

An “Core-Wings” Pedagogical Model for Integrated Marketing Practice: Fostering Brand-Sales-Effect Synergy through Digital Empowerment

Yueying Liao

Guangzhou Institute of Science and Technology, Guangzhou, Guangdong, China

Abstract: In response to the urgent demand of the digital economy for marketing professionals with “Brand-Sales-Effect Integration” capabilities, the teaching of integrated marketing practice in higher education reveals a systemic disconnect with industry practices. This study constructs a “Integrated Core with Two Wings” pedagogical model, the integrated core focuses on the talent cultivation goal of “Brand-Sales-Effect Integration”, supported by two wings of curriculum content system innovation and methodological innovation, driven by digital intelligence technologies and industry-academia integration. Based on a deconstruction of the competency model for marketing talent in the “Brand-Sales-Effect Integration” era, this research proposes a new four-in-one curriculum framework encompassing “Strategic Insight, Content Engine, Omnichannel Operations, and Intelligent Measurement”, along with a project-based learning process and a corresponding evaluation and support system, structured as “importing real enterprise projects-co-creating human-AI collaborative strategies-multi-dimensional output of results-comprehensive value assessment”. This study provides a robust and actionable framework for the systematic reform of the integrated marketing practice course.

Keywords: Integrated Marketing; Brand-Sales-Effect Integration; Pedagogical Model; Digital Marketing Education; Industry-Academia Integration

1. Introduction: The Need for Pedagogical Reform in Integrated Marketing Education

Digital intelligence technology is accelerating the iterative evolution of theoretical paradigms and practical forms within the marketing domain. MarTech, exemplified by artificial intelligence,

has not only spawned a new matrix of digital tools but also fundamentally altered the mechanisms of value co-creation between enterprises and consumers, as well as the evaluation criteria for marketing return on investment. Specifically, first, the new media environment, dominated by social media, has compressed and fragmented the consumer decision-making journey. This shift has compelled enterprises to transition their marketing strategic thinking from the traditional binary separation of brand building and performance marketing towards the synergistic growth objective of “Brand-Sales-Effect Integration”. Second, technologies like generative artificial intelligence have permeated the entire marketing value chain, demanding that practitioners possess a new set of integrated capabilities for human-AI collaboration, strategy formulation, and execution. However, amid this industrial transformation, the teaching of *Integrated Marketing Practice* courses in higher education reveals a threefold mismatch. This systemic issue hinders the effective cultivation of innovative, application-oriented marketing talent, presenting a significant challenge for both educational theory and practice.

1.1 Cognitive Mismatch: The Lag in Theoretical Instruction

Current mainstream pedagogy often adheres to the integrated marketing communications (IMC) theoretical framework from the 1990s, which centers on coordinating different communication tools to deliver a unified brand message. While this theory held significant value in the traditional media era, it now struggles to explain and guide modern marketing practices based on algorithms and data, particularly the new business models of “Brand-Sales-Effect Integration”. This leads to a disconnect between students’ cognitive frameworks and the practical demands of the industry.

1.2 Competency Mismatch: The Misalignment in Talent Cultivation

The industry's demand for marketing talent has shifted from execution skills to composite competencies, such as data-driven consumer insight, cross-platform content strategy planning, traffic orchestration driving business growth, and human-AI collaboration skills. In contrast, traditional pedagogical models often produce students proficient in theoretical memorization or single-tool operation but weak in data analysis, technological application, and results-oriented integrated practice. Consequently, they struggle to integrate digital intelligence technologies into high-level integrated marketing design^[1].

1.3 Pedagogical Mismatch: The Isolation of the Teaching Process

At present, most “Integrated Marketing Practice” classroom instructions rely on theoretical lectures supplemented by case studies and simulated practices. The selection of cases and the design of practical activities are often detached from real-world corporate challenges, hindering students from developing genuine integrative thinking and complex problem-solving abilities, which exacerbates the “difficulty in securing employment” phenomenon.

2. Theoretical Foundations: The Logical Starting Point for the New Model Construction

2.1 Industrial Logic Foundation: The Connotation and Realization Mechanism of “Brand-Sales-Effect Integration”

The concept of “brand-effect integration” was initially proposed by the industry to employ differentiated strategies for consumers at various decision-making stages, facilitating their progression from brand awareness and engagement to interest generation and eventual conversion along the decision path^[2]. With the evolution of technology and business models, this concept has advanced to the “Brand-Sales-Effect Integration” stage. This new stage involves completing the entire chain of brand building, user interaction, and product sales within a single scenario, emphasizing the reshaping of marketing business processes by data and technology^[3]. By integrating resources under a unified business objective and

implementing a data-tracking and analysis system across the entire user journey, numerous brands leverage content platforms like Douyin and Xiaohongshu, creating seamless funnels such as “content seeding - live/short video conversion- community/membership repurchase” to maximize the commercial value of user engagement. This new paradigm requires future marketing professionals to possess a holistic perspective and full-funnel operational capabilities.

2.2 Educational Theory: Guidance from Constructivism

Constructivist learning theory posits that learning is a process in which learners actively construct meaning within a specific context. Similarly, situated learning theory emphasizes that knowledge is embedded in its application context. Based on these theories, pedagogical reform must place students in authentic or highly simulated business problem scenarios. Current academic explorations of integrated marketing curriculum reforms primarily focus on three areas: first, interdisciplinary integration, such as incorporating communication theories into marketing education to cultivate composite talent^[4]; second, methodological innovations, introducing project-based learning and blended teaching, utilizing virtual simulations and online collaboration tools to enhance practical abilities, compensating for deficiencies in traditional classroom practices and elevating student engagement^[5]; third, deepening university-enterprise collaboration by introducing corporate projects and industry experts into the curriculum system and increasing the weight of practical outcomes in assessments^[6].

The core idea of the “Integrated Core with Two Wings” model is to combine a central objective (the core) with two supporting elements (the wings) to create a synergistic effect^[7]. This structure has been widely applied in higher education. Some studies define the “student-centeredness” or “professional competency cultivation” as the “core”, with “integration of online and offline” or “theory and practice” as the “wings”^[8]. Others frame innovative talent cultivation as the “core” with research-teaching interactions as the “wings”^[9]. This study adapts this structure to construct an innovative

2.3 Technological Theory: Empowerment from Human-AI Collaboration Theory

With the widespread application of technologies such as AIGC, instructional design must transcend the “technological tool” perspective and integrate the mindset of human-AI collaboration throughout the entire process. It does not imply passive use of generative AI by teachers or students; rather, it transforms the tool into a complementary partner for human expertise, enabling collaborative completion of complex cognitive and creative tasks. In the digital era of marketing education, cultivating students’ ability to collaborate efficiently with AIGC technology is crucial. This means AIGC technology is not merely an auxiliary tool but a “cognitive exoskeleton” and an “intelligent learning partner” capable of stimulating innovation, conducting analysis, and performing simulations^[10].

3. The “Integrated Core with Two Wings” Pedagogical Model: Concept and Architecture

Guided by the principles of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and the aforementioned theories, this study constructs a “Integrated Core with Two Wings” model for the *Integrated Marketing Practice* course. The “Core” is the goal of cultivating professionals with “Brand-Sales-Effect Integration” operational capabilities. This core is supported by the “Left Wing” - a reformed curriculum content system and the “Right Wing” - an industry-academia integrated, project-based teaching process. The model is propelled by the dual driving forces of data intelligence technology and industry-academia integration.

3.1 The Core: Cultivating Integrated “Brand-Sales-Effect” Decision-Making Capabilities

As the core of this model, the “Core” aims to cultivate students’ integrated decision-making competencies in “brand-sales-effect integration” in complex business environments. This encompasses four key capabilities: First, strategic thinking ability, enabling students to define the positioning and resource allocation logic for brand building, creative design, and sales conversion at different stages based on market insights and data analysis. Second, full-chain analysis ability, allowing students to map and deconstruct the complete consumer journey from awareness to loyalty, identify

critical touch-points, and design corresponding marketing strategy mixes. Third, cross-domain integration ability, enabling students to comprehend and coordinate diverse marketing functions to form synergistic effects. Fourth, dynamic optimization ability, empowering students to establish data monitoring systems to dynamically evaluate and refine marketing strategies based on feedback, achieving agile marketing. The cultivation of these capabilities is the ultimate objective and must be integrated throughout the teaching process.

3.2 The Left Wing: Reconstructing the Curriculum into a “Four-in-One” Competency-Based Framework

To better align with industry talent demands, the curriculum design must break away from the traditional framework structured around tools like advertising, public relations and sales promotion. Instead, the content is reconstructed into four competency-based modules centered on a business problem-solving logic as follows.

Module 1: Strategic Insight. This foundational module aims to cultivate students’ executive-level strategic thinking. Content includes business analysis, data-driven consumer insights, brand positioning and value proposition development, and the formulation of “Brand-Sales-Effect Integration” objectives with KPI decomposition. Students use Python and SaaS data platforms (e.g., Chanmama, a Chinese marketing analytic tool) to acquire and analyze data, forming an insightful strategic basis.

Module 2: Content Engine. Brand content serves as the core bridge connecting brands and consumers and a key area for student development. This module cultivates systematic content planning and production capabilities through topics such as content strategy planning, human-AI collaborative content creation using AIGC, cross-platform content matrix construction and distribution, and marketing in public and private domains.

Module 3: Omni-Channel Operations. Traditional pedagogy in this area has often been criticized for emphasizing strategy and planning at the expense of practical execution. To enhance students’ ability to manage full chain operations and execute plans by integrating omni-channel resources, this module covers performance advertising placement and optimization, social media and KOL/KOC marketing mix strategies, live-streaming and

content e-commerce practices, and user journey design.

Module 4: Intelligent Measurement. Data monitoring and strategy optimization are essential for closing the marketing loop and realizing value. To foster a scientific marketing mindset where students use data for expression and decision-making, this module guides them to learn about data monitoring and tracking implementation, key metric interpretation, multi-channel attribution analysis, data visualization and reporting. This transforms “Brand-Sales-Efficacy Integration” from a concept into a measurable, optimizable, and attributable scientific system.

3.3 The Right Wing: A “Four-Step Closed-Loop” Project-Based Learning Process

This study designs a four-stage, semester-long, project-based learning process driven by authentic corporate projects to implement the aforementioned curriculum content. First, introduction of real corporate projects. To enhance practical skills and achieve industry-academia integration, the course is centered on a real marketing project from a partner enterprise. Corporate representatives serve as mentors and provide a project brief, allowing students to learn and practice in real scenarios. Second, human-AI collaborative strategy co-creation. Student teams form “virtual advertising agencies” to address the project brief. Under the guidance of university faculty and corporate mentors, they apply knowledge from Module 1 and use AIGC and data analysis tools to conduct market research and develop strategies. In this stage, teachers guide students in prompt engineering for AIGC tools to facilitate brainstorming, user persona creation, and creative ideation, thereby improving the

quality and efficiency of strategy formulation. Third, multi-dimensional outcome delivery. Students integrate knowledge from all modules to produce a comprehensive proposal that includes core creative idea, strategic plan, media budget, and effects evaluation plan. This is presented to a panel of teacher and corporate mentors in a simulated pitch competition. Fourth, Comprehensive Value Assessment. A review panel composed of teacher and corporate mentors evaluates the outcomes from multiple dimensions. Outstanding proposals may be granted a small budget for a real-world market test, allowing for data analysis and feedback, thus completing the learning loop.

4. Implementation Pathways, Evaluation Mechanism Design, and Support Systems

4.1 A Phased Implementation Plan

Transitioning the pedagogical model from a “blueprint” to “reality” requires a detailed implementation pathway. This study outlines a 16-week course design divided into three phases: Phase 1 (Weeks 1-4): Cognitive Foundation. This phase focuses on building a foundational understanding, enabling students to learn and practice from an enterprise demand perspective, aligning their work with real business operations, establishing the foundational mindset for “brand-sales-effect integration,” and stimulating goal awareness and immersion. Phase 2 (Weeks 5-14): Practical Application. This is the primary hands-on phase, where the “Two Wings” work in synergy to guide student teams through collaborative project work. Phase 3 (Weeks 15-16): Comprehensive Application and Validation. Student teams present and refine their final projects, allowing instructors to assess their comprehensive mastery.

Table 1. Example of 16-Week Course Teaching Design

Week(s)	Teaching Theme and Module	Key Teaching Activities	Key Deliverables
1-2	Introduction Module 1: Strategic Insight (Part 1)	Course introduction; Corporate mentor presents project brief; Team formation; Business Model Canvas analysis.	Team formation; Project briefing report.
3-4	Module 1: Strategic Insight (Part 2)	Consumer insight workshop; Brand positioning and value proposition seminar.	Consumer personas; Brand positioning statement.
5-6	Module 2: Content Engine (Part 1)	Content strategy and topic planning; AIGC application for marketing and hands-on workshop.	Core content strategy; AIGC creative drafts.
7-8	Module 2: Content Engine (Part 2)	Cross-platform content matrix design; Creative writing workshop.	Content matrix plan; One post for a social commerce platform (e.g.,

			Xiaohongshu); One short-form video (e.g., for Douyin).
9	Mid-term Presentation and Feedback	Mid-term strategy and content plan presentations; Feedback from review panel.	Integrated marketing plan (mid-term version).
10-11	Module 3: Omni-Channel Operations	Performance advertising and KOL marketing simulation; Private domain traffic operation strategy design.	Media buying and budget allocation plan.
12-13	Module 4: Intelligent Measurement	Marketing data analysis and attribution modeling; Data visualization tool application.	KPI setting and data monitoring plan.
14	Final Project Sprint and Integration	Team-based plan integration, optimization, and rehearsal.	Submission of final deliverables.
15	Final Presentation and Evaluation	Project pitch presentations; Joint evaluation by teacher, corporate mentors, and peers.	-
16	Debrief and Summary	Project debriefing session; Summary and career development guidance.	Individual learning report.

4.2 Construction of the Model's Effectiveness Evaluation System

A multi-dimensional and comprehensive evaluation system is essential for objectively assessing the effectiveness of the “Integrated Core with Two Wings” model and the achievement of student competencies. First, the project evaluation rubric, designed using an approach similar to the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP), establishes a model (as shown in Table 2) that emphasizes the assessment of students’ analytical, decision-making, innovative, and executional abilities. Second, the course

assessment moves beyond a single final exam. It incorporates evaluations from multiple parties, including teacher and corporate mentors, and combines formative and summative assessments to provide continuous guidance and maintain student motivation. Formative assessment, accounting for 50%, includes individual assignments, team project tasks, class participation, and peer evaluations. Summative assessment, also accounting for 50%, is based on the final proposal and the presentation. This multi-source feedback helps students understand the strengths and weaknesses of their skills and their project work.

Table 2. Project Evaluation Rubric

Primary Criteria	Suggested Weight	Secondary Criteria	Core Assessment Points
Brand Strategy Planning	40%	Market insight and analysis; Brand positioning and value proposition; Integrated content strategy planning	Depth of industry analysis, validity of user research; Differentiation of brand positioning, quality of core message and creative concept; Completeness of content matrix..
Marketing Effectiveness Analysis	20%	Key data acquisition and processing; Campaign effect measurement and attribution analysis; Data visualization and reporting	Validity of data sources, standardization of data cleaning; Relevance of KPIs, rationality of attribution model selection; Quality of data visualization, depth of business insights.
Sales Conversion	25%	User lifecycle operation planning; marketing channel mix and optimization; Sales conversion strategy design	Completeness of user journey map, feasibility of private domain marketing; Justification for channel selection, logic of budget allocation; Innovativeness of promotional activities.
Integrated Synergy & Innovation (Integration)	15%	Systemic coherence of integrated plan; Team collaboration and project management; Resource integration and innovative thinking	Internal consistency among module strategies; Rationality of team roles, effectiveness of project timeline control; Cost-effectiveness of the plan, originality of the solution.

Note: The primary criteria align with the “Brand-Sales-Effect” synergy goal of the curriculum.

4.3 Construction of a Multi-Dimensional Support System

The successful implementation of this model requires systematic support in terms of faculty, resources, and technology. First, a faculty team with dual qualifications in both academia and industry practice should be developed through internal training and external recruitment. This involves organizing regular enterprise practices and training for university instructors to enhance their capabilities while establishing an “industry mentor pool” by hiring senior executives as course mentors. Second, a sustainable, mutually beneficial university-enterprise cooperation mechanism should be established. This includes co-founding “Industry-Academia Integration Practice Bases” to form strategic educational partnerships and secure corporate teaching resources. Finally, universities must provide the necessary technological infrastructure for smart teaching, lowering the barrier for faculty and students to use technology and creating an efficient digital learning environment.

5. Conclusion and Future Work

5.1 Conclusion

In the context of a marketing industry reshaped by the digital economy, reforming traditional integrated marketing education is imperative. This study moves beyond piecemeal improvements to construct a new pedagogical model for the *Integrated Marketing Practice* course by synthesizing industrial logic, educational theories, and cutting-edge technology. The “Integrated Core with Two Wings” design integrates business strategy, content design, marketing channel operations, and data analysis, demonstrating theoretical innovation. The synergistic operation of curriculum and methodological reforms reflects its systemic nature. By providing an “action blueprint” that includes instructional design and an evaluation system, this research offers practical guidance.

5.2 Limitations and Future Directions

The effectiveness of the proposed teaching framework for the *Integrated Marketing Practice* course requires validation through long-term practical application. Future research could proceed in two directions. First, empirical testing: an experimental study could be conducted over one or two semesters with an experimental group and a control group. Using the evaluation system developed in this study,

the model's effectiveness in enhancing students' “Brand-Sales-Effect Integration” capabilities could be quantitatively analyzed. Second, longitudinal tracking: a long-term study could track the career development of graduates who have experienced this pedagogical model, analyzing their core professional competencies to further validate the model's long-term impact. This pedagogical model is not only a reform plan for a single course but also a guiding philosophy for reforming the new business curriculum. It has the potential to be adapted for related professional course clusters, thereby creating a new ecosystem for marketing education in the digital age.

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