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A Study on Innovative Approaches to Teaching Cross-Border Marketing Courses in Higher Education Institutions in the Context of Digital Transformation

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Abstract

The digital transformation of cross-border marketing courses has evolved from a technological upgrade in teaching methods to a structural shift in educational paradigms. The digital restructuring of cross-border marketing channels and the rise of data-driven decision-making models are reshaping industry demands for marketing talent competencies, requiring curriculum instruction to adapt in terms of objectives, content frameworks, and practical platforms. However, current courses lag in aligning with job competency requirements, updating platform tools, and deepening industry-academia collaboration, which hinders the efficiency of matching talent development with industry needs. This study establishes an implementation framework for teaching innovation by referencing industry competency standards, focusing on four dimensions: objective reconstruction, content integration, platform development, and collaborative education, providing theoretical references and practical pathways for the digital transformation of business courses.

Keywords

digital transformation, cross-border marketing, course instruction, educational innovation, integration of industry and education

1. Introduction

The global cross-border marketing ecosystem is undergoing profound digital transformation. Emerging business models—social commerce, independent store operations, and AI-assisted content generation—are gradually replacing the traditional paradigm of platform-based sales tracking and advertising with a refined framework that integrates data insights, content creativity, and cross-cultural communication. This evolution demands that university marketing curricula not only impart established knowledge but also cultivate students' data literacy, tool adaptability, and cross-cultural decision-making. However, most higher education institutions still primarily focus on classic theoretical instruction and simulated software operations in cross-border marketing education, resulting in a clear gap between curriculum objectives and the competency standards required for real-world industry roles. Addressing how to respect the logical progression of disciplinary knowledge while responding to the rapidly evolving competency demands of the industry has become the central challenge in current curriculum reform.

2. New Requirements for Cross-Border Marketing Curriculum Teaching in the Context of Digital Transformation

2.1 Digital Reconstruction of Cross-border Marketing Channels and Outreach Methods

Traditional cross-border marketing is highly concentrated on third-party platforms such as Amazon and AliExpress, with operations centered around internal search ranking and advertising placement. After the rise of emerging channels such as TikTok Shop, Temu, and SHEIN, traffic has been simultaneously diverted to independent websites and social media e-commerce, and the channel pattern has shifted from a single-platform dominance to a decentralized multi-touchpoint layout. Consumer information acquisition has shifted, with decentralized paths—short video seeding, live streaming interaction, and acquaintance recommendations—gradually replacing search behavior as the primary touchpoint. “People looking for goods” has given way to “goods looking for people” driven by algorithms. The key nodes to reach consumers are no longer concentrated within the platform site, but scattered among the content field, social field, and private field. Marketers must handle multiple tasks—content planning, community management, and paid traffic acquisition—simultaneously. If the course still focuses on traditional platform operation skills, students will find it difficult to grasp the diversity of traffic sources and the complexity of reach paths, and there is an urgent need to establish a systematic understanding of the channel ecosystem [1].

2.2 The Multidimensional Reshaping of Marketing Capabilities by Data-driven Decision-making Models

The reference frame for enterprise operational decision-making is shifting from empirical judgment to data evidence. In the past, product selection, pricing, and advertising placement mainly relied on the personal experience and market intuition of business leaders. Nowadays, the data dimensions provided by platforms are becoming increasingly refined, and indicators such as conversion funnels, customer profiling, and repeat purchase cycles have become the basic language of daily operations. Marketers no longer receive vague sales figures, but rather behavior trajectories that can be targeted at specific groups, time periods, and touchpoints. This information forces decision-makers to develop a mindset of using data to verify hypotheses. Correspondingly, the job competency structure has undergone substantial changes, and simple skills in copywriting or advertising placement are no longer sufficient. Practitioners need to have the ability to extract effective information from raw data, identify abnormal fluctuations, and judge the correlation between variables. Course teaching cannot ignore this shift in required competencies, if only the marketing theory framework is taught and the systematic embedding of data literacy is ignored, students will find it difficult to understand the logical support behind business instructions after entering the job.

2.3 Upgrading the Demand for Composite Talents in the Cross-border e-Commerce Ecosystem

The complexity of industry ecology has far exceeded the scope of traditional international trade. Enterprises not only require marketers to master platform operations and foreign language communication skills, but also expect them to produce creative content, gain user insights in cross-cultural contexts, and integrate multi-channel resources. A single dimension of professional training is difficult to meet the comprehensive requirements of actual job positions. A qualified cross-border marketing practitioner often needs to simultaneously handle advertising flow, social account operation, localized content production, and even simple supply chain coordination tasks. The blurring of job responsibility boundaries has gradually led to the shift of the “specialist” model to the “generalist” training orientation. If the course teaching still follows fragmented knowledge modules and operates independently, students will find it difficult to adapt to the work rhythm of one person in multiple positions after entering the workplace, and they will also be unable to respond quickly in the complex and ever-changing overseas market.

3. The Main Shortcomings Faced by Cross-border Marketing Course Teaching in Universities

3.1 Insufficient Matching Between Course Objectives and Digital Job Requirements

The goal setting of most cross-border marketing courses in universities still revolves around traditional marketing theory frameworks. The training program usually requires students to master classic theories, be familiar with platform operation processes, and have basic foreign language application abilities, but it rarely includes data interpretation, content planning, and multi platform collaborative operation as clear graduation ability indicators. The recruitment requirements for junior marketing positions in enterprises have already covered specific job contents such as advertising flow, social account maintenance, and competitor monitoring, but the course objectives remain at a relatively broad level of ability description. The difference in discourse system between the two directly leads to a structural deviation between the training direction and the actual employment demand. If the teaching objectives cannot truly reflect the work logic of the industry and the operational norms of the position, the subsequent teaching content arrangement and practical design of the course will lack effective guidance basis [2].

3.2 The Teaching Content System Lags Behind in Following Up on Platform Iteration and Tool Updates

The platform rules and operational tools in the cross-border e-commerce industry are updated frequently. The traffic distribution mechanism of TikTok Shop is adjusted almost every quarter, and the intelligence level of the advertising delivery system continues to deepen. AI-assisted content generation tools are now entering daily workflows. The compilation of textbooks and the revision of course outlines follow their own revision cycles. A new set of textbooks often takes one to two years from project approval to publication, and by the time they are officially put into teaching, some of the operational guidelines may have become outdated. The teacher community also faces pressure, with daily teaching tasks and research assessments taking up a lot of energy. The time to truly follow up on platform changes and convert them into teaching resources is very limited. Schools lack a rapid-response mechanism for industry trends, and course content adjustments must pass through multiple layers of approval. Once the new teaching plan is approved for implementation, the industry's gameplay may have evolved further.

3.3 The Connection Between Practical Teaching Platforms and Real Cross-border Marketing Scenarios is Weak

Most universities rely on cross-border e-commerce simulation software for their practical activities. This type of software breaks down the operational process into standardized steps, allowing students to complete tasks such as product listing and order processing in a virtual environment. Platform data is generated based on fixed parameters, lacking the random fluctuations and competitive variables in the real market. In real scenarios, traffic costs shift in real-time with peer bids, buyer review sentiment is difficult to quantify, and sudden policy changes may alter market entry thresholds overnight. Simulation training cannot replicate such uncertainty. After completing the exercises, students have mastered the process specifications, but have not experienced the pressure of making judgments in the face of real data. The feedback from the company to the interns also confirms this deviation, as newly hired employees are familiar with the backend operation path but lack guidance on how to handle abnormal situations.

3.4 The Lack of Support for the Collaborative Mechanism Between Industry and Education and the Construction of Dual Qualified Teachers

Industry-education collaboration has long remained a one-way output—enterprises merely provide internship positions. The real operational data and typical work cases of industry associations and leading enterprises are difficult to enter classroom teaching, and the main channel for schools to obtain cutting-edge industry trends is still teachers' personal social networks, lacking institutionalized information transmission channels. Most of the teachers in the group enter teaching positions directly after graduating from universities, lacking systematic experience in cross-border marketing practice. Faced with the rapid iteration of industry operation logic, teachers' knowledge update speed lags significantly behind that of frontline practitioners. The

willingness of enterprises to participate in cooperative education has been declining year by year, due to the unequal input-output ratio - sending backbone personnel into the classroom and opening up backend data for teaching use require additional manpower and time, while short-term benefits remain unclear [3].

4. The Implementation Path of Teaching Innovation in Cross-Border Marketing Courses Under Digital Transformation

4.1 Reconstruction of Course Objective System Guided by Job Skills

The adjustment of the course objective system needs to start with job demand research. Colleges and universities should organize professional teachers to systematically sort out the work content of typical positions such as cross-border e-commerce operation specialists, advertising pitchers, and content planners, extract recurring tasks and decision-making situations from daily work, using them as the basis for curriculum goal design. Traditional syllabi use vague expressions like “mastering knowledge” and “understanding theory” to describe learning outcomes—terms that are difficult to measure and lack clear job relevance. The new target system should translate capability requirements into observable and evaluative behavioral performance, such as “being able to adjust bidding strategies based on advertising data” or “being able to write localized product copy for specific target markets”, replacing the previous vague capability descriptions.The division of target levels also needs to be adjusted synchronously, with the requirements for memorization and understanding compressed, while the weight of application, analysis, and evaluation increased, so that the course objectives truly reflect the cognitive requirements of job positions.

The deep logic of goal reconstruction lies in transforming the employment standards of enterprises into specific indicators of course learning outcomes. The expectation of enterprises for entry-level positions is not the mastery of theoretical knowledge, but whether the new employee can quickly take over daily operational affairs after joining. This means that the course objectives need to respond to this reality by incorporating specific work content such as advertising ROI analysis, competitor monitoring report writing, and cross-cultural communication design into the teaching objectives, so that students' learning process corresponds to the work process of the position. There are significant differences in the requirements for ability structure among different positions. Content based positions focus on creative output and copywriting expression abilities, while data based positions emphasize more on indicator interpretation and logical deduction abilities. Course objectives should set differentiated ability modules for students' different development directions, allowing students to choose corresponding ability training paths based on their own interests and career planning [4].

4.2 Updating Modular Teaching Content Guided by Digital Tools

Updating modular teaching content must start with tool iteration. The advertising delivery systems, data dashboards, and AI tools used in daily operations receive version updates and new features every few months. If the pace of updating teaching content is disconnected from the iteration of the tools, it will be impossible for students to apply what they have learned. The course team should establish a tracking mechanism for changes in industry tools, regularly review the rule changes and functional adjustments of mainstream platforms, and adjust the teaching focus and operational training content of each module based on this, and the structure of teaching modules should also be adjusted, as traditional chapter division is accustomed to organizing content according to marketing functions, such as “Fundamentals of Advertising”, “Consumer Behavior”, etc. This division method has no corresponding relationship in job work, and it is difficult for students to connect scattered knowledge into a complete workflow after learning. The new module design should be organized around the application scenarios of digital tools, linking knowledge points according to the logical clues of work tasks, and embedding dispersed marketing theories into specific tool operations and decision-making contexts. For example, in the advertising placement module, students need to simultaneously handle interrelated decision variables such as budget allocation, audience targeting, and creative material selection, rather than learning advertising principles and data analysis methods separately and then piecing them together on their own. The modules should also maintain a progressive relationship, with basic modules ensuring that students have the ability to independently operate mainstream tools, while the advanced modules introduce complex tasks such as cross platform combination delivery and multi-dimensional data cross analysis, so that the teaching content presents a ladder from tool proficiency to strategic thinking.

4.3 Construction of a Practical Training Platform and Case Library Characterized by the Combination of Virtual and Real Elements

The construction of training platforms needs to balance the operability of virtual simulation environments with the complexity of real business scenarios. The simulation software currently used by most universities provides a standardized operating interface, but cannot reproduce uncontrollable variables such as advertising bidding fluctuations, exchange rate changes, and buyer dispute resolution in the real market. The direction of platform upgrade should be to embed real business data and dynamic market signals in the virtual environment, so that students can face uncertainty consistent with real positions in simulated operations. The setting of practical training tasks should also avoid repetitive process operations, and should design phased projects that require comprehensive judgment, such as requiring students to complete the entire process from product selection decision-making to advertising placement to order fulfillment within a simulation cycle, and to cope with unexpected situations such as intensified competition and negative feedback crises that may occur randomly during the process.

The quality of case library construction directly affects the effectiveness of practical training teaching. The selection of teaching cases requires the establishment of clear screening criteria, and relying solely on publicly available enterprise reports and experience sharing posts on the internet cannot meet the depth requirements of teaching for cases. Colleges should establish a regular case collection channel with partner enterprises to obtain real operational data and decision documents that have been desensitized, ensuring that the case content contains complete background information, decision nodes, and result data. The presentation of cases also needs to take into account the applicability of different course modules. Cases for basic teaching should focus on the analysis and training of a single variable, while cases for comprehensive training should include complex situations interwoven with multiple variables, so that case resources can cover the complete teaching chain from specialized skill training to comprehensive decision-making exercises. The accumulation of typical cases will provide support for the continuous improvement of subsequent courses, and the common problems exposed by students in practical training can contribute to the optimization of teaching content and case design [5].

4.4 Teacher Co-construction and Curriculum Co-research Supported by School Enterprise Collaboration

The deepening of school enterprise collaboration requires breaking through the existing one-way transmission mode from the level of cooperation mechanism. Enterprises have long faced the dilemma of imbalanced input-output ratio, with additional manpower and time costs required for key personnel to teach on campus and for backend data to be opened up. However, the benefits of cooperation are difficult to manifest in the short term. If the school wants to maintain a long-term stable cooperative relationship, it should create practical value for enterprises—through curriculum development, talent delivery, and on-the-job training—shifting cooperation from one-way output to mutual benefit. At the level of teacher development, sending teachers to enterprises for on-the-job training is an effective way to fill the gap in practical experience. Schools should provide corresponding policy support in workload assessment and performance evaluation, and lower the institutional threshold for teachers to participate in enterprise practice. The depth of participation of enterprise mentors in teaching also needs to be further improved, moving beyond a lecture at the end of the semester or joint guidance for graduation projects, and instead letting enterprise backbone participate in the module design, case development, and classroom teaching throughout the entire process. The joint research of courses requires the school to open up the course development process to enterprises, regularly organize teaching seminars with the participation of teachers and enterprise backbone, adjust course content and practical training plans around the latest changes in the industry, and keep the courses in a dynamic and updated state.

5. Conclusion

Digital transformation brings not only knowledge supplementation and tool replacement, but also a fundamental questioning of course goal positioning, content logic, and training methods. Teaching design that ignores real industry needs leaves students trapped between theory and practice, while one-way technological catch-up—disconnected from educational principles—may reduce training to mere tool proficiency. The

effectiveness of the implementation of innovative teaching paths depends on whether universities can establish a sustainable dynamic calibration mechanism between industry competency standards and disciplinary education logic, so that courses can truly become effective intermediaries connecting academic literacy and professional competence.

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