

Research Article

Digital Competencies Needed of Business Education Graduates' Employability Prospect and Job Creation in Tertiary Institutions in Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study ascertained digital competencies needed of business education graduates' employability prospect and job creation in tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study and two null hypotheses were formulated and tested. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population for the study comprised 133 business education lecturers in the five tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria. The entire population was studied because the population size was manageable. The instrument for data collection was 21-item structured questionnaire. The instrument was validated by two experts. The reliability of the instrument was established using test-retest method and data collected were analyzed using Spearman's rank order correlation, which yielded overall reliability coefficient of 0.81. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions, while t-test and analysis of variance were used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that digital marketing competencies and digital social media competencies are highly needed of business education graduates' employability prospect and job creation in Delta State. Gender and years of teaching experience do not significantly influenced business education lecturers mean responses concerning digital marketing and digital social media competencies needed of business education graduates for employability prospect and job creation in Delta State. The study concluded that lack of digital competencies affect business education graduates in securing meaningful employment, establishing and sustaining business venture that can stand the test of time in this digital age. It was therefore recommended that business education students should be trained on digital marketing competencies by giving them several assignments on purchasing and marketing of goods online. This will help them acquire digital marketing competencies and enhance students' social media competencies for employability and job creation.

Keywords: Digital Competencies, Business Education Graduates, Employability, Job Creation.

Introduction

Business education is an aspect of vocational education that is incorporated into the Nigerian educational system right from the junior secondary school for a gradual skill development of the learners. Business education is a broad area of knowledge that deals with the entire enterprise system, preparing recipients for roles in business as employees or employers (Onojaife, 2019). According to Ile and Okolocha (2015), business education is that aspect of education which concerns itself with the vocational and professional preparation for a career in business. The actual goals of business education are to: prepare students for specific career in office occupations; requisite skills' acquisition for job creation and entrepreneurship and exposure of students with knowledge about business, including digital skills' acquisition by incorporating information and communication technology (ICT) (Edokpolor and Egbri, 2017).

The goals of business education are targeted at producing graduates with diverse abilities to properly fit into employment opportunities and as well create employment. Business education promotes competencies formation that would enhance employability and job creation. This is achievable through acquisition of digital competencies which offer business education graduates the needed employability competencies needed to secure jobs and progress in the world of work that is highly competitive and digitally-driven. The

world as a global community has been launched into technological and digital explosion. This has affected the traditional ways of doing things which cuts across all sectors. The introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has not only affected teaching and learning but also the business world. Firms require potential workers to be ICT motivated and digitally oriented, thus, potential workers are expected to possess the needed 21st century digital competencies to excel in their chosen careers as well as create jobs. It is not an overstatement to state that digital competencies change the way people work in this 21st century, as well as providing job opportunities. Lots of job prospects are at risk of being replaced with robot, especially jobs that involve routine tasks (Ore *et al.*, 2022). Although, jobs could be replaced by robotics due to the advent of advance technology, the fact remains that digital skills could increase job opportunities and employability of business education graduates.

Competencies is the aptitude of an individual to do a thing or behave correctly especially in a social context (Raven and Stephenson, 2017). Competencies are a set of defined behaviour that offers an organized guide, enabling the identification, evaluation and development of behaviours in individual. Competence is alleged of as being shown in action in a situation and context that might differ each time a person has to act. Without appropriate training given to business education graduates, they cannot show good competencies in their various work or as an employer of labour. In this 21st century, graduates are expected to be equipped with several digital competencies in order to be productively employed or create their own jobs.

Digital competencies involve the ability to work with innovative technologies and digital information, knowledge with ICT and thoughtful users have the right to innovate, control, design, and realize their full potential in this space. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2018), digital competencies refer to those competencies needed by individuals to use digital devices, communication applications, and networks to access and manage information. Acquisition of digital competencies enable individuals to create and share digital contents, communicate and collaborate with others, solve problems, being creative, achieve self-fulfillment in life, learn, work and competently engage in social activities at large. According to Okeji *et al.*, (2020), digital competencies signify set of abilities needed to effectively and efficiently perform office tasks using new technologies in the digital environment. Iordeiche *et al.*, (2017) emphatically stated that people should be furnished with the right competencies to make use of the new technologies in their workplace. This is because labour markets are changing due to technological development. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2018) pointed out that the need for mid-skilled labour has decreased while that for high-skilled labour, often university graduates, has increased over the last decades. Digital technologies have the potential to change the way people work and inter-relate, which likely, create new opportunities, but also challenged with inadequate power supply, funds, training, poor technological knowledge among others (Thomas, 2019). Irrespective of the challenges hindering digital competencies attainment by graduates of business education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, all stakeholders in education and employers of labour must collaborate in ensuring that digital employability competencies such as digital marketing, social media, computer appreciation and word processing competencies amongst others are acquired by business education students in tertiary institutions of Nigeria before graduation.

Digital marketing is a broad marketing concept that describes the marketing of products or services using digital technologies, mainly on the internet. Digital marketing refers to the use of websites, applications, mobile devices, social media, search engines, and other digital means to promote and sell products and services. Digital marketing started to become popular with the widespread adoption of the internet in the 1990s. Digital marketing involves many of the same principles as traditional marketing and is often considered an additional way for companies to approach consumers and understand their behavior. This includes display advertising, using mobile phones and any other digital medium. Digital marketing is the promotion of products or brands through one or more forms of electronic media and it differs from conventional marketing in that it involves the use of channels and methods that allow a business to analyze marketing campaigns and understand what is working and what is not in a quicker and more authentic way (Yamin, 2017). Companies often combine traditional and digital marketing techniques in their strategies. But digital marketing also comes with its own set of challenges (Barone, 2023). The various digital marketing tools according to Scharl *et al.*, (2015), Ryan and Jones (2018), Norcross (2016) and Pulizzi (2016) includes e-mail marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), online advertising, affiliate marketing, mobile marketing and content marketing. With the possession of digital marketing competencies by business education students; upon graduation, they could be able to use their mobile phones with internet connectivity to market products for companies and also market their own products from the comfort of their homes. This means that they can easily get employment and as well be self-employed.

Social media is a phenomenon that has drawn a lot of attention both to companies and individuals interacting on the networking landscape. However, when it comes to giving a clear definition of what social media really is, the understanding of the term is very minimal. Social media refers to content distributed through social interactions. These media utilize various firms that offer services or tools to help customers and firms build connections (Grewal and Levy, 2013). According to Zeeshain and Hussain (2017), social media is the usage of web-based and mobile technologies to create, share and consume information and knowledge without any geographical, social, political or demographical boundaries through public interaction in a participatory and collaborative way. Social media gives business education students' avenue to explore and choose from various competencies to emulate which in turn leads to employability and job creation upon graduation.

Nowadays, social media have become digital tools that are currently used as a pervasive means of interaction among people. Selwyn (2012) considers social media as modern platforms that provide avenues for their users to exchange and interact with one another, stating that social media is used to create, edit and share new forms of visual, textual, and audio content with others. Kern (2010) defines social media as platforms of modern and electronic communication means through which users create online communities to share ideas, information, personal messages, and other related content messages, as well as to read articles, listen to music, search and save relevant photos and much more. Adaja and Ayodele (2013) asserted that social media are web-based and mobile tools that are used to turn communication into interactive dialogue between communities, organizations, and individuals. According to Embe (2012) users can easily get information through social media which would enable them to develop their employability skills. The most widely recognized social media tools in Nigeria are WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Skype, Myspace, 2go, Friendster and others.

Exposures to the above mention skills can lead to employability and job creation of business education graduates. In the simplest terms, employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling jobs. Employability, according to Yorke and Knight (2014) is a set of skills, understandings and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy. Hillage and Pollard (2013) stated that employability refers to a person's capability of gaining initial employment, maintaining employment and obtaining new employment if required. Business education graduates' employability is the ability of a graduate of business education programme to get a satisfying job, maintain, grow and reach self-actualization.

Job creation on the other hand, refers to the process of creating new job opportunities for oneself or others. This could involve acquiring digital competencies in order to expand existing businesses, attracting new businesses to an area or creating public works project. Job creation is important for economic growth and for unemployment reduction. According to Fabian (2022), job creation is a deliberate effort made by individuals, corporate bodies and the government to generate employment of different types for the unemployed citizens in the economy.

Business education lecturers are those who teach in business education programme and consist of male and female with diverse teaching experiences. As a result, gender and years of teaching experience are factors that could affect their possession of digital skills and transferability to students for occupational and job creation empowerment on graduation. To some persons, male business education lecturers are more digitally oriented than their female counterparts and may likely reflect in their ratings. To others, female business education lecturers are more digital-friendly when it comes to e-marketing and social media engagements than their male counterparts. It is exciting to determine how gender and teaching experience moderated business education lecturers' ratings. Regarding years of teaching experience, there is the tendency of business education lecturers with long years of teaching experience to be so accustomed to the use of traditional method of teaching, that they display unfavourable disposition towards the need to upgrade and acquire digital skills for effective teaching. On the other hand, there is the likelihood of business education lecturers with long years of teaching experience who have become used to the traditional method of teaching to wish to embrace 21st century digital skills unlike their counterparts with lesser years of teaching experience. However, Okeji *et al.*, (2020) found no significant difference on the opinions of male business education lecturers and their female counter-parts concerning the digital competencies needed of business education graduates' employability prospect and job creation in tertiary institutions. It will be interesting to find out if gender and years of teaching experience moderated business education lecturers digital competencies needed of business education graduates' employability prospect and job creation in

tertiary institutions in Delta State. Thus, the focus of this study was to ascertain digital competencies needed of business education graduates' employability prospect and job creation in tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

In the present stage of technological variations in the business world, students should be properly equipped with the essential digital competencies to enhance their employability and job creation. This is because unemployment rate without decent jobs among Nigerian graduates has continued to worsen. Therefore, the need for proper measures to restraint the threat especially among business education graduates through digital competencies for them to acquire decent jobs. Chinwokwu (2013) reported that graduates of business education programme in Nigeria are not establishing and running their own small businesses and without decent works for self-reliance as expected due to inadequate digital competencies.

Business education graduates lack relevant digital competencies in the areas of digital marketing, digital social media, digital computer appreciation and word processing needed to work or operate effectively in their chosen businesses or occupational endeavours. The problem of this study is that business education graduates are not adequately and sufficiently equipped with digital competencies to enable them acquire decent jobs or operate their own businesses. Despite the training and education received in the current business education programme which have inclusions of information and communication technology and other digital applications, the rate of unemployment among business education graduates is still very high. This is the reason the study sought to determine the digital competencies needed of business education graduates' employability prospect and job creation in Delta State, Nigeria was conceived.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to ascertain the digital competencies needed of business education graduates' employability prospect and job creation in tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria. Specifically, this study sought to ascertain the:

- 1) Digital marketing competencies needed of business education graduates for employability prospect and job creation in Delta State, Nigeria?
- 2) Digital social media competencies needed of business education graduates for employability prospect and job creation in Delta State, Nigeria?

Research Questions

The following research question guided the study:

- 1) To what extent are digital marketing competencies needed of business education graduates for employability prospect and job creation in Delta State, Nigeria?
- 2) To what extent are digital social media competencies needed of business education graduates for employability prospect and job creation in Delta State, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- 1) There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female business education lecturers concerning marketing digital competencies needed of business education graduates for employability prospect and job creation in Delta State, Nigeria.
- 2) There is no significant difference in the mean responses of business education lecturers concerning social media digital competencies needed of business education graduates for employability prospect and job creation in Delta State, Nigeria based on their years of working experience (1-5 years, 6-10 years or above 10 years).

Method

The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised 133 business education lecturers (males 64 and female 69) in the five tertiary institutions that offered business education programme in Delta State, Nigeria. A structured questionnaire having two sections: section 'A' was on demographic data of respondents; while section 'B' contained 21-item question statements with a 4-point rating scale and weighted as: Very Highly Needed (VHN, 3.50-4.00); Highly Needed (HN, 2.50-3.49); Fairly Needed (FN, 1.50-2.49); and Not Needed (NN, 1.00-1.49). The instrument was face validated by two experts from business education and measurement and evaluation areas. The reliability of the questionnaire was ascertained using test-retest method. The data obtained was analyzed using Spearman's rank order correlation, which yielded reliability coefficients of 0.84 and 0.78 respectively for clusters B1 and B2. With the overall reliability

coefficient of 0.81 indicating that the instrument is reliable. The researchers with the help of three research assistants distributed the 133 copies of the questionnaire to the respondents in the five tertiary institutions in Delta State. Out of the 133 instruments, only 113 were successfully retrieved due to the reason that, as at the time of distribution, 20 lecturers could not be reached. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions.

The null hypotheses were tested using t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypotheses were not accepted where the calculated table-value is higher than the critical value. Conversely, where the calculated table-value is less than the critical value, it meant that there is significant difference and the null hypothesis is accepted.

Results

Research Question 1

- 1) To what extent are digital marketing competencies needed of business education graduates for employability prospect and job creation in Delta State, Nigeria?

Table 1. Business education lecturers' mean responses on digital marketing competencies needed of business education graduates for employability prospect and job creation in Delta State, Nigeria (N=113).

S/N	Statement	\bar{x}	SD	Remarks
1	Ability to advertise products online for business exploits	3.42	0.71	Highly needed
2	Ability to utilize computer effectively in conducting business transactions	3.62	0.69	Very highly needed
3	Ability to use point-of-sale (POS) device for receipt and payment	3.42	0.83	Highly needed
4	Ability to create and share digital contents for promoting business to target audience	3.38	0.71	Highly needed
5	Ability to place order and buy goods through mobile phone	3.69	0.68	Very highly needed
6	Ability to effectively use e-mail services in conduct of business	3.22	0.69	Highly needed
7	Ability to interact and convince consumers over the phone for patronage	3.17	0.91	Highly needed
8	Ability to surf the internet for business opportunity	3.64	0.74	Very highly needed
9	Ability to use YouTube video mobile TV contents to capture attention of prospective customers	3.60	0.82	Very highly needed
10	Ability to use short message service (SMS) as primary point of contact with customers via the mobile devices	3.49	0.85	Highly needed
Grand mean and standard deviation		3.47	0.76	Highly needed

Result presented in Table 1 from the respondents showed that items 2, 5, 8 and 9 were very highly needed with mean scores ranging from 3.60 to 3.69. The remaining items were highly needed with mean scores ranging between 3.17 to 3.49. The grand mean of 3.47 showed that the respondents reacted positively to the statements which revealed that digital marketing competencies are highly needed of business education graduates for employability prospect and job creation in Delta State, Nigeria. The standard deviation for the items ranged from 0.68 to 0.91. This is an indication that the respondents were not wide apart in their ratings.

Research Question 2

- 1) To what extent are digital social media competencies needed of business education graduates for employability prospect and job creation in Delta State, Nigeria?

Result presented in Table 2 from the respondents showed that items 11, 18, 19 and 20 were very highly needed with mean scores ranging from 3.50 to 3.67. The remaining items were highly needed with mean scores ranging between 3.05 to 3.43. The grand mean of 3.38 revealed that the respondents reacted positively to the statements which indicates that digital marketing competencies are highly needed of business education graduates for employability prospect and job creation in Delta State, Nigeria. The

standard deviation for the items ranged from 0.62 to 1.00. This shows that the respondents are not wide apart in their mean responses.

Table 2. Business education lecturers' mean responses on digital social media competencies needed of business education graduates for employability prospect and job creation in Delta State, Nigeria (N=113).

S/N	Statement	\bar{x}	SD	Remarks
11	Ability to use WhatsApp to connect to group of people all over the globe for useful job/employment related information	3.58	0.75	Very highly needed
12	Ability to utilize WhatsApp video call, which creates personal touch between distant business partners	3.35	0.92	Highly needed
13	Ability to access Facebook for job advert posts	3.30	0.68	Highly needed
14	Ability to check updates on Facebook wall posts for job vacancies	3.19	1.00	Highly needed
15	Ability to communicate effectively through Twitter for job opportunities	3.43	0.84	Highly needed
16	Ability to use Twitter to create mutual inter-personal relationship for business exploits	3.29	0.86	Highly needed
17	Ability to utilize YouTube video to acquire creative skills for self-employment	3.05	0.86	Highly needed
18	Ability to create and upload videos of business interest on YouTube	3.50	0.62	Very highly needed
19	Ability to utilize LinkedIn to get relevant employment information	3.67	0.70	Very highly needed
20	Ability to access LinkedIn to gain skills and talents demand of identified job	3.54	0.73	Very highly needed
21	Ability to use Instagram to advertise products and access wider market for business exploits	3.28	0.86	Highly needed
Grand mean and standard deviation		3.38	0.81	Highly needed

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female business education lecturers concerning digital marketing competencies needed of business education graduates for employability prospect and job creation in Delta State, Nigeria.

Table 3. Summary of t-test analysis of male and female business education lecturers concerning digital marketing competencies needed of business education graduates for employability prospect and job creation in Delta State, Nigeria.

Gender	N	\bar{x}	SD	A	df	t-cal. value	t-crit. value	Decision
Male	55	3.37	0.7	0.05	111	0.04	1.96	Not significant
Female	58	3.34	0.68					

Table 3 showed that the calculated t-value was 0.04 while critical t-value at 0.05 level of significance and 111 degree of freedom was 1.96. Since the calculated t-value is less than the table-value, the null hypothesis was therefore accepted. This means that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female business education lecturers concerning digital marketing competencies needed of business education graduates for employability prospect and job creation in Delta State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean responses of business education lecturers concerning digital social media competencies needed of business education graduates' employability prospect and job creation in Delta State, Nigeria based on their years of teaching experience (1-5 years, 6-10 years or above 10 years). As shown in Table 4, the F-ratio (df: 2/110) is 12.432 and greater than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance (F-ratio > alpha level). It was therefore noted that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of business education lecturers concerning digital social media competencies needed of business education graduates for employability prospect and job creation in Delta State based on their years of teaching experience. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

Table 4. Summary of analysis of variance on the mean ratings of business education lecturers concerning digital social media competencies needed of business education graduates for employability prospect and job creation in Delta State, Nigeria based on their years of working experience (1-5 years, 6-10 years or above 10 years).

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	α	Remarks
Between groups	1230.212	2	56.450	12.432	0.05	Not significant
Within groups	2601.326	110	23.986			
Total	3831.538	112	-			

Discussion of the Findings

Findings on research question one shows that digital marketing competencies are highly needed of business education graduates for employability prospect and job creation in Delta State, Nigeria. In relation, the digital marketing involves the use of digital media in the process of carrying out the marketing practices. In agreement, Scharl *et al.*, (2015), Pulizzi (2016), Norcross (2016) and Ryan and Jones (2018) presented the various digital marketing tools to include e-mail marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), online advertising, affiliate marketing, mobile marketing and content marketing. This implies that business education graduates very highly needed to possess digital marketing competencies for them to efficiently secure meaningful employment and as well create jobs for self-reliance. The null hypothesis one, showed no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female business education lecturers concerning digital marketing competencies needed of business education graduates for employability prospect and job creation in Delta State, Nigeria. The findings of the study is in line with Okeji *et al.*, (2020) who revealed there is no significant difference on the opinions of male business education lecturers and their female counter-parts concerning the digital competencies needed of business education graduates' employability prospect and job creation in tertiary institutions. Finally, results from research question two indicates that digital social media competencies are highly needed of business education graduates for employability prospect and job creation in Delta State, Nigeria. According to Embi (2012), social media users can easily get information through social media which would enable them to develop their employability skills.

Embi further presented the most widely recognized social media tools in Nigeria to include: WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Skype, Myspace, 2go, Friendster and others. In the submission of Zeeshain and Hussain (2017), LinkedIn is recognized as a professional social networking site which provides opportunities to showcase accomplishments, acquire skills, and brand oneself professionally. Adaja and Ayodele (2013) asserted that social media are web-based and mobile tools that are used to turn communication into interactive dialogue between communities, organizations, and individuals. The null hypothesis two showed no significant difference in the mean ratings of business education lecturers concerning digital social media competencies needed of business education graduates for employability prospect and job creation in Delta State, Nigeria based on their years of teaching experiences.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that lack of digital competencies affect business education graduates in securing meaningful employment, establishing and sustaining business venture that can stand the test of time in this digital age. Thus, the digital competencies acquired by business education graduates would equip them to competently handle all types of jobs, businesses and as well be successful self-reliant individuals, job creators rather than job seekers. This will help to reduce the rate of unemployment situation and its undesirable consequences in the country. Finally, business education lecturers need to inculcate all the digital competencies identified into their students in order to enhance their employability prospect and job creation on graduation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations were made:

- ✓ Business education students should be trained on digital marketing competencies by giving them several assignments on purchasing and marketing of goods online. This will help them acquire digital marketing competencies for employability and job creation.
- ✓ Training sections should be organized for all business education lecturers and their students on the effective use of social media platforms in lecturer delivery and conduct of businesses. This will enhance the students' social media competencies for employability and job creation.
- ✓ Business education lecturers should endeavour to incorporate all the digital competencies identified for students' practical experience during instructional delivery. This experience will help to reduce much emphasizes on theories rather than practicals.

Declarations

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