
Determinants of Marketing Skill Competency Among SPM Leavers

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Abstract

This paper examines how some of these factors influence marketing skill competency among Malaysian SPM leavers based on the Theory of Planned behaviour (TPB) as the paradigm. The new job market requires a learner the skills of adapting to the digital and competitive economy practiced in Malaysia and as such marketing education should equip students with such skills. Nonetheless, there is very few facts regarding the level of readiness and the levels of skills of SPM leavers prior to commencement of programs in marketing diploma programs. In this work, exposure to marketing knowledge and interest in marketing are considered components of the attitude with the help of TPB, career guidance and social support are the subjective norms, and the digital media experience and self-efficacy. All these play a role in determining the perception of students towards their competency in marketing skills. The type of designed survey was a quantitative one where 319 SPM leavers were considered to complete a structured online survey questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale. Analysis of the data was done through descriptive statistics where frequencies and proportion, average score analysis was done in Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS. The results indicate that there is a very high awareness regarding marketing as a potential course of study at 98.7%. General levels of exposure, interest, social support, digital media experience, and self-efficacy were also high (M = 3.84, 3.76, 3.72, 3.73 and 3.79 respectively). The perceived marketing skill competency in general was considerable as well (M = 3.72); the basic marketing concepts knowledge (M = 3.65) and the ability to develop simple marketing content (M = 3.63) were moderate. Such findings suggest that although the students have positive attitudes and confidence, they require further training in the foundational skills. The research also provides the local support of the evidence on the program outreach, curriculum, and the design of learning based on the skills of the marketing education.

Keywords : Career Guidance Support; Digital Media Usage; Exposure to Marketing; Interest in Marketing; Self-Efficacy; Skill Competency in Marketing; Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

I. INTRODUCTION

The Malaysian marketing environment has experienced huge alteration as it has become immensely digitalized, covering the rise of e-commerce platforms, along with the rise of the use of data-driven approaches. Modern marketing is linked to the combination of technology, artificial intelligence, and consumer analytics to develop personal customer experience (Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan [8]). On the same note, Armstrong and Kotler [3] note that in the present times, marketing practitioners should have strong digital skills, strategic communication abilities and analytical skills. These changes portend to it being considered that marketing is no longer a conventional advertising practice but instead have transformed into dynamic and technology-infused careers with various career options.

Although there is a high demand of marketing professionals in the industry, diploma level marketing programs enrollment in Malaysia has recorded a fluctuating and downward pattern. The Diploma in Marketing (DMK) course has had a relatively reduced number of students joining Kolej Profesional MARA Seri Iskandar (KPMISI) as compared to technical programs. This disparity is further demonstrated by recent enrollment records by KPM Seri Iskandar. The Diploma in Marketing (DMK) displayed 158 student numbers in 2024 and the Diploma in Electronic Engineering (DEC) displayed 441 student numbers in 2024. On the same note, in 2025, DMK program registered 162 students, and the DEC program registered 508 students. These values show that the applicability to the marketing program is also significantly lower than in the engineering program. As an example, the non-maturity difference between the two programs stands at 346 students in 2025, with the enrolment ratio standing at about 3.1:1 that is, there are over three students enrolled in the engineering program against every one student enrolled in the marketing diploma. This trend indicates that the technical or STEM programs still have a large number of students attending the programs as opposed to marketing oriented programs.

This is where there is a contradiction, and as the marketing industry keeps developing, there are not so many SPM leavers selecting marketing as a sector to study. According to former researches [5], [10] the choice of programs depends on career opportunities, personal interest as well as on the role of social influence among the students.

Nevertheless, little localized research has dealt with the particular influences that these elements have in altering the perceptions of Malaysian SPM leavers about marketing diploma programs. This is a major research vacuum especially in the vocational education setting.

The importance of understanding this issue is that the perceptions of students directly affect their enrollments, the sustainability of institutions and failed to align the work force with the needs of the industry. In the absence of empirical data to explain the reasons supporting SPM leavers need not be compelled to take up marketing courses, the institutions will not succeed in formulating successful recruitment plans and curriculum modifications. Hence, the proposed study is important as it will deliver evidence-based information about the factors of career perception in marketing.

The theory behind this research is based on the revelation of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) suggesting that familiarity to career opportunities in the field of marketing, aligning with individual interest in marketing activities, job market environment demand, and family and peer pressure are the four elements that drive the perception of career opportunity in the marketing field. These variables compose the conceptual framework of the study with the concept of awareness and perceived demand depicting perceived behavioral control, the personal interest presenting the concept of attitude and subjective norms of parental and peer influence [1].

Based on this, the research question of the research will be: (1) how marketing career path-awareness relates with career opportunities-perception; (2) how personal interest in marketing affects the perception of career opportunities; (3) how the effect of the perceived job market demand on the perception of marketing careers is determined; and (4) whether parental and peer influence affect the perception of marketing careers.

In general, the study is theoretically beneficial as it extrapolates the use of the Theory of Planned Behavior to the Malaysian vocational education context and practically by offering practical solutions to the enhancement of marketing programs attractiveness and student recruitment methods.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Although the need of digitally skilled marketers is on the rise in the changing economy of Malaysia, the enrollment in the marketing diploma program including the Diploma in Marketing offered by KPMSI is decreasing, which suggests that there may be a discrepancy between student views of the profession and the requirements of the industry. This is a problem that needs some theory-driven approach to comprehend the factors that affect marketing competency of students and their educational intentions. Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) [1], the paper hypothesizes that Exposure to Marketing Knowledge and Interest in Marketing will be the attitudinal factors, Career Guidance Support will be the subjective norms, and Digital Media Usage and Self-Efficacy will be the perceived behavioral control. It is presumed that these constructs would have a combined effect on the Skill Competency in Marketing, which greatly contributes to the preparation of students to work in marketing related jobs.

Past researches have enlightened on a number of elements that affect academic and career choice of students among them being opportunities to secure employment, career cognition, and external factors such as family and institutional support [5], [10]. Moreover, digital preparedness research indicates that having confidence and flexibility in the current workplace would be enhanced through digital familiarity among students [2]. Nevertheless, a lot of studies are generalized in terms of career choice aspects instead of exploring how specific behavioral constructs influence marketing competency in the secondary school graduates. Also, few studies have used TPB in the Malaysian vocational education. Thus, the current research fills this gap by offering a TPB-based description of the factors of marketing skill competency in Malaysian SPM leavers.

A. Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The proposed study adheres to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) that was created by Ajzen [1] and states that the behavior of an individual is determined by the three primary factors: attitude, subjective norms, and behavioral control. Attitude can be defined as the positive or negative appraisal towards a behavior of a person, social influence by important individual(s) including parents, teachers, and peers; when this is absent then there is a perceived behavioral control that is the belief that the individual can perform a given behavior. Interest in Marketing is the attitude, Career Guidance Support is the subjective norms, and Exposure to Knowledge of marketing, Digital media usage and self-efficacy are the perceived behavioral control in this study. These variables are hypothesized to affect the Skill Competency in Marketing of the students

which gives an impressions of their perceived capabilities of performing marketing related tasks and activities.

B. Skill Competency in Marketing

The marketing skill competency is the dependent variable in this study. In marketing, skill competency, means that individuals should possess the skills to use the knowledge of marketing, analytical thinking, communication skills, and use of online tools to accomplish tasks that involve marketing. As demonstrated by the existing digital economy marketing competency covers the skills including, but not limited to digital marketing, data analytics, branding strategies, and customer engagement skills. Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan [8] argued that modern marketing focuses on the aiding of both technology and consumer insights so as to generate a personalized marketing strategy. On the same note, Grewal, Levy and Kumar [6] state that the marketing professional today must have both analytical competencies and creative capabilities so that they can ensure workability in the current dynamic business world. Building marketing competency on the students is thus inevitable to equip them with the fast shifting marketing industry.

C. Exposure to Marketing

Exposure to marketing knowledge entails the level of awareness and familiarity among students in relation to marketing concepts, career opportunities and other issues related to marketing. Education, media and on-ground examples can develop the senses of marketing in students at an early age, which may make them be more interested in studying and choosing a career that is related to marketing. Couto and Rodrigues [5] have said that knowledge of educational opportunities and career-tracking acts significantly in the academic choices and the programs selected by the students. In the absence of exposure, the students can have a low level of knowledge regarding marketing as a career.

H1: Marketing Knowledge as a source of Skill Competency also positively impacts SPM leavers in relation to competencies in Marketing.

RQ1: What is the effect of Exposure to Marketing Knowledge on Skill Competency in Marketing in SPM leavers?

RO1: To investigate the effect of Exposure to Marketing Knowledge on Skill Competency in Marketing.

D. Interest in Marketing

Interest in marketing can be described as the intrinsic motivation, enthusiasm, and curiosity of students to marketing related matters and undertakings. Such students are more interested in marketing, which can influence their active

participation in the acquisition of knowledge of marketing concepts and the masters of relevant skills. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, attitudes towards a behavior regulate intentions and action of individuals [1]. Thus, the students interested in marketing and seeing it as something worthwhile and relevant can build a better competence in the sphere. Other studies also indicate that personal interest is a very crucial requirement in terms of academic engagements and career orientation of students.

H2: Marketing Interest has a positive effect on the perceived Skill Competency in Marketing.

RQ2: Which extent is the Impact of Interest in Marketing on the perceived Skill Competency in Marketing?

RO2: To determine the influence of Interest in marketing on Perceived Skill Competency in marketing.

E. Digital Media Usage

Digital media usage is the degree of utilization of digital media by students on such platforms as social media, tools of online marketing and technology of digital communication. Digital media in the business of contemporary marketing are rampant in promoting products, communicating with customers and studying the behavior of the market. According to Almaraz-Lopez et al. [2], exposure to digital technologies increases the job preparedness of students in the future and also advances their flexibility in technological driven spheres. It is also possible that students having frequent exposures to the digital sources can enhance their competencies in marketing aspects.

H3: The relationship between Digital Media Usage and Skill Competency in Marketing is positive.

RQ3: How does Digital Media Usage relate to Skill Competency in Marketing?

RO3: To examine the relationship between Digital Media Usage and Skill Competency on Marketing.

F. Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is the idea that a person holds that he or she is able to do certain things and get the preferred results. Bandura [4] observed that with increase in self-efficacy, individuals are much more likely to exhibit motivation, persistence and confidence in completing complicated tasks. When applied to educational environment of marketing, the highly self-efficacy students express greater confidence in the assessment of providing marketing knowledge and engaging in marketing activities. Consequently, self-efficacy is deemed as a significant psychological determinant that is playing

a role in the Skill Competency in Marketing of SPM leavers.

H5: Self-Efficacy has a positive influence of Skill competency in the Marketing amongst SPM leavers.

RQ5: What is the impact of the Self-Efficacy on Skill Competency in Marketing among leavers of the SPMs?

RO5: To establish the correlation between Self-Efficacy and Skill Competency in Marketing.

G. Career Guidance Support

Career guidance support can be defined as support and advice offered by the teachers, counselors, parents and other peers to help students to make wise educational and career choices. An effective career guidance would give students a superior knowledge of career opportunities and aid in building confidence regarding the choice of their academic direction. Simoes and Soares [10] emphasize that students have their higher education choices greatly influenced by external factors like learning institutions and family members. Hence, positive advice might have a positive impact on the attitudes of students to marketer competency and prospective jobs.

H4: Career Guidance Support has a positive effect on Skill Competency in the field of Marketing.

RQ4: What is the influence of Career Guidance Support on Skill Competency on Marketing?

RO4: To measure the role of Career Guidance Support in Skill Competency in Marketing.

Conceptual Framework of Determinant of Marketing Skill Competency among SPM Leavers

The proposed study is based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) that demonstrates that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control have an impact on the development of behavioral outcomes. Skill Competency in Marketing in this model as the dependent variable (DV) is the outcome whereby it is being impacted. The independent variables (IVs) include Exposure to Knowledge about marketing and interest into Marketing (attitude), Digital Media Usage and Self-Efficacy (perceived behavioral control), and Career Guidance Support (subjective norms). These variables will be hypothesized to impact the competency of market skills among the students directly and positively whereby higher the attitude, social and control factor, the higher the perceived competency in marketing among the students will be.

The adopted Conceptual Framework of Determinant of Marketing Skill Competency among SPM Leavers in this study is in Figure 2.1 below.

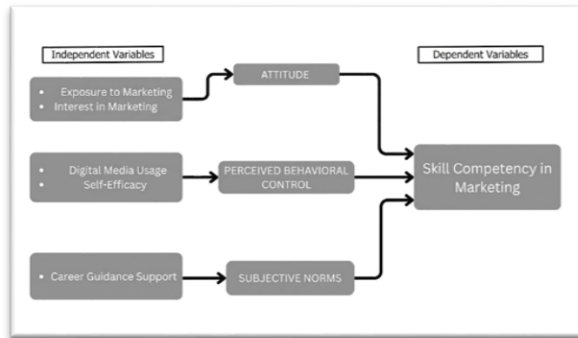


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework of Determinant of Marketing Skill Competency among SPM Leavers

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

In this research, the research design will be a quantitative research design basing on survey, to investigate the variables that will affect Skill Competency in Marketing among the Malaysian SPM leavers. The quantitative research is also suitable because it enables the researcher to gather objective numerical data and examine the correlation between the variables [9]. A cross-sectional time frame was also used, in which data were obtained at one point in time to bring the current perceptions and experiences of the respondents [11].

This research will be meant to establish patterns and analyze the interactions of the independent variables (Exposure to Marketing Knowledge, Interest in Marketing, Digital Media Usage, Career Guidance Support, and Self-Efficacy) and the dependent variable (Skill Competency in Marketing). Descriptive statistics are data-based on frequency, percentage, and analysis of mean scores as a way of identifying patterns, trends and relationships among the variables under statistical analysis; hence this is systematic and objective in the interpretation of the data [12].

Even though the present research is more of descriptive statistical research, future research can use some more rigorous methods of analysing the data like Multiple regression analysis or Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to look at the cause-effect relationship of the proposed variables as well as test the conceptual framework more rigorously.

B. Population and Sample

The sample size of the study is the Malaysian SPM leavers that are in the diploma program selection process or planning further education options. There were 319 respondents in this research. Sampling

methodology adopted was convenience sampling because the respondents were chosen on the basis of their availability and eagerness to take part.

The convenience sampling is often applied in the research of educational and social sciences because it is convenient and can be readily applied, with accessibility and a limited time to respondents [9]. Convenience sampling was also adopted in this research, which meant that the researcher could easily administer the questionnaire to SPM leavers on these two social media platforms: WhatsApp and Telegram, being in a position to collect a response on the questionnaire by SPM leavers of diverse educational backgrounds.

The quantity of samples (n=319 respondents) is regarded as sufficient in the quantitative survey research. Creswell says that survey-based research is usually adequate when the sample size is above 300 respondents as it gives research reliable figures of statistical data and interpretation of trends in the data that are meaningful [11]. The higher the sample size the better the stability and the reliability of the statistical estimates.

The convenience sampling, however, can cause sampling bias, because respondents who can easier access online platforms or are more interested in educational surveys can take part. Subsequently, the sample might not be representative of all the population of Malaysian SPM leavers. Consequently, this study must be understood with reservations in making a generalization of the results to the broader population.

C. Research Instruments

The instrument used in the study is a structured questionnaire that was customized to the needs of the previous researches in order to provide reliability and validity to this study [1], [5]. Quantitative research also resorts to a structured questionnaire because it can be used to gather data in a standardized manner and enhance uniformity of the answers [9]. The online method of conducting the questionnaire through the Google Forms provided an efficient and easy way to collect data through the questionnaire. The respondents were measured using the five-point Likert scale whereby a one-point corresponds to strongly disagree, two-point corresponds to disagree, three-point corresponds to neutral, four-point corresponds to agree, and five-point corresponds to strongly agree. Likert scale is usually applied in behavioral and social sciences studies in order to measure attitude, perception, self-reported competencies [12], [13]. The scaling approach presents a consistent way of measuring the perception of the respondents and is also capable of giving quantifiable results data that are appropriate to descriptive statistical analysis. The questionnaire took two major parts:

Section A: Demographic Section

Section A was aimed at gathering demographic data about the respondents in order to know their characteristics of origin. This part comprises of five questions that include:

No.	Question	Response Options
1	Name	Open-ended
2	Gender	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say
3	Age	<input type="checkbox"/> 17–18 <input type="checkbox"/> 19–20 <input type="checkbox"/> 21–22
4	SPM Stream	<input type="checkbox"/> Business <input type="checkbox"/> Science <input type="checkbox"/> Arts <input type="checkbox"/> Technical <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
5	Have you considered pursuing a diploma after SPM?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Table 3.1 Demographic Questions

Section B: Research Questions

Table 3.2 shows the instruments that were adopted to measure the independent and dependent variables in this study. To achieve the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, the measurement items were based on the known and tested instruments that have been developed by past scholars.

Variable	Sources
Exposure to Marketing Knowledge (IV 1)	Couto & Rodrigues (2025)
Interest in Marketing (IV 2)	Ajzen (2020); Grewal et al. (2023)
Digital Media Usage (IV 3)	Almaraz-López et al. (2023)
Career Guidance Support (IV 4)	Simões & Soares (2010)
Self-Efficacy (IV 5)	Bandura (1997); Ajzen (2020)
Skill Competency in Marketing (DV)	Developed based on TPB literature

Table 3.2 Adopted instruments by scholar

Table 3.3 shows the questionnaire constructs were adopted from previous studies:

Author(s)	Year	Variable	Instruments
Couto, T., & Rodrigues, M. A.	2025	Exposure to Marketing Knowledge (IV 1)	1. I have learned about marketing in my SPM studies. 2. I follow marketing-related content online (blogs, videos, courses). 3. I understand what marketers do in their daily work. 4. I am aware of different marketing career paths.
Ajzen, I.; Grewal, D., Levy, M., & Kumar, V.	2020; 2023	Interest in Marketing (IV 2)	5. I enjoy learning about marketing strategies and campaigns. 6. I find marketing topics interesting and engaging. 7. I would like to work on marketing projects. 8. Marketing-related activities appeal to me.
Almaraz-López, C., Almaraz-Menéndez, F., & López-Esteban, C.	2023	Digital Media Usage (IV 3)	9. I regularly use social media platforms (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook). 10. I create content for social media. 11. I use digital tools for communication and promotion.

			12. I engage with brands or businesses online.
Simões, C., & Soares, A. M.	2010	Career Guidance Support (IV 4)	13. My teachers have provided information about marketing careers. 14. My parents encourage me to explore marketing as a career option. 15. I have received career counseling related to marketing. 16. I feel supported in considering marketing studies.
Bandura, A.; Ajzen, I.	1997; 2020	Self-Efficacy (IV 5)	17. I believe I can learn marketing skills effectively. 18. I am confident in my ability to succeed in marketing courses. 19. I can overcome challenges in learning marketing. 20. I trust my capability to perform well in marketing-related tasks.

Developed based on TPB literature	Skill Competency in Marketing (DV)	21. I feel competent in understanding basic marketing concepts. 22. I can analyze market trends and consumer behavior. 23. I am capable of creating basic marketing content (social media posts, ads). 24. I understand how to use digital tools for marketing purposes. 25. I feel prepared to apply marketing skills in real-world situations.
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Table 3.3 IV and DV Instruments

D. Data Analysis Method

The collected data were evaluated with the help of Microsoft Excel and the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) to help follow the correct systematic evaluation of the obtained data. Data summaration and presentation in a form of meaning came under the descriptive statistical analysis. The analysis involved frequency and percentage to explain the demographic profile and response distributions of the respondents, and the usage of means score analysis to establish what level of each construct is provided such as Exposure to Marketing Knowledge, Interest in Marketing, Digital Media Usage, Career Guidance Support, Self-Efficacy, and Skill Competency in Marketing. Quantitative research extensively applies the descriptive statistics to determine patterns, trends, and the general perceptions of the respondents [9], [12]. This method of analysis helps researchers have a clear understanding of the attitude and perception of respondents on the variables being studied on the study.

IV. RESULTS

This study had a target of 300 respondents. It was shown that the data collection procedure surpassed this mark, and 319 respondents (n = 319) were surveyed. This sample size is deemed appropriate to express the views of the Malaysian SPM leavers about the competences in marketing and their education interests.

A. Respondent Profile

Gender

Figure 4.1 shows the result for our respondent's gender:

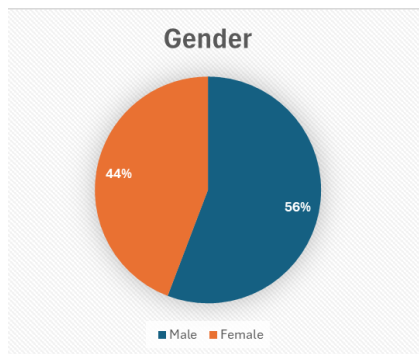


Figure 4.1 Pie Chart on Respondent's Gender

The results show that the proportion of male respondents (56%), to some extent, was higher than the proportion of females (44%), which implies that the sample is characterized by a relatively balanced gender proportion. The sample difference is also not very huge, despite males being the majority. It is a well-balanced distribution to facilitate the representation of both genders in the investigation of the perceptions on Skill Competency in Marketing. This is done to have a balanced gender sample since perception of career and educational activities differ sometimes in that, in comparison to male students, female students have different career motivations, career interests, and social influences.

SPM Stream Background

Figure 4.2 shows the respondent's courses choice during their SPM studies.

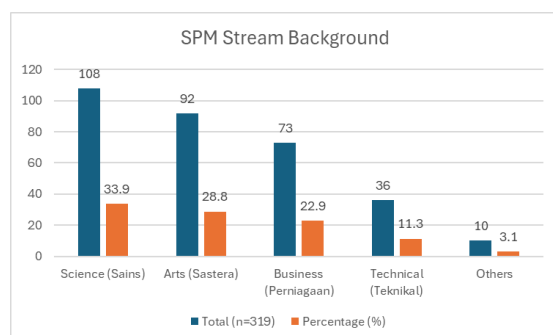


Figure 4.2 Bar Chart of Respondent's SPM Stream Background

As shown in the bar graph, the majority of the respondents belonged to the Science stream (33.9%), with the next two streams being Arts (28.8%) and Business (22.9%). This is reflected in the distribution, as the respondents were not only selected on different academic backgrounds, but were not majoring in a single field of study. The existence of students with different streams holds the notion that marketing education could be appealing to extensive academic backgrounds. The reduced existence of Business stream students however can also reflect that many non-business students are considering entering the field of marketing as an option after doing SPM.

Awareness of Marketing

Figure 4.3 shows the result of respondents' awareness towards marketing as a course:

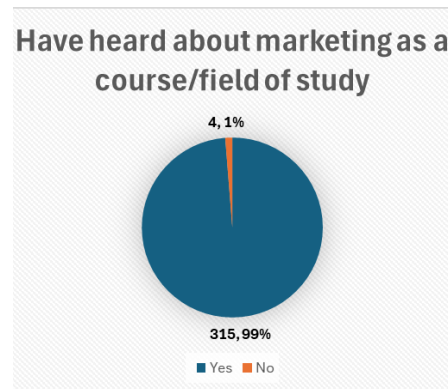


Figure 4.3 Pie Chart on Respondent's Awareness on Marketing

The findings show that 98.7% of the respondents have come across the study area of marketing which shows that SPM leavers are very well aware of marketing. This observation indicates that marketing has become common knowledge among graduates of secondary schools. This awareness level could be informed by the rising prominence of marketing operations in virtual space like the social media platforms, online advertising, and e-commerce sites. In spite of this awareness, there is no guarantee that awareness is the direct cause of high interest and confidence in the pursuit of careers related to marketing.

B. Descriptive Analysis of Variables

Table 4.4 shows the mean results for our DV and IVs.

Variable	Mean Score	Interpretation Level
Exposure to Marketing Knowledge (IV1)	3.84	Significant

Variable	Mean Score	Interpretation Level
Self-Efficacy in Learning Marketing (IV5)	3.78	Significant
Interest in Marketing (IV2)	3.76	Significant
Digital Media Experience (IV4)	3.73	Significant
Career Guidance and Social Support (IV3)	3.72	Significant
Skill Competency In Marketing (DV)	3.69	Significant

Table 4.4 Mean Table Result for DV and IVs

Findings indicate that Exposure to Marketing Knowledge registered the greatest average (M 3.84) amongst the variables. This observation implies that the exposure of respondents towards the knowledge of marketing is moderate to high. This exposure can be provided through different channels such as in school, within the internet, in social media marketing drives, and through internet adverts. The digital world often exposes students to marketing practices via social media value-adders, online shops and branded material which might be one reason why they are familiar with marketing notions.

Conversely, the least mean score (M = 3.69) of the variables measured belonged to Skill Competency in Marketing. Even though the value remains in the relatively positive level of interpretation, it indicates that the respondents might not strongly feel that they are competent in marketing skills. The first possible reason is that, although students are exposed to marketing information, they might not have time to practice marketing related skills of designing campaigns, creation of contents or market analysis. The students will not be as much assured that they can in fact accomplish the marketing tasks in reality without having relevant learning experiences.

All in all, the results indicate that exposure is not possibly enough to form perceived competency. There are also other variables that can be essential in determining the perceived marketing competencies in students; personal interest, engagement in digital activities, belief in self-learning capacity, and outside perspectives of careers.

V. DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this research have shown that all the variables studied have moderate to high mean scores implying that respondents have a positive

impression of learning and competencies related to marketing. These results can be attributed to the frame of the Theory of Planned Behavior, according to which the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral control perception key to everyone make people be influenced in their intentions and behavior [1].

Exposure to Marketing Knowledge had the best mean score (M = 3.84). This finding shows that the Malaysian SPM leavers are comparatively well versed with marketing concepts and job opportunities. This exposure can be affected by the growing availability of marketing materials on the various online platforms like the social media, internet advertising, and in the online malls. Past research has also hypothesized that students careers and education choice could be affected by their understanding on career pathway and educational prospects [5]. Thus, increased exposure to the information in relation to marketing can help extent to shaping the perception of students towards marketing education.

The results also indicate that Self-Efficacy had a fairly high mean score (M = 3.78) indicating that the respondents usually suppose that they are able to acquire skills related to marketing. Based on the self-efficacy concept put forward by Albert Bandura, people that have greater belief in their capacities tend to have greater effects in terms of improved motivation, determination, and involvement in the process of acquiring new skills [4]. It means that students holding the conviction that they will succeed in marketing courses might be even willing to consider the education pathways related to marketing.

In the same way, other high-mean scores were demonstrated with Interest in Marketing (M = 3.76) and Digital Media Usage (M = 3.73). These findings indicate that, active participants with regards to digital platforms are likely to be interested in marketing-related activities by default. In the present day digital economy, marketing efforts are tightly interwoven with social media, online advertisement and internet consumer interaction. Earlier studies emphasize that digital technologies knowledge can advance readiness of students working in technologically oriented sectors and make them more flexible to working in contemporary workplaces [2].

In the meantime, Career Guidance and Social Support had the least mean score of all the independent variables (M = 3.72). The value remains indicative of positive view, albeit, potentially at moderate levels of guidance upon careers of a marketing nature. The parents, teachers, and counselors are external factors that may be significant in influencing the academic choices of

the students. Certain previous researches focus on the fact that family expectations and institutional advice are considered influential determinants of higher learning among the students in their selection of education programs [10]. Students can also be more encouraged in certain instances than the traditionally recognized subjects like science or engineering instead of courses related to business.

Lastly, the lowest overall mean score ($M = 3.69$) was on Skill Competency in Marketing. The value is quite positive, but it is an indication that the respondents do not view themselves as highly competent in marketing skills. This case can happen since there are a number of students who are exposed to leaders of the marketing concepts and lacked the opportunities to practice these concepts under real life conditions. Unless the students have some practical experience in working on such activities as digital campaign creation, content marketing, or understanding the market, they might not be as certain about their own capacity to handle the marketing-related job.

In general, the results indicate that exposure, interest, digital engagement, and self-efficacy have a positive impact on perceived marketing competency in students, which can be regarded as evidence of how the Theory of Planned Behavior behavioral assumptions work [1]. The comparatively low score on perceived-skill competency, however, is an indication that there should be more powerful practical learning opportunities. Schools can thus contemplate the incorporation of experiential learning in form of digital marketing assignments, entrepreneurship training and even industry partnerships to enhance the students marketing skills and their faithfulness in taking the careers that associate with marketing.

VI. CONCLUSION

The aims of this study were to understand how SPM leavers perceive marketing, the exposure to marketing knowledge, interest in marketing, career guidance and social support, experience using digital media, affection of self-efficacy, and marketing skill competency. Descriptive statistical analysis of data with the use of frequency, percentage and mean score analysis was used to get the obtained findings [9], [12].

The findings show that the awareness of marketing is very high as the people interviewed were mostly able to hear about marketing as a study area and were also aware of the marketing career. It also established that, the respondents are quite exposed to the marketing knowledge, which introduces the notion that students are bombarded to the concepts of marketing based on the learning experiences and external media like the online platforms and digital media [3], [4].

Besides this, the results indicate that the respondents are highly interested in marketing, have a good digital media experience as well as displaying positive self-efficacy of learning marketing-related skills. Career guidance and social support were also discovered to affect the perceptions of students towards marketing education and career opportunities [5], [6]. More so, the level of perceived marketing skill competency among the respondents was also relatively high meaning that quite a number of students felt that they could develop and apply the marketing related knowledge and skills.

In the practical sense, the inferences have significant implications to institutions of higher learning that engage in programs based on marketing. Institutions can wish to intensify marketing program promotion and career awareness programs so as to attract more SPM leavers. As a case in point, conducting marketing workshops, online marketing boot camps, and entrepreneurship courses would enable students to get an early glimpse of the actual marketing practices. Moreover, partnership with industry partners including marketing agencies and online business can also offer students a chance to take part in internship programs and industry seminars and projects that can help to comprehend careers in marketing and can increase their perceived expertise.

Another important role in influencing the choice of student in education is the role of career guidance by teachers, counselors and parents, which is also discussed in the study. It follows that educational establishments can add value to career counseling efforts by offering a deeper structure regarding marketing career opportunities, new digital marketing careers, and updated need of marketing experts in the contemporary economy.

Although it has done so, this study has a number of limitations. Convenience sampling can weaken the extrapolation of the results in the general population of Malaysian SPM leavers. The research was also based on descriptive statistics analysis, thus, it was impossible to investigate causal relations between variables.

The study can be further elaborated in future studies through more sophisticated statistical methods like regression analysis or structural equation modelling (SEM) to seek answers to the strength and the direction of relationships between variables. The future research can also involve bigger and more diversified samples of dissimilar regions or institutions so that the results can be more representative. Moreover, qualitative methods like interviews or focus group discussions may aid further into the motivation of students and

perceptions and obstacles in their way whenever marketing-related education is a point of concern.

On the whole, the present study can enhance the knowledge on the factors contributing to students willingness to choose education and career in marketing. Through exposure reinforcement, enhancing career planning and offering practical learning experiences, educational institutions can be significant at making more SPM leavers think of marketing as a rewarding and suitable career path of study.





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