

Digital Marketing Education to Bridge the Industry-Academia Gap

S. Sharangan

Faculty of Business Law, ESOF Metro Campus, Jaffna, Sri Lanka

Corresponding author: sriskanthan@esoft.lk

Abstract

As digital marketing continues to grow at a rapid rate, the majority of graduates with academic degrees cannot keep up with job demands. This study explores the causes of this gap and the changes needed in academia to equip students for the challenges of the digital marketing career. A qualitative inductive research approach was adopted. According to purposive sampling, 25 digital marketing industry experts occupying positions as managers, workforce development professionals, and digital marketing strategists were chosen through in-depth interviews. The interviews gathered insights into the challenges faced by new graduates and the evolving needs of the industry. A thematic method of data analysis with an emphasis on determining prevalent issues and recurring trends was used. The findings indicate a huge gap between academic training and industry practice. Employers emphasised that there is a huge need for exposure to the real world, flexibility, and analytical skills, which tend to fall short in the traditional studies. Industry challenges such as employee imposter syndrome, dependence on dynamically shifting algorithms, demand for quick results, and unrealistic expectations of clients have been identified as well. These findings indicate the necessity of practice-oriented and revised teaching. The study contributes to the academic literature on digital marketing education by pointing out the limitations of theory-driven curricula. It suggests a shift towards experiential learning, the integration of innovative technologies like AI and automation, and regular professional training to impart graduates with the pace of the digital marketing environment. This research is ground-breaking in its approach to bridging the gap between industry and academia. It links industry feedback with education reform, and it offers practical aid in creating a more competent, confident, and industry-capable digital marketing professional.

Keywords: digital marketing workforce, emerging technologies, experiential learning, industry-academia gap, workforce development