

Teaching digital marketing in higher education: a systematic review

La docencia en marketing digital en educación superior: una revisión sistemática



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Abstract:

This article explores the research related to digital marketing education. It also aims to identify future lines of study in order to expand the theoretical and practical knowledge in this area. Specifically, 19 articles published in the Web of Science and Scopus databases have been selected for analysis. The authors have not observed any connection between these publications. Moreover, the articles mainly focus on isolated tests at various educational institutions related to the use of tools in the classroom, and to simulations with companies to improve students' experience, skills, and employability. The results indicate the need for further research regarding ways to train professors in how to use practical methodologies, how to integrate digital tools in the classroom, and ways to collaborate with companies in developing real simulations with students.

Keywords:

Digital marketing; university; teaching methodology; university teaching; systematic review.

Resumen:

El artículo presenta un análisis de las investigaciones publicadas sobre docencia en marketing digital y se identifican futuras líneas de investigación con el objetivo de ampliar el conocimiento teórico y práctico en este campo. Concretamente, se seleccionaron 19 artículos publicados en las bases de datos de Web of Science y Scopus. Se observa que no existe una vinculación entre estas publicaciones y que se centran sobre todo en la realización de pruebas aisladas en diferentes instituciones educativas relacionadas con el uso de herramientas en el aula y la realización de simulaciones con empresas para mejorar la experiencia del alumnado, sus habilidades y su empleabilidad. Los resultados informan de la necesidad de incrementar la investigación con estudios sobre cómo capacitar a los docentes en las metodologías prácticas, de qué forma integrar las herramientas digitales en el aula y cómo establecer colaboraciones con empresas para el desarrollo de simulaciones reales con los estudiantes.

Palabras clave:

Marketing digital; universidad; metodología docente; enseñanza universitaria; revisión sistemática.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, marketing education faces numerous challenges that have emerged from the digital disruption. As the world of marketing has now become digitised, it is imperative that marketing education should also be digital (Uribe-Saldarriaga, Ortiz-Pradilla and Echeverry-Gómez, 2022). Employers claim that students do not have the necessary skills to be 21st century marketing managers (Zahay et al., 2022). Despite the fact that the protagonist of university teaching has always been the professor, who is responsible for organising and planning the students' learning, thereby leaving students in the background

(Rodríguez-Borges et al., 2021; Ausín et al., 2016), there is an increasing gap between what students need to learn and the knowledge they are actually receiving in the classroom (Zahay et al., 2022; *Observatorio de Innovación Educativa*, 2020).

One of the root causes of this situation is that the technology currently being used in workplace marketing has arisen outside the educational environment of traditional marketing, which makes it vitally important to provide professors with the training they need to master these skills before imparting such knowledge in the classroom (Robson and Mills, 2022; Zahay et al., 2022). As lectures are not the most effective educational technique, especially in the area of marketing (Tuzovic, et al., 2011), professors in the 21st century must find new ways to engage students in order to improve learning outcomes (Leventhal and Swanson, 2016).

In spite of the fact that the number of training courses and university degrees in digital marketing has grown incessantly in recent years, the scientific literature focussed on this field has not experienced the same level of growth, and there is not a broad theoretical framework to address this field of study. It is considered essential to analyse the research that has been carried out to date in order to establish new lines of exploration and broaden the knowledge base regarding digital marketing education.

In this regard, the main objective of this study is to analyse the features of the research published on methodologies used to teach digital marketing. The second objective is to identify future lines of research that might contribute to expanding the theoretical and practical knowledge in this field.

To achieve these objectives, the following research questions are set forth: RQ1: In which years and in which journals have studies on this topic been carried out, and how many citations have they received? RQ2: Which authors are doing the most work in this field, and in which country have the studies been published? RQ3: What teaching methodologies have been analysed in the research? RQ4: What is the main objective of the analysis, and what are characteristics of teaching digital marketing in higher education have been found in the studies? RQ5: What is the relationship between the features of the teaching analysed and its practical objectives?

2. Theoretical framework

Experiential learning transforms knowledge into practical know-how by enabling students to perform a series of hands-on tasks and solve problems with the aim of learning from their actions. This pedagogical approach is highly recommended in the literature for the marketing area (Tuzovic et al., 2011), especially for digital marketing, which is a discipline based on practical skills as well as theory (Zahay et al., 2022). Consequently, many degree programmes are incorporating company projects (Atwong, 2015), simulations (Bolton, Chapman and Mills, 2019), and industry partnerships (Richards and Marshall, 2019), for the purpose of reinforcing students' technical knowledge.

These interactive methodologies make students the protagonists of their own learning, thereby enabling them to think and learn for themselves (Leventhal and Swanson, 2016; Tuzovic, et al., 2011). Therefore, students often perceive experiential methodologies, especially projects with real companies, as more effective for their learning, which makes them more engaged and motivated compared to traditional lectures (Rana and Dwivedi, 2018; Salminen, 2014; Tuzovic, et al., 2011). Moreover,

the fact that these methodologies not only allow them to develop skills, but also to put them into practice, enhances their employability (Zahay et al., 2022).

In order to maintain student interest, it is necessary to promote memorable, innovative and stimulating interaction (Tuzovic et al., 2011), which is even more necessary in online education, as students participate less compared to in-person teaching. This is due to the autonomy granted to students, which makes it difficult to engage them (Vander Schee, Andrews and Stovall, 2021; Leventhal and Swanson, 2016). However, this type of experiential learning method requires intense preparation and involvement by professors (Zahay et al., 2022).

In today's digital environment, the technology used in professional marketing has fundamentally changed the set of skills that graduates need, making it essential for them have the ability to use certain tools (Zahay et al., 2022). Therefore, a commitment is now being made to combine in-class exercises with hands-on learning techniques, and/or experiential activities, in order to give students the opportunity to apply marketing concepts to the "real world" (Zahay et al., 2022).

However, this combination of a knowledge-based and hands-on approach to marketing education through experiential learning is not intended to detract from the theoretical foundation of marketing, but rather to integrate the practical skills required in the workplace (Zahay et al., 2022).

For marketing degrees to keep up with the latest and most relevant skills required by the industry, business and marketing educators have suggested, among other approaches, using third-party certification schemes, such as Google, Hootsuite, and HubSpot, as part of the curriculum (Spiller and Tuten, 2019; Zahay et al., 2019). In fact, studies indicate that such programmes have a positive impact on both learning (Spiller and Tuten, 2019) and student employability (Laverie et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2019).

3. Methodology

A systematic literature review, or SLR, was conducted for the purpose of collecting and analysing research papers related to digital marketing teaching in higher education. This type of review identifies, evaluates and interprets all the relevant research available for a given subject (Kitchenham and Charters, 2007). The stages of the review are as follows:

1. Research questions and variables. As the main objective was to analyse the characteristics of the research studies published to date with regard to teaching methodologies in the area of digital marketing, the following research questions and variables associated with each are posed:

Table 1. Research questions and analysis variables

Research questions (RQ)	Variables
RQ1. In which years have studies on this topic been published, in which journals, and how many citations have they received?	Year of publication Journal article or book chapter Name of the journal or book Number of citations
RQ2. Which authors are doing most of the work in this field, and in which country are the studies being carried out?	Names of the authors Countries where the studies are being conducted
RQ3. What teaching methodologies have been analysed in the re-search?	Methodologies analysed
RQ4. What is the main objective of the analysis, and what are features of digital marketing teaching in higher education have been found in the studies?	Objective of the analysis Teaching features: Teamwork Use of online tools Simulations and hands-on activities Professor-student communication and segment adaptation Contests between the students
RQ5. What is the relationship between the characteristics of the teaching analysed and its practical objectives?	Practical objectives of the teaching: To increase the student's experience To improve students' skills and learning To enhance student employability

Source: created by the authors

- Search and inclusion criteria: a search equation was used as a starting point, and the inclusion criteria stated that the title, abstract, and key words of the articles had to include topics related to digital marketing in higher education. The following equation was inserted into the Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) databases: (TITLE-ABS-KEY ["digital marketing" OR "online marketing" OR "on-line marketing"] AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ["higher education" OR universit*]). This equation yielded 223 documents from Scopus and 200 documents from WoS, between 2011 and February 2023, the latter being the date when the research started. The search was not delimited by time, as it was found that 90.3% of the articles were concentrated in the last 10 years. Nor was it demarcated by language and geographical area, as the authors considered it relevant to analyse an international sample that did not exclude any country.
- First review and article exclusion. Of the 423 documents, 91 were duplicate articles, which were detected using the Zotero tool, and these were excluded. This process resulted in 332 documents. As the search equation did not contain any references to teaching methodologies, an initial review of the abstracts of the 332 articles was carried out in order to eliminate those that did not refer to teaching digital marketing. As a result, 19 valid documents were obtained for the systematic review, of which 17 articles were published in journals, and two were book chapters.

Review and analysis of the sample. An Excel file was prepared with the variables indicated for each research question, and the answers were drafted after reviewing each of the documents. A quantitative and qualitative content analysis was then carried out. For the quantitative research, the main numerical results of the articles under study were collected, analysed, and presented, while the qualitative analysis focused on the different activities identified by this research from the point of view of the methods used by professors in teaching digital marketing, the type and size of the samples chosen to carry out these methodologies, and their scope.

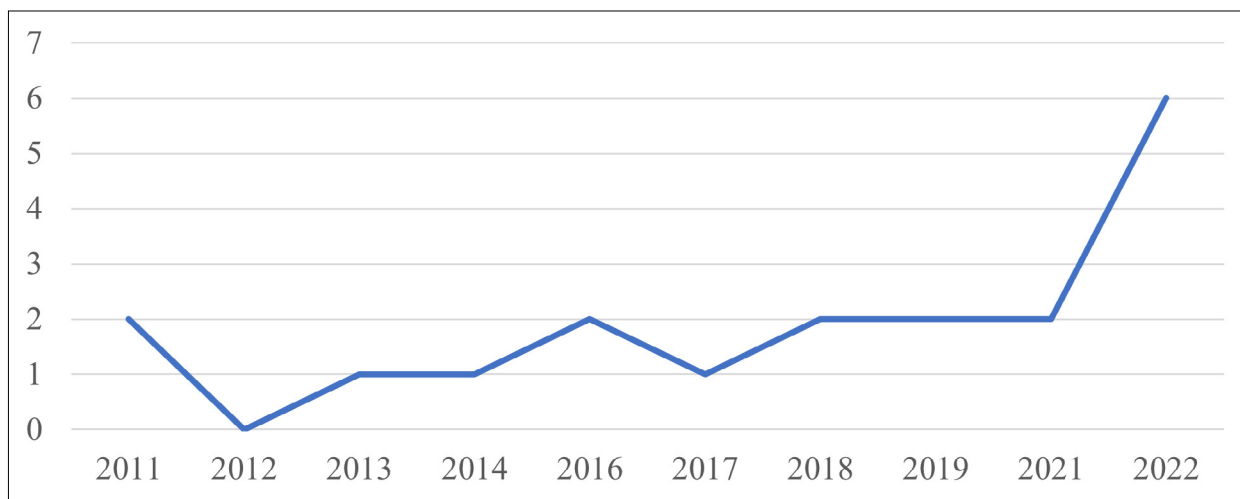
4. Results

To analyse the characteristics and trends of studies on teaching methodologies involving digital marketing, the following research questions have been addressed.

RQ1. In which years and in which journals have the studies on this topic been published, and how many citations have they received?

The findings show that research in this area is fairly recent. In fact, even though the sample was extracted from 2011 onward, 31.5% of the entire sample (N= 6) was published in the single year of 2022, as shown in the graph below.

Graph 1. Number of articles published per year



Source: created by the authors

In terms of the number of citations received by the studies, the article that appeared in the Journal of Marketing Education is by far the most cited of the sample.

Entitled “Digital marketing: the time for a new ‘academic major’ has arrived”, the paper describes the need for a change in marketing education in order to integrate the challenges of the digital age into the university curriculum. It accounts for 88.5% of all the citations in the sample.

Table 2. Number of citations received by the articles

Name of the journal	Number of citations received
<i>Journal of Marketing Education</i>	424
<i>Revista Universidad y Sociedad</i>	20
<i>International Journal of Business Information Systems</i>	14
<i>Obrazovanie i Nauka</i>	4
<i>Cases on innovations in educational marketing: Transnational and technological strategies</i>	4
<i>Profesional de la información</i>	3
<i>Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing</i>	3
<i>Marketing Education Review</i>	2
<i>Cutting-edge technologies and social media use in higher education</i>	2
<i>RISTI - Revista Iberica de Sistemas e Tecnologias de Informacao</i>	1
<i>e-Review of Tourism Research</i>	1
<i>Developments in Marketing Science: Proceedings of the Academy of Marketing Science</i>	1
<i>Smart Innovation, Systems and Technologies</i>	0
<i>Onomazein</i>	0
<i>Developments in Marketing Science: Proceedings of the Academy of Marketing Science</i>	0
<i>Journal for Advancement of Marketing Education</i>	0
<i>Revista electrónica calidad en la Educación Superior</i>	0
<i>Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice</i>	0

Source: created by the authors

RQ2. Which authors are doing the most work in this field, and in which country are the studies being carried out?

A review of the literature on teaching digital marketing shows that a small number of authors have carried out research on this topic (Table 3). Of these, the majority have conducted their research in university settings (Baladrón-Pazos, Correyero-Ruiz and Manchado-Pérez, 2022; Embaye et al., 2022; Uribe-Saldarriaga, Ortiz-Pradilla, Echeverry-Gómez, 2022; Zahay et al, 2022; Vander Schee, Andrews, & Stovall, 2021; Au-Yong-Oliveira, 2019; Rana & Dwivedi, 2018; Salminen, 2014; Reed, 2013; Tuzovic et al., 2011), with a special focus on public universities (Baladrón-Pazos, Correyero-Ruiz y Manchado-Pérez, 2022; Embaye et al., 2022; Uribe-Saldarriaga, Ortiz-Pradilla, Echeverry-Gómez, 2022; Zahay et al., 2022; Vander Schee, Andrews y Stovall, 2021; Au-Yong-Oliveira, 2019; Rana y Dwivedi, 2018; Haugtvedt, 2016), in addition to online settings (Embaye et al., 2022; Uribe-Saldarriaga, Ortiz-Pradilla, Echeverry-Gómez, 2022; Vander Schee, Andrews, & Stovall, 2021; Reed, 2013), where the overriding emphasis was on undergraduate degrees (Baladrón-Pazos, Correyero-Ruiz, & Manchado-Pérez, 2022; Uribe-Saldarriaga, Ortiz-Pradilla, Echeverry-Gómez, 2022; Zahay et al, 2022; Rana and Dwivedi, 2018; Reed, 2013; Tuzovic et al., 2011).

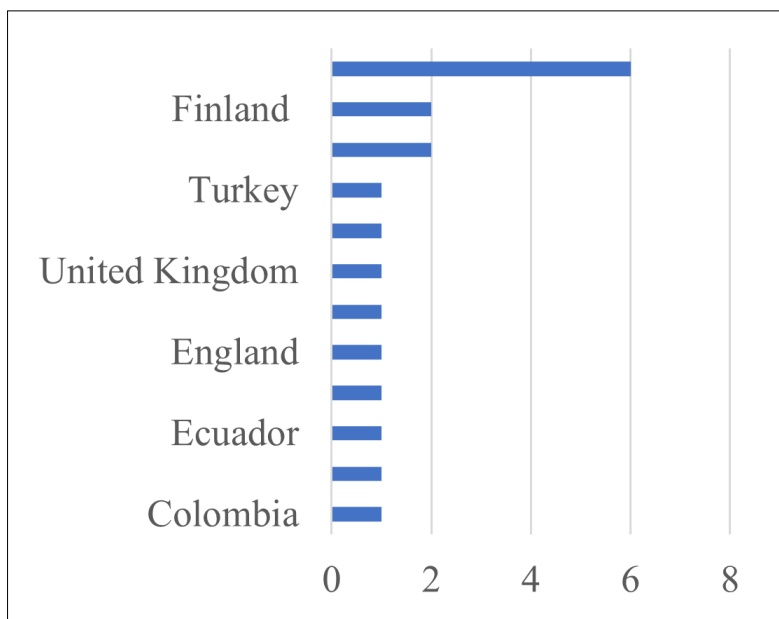
Table 3. Publications of the study sample

Authors	Article or Book Chapter	Journal	Year
Zahay, D.; Pollitte, W.A.; Reavey, B.; Alvarado, A.	"An integrated model of digital marketing curriculum design"	<i>Marketing Education Review</i>	2022
Lopez Zurita, Paloma	"Anglicisms in digital marketing within an academic context"	<i>Onomazein</i>	2022
Embaye, T.; Bogdanović, Z.; Barać, D.; Naumović, T.; Radenković, B.	"Employing Trait Emotional Intelligence in an Adaptive E-learning Environment"	<i>Smart Innovation, Systems and Technologies</i>	2022
Watson, A.; Syrdal, H.; Osborn, J.; McGrath, R.; Ringleb, A.; Botten, T.; Leoni, S.; Waller, M.	"Special Session: The University of Google? A Panel Discussion about the Disruptive Changes in Marketing Education and What Programs May Look Like in the Not-So-Distant Future: Abstract"	<i>Developments in Marketing Science: Proceedings of the Academy of Marketing Science</i>	2022
Baladrón-Pazos, A.-J.; Correyero-Ruiz, B.; Manchado-Pérez, B.	"University education in Advertising and Public Relations in Spain after 50 years: What and how we teach."	<i>Profesional de la Información</i>	2022
Uribe-Saldarriaga, C.M.; Ortiz-Pradilla, T.; Echeverry-Gómez, S.	"What If? A Robot Challenge in a Marketing Course: Abstract"	<i>Developments in Marketing Science: Proceedings of the Academy of Marketing Science</i>	2022
Derindag, O.F.; Cizmeci, B.	"Are we ready for the new normal in e-business education? Sentiment analysis of learners' opinions on moocs"	<i>Obrazovanie i Nauka</i>	2021
Vander Schee, B.A.; Andrews, D.; Stovall, T.	"Enhancing First-Year Course Student Experience with Virtual Team Support from Senior Marketing Majors"	<i>Journal for Advancement of Marketing Education</i>	2021

Hanni-Vaara, P.; Kähkönen, O.; Paloniemi, P.	“Developing destination experience and digital marketing in the co-creation process: case cooperation of the Ranua municipality and Lapland university of applied sciences”	<i>E-Review of Tourism Research</i>	2019
Au-Yong-Oliveira, M.	“Marketing in academia between 2009 and 2019: A technologically turbulent decade” [“ <i>O marketing na academia entre 2009-2019: Uma década tecnológica turbulenta</i> ”]	<i>RISTI - Revista Iberica de Sistemas e Tecnologias de Informacao</i>	2019
Rana, N.P.; Dwivedi, Y.K.	“An empirical examination of antecedents determining students’ usage of clickers in a digital marketing module”	<i>International Journal of Business Information Systems</i>	2018
Bricio Samaniego, Karina; Calle Mejia, José; Zambrano Paladines, Mario	“Digital marketing as a tool for labor performance in the Ecuadorian environment: a case study of graduates from the University of Guayaquil”	<i>Revista universidad y sociedad</i>	2018
Vicarioli, Francisco Mora; Araya, Fabio Sanabria	“Experience of using the e-book as a teaching resource in the organization and design of the Online Marketing II course”	<i>Revista electrónica calidad en la educación superior</i>	2017
Haugtvedt, C.P.	“Digital Natives and the University Classroom and Beyond: Prompting Analysis, Personal Expression, and Ongoing Discourse”	<i>Developments in Marketing Science: Proceedings of the Academy of Marketing Science</i>	2016
Leventhal, R.C.; Swanson, A.	“Technological applications to the marketing classroom”	<i>Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing</i>	2016
Salminen, J.	“Leveraging Facebook as a peer-support group for students”	<i>IGI Global</i>	2014
Reed, D.	“IDM student competition 2013: English wine week”	<i>Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice</i>	2013
Wymbs, C.	“Digital marketing: The time for a new ‘academic major’ has arrived”	<i>Journal of Marketing Education</i>	2011
Tuzovic, Sven; Wetsch, Lyle; Murphy, Jamie; Tripathi, P; Mukerji, S	“The Google Online Marketing Challenge: a Transnational Comparison of Classroom Learning with Real Clients, Real Money, and Real Advertising Campaigns”	<i>Cases on Innovations in Educational Marketing: Transnational and Technological Strategies</i>	2011

Source: created by the authors

The country with the most research on digital marketing education published in Scopus and WoS is the United States with 31.5% (N=6) of the articles, followed by Spain and Finland, each with 10.5% of the articles (Figure 2).

Graph 2. Countries where the articles in the research sample were carried out

Source: created by the authors

RQ3. What teaching methodologies have been analysed in the research?

With regard to teaching methodologies or resources analysed, it is true that the articles reviewed are highly diverse, in which projects involving collaboration with real companies (Hanni-Vaara, Kähkönen and Paloniemi, 2019; Reed, 2013; Tuzovic et al., 2011), along with the use of social networks (Haugtvedt, 2016; Salminen, 2014), are the most frequently mentioned topics. However, other topics include the following list: student segmentation through trait emotional intelligence (Embaye et al., 2022); virtual team support systems in which groups of experienced students assist less experienced learners (Vander Schee, Andrews and Stovall, 2021); the inclusion of third-party certifications (Zahay et al., 2022); the use of resources such as educational robotics (Uribe-Saldarriaga, Ortiz-Pradilla, Echeverry-Gómez, 2022); utilisation of clickers (Rana and Dwivedi, 2018); Padlet.com (Au-Yong-Oliveira, 2019); eBooks (Vicarioli and Araya, 2017); and the inclusion of professors' screenshots in the classroom (Leventhal and Swanson, 2016).

In short, from a qualitative point of view, it could be asserted that the research on this subject is highly fragmented, as the studies have examined the results of specific and isolated activities, yet they do not delve into how the practice in question can be improved in order to effectively integrate the activity into the daily work of professors. The same situation occurs with the research method and tools used, as there are articles that take a more qualitative approach in investigating topics such as curricular reviews (Zahay et al., 2022; Wymbms, 2011), text analysis (Lopez, 2022), sentiment analysis (Derindag and Cizmeci,

2021), expert panels (Watson et al., 2022), interviews (Vicarioli and Araya, 2017), self-ethnography exercises (Au-Yong-Oliveira, 2019), whereas others take a more quantitative approach by relying on surveys and questionnaires (Vander Schee, Andrews and Stovall, 2021; Bricio, Calle and Zambrano, 2018; Rana and Dwivedi, 2018; Vicarioli and Araya, 2017). Added to this state of affairs is the fact that the type and size of the research sample is also diverse, and in many cases they are not representative of the universe studied. Some rely on students (Vander Schee, Andrews, & Stovall, 2021; Rana & Dwivedi, 2018; Vicarioli & Araya, 2017; Salminen, 2014; Tuzovic et al, 2011), others on graduates (Bricio, Calle and Zambrano, 2018), and still others on professors (Leventhal and Swanson, 2016), or experts (Watson et al., 2022), although some articles focus on analysing curricula (Zahay et al., 2022; Wymbs, 2011).

RQ4. What is the main objective of the analysis, and what features of digital marketing teaching in higher education have been found in the studies?

After analysing the articles, the main topics have been grouped into the five most frequently repeated variables with regard to the features of teaching. Most of the publications (57.9%) have examined on the need to use online tools and new technology in the classroom. In 31.6% of the cases, the focus is on including practical activities and simulations with real companies into the teaching. Teamwork is mentioned as a feature in 21% of the research. The importance of good communication between professors and students is addressed, also in 21% of the articles. And in the final position at 15% is organisation of contests between students.

Table 4. Teaching characteristics analysed in the articles as the object of analysis

Article	Object of analysis	Teamwork	The use of online tools and new technology in the classroom	Simulations and hands-on activities	Professor-student communication and segment adaptation	Contests between students
"An integrated model of digital marketing curriculum design"	Learning through projects with companies and marketing simulations			X		
"Anglicisms in digital marketing within an academic context"	Unnecessary Anglicisms in marketing studies				X	
"Employing Trait Emotional Intelligence in an Adaptive E-learning Environment"	Tailoring educational marketing content according to student segmentation				X	

“Special Session: The University of Google? A Panel Discussion about the Disruptive Changes in Marketing Education and What Programs May Look Like in the Not-So-Distant Future: Abstract”	Incorporating Google certificates into university marketing degrees			X		
“University education in Advertising and Public Relations in Spain after 50 years: What and how we teach”	The prevalence of hands-on activities in university degrees in this field				X	
“What If? A Robot Challenge in a Marketing Course: Abstract”	The use of robotics in education to introduce new technology into undergraduate degrees			X		
“Are we ready for the new normal in e-business education? Sentiment analysis of learners’ opinions on moocs”	Practical skills obtained from online courses compared to those attained through university degrees			X		
“Enhancing First-Year Course Student Experience with Virtual Team Support from Senior Marketing Majors”	Teamwork and simulations to enhance the learning experience	X			X	
“Developing destination experience and digital marketing in the co-creation process –case cooperation of the Ranua municipality and Lapland University of Applied Sciences”	Teamwork between universities and companies to improve employability and create real projects	X			X	

“Marketing in academia between 2009 and 2019: a technologically turbulent decade”	Teamwork, the use of tools (Padlet), and contests between students to enhance motivation.	X	X			X
“An empirical examination of antecedents determining students’ usage of clickers in a digital marketing module”	Contests between students and the use of classroom tools (clickers) to increase motivation, participation, and learning.		X			X
“Digital marketing as a tool for labor performance in the Ecuadorian environment: a case study of graduates from the University of Guayaquil”	The need for classroom tools to enhance employability		X			
“Experience of using the eBook as a teaching resource in the organization and design of the Online Marketing II course”	The use of online tools in the classroom to improve professor-student communication	book	X		X	
“Digital Natives and the University Classroom and Beyond: Prompting Analysis, Personal Expression, and Ongoing Discourse”	Use of social media to improve student learning and stimulate online debates		X			
“Technological applications to the marketing classroom”	Using video in the classroom to increase motivation		X			

“Leveraging Facebook as a Peer-support Group for Students”	Using Facebook groups for active student learning		X			
“IDM Student Competition 2013: English Wine Week”	Student contests to produce a marketing plan for a company			X		X
“Digital Marketing: The Time for a New ‘academic major’ has Arrived”	Adapting curricula and faculty training to respond to the needs of business in this field				X	
“The Google Online Marketing Challenge: A Transnational Comparison of Classroom Learning with Real Clients, Real Money, and Real Advertising Campaigns”	Using Google tools for teamwork and to increase student participation and motivation	X	X	X		

Source: created by the authors

RQ5. What is the relationship between the features of the teaching analysed and its practical objectives?

In terms of scope, there are differences, as some studies analyse a single subject, focussing on all of the students collectively, or only on one segment. Others focus on an entire subject, one module (Zahay et al., 2022; Vander Schee, Andrews and Stovall, 2021; Hanni-Vaara, Kähkönen and Paloniemi, 2019; Rana and Dwivedi, 2018), or on a group of subjects (Tuzovic et al., 2011), while others extend the analysis to encompass an entire degree (Embaye et al., 2022; López, 2022; Uribe-Saldarriaga, Ortiz-Pradilla, Echeverry-Gómez, 2022), or several degrees (Baladrón-Pazos, Correyero-Ruiz and Manchado-Pérez, 2022; Derindag and Cizmeci, 2021; Au-Yong-Oliveira, 2019), and even to several educational centres (Wymbs, 2011).

Nor is the same educational level analysed in all the cases, as there is research related to the undergraduate level as well (Zahay et al., 2022; Watson et al, 2022; Baladrón-Pazos, Correyero-Ruiz and Manchado-Pérez, 2022; Uribe-Saldarriaga, Ortiz-Pradilla, Echeverry-Gómez, 2022; Hanni-Vaara, Kähkönen and Paloniemi, 2019; Rana and Dwivedi, 2018; Bricio, Calle and Zambrano, 2018; Reed, 2013; Tuzovic et al, 2011), in addition to the postgraduate area (Lopez, 2022; Haugtvedt, 2016; Tuzovic et al., 2011), and university courses (Embaye et al., 2022; Derindag and Cizmeci, 2021; Vander Schee, Andrews and Stovall, 2021; Au-Yong-Oliveira, 2019; Salminen, 2014; Wymbs, 2011).

After analysing the sample, three main objectives of digital marketing education were identified: to improve the experience, skills, and employability of students. Subsequently, a comparative analysis was carried out, which showed that when the aim is to improve the students' experience in the classroom by fostering participation and motivation, the teaching analysed includes online tools and new technologies in the classroom (40%). This feature is also the main attribute when the objective is to foster students' employability (42.8%). On the other hand, if the teaching is based on simulations with real companies and activities using practical cases, the articles tend to focus on verifying whether this implies an improvement in the acquisition of skills and knowledge by the students (37.5%).

Although it has been observed that certain tools and simulations are being implemented in order to adapt digital marketing teaching for the purpose of converting the students into future professionals, a significant gap is seen in both the training of students and in research contributions on the subject, due to the lack of coherence and homogeneity among methods, samples, and scope. As such, the methodologies implemented to date and reported in the research have a clear practical application, yet they have not proven to be widely effective, as they are not representative.

Table 5. Correlation between teaching features and practical objectives

	Increase the students' experience (motivation, participation, etc.)	Improve student's skills and learning	Enhance student employability
Teamwork	15%	12.5%	14.2%
Use of online tools and new technology in the classroom	40%	25%	42.8%
Simulations and practical activities	15%	37.5%	28.5%
Professor-student communication and segment adaptation	15%	12.5%	14.2%
Contests between the students	15%	12.5%	0%

Source: created by the authors

5. Conclusions

The first conclusion of this research is the scant amount of scientific studies published in Scopus and WoS on teaching methodologies in the area of digital marketing. Nevertheless, the trend is positive, as the largest number of publications have been concentrated in recent years, yet there is still a need to increase the amount of research in this area, especially with regard to postgraduate degrees, which are barely addressed in the existing literature.

Likewise, it can also be affirmed that the teaching methodologies published to date with regard to marketing are not clearly linked to each other, nor do they follow a roadmap with a common objective. Instead, they are fairly specific actions proposed or implemented on an individual basis.

While it has been confirmed that hands-on training through experiential methodologies can improve students' learning and empower them with skills that can increase, among other things, employability, the analysis shows that they are not being implemented on an ongoing basis, nor do they have a long-term strategy. Rather, they focus on "pilot" tests in order to see how students react to this type of learning.

The analysis also reflects a significant gap in terms of providing training to professors in these practical methodologies. At the moment, there are no articles addressing this specific aspect, which should be a key element in providing students with the necessary skills to meet their learning objectives.

In short, it is clear that the articles do not analyse how to integrate the constant changes occurring in the field of digital marketing into the academic curricula. The method of assessing students in this area is a key teaching feature that is not explored in the articles in the sample. The existing literature confirms the effectiveness of incorporating tools such as Facebook groups and Google certificates into the classroom, yet there is no discussion on how to assess student learning. The theoretical framework on the teaching of digital marketing must provide adequate guidance to both professors and researchers in this regard. To achieve this aim, the use of tools should not only be analysed as a technique for motivating students or assisting their employability, but also as part of the degree curriculum to be assessed.

In terms of research on teamwork, the authors have not observed the inclusion of variables associated with the organisation of the subject from the beginning to the final exam, nor regarding assessment. Another relevant issue is that several articles highlight the advantages of working with real companies in the classroom, such as those of Zahay et al. (2022), and Hanni-Vaara, Kähkönen and Paloniemi (2019), yet they do not focus on specific ways to incorporate these companies into digital marketing studies.

The analysis also shows that the country with the most publications is the USA, which confirms the fact that there is still considerable room for improvement in terms of research on teaching methodologies in the area of digital marketing in other regions of the world.

On the other hand, although emphasis has been placed on the need to use more digital tools and new technology in the classroom, as well as on practical activities and simulations with real companies, there have been no proposals regarding how to develop these projects effectively, nor how professors and students can work with these ventures in the classroom.

Moreover, there has not been any focus on how to consolidate methodologies in degree curricula that are based on using online tools and working with companies. This field requires research into techniques that can be used by professors to maintain genuine contact between universities and companies, as well as ways of assessing the practical learning acquired by students. Beyond verifying the effectiveness of practical methodologies in achieving students' professional goals, research is needed into mechanisms for building and updating flexible degree programmes that are open to the constant change demanded by the digital marketing field.

One of the main shortcomings of this research is the small sample size found in the Scopus and WoS databases. This does not allow the authors to draw general conclusions about the teaching methodologies used in digital marketing that might assist students in meeting their learning needs. Nevertheless, this study has opened new avenues of research based on the limitations revealed in the articles analysed.

Regarding the main lines of future research, in addition to the gaps that have not been addressed in studies on teaching methodologies in digital marketing, the following might be considered:

How to train professors in digital marketing, given the continuous advances in this area.

How to implement a teaching programme in which the activities are linked to each other within a comprehensive experiential methodology.

Ways to achieve collaboration with companies and organisations that will enrich the digital marketing curricula.

Which online tools to include in the classroom.

How to effectively develop a hands-on methodology in the classroom.

Ways to improve the employability of students.

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8. Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest contained in this article.

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