

Integrating Nascent Technologies and Experiential Learning in Nigerian Marketing Education: An Empirical Analysis of Graduate Employability

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Abstract

In emerging economies such as Nigeria, the mismatch between university curricula and the competencies demanded by a digitally evolving labor market has intensified graduate unemployment. While traditional marketing education has prioritized conceptual knowledge, modern commercial ecosystems demand data literacy, digital tool proficiency, and analytical problem-solving. Grounded in Becker's Human Capital Theory and Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, this empirical study investigates the impact of integrating nascent technologies (Artificial Intelligence [AI], social media analytics, and digital tools) and experiential pedagogies on the perceived employability and self-employment capacities of marketing graduates. Using a descriptive survey research design, data were collected via structured questionnaires from 240 final-year Business and Marketing Education students across four public universities in Southern Nigeria. Hypotheses were tested using Multiple Linear Regression analysis. The empirical findings reveal that both the integration of nascent technologies ($\beta=0.412$, $p<.001$) and experiential industry-linked projects ($\beta=0.358$, $p<.001$) exert a positive, statistically significant influence on graduate employability. The paper outlines strategic recommendations for curriculum updates, resource allocation, and university-industry partnerships to enhance marketing education within sub-Saharan Africa.

Keywords: Experiential Learning, Graduate Employability, Human Capital Theory, Marketing Education, Nascent Technologies

INTRODUCTION

The global economy is undergoing a rapid, technology-driven restructuring, commonly conceptualised as the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0). Globally, digital transitions, generative artificial intelligence, and automation are reshaping labor markets, rendering traditional job roles obsolete while creating highly specialized, data-oriented opportunities (World Economic Forum, 2025). In emerging markets, particularly within sub-Saharan Africa, this transition offers an avenue for economic "leapfrogging" through digital ecosystems and frugal innovation (Yesuf, 2026). However, it also presents a major threat to graduate employability if local higher education institutions (HEIs) fail to rapidly align their educational provisions with these global shifts. Nigeria, as Africa's largest economy by demographic volume, faces a severe youth unemployment crisis. Recent labour force data from the National Bureau of Statistics (2024) indicates a persistent divergence between the skills of university graduates and the active needs of employers. This disparity is acutely visible in marketing. Traditionally, marketing education in Nigerian universities has relied heavily on textbook-centric, theoretical expositions of fundamental principles (Armstrong & Kotler, 2021; Kotler & Keller, 2022). While these foundational tenets remain valid, their delivery has structurally decoupled from the practicalities of modern digital marketing, consumer analytics, and technological execution (Adeola & Evans, 2019; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). In the contemporary business landscape, marketing is no longer merely a creative or administrative function; it is a highly technical, data-driven discipline. Modern marketers are expected to leverage consumer data, deploy predictive analytics, optimize digital campaigns, and utilize artificial intelligence (AI) tools to understand and influence buyer behavior in real time (Zohora, 2026). Recent empirical scholarship in Nigeria highlights that integrating emerging digital skills, advanced analytical software, and digital information resources significantly boosts student engagement and instructional quality (Iorwuese, 2025; Onyemah, 2026). Despite these insights, there remains a critical gap in empirical literature regarding how the systematic combination of technical tools and experiential learning structures directly influences a graduate's preparedness for the workforce. This paper addresses this gap through an empirical investigation. Guided by **Human Capital Theory** (Becker, 1993) and **Experiential Learning Theory** (Kolb, 2015), this study measures how exposing Nigerian marketing students to nascent technologies and experiential learning structures affects their perceived employability and self-employment capacities.

To effectively bridge the divide between theoretical marketing pedagogy and contemporary industry expectations, higher education institutions must adopt an integrative framework combining **nascent technologies** and **experiential learning**. Nascent technologies comprising generative artificial intelligence (AI), social media analytics tools, predictive algorithms, and cloud-based digital platforms transform marketing from a conceptual, administrative function into an interactive, data-driven science. Exposing students to these technologies equips them with technical fluency, data literacy, and automated tool execution required in modern commercial environments. However, technology integration alone is insufficient without appropriate pedagogical frameworks. Experiential learning rooted in active experimentation, live industry projects, and reflective practicums provides the contextual canvas through which technical skills are applied to solve real-world business challenges. By combining nascent digital tools with experiential project structures, marketing education shifts from passive information reception to active problem-solving. This dual integration ensures that students do not merely learn *about* modern tools, but actively apply them to execute digital campaigns, interpret consumer analytics, and build market strategies, thereby directly enhancing their job readiness and self-employment capacities.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overarching objective of this study is to empirically evaluate the impact of integrating nascent technologies and experiential learning methodologies on the perceived employability of marketing

graduates in South-Western Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. **Assess** the influence of integrating nascent technologies (AI, social media analytics, and digital tools) on the perceived employability and workforce readiness of final-year marketing and office management students.
2. **Examine** the impact of experiential learning structures (industry-linked projects, practical practicums, and live case studies) on the perceived employability of final-year marketing and office management students.
3. **Determine** the combined predictive capacity of nascent technology integration and experiential learning in explaining variations in graduate job readiness within public universities in South-Western Nigeria.

Scope of the Study

- **Geographical Scope:** The study was geographically delimited to South-Western Nigeria, covering four selected public universities.
- **Content Scope:** The study focused on two independent variables: the pedagogical integration of nascent technologies (AI, digital tools, and social media analytics) and experiential learning structures (industry-linked projects and practical practicums). The dependent variable was limited to perceived graduate employability and self-employment capacity.
- **Target Population Scope:** The empirical boundary of the study was restricted exclusively to final-year undergraduate students specializing in Marketing and Office Management (Department of Marketing and Department of Office & Information Management / Technology) across the selected public universities

Hypotheses Development

To guide the empirical inquiry, two directional research hypotheses were formulated based on the intersection of human capital optimization and practical learning cycles:

- **H1:** The pedagogical integration of nascent technologies (AI, social media analytics, and digital tools) has a significant positive influence on the perceived employability of Nigerian marketing education graduates.
- **H2:** The deployment of experiential learning structures (industry-linked projects and practical practicums) has a significant positive influence on the perceived employability of Nigerian marketing education graduates.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design, Population, and Sampling Procedure

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The target population comprised all final-year (400-Level) undergraduate students enrolled in the Departments of Marketing and Office Management (Office Technology and Information Management) across four (4) selected public universities in South-Western Nigeria:

1. **Lagos State University (LASU), Ojo**
2. **Lagos State University of Education (LASUED), Oto/Ijanikin**
3. **Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU), Ago-Iwoye**
4. **Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB) / University of Lagos (UNILAG)**

The total target population across the four institutions was **600** final-year students across both academic departments. A sample size of $N=240$ respondents was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's sample

size calculation table and selected via proportional stratified random sampling across the institutions and departments to ensure balanced representation.

Population and Sample Distribution Across Universities and Departments

Institution / University	Department	Target Final-Year Population (N)	Proportion (%)	Sample Selected (n)
Lagos State University (LASU), Ojo	Department of Marketing	110	18.33%	44
	Business Education	85	14.17%	34
Lagos State University of Education (LASUED)	Department of Marketing	75	12.50%	30
	Office & Information Management	65	10.83%	26
Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU), Ago-Iwoye	Department of Marketing	95	15.83%	38
	Business Education	55	9.17%	22
University of Lagos (UNILAG), Akoka	Department of Marketing	70	11.67%	28
	Business Education	45	7.50%	18
TOTAL		600	100.0%	240

Instrumentation and Reliability

Data collection was executed using a structured, 4-point Likert scale questionnaire titled the *Nascent Technology and Experiential Marketing Education Questionnaire* (NTEMEQ). The instrument was validated by three experts in Business Education and Measurement and Evaluation. To determine internal consistency, a pilot test was conducted with 30 students outside the primary sample. Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficients were computed, yielding highly reliable internal metrics:

- Nascent Technology Integration Scale: $\alpha=0.84$
- Experiential Learning Structures Scale: $\alpha=0.81$
- Perceived Graduate Employability Scale: $\alpha=0.86$

Data Analysis

Data collected from the field were scrubbed and analyzed using SPSS version 29. Descriptive statistics (mean scores and standard deviations) were utilized to interpret the baseline variables, while Multiple Linear Regression analytics were deployed to test the research hypotheses at a 5% ($\alpha=0.05$) level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Profile of Variables

Baseline item analysis indicated that students recognized the critical value of advanced tools. For instance,

statements evaluating the utility of data analytics tools for practical skill acquisition scored well above the standard acceptance threshold criterion mean of 2.50, matching patterns observed in adjacent states like Delta and Bayelsa (Iorwuese, 2025; Onyemah, 2026).

Hypothesis Testing

A multiple linear regression analysis was executed with Perceived Graduate Employability as the dependent variable, and Nascent Technology Integration and Experiential Learning Structures as the independent variables. The model returned a robust fit, explaining a substantial portion of the variance in the outcome variable ($R^2=0.584$, $F(2,237)=166.24$, $p<.001$).

Predictive Variables	Unstandardised B	Standard Error	Standardised β	t-value	Sig. (p)
Constant	1.124	0.145	—	7.752	<.001
Nascent Technology Integration (H1)	0.456	0.052	0.412	8.769	<.001
Experiential Learning Structures (H2)	0.388	0.051	0.358	7.608	<.001

The empirical results confirm both hypotheses:

- **Regarding H1:** The integration of nascent technologies exerts a strong, statistically significant positive influence on perceived employability ($\beta=0.412$, $t=8.769$, $p<.001$). This confirms that structured exposure to modern digital infrastructures directly prepares students for digital-era workplaces.
- **Regarding H2:** Experiential learning structures also demonstrate a significant positive path to perceived employability ($\beta=0.358$, $t=7.608$, $p<.001$). This highlights that hands-on training, case reflections, and practical workflows bridge the transition from abstract concept to actual workplace competency.

DISCUSSION

The empirical findings reinforce Gary Becker's Human Capital Theory by showing that technical competencies function as structural human capital assets that directly elevate a graduate's workplace utility. When curricula move beyond purely passive conceptualizations (Tiemo, 2026), students show higher self-efficacy and job readiness. These results align closely with recent findings by Akpan et al. (2026), which demonstrated that leveraging AI tools and internet computing significantly enhances the structural learning clarity and effectiveness of business education environments.

Furthermore, the strength of the experiential learning path supports David Kolb's model. Integrating interactive simulations, local business challenges, and marketing practicums transforms passive students into active problem-solvers (Fossatti et al., 2023; Shaibu, 2024). This pedagogical shift is essential in Nigeria, where employers consistently demand immediate technical competency, digital problem-solving capabilities, and data fluency over historical text memorization (Ojo, 2024; World Economic Forum, 2025).

CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This study provides clear empirical evidence that integrating nascent technologies alongside hands-on experiential pedagogies significantly improves the job readiness and employability metrics of Nigerian marketing graduates. Relying entirely on traditional, non-digital marketing frameworks limits the human capital development of students within sub-Saharan Africa.

To ensure sustainable graduate development, the following actionable recommendations are provided:

1. **National Curriculum Digitalisation:** The National Universities Commission (NUC) and institutional boards must systematically update marketing benchmarks. The updated criteria should include dedicated modules for predictive data analytics, AI-driven marketing automation, and digital customer psychology.
2. **Institutional Investment in Infrastructure:** University administrations must actively improve teaching resources by funding dedicated digital marketing labs, providing access to analytics software, and supporting ongoing digital upskilling workshops for faculty members (Edokpolor, 2023).
3. **Formalized Local Industry Integration:** Marketing departments should establish mandatory, project-based practicums where students partner with local MSMEs to design, execute, and analyze live digital campaigns, ensuring practical experience before graduation (Haruna, 2026; Ogbebor & Oviawe, 2024).

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