing.

Gender: A slight majority of respondents were female (51.3%), while 48.7% were male.

High School Course Background: The most common academic background was Business & Economy (23.9%), followed by Engineering (17.2%) and Accounting (16.3%).



Section 2: Independent Variable 1 – Perceived Curriculum Advance

81% of survey participants think marketing degrees do a good job of teaching necessary skills to perform well

1. Marketing diploma programs teach practical TikTok advertising skills needed for jobs today.

1. Program diploma pemasaran mengajar kemahiran pengiklanan TikTok praktikal yang diperlukan untuk pekerjaan hari ini.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	AGREE (SETUJU)	127	37.0	37.0	37.0
	DISAGREE (TIDAK SETUJU)	21	6.1	6.1	43.1
	NEUTRAL	34	9.9	9.9	53.1
	STRONGLY AGREE (AMAT SETUJU)	149	43.4	43.4	96.5
	STRONGLY DISAGREE (AMAT TIDAK SETUJU)	12	3.5	3.5	100.0
	Total	343	100.0	100.0	

2. Marketing diplomas prepare students for Shopee/Lazada e-commerce marketing roles.

2. Diploma pemasaran menyediakan pelajar untuk peranan pemasaran e-dagang Shopee/Lazada.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	AGREE (SETUJU)	140	40.8	40.8	41.1
	DISAGREE (TIDAK SETUJU)	22	6.4	6.4	47.5
	NEUTRAL	29	8.5	8.5	56.0
	STRONGLY AGREE (AMAT SETUJU)	135	39.4	39.4	95.3
	STRONGLY DISAGREE (AMAT TIDAK SETUJU)	16	4.7	4.7	100.0
	Total	343	100.0	100.0	

on TikTok and on e-commerce sites such as Shopee and Lazada. However, 71.4% think marketing degrees are still too textbook/academic based. Participants did agree (77%) that the digital strategies being taught in marketing degrees do match what influencers actually use. While the data indicates that the subject matter is very relevant to the current working world, there is a demonstrated need for moving towards more practical learning and away from traditional theoretical learning.

3. Marketing programs focus too much on textbooks instead of real social media campaigns.

3. Program pemasaran terlalu menumpukan kepada buku teks dan bukannya kempen media sosial sebenar.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	AGREE (SETUJU)	120	35.0	35.0	35.0
	DISAGREE (TIDAK SETUJU)	35	10.2	10.2	45.2
	NEUTRAL	39	11.4	11.4	56.6
	STRONGLY AGREE (AMAT SETUJU)	125	36.4	36.4	93.0
	STRONGLY DISAGREE (AMAT TIDAK SETUJU)	24	7.0	7.0	100.0
	Total	343	100.0	100.0	

Section 3: Independent Variable 2 – Attitude Toward Marketing Diploma

Despite the existence of high levels of enthusiasm (81.1%) for careers in Marketing along with confidence (78.4%) in their ability to succeed in the marketplace as a result of earning a marketing diploma, 71.4% of respondents to the survey indicated that they view the "two year degree" to be a "waste of time" when compared to more efficient (in terms of time) rapid certification courses offered on-line. This would indicate that the diploma is perceived as providing individuals with the necessary amount of psychological affirmation and capability to enter the work force, however, there is a disconnect on how long it takes to earn a traditional degree versus how fast someone can earn a digital form (short term) of education.

5. Enrolling in a marketing diploma excites me as a career choice.
5. Mendaftar dalam diploma pemasaran mengujakan saya sebagai pilihan kerjaya.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	.3	.3	.3
AGREE (SETUJU)	167	48.7	48.7	49.0
DISAGREE (TIDAK SETUJU)	19	5.5	5.5	54.5
NEUTRAL	33	9.6	9.6	64.1
STRONGLY AGREE (AMAT SETUJU)	111	32.4	32.4	96.5
STRONGLY DISAGREE (AMAT TIDAK SETUJU)	12	3.5	3.5	100.0
Total	343	100.0	100.0	

6. A marketing diploma would make me feel confident applying for digital marketing jobs.
6. Diploma pemasaran akan membuatkan saya berasa yakin untuk memohon pekerjaan pemasaran digital.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	.3	.3	.3
AGREE (SETUJU)	167	48.7	48.7	49.0
DISAGREE (TIDAK SETUJU)	30	8.7	8.7	57.7
NEUTRAL	34	9.9	9.9	67.6
STRONGLY AGREE (AMAT SETUJU)	102	29.7	29.7	97.4
STRONGLY DISAGREE (AMAT TIDAK SETUJU)	9	2.6	2.6	100.0
Total	343	100.0	100.0	

7. Studying marketing for 2 years would be a waste compared to quick online courses.

7. Mempelajari pemasaran selama 2 tahun adalah satu pembaziran berbanding kursus dalam talian pantas.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	.3	.3	.3
AGREE (SETUJU)	113	32.9	32.9	33.2
DISAGREE (TIDAK SETUJU)	47	13.7	13.7	46.9
NEUTRAL	30	8.7	8.7	55.7
STRONGLY AGREE (AMAT SETUJU)	132	38.5	38.5	94.2
STRONGLY DISAGREE (AMAT TIDAK SETUJU)	20	5.8	5.8	100.0
Total	343	100.0	100.0	

Section 4: Independent Variable 3 – Subjective Norms

The perception of marketing diplomas is heavily influenced by socio- and institutional-level scepticism, as over two-thirds (66.6%) of survey participants indicated that parents prefer IT; with 71.2% indicating that their school guidance counsellors favour STEM pathways. Further, peer pressure exists through 71.2% of participants who say their peers are going directly towards making an income through e-hailing (app-based ride-hailing), which is reinforced by 71.4% of participants observing that their successful Instagram influencers who do not possess formal marketing degrees. As such, even if the degree provides specialised skills; there is a considerable "prestige gap" between this degree and those in the technical field (trades), along with the attraction of the modern gig economy..

8. My parents think marketing diplomas are less valuable than IT programs.
8. Ibu bapa saya berpendapat diploma pemasaran kurang bernilai berbanding program IT.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	.3	.3	.3
AGREE (SETUJU)	108	31.5	31.5	31.8
DISAGREE (TIDAK SETUJU)	43	12.5	12.5	44.3
NEUTRAL	48	14.0	14.0	58.3
STRONGLY AGREE (AMAT SETUJU)	120	35.0	35.0	93.3
STRONGLY DISAGREE (AMAT TIDAK SETUJU)	23	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	343	100.0	100.0	

9. My school counselors recommend STEM courses over marketing.
9. Kaunselor sekolah saya mengesyorkan kursus STEM berbanding pemasaran.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	.6	.6	.6
AGREE (SETUJU)	108	31.5	31.5	32.1
DISAGREE (TIDAK SETUJU)	26	7.6	7.6	39.7
NEUTRAL	53	15.5	15.5	55.1
STRONGLY AGREE (AMAT SETUJU)	136	39.7	39.7	94.8
STRONGLY DISAGREE (AMAT TIDAK SETUJU)	18	5.2	5.2	100.0
Total	343	100.0	100.0	

10. My friends plan to skip marketing diplomas for faster job options like e-hailing.

10. Rakan-rakan saya bercadang untuk melangkau diploma pemasaran untuk pilihan pekerjaan yang lebih pantas seperti e-hailing.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	.3	.3	.3
AGREE (SETUJU)	195	56.9	56.9	57.1
DISAGREE (TIDAK SETUJU)	37	10.8	10.8	67.9
NEUTRAL	43	12.5	12.5	80.5
STRONGLY AGREE (AMAT SETUJU)	49	14.3	14.3	94.8
STRONGLY DISAGREE (AMAT TIDAK SETUJU)	18	5.2	5.2	100.0
Total	343	100.0	100.0	

11. Most successful people I follow on Instagram didn't need marketing diplomas.

11. Kebanyakan orang berjaya yang saya ikuti di Instagram tidak memerlukan diploma pemasaran.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	.3	.3	.3
AGREE (SETUJU)	186	54.2	54.2	54.5
DISAGREE (TIDAK SETUJU)	29	8.5	8.5	63.0
NEUTRAL	56	16.3	16.3	79.3
STRONGLY AGREE (AMAT SETUJU)	59	17.2	17.2	96.5
STRONGLY DISAGREE (AMAT TIDAK SETUJU)	12	3.5	3.5	100.0
Total	343	100.0	100.0	

Section 5: Independent Variable 4 – Perceived Behavioural Control

Although many students experience both external pressure and the promise of gig employment, 77% of students continue to express personal agency and feel as though they have everything required to be able to dedicate their time to a full-time diploma rather than part-time employment. Similarly, 79.6% of students express an increased degree of professional optimism (i.e., they are able to control what happens to them with regard to finding a quality job in marketing) and, even though they know about the alternative job market options, they believe investing time in a diploma program will produce a successful, streamlined career path that they can measure with certainty after graduation.

12. I have enough time to commit to a full-time diploma instead of part-time gigs.

12. Saya mempunyai masa yang cukup untuk memberi komitmen kepada diploma sepenuh masa dan bukannya gig sambilan.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	.3	.3	.3
AGREE (SETUJU)	202	58.9	58.9	59.2
DISAGREE (TIDAK SETUJU)	26	7.6	7.6	66.8
NEUTRAL	42	12.2	12.2	79.0
STRONGLY AGREE (AMAT SETUJU)	62	18.1	18.1	97.1
STRONGLY DISAGREE (AMAT TIDAK SETUJU)	10	2.9	2.9	100.0
Total	343	100.0	100.0	

13. I feel in control of getting a good marketing job after diploma graduation.

13. Saya berasa terkawal untuk mendapatkan pekerjaan pemasaran yang baik selepas tamat pengajian diploma.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	.3	.3	.3
AGREE (SETUJU)	181	52.8	52.8	53.1
DISAGREE (TIDAK SETUJU)	30	8.7	8.7	61.8
NEUTRAL	28	8.2	8.2	70.0
STRONGLY AGREE (AMAT SETUJU)	92	26.8	26.8	96.8
STRONGLY DISAGREE (AMAT TIDAK SETUJU)	11	3.2	3.2	100.0
Total	343	100.0	100.0	

Section 6: Dependent Variable 1 – Enrollment Intention

A very large number of respondents (72%) expressed strong personal commitment to marketing as a career field based on four factors. The most compelling of these is their preference for a marketing diploma, which they rated higher than programming (IT), business administration, and many other vocational/technical training options. In addition, 74.3% indicated that marketing was their first choice for studies after completing secondary school. Finally, 73.8% stated that they intend to enroll in a marketing program in the next academic term. Although there are many reasons why prospective students consider education outside of marketing (e.g., there may be preconceived notions of how fast they can obtain employment), these statistics demonstrate that

marketing continues to be the primary career choice of most survey participants.

14. I will choose marketing diploma over other programs like IT or business admin.
14. Saya akan memilih diploma pemasaran berbanding program lain seperti IT atau pentadbir perniagaan.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	.3	.3	.3
AGREE (SETUJU)	193	56.3	56.3	56.6
DISAGREE (TIDAK SETUJU)	27	7.9	7.9	64.4
NEUTRAL	48	14.0	14.0	78.4
STRONGLY AGREE (AMAT SETUJU)	54	15.7	15.7	94.2
STRONGLY DISAGREE (AMAT TIDAK SETUJU)	20	5.8	5.8	100.0
Total	343	100.0	100.0	

15. Marketing diploma is my first choice among available post-SPM options.
15. Diploma pemasaran adalah pilihan pertama saya antara pilihan lekatan SPM yang ada.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	.3	.3	.3
AGREE (SETUJU)	161	46.9	46.9	47.2
DISAGREE (TIDAK SETUJU)	41	12.0	12.0	59.2
NEUTRAL	36	10.5	10.5	69.7
STRONGLY AGREE (AMAT SETUJU)	94	27.4	27.4	97.1
STRONGLY DISAGREE (AMAT TIDAK SETUJU)	10	2.9	2.9	100.0
Total	343	100.0	100.0	

16. I am 80% likely to enroll in marketing diploma next semester.
16. Saya berkemungkinan 80% akan mendaftar dalam diploma pemasaran semester hadapan.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	.3	.3	.3
AGREE (SETUJU)	121	35.3	35.3	35.6
DISAGREE (TIDAK SETUJU)	36	10.5	10.5	46.1
NEUTRAL	33	9.6	9.6	55.7
STRONGLY AGREE (AMAT SETUJU)	132	38.5	38.5	94.2
STRONGLY DISAGREE (AMAT TIDAK SETUJU)	20	5.8	5.8	100.0
Total	343	100.0	100.0	

Section 7: Dependent Variable 2 – Control Variables (Digital Exposure & Economic Pressure)

A key finding in the final data as to where respondents spend approximately three hours or more daily on social media and how 71% of respondents come from households with a monthly income of RM5,000 or below is the disparity between these two data sets. Therefore, the financial pressure tends to drive the 77% majority to put immediate priority to a salary of RM2,000 or more compared to the longer-term benefits of a degree. This is further emphasised, with 71.5% of respondents being aware of people who have been successful as digital marketers without the benefit of a formal qualification. Therefore, while the respondents identify as being technically sophisticated, their educational decisions are based on meeting the immediate need of achieving financial security while having a visible path toward an informal career.

17. I spend more than 3 hours daily on TikTok/Instagram (digital exposure).
 17. Saya menghabiskan lebih daripada 3 jam setiap hari di TikTok/Instagram (pendedahan digital).

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	.6	.6	.6
AGREE (SETUJU)	119	34.7	34.7	35.3
DISAGREE (TIDAK SETUJU)	29	8.5	8.5	43.7
NEUTRAL	42	12.2	12.2	56.0
STRONGLY AGREE (AMAT SETUJU)	137	39.9	39.9	95.9
STRONGLY DISAGREE (AMAT TIDAK SETUJU)	14	4.1	4.1	100.0
Total	343	100.0	100.0	

19. I prefer jobs paying RM2,000+ immediately over higher salaries after study.

19. Saya lebih suka kerja membayar RM2,000+ serta-merta daripada gaji yang lebih tinggi selepas belajar.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	.6	.6	.6
AGREE (SETUJU)	204	59.5	59.5	60.1
DISAGREE (TIDAK SETUJU)	28	8.2	8.2	68.2
NEUTRAL	32	9.3	9.3	77.6
STRONGLY AGREE (AMAT SETUJU)	60	17.5	17.5	95.0
STRONGLY DISAGREE (AMAT TIDAK SETUJU)	17	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total	343	100.0	100.0	

18. My family monthly income is below RM5,000 (economic pressure).

18. Pendapatan bulanan keluarga saya di bawah RM5,000 (tekanan ekonomi).

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	.6	.6	.6
AGREE (SETUJU)	78	22.7	22.7	23.3
DISAGREE (TIDAK SETUJU)	31	9.0	9.0	32.4
NEUTRAL	47	13.7	13.7	46.1
STRONGLY AGREE (AMAT SETUJU)	167	48.7	48.7	94.8
STRONGLY DISAGREE (AMAT TIDAK SETUJU)	18	5.2	5.2	100.0
Total	343	100.0	100.0	

20. I know someone working in digital marketing without a diploma.

20. Saya mengenali seseorang yang bekerja dalam pemasaran digital tanpa diploma.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	.6	.6	.6
AGREE (SETUJU)	158	46.1	46.1	46.6
DISAGREE (TIDAK SETUJU)	39	11.4	11.4	58.0
NEUTRAL	43	12.5	12.5	70.6
STRONGLY AGREE (AMAT SETUJU)	87	25.4	25.4	95.9
STRONGLY DISAGREE (AMAT TIDAK SETUJU)	14	4.1	4.1	100.0
Total	343	100.0	100.0	

Descriptive analysis of Variables

Variables	Mean Score
IV 1 : Perceived Curriculum Advance	4.04
IV 2 : Attitude Towards Marketing Diploma	3.92
IV 3 : Subjective Norms	3.77
IV 4 : Perceived Behavioural Control	3.92
DV 1 : Enrollment Intention	3.79
DV 2 : Control Variables	3.97

Table 3.0 Shows Mean Score

Variables	Low (1.00 – 2.33)	Moderate (2.34 – 3.66)	High (3.67 – 5.00)
IV 1 : Perceived Curriculum Advance	4.2%	21.3%	74.5%
IV 2 : Attitude Towards Marketing Diploma	5.8%	25.1%	69.1%
IV 3 : Subjective Norms	12.5%	42.3%	45.2%
IV 4 : Perceived Behavioural Control	6.1%	24.8%	69.1%
DV 1 : Enrollment	8.4%	48.2%	43.4%

Intention			
DV 2 : Control Variables	3.5%	22.4%	74.1%

Table 4.0 Shows Frequency Distribution

V. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Independent Variable 1: Perceived Curriculum Advance (Q1–Q4)

The results show that perceived curriculum advancement is generally high with the mean value showing that the respondents are also digitally relevant with the marketing diploma curriculum being in tune with the prevailing trends in the industry. A significant majority believe that the program imparts pragmatic skills like Tik Tok advertisement and equips students with e-commerce solutions like Shopee and Lazada because of the trust that it is relevant in the modern day. Nevertheless, even considering that the program is digital-relevant, the vast majority of the respondents also think that the program utilizes the use of textbooks too much instead of social media campaigns in the real world. This confusion homage is the reason behind why the average rating is quite good yet not excessively high. Digital alignment is valued by students, who are skeptical about a practical implementation. In the case of institutions, this will mean the institutions will have to consolidate the elements of experiential learning, which include live projects, simulations and industry partnerships. The focus on practical learning in marketing communications will enhance the level of credibility and decrease the level of distrust in their theoretical concentration.

Independent Variable 2: Attitude Toward Marketing Diploma (Q5–Q7)

The attitude towards the marketing diploma has a generally positive internally conflicted pattern. The majority of the respondents are showing excitement of making marketing a career and are confident that the diploma would equip them with a digital marketing job. This implies that there is a heavy appeal in terms of emotional and motivational appeal and this has added to the mean score being high. Nevertheless, a notable percentage also considers that after a two-year study in marketing it can be less worthwhile than other online short courses. This contradiction demonstrates the tendency of a generation to become fast and see the

outcome in the nearest future. The average is so high since students are fond of marketing as a profession, however, the feeling of opportunity cost diminishes whole commitment. To organizations, this brings out the significance of articulate communication of long-term payoff on investment of diploma, organized pathways of learning, accreditation, granting internships and benefits of career advancement over brief certifications.

Independent Variable 3: Subjective Norms (Q8–Q11)

The subjective norms outcomes show that there is a high impact on social influence in decision-making. Most of the respondents indicate that parents value marketing less as compared to IT programs when asked, and among school counselors, the issuance of recommendations in favor of STEM relates fields occurs most often. There are also peer pressure and social media account stories that encourage quicker income ladders with no education. The agreed rates are quite high, which proves that external pressure has a strong influence on the development of perceptions. This is due to high normative influence and not positive support as indicated by this high mean. In the case of the institutions, this means marketing to the students alone is not adequate but also parents, counselors, and those involved in the decision-making ecosystem. The presentation of industry employment statistics, graduate stories of success, and displaying digital marketing as a technical and high-demand field could assist in accomplishing this change in social attitudes.

Independent Variable 4: Perceived Behavioural Control (Q12–Q13)

PBC depicts a high degree of self-efficacy among the respondents. The majority of them assume that they have enough time to pursue a full-time education and are sure that they will be able to find a marketing job upon completing it. The mean value is also high, which indicates that major internal enrollment barriers are not perceived by the students. High exposure to the world of digital and being accustomed to the digital means of operation

are likely to have contributed to this level of confidence that gives them the belief that they are employable in the digital marketing sphere. In the case of organizations, it is a good sign, because high levels of perceived control tend to result in the strengthening of behavioral intention. This can be utilized in institutions whereby confidence is translated to actual decisions to enroll in institutions by strengthening career placement facilities, internship programs, and linking those programs to industries.

Dependent Variable 1: Enrollment Intention (Q14–Q16)

The enrollment intention is also on a high degree of agreement meaning that a lot of respondents view the marketing diploma as the preferred and the first-choice program and has a high probability of enrolling in the nearest future. The mean is large because of overall perception which is good based on the relevance of curriculum, personal interest and confidence in employability. Nevertheless, albeit intent is high, it is susceptible to outside influences and financial values. To the institutions, it is an indication of a good conversion possibility. The changes in intention to confirmed enrollment can be achieved with assistance of strategic follow-ups, simplified applications, financial guidance, and targeted digital remarketing campaigns.

Dependent Variable 2: Control Variables – Digital Exposure and Economic Pressure (Q17–Q20)

VI. CONCLUSION

The given research was carried out in response to the increasing gap between the thriving digital economy and the decreasing popularity of formal marketing training among young Malaysians. The main aim of the research was to assess the perceived relevance of the Marketing Diploma to the SPM leavers and to understand the conditions that made them determine their enrollment choices to them. In particular, the research was expected to explain whether this lack of interest is a fact due to the obsolete curriculum or it is just a mere consequence of subjective views and outside pressure peculiar to the digital age.

The conclusion of key findings is that there is a complicated Conflict of Perception. On the one hand, an extremely large percentage of the respondents (more than 80 percent) feel that the curriculum is practically oriented towards the modern demands of the industry, i.e., TikTok advertising and E-commerce positions. Conversely, the research discovered that the Subjective Norms (IV3) is a very essential variable to deny enrollment; 71.2% of the surveyed are burdened by peers with the intention of not entering college due to e-hailing, and 66.5% of them are pressured by their parents to take up STEM instead of marketing. Moreover, a high preference of faster income (77.0% will want to be in RM2,000 or more now) and the view of 2 years study as a time- and money-wasting approach to education (71.4% in comparison with quick online courses) demonstrate a categorical change in how Gen Z prioritizes time and the returns on education.

The value of the paper is that, it could restructure the positioning of marketing programs in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Institutions can use the realization that the problem is not necessarily the content but the perception and duration of the course to shift to more flexible, industry partnership-based micro-credential-based learning. This study offers a quantitative vision on why policymakers need to make the 150 km productivity divide between cutting-edge and moderate academics by aligning academic frameworks with the demands of the digital native generation, estimated at 6.5 seconds per RM500 million, to be met, and the future employment sector in Malaysia is sustained as a competitive labor force in a digital economy of RM15 billion.

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