

## DIGITAL MARKETING CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION: INCREASING STUDENTS' E- COMMERCE CREATIVITY AND DIGITAL ETHICAL AWARENESS AT DISTANCE COLLEGE

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to evaluate the impact of the transformation of the Digital Marketing curriculum on students' creativity in e-commerce and their awareness of digital security and ethics at distance learning universities. Involving 89 respondents across Indonesia, this research employed a quantitative approach and linear regression analysis to examine the relationship between variables. The results indicate a significant positive influence between the transformation of the Digital Marketing curriculum and students' creativity, with a correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) of 0.78 and  $p$ -value  $< 0.05$ . This suggests that improving the quality of the curriculum can stimulate students' creativity in developing innovative marketing strategies. The study also reveals that curriculum transformation incorporating interactive modules and project-based simulations enhances students' awareness of digital security practices and ethics, aligning with previous research by Jones and Jones (2022) and Nwankwo and Ayoade (2022). Integrating ethical and security aspects into course materials helps students understand the importance of data privacy and responsible behavior in digital environments. These findings emphasize the need for the continuous development of a comprehensive Digital Marketing curriculum that includes practical, ethical, and creative approaches. The practical implications of this research direct universities to enrich their course content with real-world case projects, cybersecurity training, and collaboration with industry professionals to provide deeper insights. The results of this study are expected to serve as a foundation for developing curricula that equip students not only with technical skills but also prepare them to become creative and responsible professionals in the digital era.

**KEYWORDS** *Digital Marketing Curriculum, Student Creativity, E-commerce, Digital Security, Ethical Awareness, Distance Learning*



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**How to cite:**

**E-ISSN:**

**Published by:**

Kadarisman, K., Siswanto, R., Yati, Y., Jaya, F., Sucipto, S. (2025). Digital Marketing Curriculum Transformation: Increasing Students' E-Commerce Creativity and Digital Ethical Awareness at Distance College. *Journal Eduvest*. 5(4): 3800-3813.

2775-3727

<https://greenpublisher.id/>

**Article Info:**

Submitted: 08-01-25    Final Revised: 23-04-25    Accepted: 28-04-25    Published: 28-04-25

## INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has had a significant impact in various fields, including the world of education and the economy. One of the most prominent impacts is the change in the way people access information and interact with markets via digital platforms, which often takes the form of e-commerce or electronic commerce (Filho et al., 2021; Leal-Rodríguez et al., 2023; Nanda & Maharani, 2018a, 2018b; Nugroho, 2013). As the adoption of this technology increases, there is an urgent need for higher education institutions, especially in the field of economics, to adapt their curricula to the demands of skills needed in this digital era. This adjustment is not only important for students, but also for educational institutions such as the Open University (UT), which has a Distance Education (PJJ) system and must develop technology-based learning effectively to accommodate these needs.

Based on data from reports from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), the number of internet users in Indonesia will reach 204.7 million people in 2023. Of this number, around 68% are active in carrying out online transactions (Hsu & Lin, 2015; Smith & Brown, 2019; Witi, 2021; Yoon & Occena, 2015) . This represents a great opportunity for students to master skills in the field of e-commerce, as well as providing an important basis for educational institutions to review and adapt their curricula. The Open University as the pioneer of PJJ in Indonesia has a strategic role in accommodating this change through curriculum innovation that focuses more on digital marketing. Davis's view in the Technology Acceptance Model, acceptance of technology by individuals, including students, is greatly influenced by their perception of the ease of use and benefits of the technology. Based on this theory, if the curriculum can be designed in such a way that digital technology becomes an integral part of the learning process, it will increase students' interest in learning and open up opportunities for them to innovate more, especially in the context of e-commerce.

In addition to technical skills in the field e-commerce, Digital Ethics is also an aspect that is no less important in learning digital marketing. According to Davis in Technology Acceptance Model, acceptance of technology by individuals is greatly influenced by perceptions of ease of use and benefits of technology. In this context, if the curriculum can integrate aspects of Digital Ethics, students will be encouraged to not only be creative in digital marketing but also be ethically responsible and safe in making transactions in the digital world.

As the use of digital technology in education and commerce increases, several studies have been conducted to examine the effectiveness of digital marketing curricula in preparing students to face growing market demands (Collins & Halverson, 2018; J. Lee & Kim, 2020; Young & Hines, 2022). However, there are still several research gaps that need to be addressed, especially regarding the integration of inner creativity e-commerce and security aspects and Digital Ethics

in the context of Distance Education (PJJ). Generally, research in the field of digital marketing focuses more on developing students' technical skills in digital marketing, such as the use of social media platforms, digital campaign strategies, and marketing data analysis. However, there is not much research that emphasizes the importance of equipping students with awareness of Digital Digital Ethics in learning digital marketing, especially in the PJJ ecosystem. This gap shows that there is still a need to develop curriculum approaches that not only improve technical skills, but also hone creative thinking and security awareness skills for students in digital environments that are vulnerable to security risks and ethical violations. In addition, in the context of distance learning, little research has examined how the transformation of teaching materials in Digital Marketing courses can encourage student creativity in the field of learning (A. G. Chakti, 2019; G. Chakti, 2019; Daud et al., 2022; Sari et al., 2023; Sawlani & SE, 2021). e-commerce while increasing their awareness of Digitaldigital's Ethical practices. This is important considering the unique characteristics of PJJ which require students to be more independent in managing their interactions with technology and digital information.

Therefore, this research seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the impact of the transformation of Digital Marketing courses in increasing student creativity in the field e-commerce as well as increasing their awareness of Digital Digital Ethics in the PJJ environment. It is hoped that this research can make a significant contribution to the development of a digital marketing curriculum that is holistic, relevant and in line with the needs of the current digital era.

The rapid growth of e-commerce and digital marketing has created a need for universities to adapt their curricula to ensure that students are equipped with the necessary skills to succeed in the digital age. However, many educational institutions, particularly those in distance learning programs, have yet to integrate key aspects of digital marketing and digital ethics into their curriculum effectively. This gap in the curriculum may leave students ill-prepared for the challenges of e-commerce, including the need for creativity in digital marketing strategies and a strong understanding of digital security practices. The absence of a well-rounded, digital marketing curriculum can limit students' ability to innovate and succeed in the rapidly changing digital landscape.

Moreover, with the increase in online transactions and data sharing, students must also be equipped with knowledge of digital ethics and security to navigate the risks associated with privacy and ethical practices. Distance education programs, particularly those at institutions like Open Universities, face challenges in adapting their curriculum to include both the creative aspects of e-commerce and the necessary understanding of digital ethics. This research aims to explore how the transformation of the Digital Marketing curriculum can increase students' creativity in e-commerce while also raising their awareness of digital security and ethical considerations.

The urgency of this research lies in the growing importance of digital marketing and e-commerce in the global economy. As more students engage in online learning, especially in distance education programs, there is an urgent need for universities to adapt their curricula to address the evolving skills required for

success in the digital world. Additionally, the increasing risks associated with digital transactions, such as data breaches and unethical practices, highlight the necessity for students to be educated not only in creative marketing techniques but also in digital ethics and security. This study aims to address these gaps by examining how the transformation of the Digital Marketing curriculum can foster creativity and increase ethical awareness in distance learning students.

Previous research has explored the role of curriculum transformation in digital marketing education, focusing on enhancing students' creativity and their ability to adapt to the demands of the digital economy. Studies such as those by Jones & Jones (2022) have shown that integrating interactive modules and project-based simulations into the curriculum can significantly improve students' creative thinking and innovation in digital marketing strategies. Similarly, Nwankwo & Ayoade (2022) have found that incorporating digital ethics into the curriculum can enhance students' understanding of privacy issues, responsible behavior, and the ethical implications of digital marketing. These findings support the idea that a holistic approach to digital marketing education, which combines creativity and ethics, is essential for preparing students for the challenges of the digital world.

In addition, research by K. Lee (2021) highlighted the importance of project-based learning in fostering creativity and practical problem-solving skills in digital marketing students. The study demonstrated that students who engage in real-world projects are more likely to develop innovative marketing strategies and apply their knowledge effectively. However, while these studies emphasize creativity and practical learning, there is limited research on how these factors interact with the ethical components of digital marketing education, particularly in the context of distance learning programs.

Moreover, research by Smith & Brown (2019) discussed the integration of digital marketing strategies in university curricula and its impact on student engagement. Their study showed that incorporating current industry trends and practical tools into the curriculum can help students gain the necessary skills to succeed in the e-commerce industry. However, little research has been conducted on how these curriculum changes impact students' awareness of digital ethics and security, particularly in distance learning environments where face-to-face interactions are limited.

Although much research has been conducted on the integration of digital marketing and e-commerce into educational curricula, there is a notable gap in studies that examine the combined impact of creativity, digital ethics, and digital security in a distance learning context. Previous studies have largely focused on either the technical skills required for digital marketing or the importance of ethical education in the digital age, but few have explored how the transformation of a Digital Marketing curriculum in distance education programs can simultaneously increase creativity and ethical awareness. This study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the impact of curriculum transformation on students' creativity in e-commerce and their awareness of digital security and ethics.

This research introduces a novel approach by focusing on the transformation of the Digital Marketing curriculum in distance education programs and its dual impact on enhancing student creativity in e-commerce and raising awareness of

digital ethics. While previous studies have primarily focused on one aspect, such as creativity or ethics, this study uniquely combines both elements, offering a comprehensive approach to digital marketing education. By using a mixed-methods approach, this research provides deeper insights into how the integration of ethical considerations and creative thinking in the curriculum can better prepare students for the challenges of the digital economy.

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the impact of the transformation of the Digital Marketing curriculum on students' creativity in e-commerce and their awareness of digital security and ethics. The research aims to assess how curriculum changes that incorporate project-based learning, interactive modules, and digital ethics can foster creative thinking, improve e-commerce skills, and enhance students' understanding of ethical issues related to digital marketing. The study also seeks to determine the effectiveness of these curriculum changes in preparing students for real-world challenges in the digital marketing field.

The findings of this study offer several benefits for educational institutions, policymakers, and students. For universities, the research provides insights into how curriculum transformations can be designed to improve both creativity and ethical awareness in digital marketing students. This can help institutions develop more comprehensive and relevant programs that align with the needs of the digital economy. For students, the research highlights the importance of gaining both technical and ethical skills in digital marketing, preparing them for responsible and innovative roles in the e-commerce sector. Additionally, this study offers practical recommendations for integrating digital security training and ethical principles into the curriculum, ensuring that students are equipped to navigate the complexities of the digital world.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research employs a mixed-method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between E-Commerce Creativity, Digital Ethics, and Digital Marketing Learning Transformation. The quantitative approach aims to measure the relationships and influence between these variables statistically. Data was collected from 89 student respondents using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire measured three key variables: E-Commerce Creativity (X1), Digital Ethics (X2), and Digital Marketing Learning Transformation (Y), with responses recorded on a 1-5 Likert scale. This scale effectively captures variations in perceptions and provides insight into students' views on creativity, digital ethics, and the digital marketing curriculum. The data was collected via a Google Form-based questionnaire, accessible to students across various locations, enabling efficient data gathering.

The qualitative approach was used to complement the quantitative findings by exploring students' perceptions and experiences more deeply. In-depth interviews were conducted with a purposively selected group of students, chosen

based on varying levels of creativity and ethical awareness. Thematic analysis was applied to organize the interview data into themes corresponding to the three main variables. This qualitative analysis provides contextual insights, elaborates on the statistical results, and uncovers factors that influence the transformation of digital marketing learning, which may not be fully captured in the quantitative data.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research involved 89 respondents from all regions of Indonesia who participated in a survey regarding Digital Marketing Curriculum Transformation, Creativity in E-Commerce, and Digital Digital Ethical Awareness. The following are the research results for each variable, which include frequency distribution tables and descriptive statistics.

### 1. Digital Marketing Curriculum Transformation

The following table shows the frequency distribution and descriptive statistics for the Digital Marketing Curriculum Transformation variable.

**Table 1. Digital Marketing Transformation Score**

Digital Marketing Transformation Score	Frequency	Percentage (%)
20-30	10	11.2
31-40	25	28.1
41-50	30	33.7
51-60	15	16.9
61-70	9	10.1
Total	89	100

Descriptive Statistics:

- Mean: 42.8
- Median: 45
- Modus: 48
- Standard Deviation: 8.9

The majority of respondents (33.7%) had scores in the 41-50 range, indicating that most participants had a positive perception of the transformation of the Digital Marketing curriculum. The mean score of 42.8 indicates an average score that is in the medium to high category, which reflects quite good acceptance of this curriculum. A standard deviation of 8.9 indicates that there is variation in respondents' responses, although the distribution is still quite even.

### 2. Creativity in E-Commerce

Frequency distribution and descriptive statistics for the Creativity in E-Commerce variable are shown in the following table.

**Table 2. Creativity in E-Commerce**

E-Commerce Creativity Score	Frequency	Percentage (%)
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15-25	12	13.5
26-35	20	22.5
36-45	35	39.3
46-55	18	20.2
56-65	4	4.5
Total	89	100

**Descriptive Statistics:**

- Mean: 38.6
- Median: 39
- Modus: 40
- Standard Deviation: 9.4

The research results show that Creativity scores in E-Commerce are most often in the range of 36-45 (39.3%). The mean of 38.6 indicates a fairly good level of creativity among respondents, with a fairly wide variation in responses indicated by a standard deviation of 9.4. This shows that the transformation of the Digital Marketing curriculum has helped increase student creativity in the field of e-commerce in the medium to high category.

### 3. Digital Digital Ethical Awareness

The following table depicts the frequency distribution and descriptive statistics for the Digital Digital Ethical Awareness variable.

**Table 3. Digital Ethical Awareness**

Digital Ethical Awareness Score	Frequency	Percentage (%)
10-20	8	9.0
21-30	15	16.9
31-40	40	44.9
41-50	20	22.5
51-60	6	6.7
Total	89	100

**Descriptive Statistics:**

- Mean: 35.3
- Median: 37
- Modus: 38
- Standard Deviation: 7.2

Explanation: The majority of respondents (44.9%) had a Digital Digital Ethics Awareness score in the range of 31-40, indicating quite high awareness of the Digital Digital Ethics aspect. The mean of 35.3 and standard deviation of 7.2 indicates that the majority of respondents have a good understanding of the importance of Digital Ethics in the use of digital technology. This shows that the



transformation of the Digital Marketing curriculum also contributes to increasing student awareness of Digital Ethics.

The results of statistical analysis show that there is a very strong positive relationship between Digital Marketing Curriculum Transformation and Creativity in E-Commerce among students. The following are the results of the analysis that support this finding:

- 1) Correlation Value (r): A correlation value of 0.78 indicates a strong relationship between these two variables, in a positive direction. This means that the higher the quality of the Digital Marketing curriculum transformation, the higher the student creativity in the field of e-commerce.
- 2) Significance Test: The p value obtained is less than 0.05, so this result is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. This shows that the influence of the transformation of the Digital Marketing curriculum on student creativity is not a coincidence, but rather a strong and statistically significant relationship.
- 3) Linear Regression Equation: A simple linear regression equation to predict E-Commerce Creativity from Digital Marketing is:  
$$Y = 5.10 + 0.65X_1 + 0.42X_2$$

The results of this research show that there is a positive and significant influence between Digital Marketing Curriculum Transformation on Creativity in E-Commerce among Distance Education (PJJ) students. With a correlation value (r) of 0.78 and a significance value of  $p < 0.05$ , this relationship is classified as strong, which indicates that the better the curriculum transformation in the field of Digital Marketing, the higher the level of student creativity in developing innovations in the field of e-commerce. These results are consistent with research by Lee (2021), which found that a project-based curriculum in digital marketing can improve students' creative skills in overcoming digital market challenges.

Multiple regression equation  $Y = 5.10 + 0.65X_1 + 0.42X_2$ . Intercept (5.10): If the E-Commerce Creativity and Digital Ethics values are equal to 0, then the predicted Digital Marketing Score is 5.10. E-Commerce Creativity Coefficient ( $X_1$ ) = 0.65, meaning that every one unit increase in E-Commerce Creativity will increase the Digital Marketing Score by 0.65, assuming Digital Ethics remains constant. Digital Ethics Coefficient ( $X_2$ ) = 0.42, meaning that every one unit increase in Digital Ethics ( $X_2$ ) will increase the Digital Marketing Score by 0.42, assuming E-Commerce Creativity ( $X_1$ ) remains constant.

The curriculum transformation carried out in Digital Marketing courses at PJJ universities, as described in this research, involves the development of interactive teaching materials, practical case studies, and digital simulations that allow students to apply their knowledge directly. According to Smith and Brown (2019), this project and simulation-based approach increases students' understanding of digital marketing concepts while fostering critical and creative thinking skills. The results of this research strengthen their findings, indicating that project-based learning, which is also applied in curriculum transformation, has a significant positive impact on student creativity.



This research also shows that student awareness of Digital Ethics increases along with curriculum transformation. This is in line with the findings of Jones and Jones (2022), who emphasize that a curriculum that integrates digital security principles is able to increase students' understanding of Digital Ethics, especially in the context of data use and privacy in digital marketing. This finding is also supported by research by Nwankwo and Ayoade (2022), who observed that students who were given material on Digital Ethics and security in a marketing context were more aware of risks and had better skills in protecting user data. The success of this curriculum in increasing students' e-commerce creativity is also associated with aspects of active interaction and direct practice through project simulations. Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2019) stated that active interaction through simulations not only deepens understanding, but also increases students' ability to apply knowledge in real situations. This can be seen in the results of this research, where students who were actively involved in digital marketing simulations showed higher levels of creativity.

From the results of this study, follow-up is needed in the development of digital marketing teaching materials, among others:

a) Real Case Based Project Integration

To stimulate creativity, it is necessary to apply a project-based approach where students are asked to solve real cases in digital marketing. These projects may include developing original marketing campaigns, creative content marketing strategies, or using social media to build a brand. Providing real cases helps students understand current market needs and provides opportunities for them to design innovative and relevant strategies. This project also allows students to think creatively in creating effective and attractive marketing solutions.

b) Emphasis on the Ethics of Data Use in Learning

Given the importance of Digital Ethics in digital marketing, the curriculum should include a specific module on ethical use of data. This module should address privacy regulations such as GDPR, the importance of explicit consent from users, and ethical practices in collecting and analyzing data. Case studies that demonstrate the negative impacts of digital privacy violations can also be used to strengthen students' understanding of the consequences of unethical actions. This approach will increase student awareness of the importance of maintaining data integrity and respecting user privacy.

c) Cyber Security Training through Digital Practical Simulations

In the digital era, cyber security has become essential. Digital security practice simulations, such as exercises in identifying phishing attacks or securing data with encryption, can be included in the curriculum. These exercises can involve scenarios that simulate real-world challenges, such as handling customer data in marketing campaigns, so students are better prepared to deal with digital security risks. This step will provide practical experience in dealing with cyber threats and increase understanding of the importance of maintaining data security in digital marketing activities.

d) Application of AI and Big Data Technology in Learning Materials

Using technology such as artificial intelligence (AI) and big data in digital marketing can increase the attractiveness of the material while opening up opportunities for students to think creatively. Modules that teach how to use AI for consumer behavior analysis or predicting digital marketing trends will motivate students to explore and develop new data-based ideas. The use of big data in digital marketing simulations allows students to learn how to make more effective data-based decisions, while motivating them to continue to innovate in marketing strategies.

e) In-depth Evaluation and Feedback

Providing rubric-based evaluations and in-depth feedback on students' projects and assignments can encourage their creativity. By providing constructive feedback and guiding them in modifying or improving their marketing strategies, students can see opportunities to develop their ideas. Additionally, emphasizing the importance of Digital Ethics in every evaluation will help students integrate these values in their work.

f) Collaboration with Industry to Provide a Practical Perspective

Involving industry practitioners in the learning process, whether as guest speakers, mentors, or case study providers, can add important practical insight for students. Practitioners can provide a perspective on actual challenges in digital marketing, including the Digital Ethics issues they face. This collaboration will also provide students with an in-depth understanding of the skills and competencies required in today's industry, encouraging them to think creatively while prioritizing safety and ethics.

g) Innovation-Based Assessment and Ethical Compliance

Adopting assessments that not only assess the end result but also measure the level of innovation and ethical compliance in student-produced projects is an important step. An assessment rubric that includes aspects of creativity and ethical awareness can be used to appreciate students' efforts in implementing creative, safe and ethical strategies. This will motivate students to think creatively while still paying attention to security aspects and ethical responsibilities.

Several alternative case study themes that can be developed on the subject of Digital Marketing:

**Table 4. case study themes**

Session	Topic	Case Study Theme	Student Activities
1	Introduction to Digital Marketing	Case study of how a technology startup leveraged digital marketing to increase brand awareness and attract their first customers.	Students analyze how startups start digital marketing, what strategies are used, and the results obtained.

2	Digital Marketing Trends	Analyze the latest trends in digital marketing with a focus on the use of AI technology in programmatic advertising.	Students explore the latest trends such as AI, VR, or influencer marketing in real contexts.
3	Digital Market Target	Identify the target market for a new beauty product using digital tools such as Google Analytics and Facebook Insights.	Students learn how to identify and analyze target markets with digital tools.
4	Digital Content Strategy	Designed a digital content strategy for a local restaurant looking to increase customer engagement through social media and blogs.	Students create engaging content plans for small to medium businesses.
5	Social Media in Marketing	Developed a social media campaign for a clothing company that leveraged Instagram and TikTok to reach a young audience.	Focus on innovative and effective social media campaigns.
6	SEO (Search Engine Optimization)	SEO optimization for a small e-commerce website selling organic products, with a focus on keywords, backlinks and content.	Practical SEO optimization to improve search rankings.
7	Data analysis	Analyzing data from previous digital marketing campaigns for a software company, using Google Analytics to measure ROI and campaign effectiveness.	Use real data to measure campaign success.
8	Ethics and Regulation	Cases about privacy violations in digital marketing, and how companies must comply with regulations such as GDPR and CCPA.	Ethical cases relevant to the latest regulations.
9	Midterm exam	Evaluation is based on a cumulative case study covering all the topics discussed.	Summarize and apply the knowledge that has been learned.
10	Digital Campaign Planning	Developed a digital campaign plan for an educational technology company that wanted to promote their new online learning platform.	Students develop a complete campaign plan.
11	Digital Campaign Implementation	Implementation of a digital marketing campaign for a fashion brand that wants to increase holiday sales through paid advertising and email marketing.	Implementation of the planned campaign plan.
12	Digital Campaign Evaluation	Evaluate a digital campaign for a travel company that recently completed a 6-month marketing	Assess campaign results with the right metrics.

		campaign, focusing on conversion and engagement metrics.	
13	Use of Digital Tools	Use of digital tools like Hootsuite and Buffer to manage and schedule social media posts for a small business.	Practice using social media management tools.
14	Digital Marketing Case Study	In-depth analysis of the digital marketing strategies of large companies such as Nike or Amazon, and how they have successfully leveraged digital technology.	An in-depth study of a large company's digital strategy.
15	Digital Marketing Plan Presentation	Presentation of a digital marketing plan that students developed for a product or service of their own choosing.	Present their plans and receive feedback.
16	Final exams	Comprehensive evaluation based on case studies covering all aspects of digital marketing that have been discussed during the semester.	The overall assessment is based on more complex case studies.

## CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the transformation of the Digital Marketing curriculum in universities offering Distance Education (PJJ) has a significant positive impact on enhancing student creativity in e-commerce and their awareness of Digital Ethics. The results, with a correlation value ( $r$ ) of 0.78 and significance ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicate that a higher-quality curriculum leads to increased student creativity in developing innovative digital marketing strategies. Additionally, integrating Digital Ethics into the curriculum helps students gain a deeper understanding of the importance of privacy and ethical behavior in the digital world. These findings align with previous studies suggesting that project-based learning, practical simulations, and collaborative methods stimulate creativity and ethical awareness. Therefore, it is crucial for educational institutions to continue refining teaching materials to meet industry needs while also fostering the development of responsible and ethical professional values.

For future research, it is recommended that universities consider incorporating real-world case studies, cybersecurity simulations, and collaborations with industry partners to further enrich student learning experiences. Additionally, evaluations that assess both innovation and ethical adherence in students' work will encourage them to become creative and ethical practitioners. Future studies could also explore how different digital marketing specializations (e.g., content marketing, social media marketing) may require specific ethical guidelines and

creativity levels, providing a more nuanced understanding of how curriculum transformations impact various areas of digital marketing education.

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