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# Redesigning Digital Marketing Learning: Innovative Pedagogies for Gen Z Engagement and Industry-Relevant Skills

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## *Abstract*

The rapid expansion of the digital economy has significantly reshaped the competencies expected from business graduates, particularly in the field of digital marketing. The present-day employers are seeking the graduates who are not only familiar with the concepts of marketing but also possess the practical digital skills that are reflective of the present day practices in the field. Although this need is increasing, in most digital marketing courses, the traditional lecture-based instructional approach continues to be the norm, which might not effectively involve the attention of the Generation Z students. Gen Z learners tend to be more receptive to technology-enabled, interactive and experience-driven learning experiences as they are digital natives. It follows that there is a growing necessity to restructure and reconsider digital marketing pedagogy to make them more engaging and that they also reflect the actual industry requirements. This paper investigates how some influential elements can impact the learning process of digital marketing by the Generation Z students. Specifically, the study concentrates on four variables, namely marketing communication and program branding, industry awareness, career expectations, and personal interest. These factors are deemed to play a significant role in indoctrinating students into desiring to engage more actively in in-feed classroom learning and approach the learning of digital marketing as relevant to their future career progression. The research was conducted using a structured questionnaire which is a quantitative research approach and the source of the data was students who are taking a course in business and marketing related courses at the college Kolej Profesional MARA Seri Iskandar. A random sampling method was used to collect 243 generation Z students in their responses. The obtained data were evaluated with the help of the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics was used in the analysis which included analysis by using mean scores, correlation analysis and regression analysis to identify the relationship between the identified factors and the engagement of students in the learning process. The descriptive results depict that marketing communication and program branding had the highest mean score (M = 4.06) which means that clear communication of the value and positioning of the program is significant in evoking the interest of students in digital marketing learning. Industry awareness (M = 3.96) and career expectations (M = 3.93) come next, which implies that the students are more likely to be engaged when their learning process is more related to the industry trends and future career prospects. Personal interest (M = 3.91) also illustrates that it has a good effect in motivating students to take part in the learning process. All in all, the results support the idea of incorporating industry-related mindsets, formal career trajectory, and learning that is meaningful into the learning of digital marketing. A more interactive and relevant pedagogical approach will help teachers engage learners of Generation Z more; in addition, learners can be equipped with skills to meet the dynamic requirements in the world of digital marketing with the help of the approach.

**Keywords** : *Constructivist Learning Theory; Digital Marketing Education; Gen Z Students; Pedagogical Innovation; Student Engagement*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The high rate of the digital economy has altered the competency needed by the current marketing graduates. To get ahead of its competitors, businesses are relying more on digital platforms, data analytics, social media marketing, and online consumer engagement strategies. Consequently, employers are currently demanding that graduates are not only knowledgeable in theory but in the practical and digital marketing competencies that reflect the practices in the industry. As noted by recent reports, the digital marketing skills have grown to be one of the most sought-after skills in the current workforce especially as organizations accelerate their digital transformation strategies [1], [2]. This change puts a lot of strain on institutions of higher learning in order to make sure that marketing education is updated to suit the prevailing industry demands. Meanwhile, the learning features of students have been changing as well. Digital natives like Generation Z students are inclined to like learning in an interactive and technology-enhanced and experience-based learning setting over the traditional lecture-based methods of learning [3]. The traditional teaching techniques that emphasize mainly on the theoretical delivery are no longer effective in keeping them attentive and engaged. Research has shown that learning in the classroom has been more motivating when it depicts real-world application and career relevance especially in subjects strongly associated with industry practice like digital marketing [4]. The foregoing developments indicate that the digital marketing education should stop the traditional teaching methods and embrace other more innovative educational methods, which are not only in line with the industry expectations, but also with the learning preferences of students. It is also relevant to improve the level of engagement in the learning process of students since engagement is directly related to more profound learning, skill acquisition, and academic success [5]. Students are more likely to be engaged in the learning process when they feel that the content of the course has some meaning, relevance, and relates to their future career opportunities.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Theoretical Foundation: Constructivist Learning Theory

The Constructivist Learning Theory indicates that the construction of knowledge by the learners is much more interactive, experiential, and reflective than what is delivered by the instructors [6]. The educational context of this theory has been on meaningful learning, collaborative learning, and problem solving in the real world whereby students are able to apply theoretical information to practice. In digital marketing education, constructivist principles justify teaching practice that entails the use of simulations, case studies, training projects, and tasks, which are industry applicable to encourage further learning and engagement of students. The learning environments, which rely on the constructivist concept, work particularly well with the generation Z learners, as they can learn effectively with the support of the technology-intensive, though not entirely computer-based activities [7]. The students can be involved in marketing-related courses to a significant degree using the digital means, teamwork in projects, and an idea of the simulation of the actual industry. The students will probably have an opportunity to acquire critical thinking skills and practical competencies that will be relevant to the digital marketing industry when they participate in the learning process using the activities that can be interpreted as the mirror of the real industry.

Also, the constructivist approach has a lot in common with the requirements of the contemporary marketing education, as learning outcomes start to be more and more based on developing skills, creativity, a capacity to solve problems, and memorizing theoretical knowledge is less important than before [8]. Through incorporation of industry-specific learning tasks in the classroom pedagogues, teachers can develop learning environments that facilitate engagement and career preparedness in the students. As such, Constructivist Learning Theory offers a suitable theoretical basis to explain how new pedagogical approaches can increase student involvement in online marketing learning.

### B. Dependent Variable: Generation Z Learning Engagement

The concept of student engagement has gained dominance in the research of higher education due to the close association between this concept and learning outcomes, academic achievement, and growth of skills. Engagement is usually used to refer to the level of attention, participatory as well as emotional engagement the students show towards the learning process. By the virtue of being engaged,

students are more likely to participate in classroom activities, put more effort into their studies, as well as gain a better insight into course material. According to recent studies, the learning environment and the applicability of course material to practical uses have a strong impact on student engagement. [9] point out that learning experiences that are meaningful, as well as integration of educational technology, are capable of greatly increasing the engagement of the students in high education environments. Similarly state that engagement is a multidimensional behavior, which includes behavioral participation, emotional interest, and cognitive investment in learning activities [10]. In the case of the Generation Z students, engagement is directly linked to the manifestations of learning experience about the real-world situations and digital reality. Being born into digital times, Gen Z students tend to gravitate toward learning experiences that are inclusive, interactive, and practical instead of previous lecture-based teaching methods [11]. points out that modern learners are more engaged in educational experiences that perceive the educational content as relevant to their future careers. On the same note [12], posit that when students realize the benefits of academic knowledge on their personal and professional growth, then they have more incentives to be more active in learning. Student engagement is especially significant in digital marketing education, as the domain needs not only theoretical knowledge but also a certain level of practical experience due to the necessity of using digital tools and strategies. Thus, by determining the factors that impact Gen Z in the engagement process, educators will be able to create more successful and relevant teaching strategies.

### C. Independent Variables

#### a. Marketing Communication and Program Branding (IV I)

The marketing communication and branding of the programs are significant in the perceptions held by the students of the academic programs. In universities, successful and efficient communication on the worthiness, applicability, and job opportunities of a course may affect interest and participation levels of students in their education. Good branding of the programs will make students know the identity and positioning of the program and this will make them feel more confident in the learning process. Higher education marketing research indicates that the institutional branding strategy affects students in terms of their expectations and attitudes towards the academic programs [13] clarify that when students are well

informed about the benefits, learning outcomes, and career opportunities of a program, such knowledge can have an impact on their perceptions and commitment towards a program. Similarly [14], found that clear program positioning and branding strategies contribute to more positive student perceptions and engagement [15]. further highlight that strategic marketing communication in higher education plays an essential role in influencing students' perceptions of program quality and relevance.

In the context of digital marketing education, effective communication about the relevance of course content and its connection to industry practices can encourage students to engage more actively in the learning process.

**H1:** *Marketing communication and program branding have a positive influence on Generation Z students' learning engagement in digital marketing education.*

#### b. Industry Awareness (IV II)

Industry awareness is defined as the knowledge of students regarding the current trends in the industry, technological advancements as well as professional practices in the industry where the students are studying. Within the marketing education, an exposure to industry developments can assist the students to appreciate that theoretical knowledge is in application in real business situations. In the recent reports by the world, it is highlighted that digital transformation has heightened the need to have the skills of digital marketing, in data analytics, social media management and digital customer engagement strategy. The digital skills are one of the most essential skills that are needed in the future workforce as stated in [16]. In the same vein, the [17] notes that companies are more and more willing to hire individuals with practical marketing knowledge of the digital environment and industry understanding. Scholarly literature also informs the relevance of relating what is in the classroom to what is happening in the industry. [18] note that the new digital marketing technologies and platforms are still transforming marketing activities, and the educational providers must inculcate industry knowledge in instruction. The greater the awareness of the students about the trends and expectations of the industry, the more they will tend to realize the relevance of their studies and be more interested in the learning process.

**H2:** *Industry awareness has a positive influence on Generation Z students' learning engagement in digital marketing education.*

### c. Career Expectations (IV III)

Career expectations denote the views that students have about the job opportunities and career advancement that is linked to the field of study. In universities and colleges, the participation of students is usually determined by their conviction in the fact that the academic course they are undertaking will help them excel in their future professions.

Research shows that when students perceive clear links between their studies and career prospects, they are more likely to demonstrate higher motivation and commitment to learning. [19] found that students' awareness of career pathways significantly influences their engagement with academic programs. Similarly, [20] highlight that graduate employability has become a key concern for students when evaluating the value of higher education. The growth of the digital economy has created a wide range of career opportunities in areas such as digital advertising, social media management, digital analytics, and content marketing. [21] notes that higher education institutions are increasingly expected to prepare graduates with skills that align with industry needs and employability expectations. Therefore, students who recognize the potential career opportunities within digital marketing are more likely to demonstrate stronger interest and engagement in related courses.

**H3:** *Career expectations have a positive influence on Generation Z students' learning engagement in digital marketing education.*

### d. Personal Interest (IV V)

Personal interest refers to an individual's intrinsic motivation and curiosity toward a particular subject or field. Interest is relevant to learning as it determines the readiness of students to engage, get to know new concepts, and devote efforts to learning. According to research work in educational psychology a student with good interest in a subject is likely to have good involvement in learning activities and better academic results. According to [22], the interest helps in maintaining attention and enhancing cognitive involvement in the learning

process. [23] also add that the value of cultivation of interest in the educational setting can become a certain contributor to the boost of motivation and persistence among students. Personal interest in the case of digital marketing education can be based on students being used to working with digital platforms, communication via social media, and the development of online content. [24] put emphasis on the fact that personal interest may develop in meaningful learning processes and exposure to an engaging subject. As soon as students see that digital marketing is something that is involved in their personal interests and digital lifestyle, they will tend to be more aggressive when engaging in classroom activities and learning assignments.

**H4:** *Personal interest has a positive influence on Generation Z students' learning engagement in digital marketing education.*

This study examines the relationship between four independent variables marketing communication and program branding, industry awareness, career expectations, and personal interest and the dependent variable, Generation Z students' learning engagement in digital marketing education. The conceptual framework illustrating these relationships is presented in Figure 1.0.

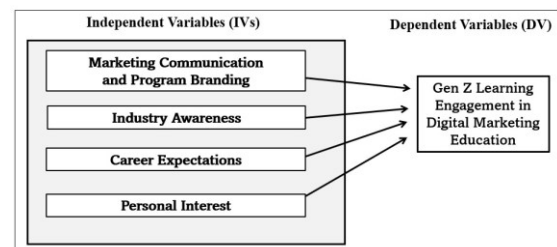


Figure 1.0: *Conceptual Framework for Redesigning Digital Marketing Learning for Gen Z Engagement and Industry-Relevant Skills*

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research design to examine the factors influencing Generation Z students' learning engagement in digital marketing education. A quantitative approach was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to systematically measure relationships between variables and generate empirical evidence that explains how specific factors influence students' engagement in the learning process. The data for this study were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to capture students' perceptions of key factors related to digital marketing learning. The questionnaire consisted of

items measuring four independent variables marketing communication and program branding, industry awareness, career expectations, and personal interest as well as the dependent variable, Generation Z students' learning engagement in digital marketing education. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, to capture respondents' level of agreement with each statement. The target population of the study comprised students enrolled in business and marketing-related programs at Kolej Profesional MARA Seri Iskandar (KPMSEI). Using a random sampling technique, a total of 243 Generation Z students participated in the survey. Random sampling was employed to provide equal opportunity for students to participate in the study and to reduce potential sampling bias, thereby improving the reliability of the findings.

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Several statistical techniques were employed to address the research objectives. First, **descriptive statistics using mean score** analysis were conducted to identify the level of importance of each factor influencing students' engagement. Next, **correlation analysis** was used to examine the strength and direction of relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Finally, **multiple regression analysis** was performed to determine the extent to which the identified factors significantly predict Generation Z students' learning engagement in digital marketing education. This methodological approach enables the study to provide empirical insights into the key factors shaping students' engagement in digital marketing classrooms, thereby offering practical implications for educators seeking to design more engaging and industry-relevant teaching strategies.

## V. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The section will give the results of the statistical tests that were carried out to investigate the variables affecting the learning participation of Generation Z students in digital marketing learning. The analysis involves descriptive statistics, correlation analysis as well as regression analysis in the use of SPSS.

### a. Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics were first conducted to examine the mean scores of the variables measured in this study. The results indicate that **marketing communication and program branding recorded the highest mean score (M = 4.06)**. Table 1.0 below presents the descriptive statistics of the variables examined in this study.

Variables	Mean (M)	Interpretation
Marketing Communication & Program Branding	4.06	High
Industry Awareness	3.96	High
Career Expectations	3.93	High
Personal Interest	3.91	High

Table 1.0 Descriptive Statistics of Factors Influencing Gen Z Learning Engagement in Digital Marketing Education

Descriptive findings indicate that **the largest mean score (M = 4.06) was obtained in marketing communication and program branding**, which demonstrates that a clear message about the program value and industry relevance may produce a strong effect on students interest and engagement in learning digital marketing. This will be preceded by industry awareness (M = 3.96), which implies that students will be more active once classroom activities will be based on current tendencies in the industry and real-life marketing processes. The career expectations (M = 3.93) also show strong influence, which means that the students are more willing to engage in activities when they can clearly see how the learning in the course is related to career opportunities. Meanwhile, personal interest (M = 3.91) shows that students who are naturally interested in digital marketing topics are more likely to participate actively in learning activities. Overall, the findings suggest that all four factors play an important role in shaping Generation Z students' engagement in digital marketing education.

### b. Correlation Analysis

The strength of the relationships between the independent variables and the learning engagement of Generation Z students during the digital marketing education were analyzed using the correlation analysis. The findings reveal that the independent variables all show **positive relationships with the student engagement** implying that an improvement in these parameters is correlated with increased learning engagement among the students. The findings show that **career expectations recorded the strongest relationship with student engagement (r = 0.835)**. Figure 2.0 presents the correlation analysis between the independent variables and Generation Z students' learning engagement in digital marketing education.

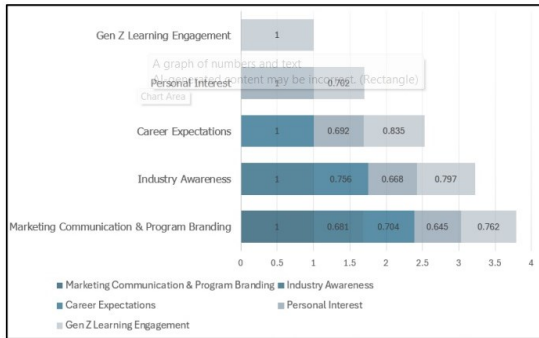


Figure 2.0: Mean Score Analysis of Factors Influencing Gen Z Learning Engagement in Digital Marketing Education

This suggests that students who perceive stronger career opportunities in digital marketing are more likely to participate actively in learning activities and demonstrate greater interest in the course. When students believe that the program can contribute to their future employability and career advancement, their motivation to engage with the subject increases significantly. Similarly, industry awareness also shows a strong positive relationship with student engagement ( $r = 0.797$ ). This indicates that students who have greater awareness of marketing industry trends and career opportunities tend to be more involved in classroom discussions and learning activities. Exposure to real-world industry insights helps students recognize the practical value of digital marketing knowledge. In addition, marketing communication and program branding show a strong positive correlation with engagement ( $r = 0.762$ ). This observation underscores the necessity of ensuring the value and relevancy of digital marketing program is communicated effectively. Once the students are aware of the program goals, advantages, and the possible results, they would tend to show interest and dedication to the learning process. Despite having a slightly lower correlation value ( $r = 0.702$ ) than the rest of the variables, the relationship between personal interest and the other variables is still positive and significant. This means that individuals who have a tendency to be attracted to marketing related activities like creativity, communication, and digital media are more inclined to be active participants in the digital marketing learning environments. More to the point, the results of the correlation indicate that **career expectations ( $r = 0.835$ ) have the strongest correlation with Gen Z learning engagement**, then comes industry awareness ( $r = 0.797$ ) and marketing communication and program branding ( $r = 0.762$ ). This finding implies that students will be more active when they can see the clear career prospects, relevance to the industry, and the perception of the program as effectively communicated and valuable. All these reasons are significant in enhancing the interest of

Generation Z students in digital marketing education.

### c. Regression Analysis

The regression model has a good explanatory power as seen by  $R^2 = 0.732$ , which implies that the four independent variables can describe about 73.2% of the variation in the learning engagement of Generation Z students. The findings of the multiple regression analysis on the effect of marketing communication and program branding, industry awareness, career expectations, and individual interest on Generation Z learning in digital marketing education are in Table 1 and Table 2 below. Table 1 summarizes the regression coefficients and significance levels of each independent variable, while Table 2 presents the overall regression model summary. These findings suggest the level of explanations of differences in the engagement of students in learning by the factors that were selected.

Independent Variables	Beta ( $\beta$ )	t-value	Sig. (p-value)	Result
Marketing Communication & Program Branding	0.194	2.67	0.008	Supported
Industry Awareness	0.301	4.12	0.000	Supported
Career Expectations	0.526	7.85	0.000	Supported
Personal Interest	-0.093	-1.37	0.171	Not Supported

Table 1.0: Multiple Regression Results of Factors Influencing Gen Z Learning Engagement

R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F-value	Sig
0.856	0.732	0.726	108.45	0.000

Table 2.0: Regression Model Summary for Gen Z Learning Engagement

Career expectations stand out as the most powerful predictor ( $\beta = 0.526$ ), which may indicate that the perception of future career prospects is an influential predictor of digital marketing education engagement of students. Other significant positive impacts are industry awareness ( $\beta = 0.301$ ) and marketing communication and program branding ( $\beta = 0.194$ ) which underscores the fact that there should be an association between classroom education and real practice in the industry and the need to communicate the value of the programs. Nonetheless, individual interest fails to prove any strong impact and, therefore, it is possible that engagement can be even more motivated by a perceived career-relevance instead of individual interest.

## IV. CONCLUSION

This study examined factors influencing Generation Z students' learning engagement in digital marketing education within Diploma in Marketing

programmes at Kolej Profesional MARA Seri Iskandar. The findings reveal that career expectations are the strongest driver of student engagement, followed by industry awareness and marketing communication and program branding. This indicates that students are more motivated to engage in digital marketing learning when they clearly see its relevance to future career opportunities and real industry practices. These insights highlight the importance of redesigning digital marketing learning with stronger industry integration, experiential activities, and clearer communication of program value, particularly within the MARA education ecosystem. Strengthening these elements may not only enhance student engagement but also support efforts to improve enrolment trends in Diploma in Marketing programmes while preparing graduates with industry-relevant digital competencies. However, this study is limited to a single institution and a cross-sectional dataset. Future research should expand across multiple MARA institutions and explore innovative pedagogical strategies, digital learning technologies, and industry collaboration models to further strengthen digital marketing education. Such efforts may contribute to developing more engaging learning environments and better preparing marketing graduates for the evolving demands of the digital economy.

Further studies should be enlarged by conducting research on the new teaching techniques and models of industry collaboration that can enhance digital marketing learning and enhance student involvement in learning marketing. The comparative analysis among several MARA institutions or other providers of higher education might also offer wider perspectives on the strategies to improve the enrolment and participation in Diploma in Marketing programs. More so, the contribution of digital learning technologies, experiential projects, and industry partnerships to developing industry-relevant skills in marketing students is an aspect that can be researched in the future. These would assist in improving the instruction of digital marketing and equip the graduates with better capabilities of responding to the needs of the rapidly evolving digital economy.

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