An Exploration of the Experiences of Modern Marketers: Skills Gaps, Mindset, and the Role of Career Stage

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An Exploration of the Experiences of Modern Marketers: Skills Gaps, Mindset, and the Role of Career Stage

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This Dissertation is Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Supervisors
Dr Pio Fenton & Dr Gearoid O’ Suilleabhain
Declaration

The researcher hereby declares that this thesis, except where duly acknowledged, is entirely his own work and has not been submitted for any other degree.

Tim Crowley
24/9/2021

Date
Abstract

The digitalisation of marketing is the greatest change that the marketing profession has experienced (Kähler & Magnusson, 2018) and digital technologies now sit at the forefront of modern marketing (Thomas & Thomas, 2018). Digital marketing has numerous benefits (Kumar, 2015; Malar, 2016), however, digitalisation is disruptive (Mgiba, 2019) and has resulted in mismatched skills and an increased need for reskilling and upskilling (Bajpai & Biberman, 2019). Accordingly, skills gaps are evident (Crush, 2011; Day, 2011; Hege, 2020; Quinn et al., 2016; Royle & Laing, 2014; Wood, 2011). Notwithstanding, there is a scarcity of research in this area (Raghuraman, 2017; Royle & Laing, 2014) especially in terms of studies which investigate the experiences and challenges of marketers within practice (Brady et al., 2008; Leeflang et al., 2014; Quinn et al., 2016; Reibstein et al., 2009; Valos et al., 2010).

This study investigates how the lived experiences of modern marketers provide an insight into the interplay between skills gaps and the digital transformation of marketing. A mixed method approach was utilised. Twenty-six in-depth interviews were employed across two cohorts of marketers. A typical 5-point Likert scale survey questionnaire was then utilised which provided further insight into the data. Finally, two online focus groups allowed the researcher to further explore key findings and to present the descriptive model to an informed group of marketers.

The key output of this study is a descriptive model which describes the experiences of modern marketers. This model also details an underlying mindset issue. While marketing skills gaps have been noted in literature the data indicates that skills gaps may not be the pertinent issue. Instead, skills gaps appear symptomatic of a fundamental mindset issue. Study findings suggest a misdiagnosis within literature and shift focus from skills gaps to mindset. Furthermore, the role of career stage is accentuated as dissimilar mindsets became evident as early and later career marketers displayed divergent foci. Both early and later career marketers appear focused on the elements of marketing which are aligned to their mindset, while a subsequent lack of knowledge and skills in the areas outside the scope of their mindset became apparent.

Study findings also provide a more nuanced insight into literature and suggest that the marketing profession should not be viewed as a homogenous group as issues may not be pervasive to marketing. Instead, they appear to vary based on career stage. Study findings have potential implications across numerous areas such as policy, education and practice, while this study provides a foundation on which future research can build upon.
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Dedication

Sinead, my rock, my constant inspiration.
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Chapter 1: Introduction
1.0 Chapter Overview

Digitalization is one of the greatest changes marketing has ever experienced (Kähler & Magnusson, 2018). However, digitalisation is disruptive (Mgiba, 2019) and the advancement of technology has created a sense of confusion and uncertainty for marketers (Bajpai & Biberman, 2019) as they are confronted with a complex and rapidly evolving environment (Leeflang et al., 2014). This chapter introduces the area under study and provides a brief background of the research area. The gap in current literature is discussed, while the research question is also highlighted. This chapter also details both the focus and scope and the aim of this study, while a brief synopsis of each chapter is also provided.

The practice of marketing has continuously changed over the years in terms of its dominant focus and practice (Kumar, 2015). The most significant phase of evolution took place in recent decades and has led to unprecedented changes to the practice of marketing (Hill et al., 2018; Zhang & Xu 2018). As a domain, marketing is inescapably driven by advances in technology (Quinn et al., 2016; Royle & Laing, 2014) and as technology evolves so too does the marketing profession, with most of the recent changes in marketing connected to technological developments (Nair, 2016). Due to these technological developments practitioners and academics have witnessed a major transformation of marketing practice over the last fifteen to twenty years (Stephen & Lamberton, 2016) with digital marketing technologies now firmly situated at the forefront of modern marketing (Kannan, 2017; Nair, 2016). Accordingly, the rapid pace of marketing in a digital world (Hill et al., 2018) has resulted in a scenario where the marketing arena is in a constant state of flux (Hill et al., 2018; Suginraj, 2017) with digital channels, specifically social media (Voorveld et al. 2018), being both dominant and influential (Thomas & Thomas, 2018). While the benefits of digital technologies in marketing are plentiful (Nair, 2016; Malar, 2016), the consequences for marketers and for the function of marketing remains unclear, with the changing digital environment potentially having serious repercussions for how marketing is practiced (Quinn et al., 2016).

While digital marketing has significant advantages (Nair, 2016; Malar, 2016) it has also given rise to side effects (Hansen, 2017). These include mismatched skills and an increased need for reskilling and upskilling (Bajpai & Biberman, 2019). Notwithstanding, a great deal of attention has focused on the tremendous opportunities digital marketing presents with little attention on the real challenges associated with going digital (Leeflang, et al., 2014). The emphasis now placed on digital technologies, coupled with the pace of change inherent to these technologies,
has led to a scenario where marketers are not keeping pace with the marketing profession and lack the skills pertinent to modern marketing (Quinn et al., 2016). This is despite upskilling initiatives being readily available throughout the marketing sphere (Digital Marketing Institute, 2021b; The Marketing Institute of Ireland, 2021). The need for expert knowledge and the damage that can be done without it has been well documented by Day (2011), yet skills gaps are clearly evident in literature (Crush, 2011; Day, 2011; Durkin, 2013; Hege, 2020; Mgiba, 2019; Quinn et al., 2016; Royle & Laing, 2014; Wood, 2011). In fact, they continue to exist and grow in practice (Ghotbifar et al., 2017) with Boychev (2018) and Sarker et al. (2019) highlighting how literature, in recent times, has mainly concentrated on the relationships between marketing and the consumer. Consequently, the research area around marketing skills gaps appears to be both under-researched and under-theorised.

1.1 Gap in Literature

There is a lack of research in the area where this study is situated (Raghuraman, 2017; Royle & Laing, 2014) with limited studies investigating the challenges within practice (Leeflang et al., 2014). Few scholars have considered the practical consequences of the rapidly evolving and increasingly digitized agenda evident within marketing (Quinn et al., 2016), while the implications for marketing have been overlooked from the marketing practitioner’s perspective, specifically in terms of how marketing is practiced (Quinn et al., 2016). The literature around marketing skills gaps has been neglected in recent times and has not kept pace with the changes in marketing, therefore, literature, namely (Crush, 2011; Day, 2011; Royle & Laing, 2014; Wood, 2011) may possibly be dated. Marketing has significantly changed in the years since these studies took place (Kähler & Magnusson, 2018; Hill et al., 2018; Suginraj, 2017) and the researcher suggests that, like marketing, the experiences of marketers may possibly have also changed, and it may be inaccurate to assume these studies are still as pertinent today as they were in 2014, and 2011, respectively. This belief appears to be supported by Mulhern (2009) who notes that because of the rapid changes in the digital era, many published articles in the area of digital media can be outdated before they are printed and, as highlighted, digital technologies play a fundamental role in contemporary marketing (Kumar, 2015; Nair, 2016; Thomas & Thomas, 2018), specifically social media (Appel et al., 2020).

Although skills gaps have also been identified in more recent literature (Hege, 2020; Quinn et al., 2016) the focus of their research lay elsewhere, where skills gaps were noted within the
wider scope of their respective studies. Therefore, extant literature which specifically focuses on marketing skills gaps may be dated, while the research area also appears to be both under-researched and under-theorised. Furthermore, Quinn et al. (2016) have hinted that there may be a bigger issue at play than skills gaps, however, this bigger issue was not diagnosed. This may be due to the fact that their study investigated how the technological landscape has impacted marketing decisions rather than being focused on marketing skills gaps. There is also a lack of research based on practitioner challenges (Quinn et al., 2016) even after earlier studies called for literature to investigate the experiences of marketers by concentrating on the challenges, issues, and skills gaps within industry (Brady et al., 2008; Reibstein et al., 2009; Valos et al., 2010). Notwithstanding, this did not materialise as Leeflang et al. (2014) note that there are only a few studies that investigate practitioner challenges. This research study is situated within this under-researched area. The focus and scope of this study will be detailed next, followed by a brief discussion on the key aim of this study.

1.2 Focus and Scope
Aligned to a constructivist grounded theory methodology, this study began with a broad research question. This research question, which emerged from the gap in literature, explored the under-theorised area of skills gaps and the experiences of modern marketers and looked at the potential role that the cognitive apprenticeship model (CAM) and peer assisted learning (PAL) may play. Peer assisted learning is an education practice originating from cognitive psychology that focuses on “student” interaction with the goal of imparting the notion of self-learning (Oldfield & Macalpine, 1995). Topping (2005) defines peer assisted learning as “the acquisition of knowledge and skills through active helping and supporting among status equals or matched companions. It involves people from similar social groupings who are not professional teachers helping each other to learn and learning themselves by so doing” (p.631).

Peer assisted learning is a robust, powerful method of learning (Biggs, 2011; Topping & Ehly, 2001) that is a well-established approach to improving a “students” knowledge or skills. Essentially, the “trainee” gains knowledge and expertise from the more experienced peer in an environment conducive to learning whereas the “trainers” participation may lead to augmented performance and an increase in certain skill sets.

The cognitive apprenticeship model draws an analogy from the old-style way of teaching, the apprenticeship (Shekoyan & Etkina, 2009). The term cognitive apprenticeship was originally coined to describe an instructional model derived from the metaphor of the apprentice working
under the master craftsman in traditional societies. According to Collins et al. (1988), cognitive apprenticeships can be defined as “learning through guided experience on cognitive and metacognitive, rather than physical, skills and processes” (p.456). Cognitive apprenticeships are viewed as “instructional tools” (Brandt et al., 1993). They aim to acquire thinking skills, such as cognitive skills and metacognitive skills, which result in sustained participation within a community (Brown et al., 1989; Collins et al., 1988) and are applicable to solving future problems (Brandt et al., 1993). According to Oriol et al. (2010), cognitive apprenticeship strategies are a robust and rigorous approach for teaching complex problem-solving skills and developing vital experiences contained in a discipline. However, early in the data collection process the data began to point to a different issue than skills gaps. As the research progressed, and supported by a constructivist grounded theory methodology, the researcher was able to follow the data. Thereupon, the research study became data-led and the research question evolved accordingly. The refinement of the research question is a typical feature of grounded theory methodologies. In fact, grounded theory research questions are generally quite broad at the outset of the study and are refined as the research study progresses. Therefore, the research question of this study is:

*How do the lived experiences of modern marketers provide an insight into the interplay between skills gaps and the digital transformation of marketing practice?*

This study specifically focuses on marketing practitioners and on their views, challenges and experiences within modern marketing. Initially, later career marketers were interviewed to gain an insight into both modern marketing and the experiences of modern marketers. Later career marketers were identified as the pertinent cohort to interview due to their overarching knowledge and experience of modern marketing. A key element of grounded theory methodologies, known as theoretical sampling, guided the researcher in terms of the next sample where, based on preliminary data, the focus turned to early career marketers. Therefore, modern practitioners are segmented, based on career stage, into early and later career marketers. Accordingly, a key output of this research study is a descriptive model which illustrates the experiences of modern marketers and highlights their behaviours and actions. The model also accentuates the role of career stage. Other scholarly studies in the area of marketing skills gaps do not appear to focus on career stage and this study provides more insight by investigating differences or variations based on a marketer’s stage of career. The working definition of career stage taken within this study categorises the early career marketer
as a recent graduate having no more than five years’ experience. The later career marketer is
categorised as having significant marketing experience holding a senior marketing position. As
mentioned, the next section will briefly highlight the key aim of this study.

1.3 Research Aim
The principal aim of this study is to answer the research question. To do this the researcher
considered it imperative to gain an in-depth insight into the experiences of modern marketers.
Therefore, the methodological decisions, including the research design, were made to achieve
the principal aim of this study. These decisions enabled the researcher to gain a comprehensive
insight into modern marketers which allowed for the research question to be successfully
answered. Within this study, mindset emerged as an important area, therefore, the next section
will give an overview of the term mindset.

1.4 Mindset
The important role of mindset is well established in literature (Brooks et al., 2012; Dweck,
2012; Issa & Pick, 2010; Kennedy et al., 2013). Within this field Carol Dweck is a prominent
scholar in terms of mindset research, most notably in the areas of fixed mindset (Dweck, 2013;
2010; 2007; 2006) and growth mindset (Dweck, 2013; 2007; 2006). This study, however, takes
a more fundamental view of the term mindset where it can be defined as “I (we) believe” (Fang
et al., 2004, p. 298). Mindsets are learned (Fang et al., 2004), based on past experiences
(Kramer, 2016), and the world is viewed through a lens (French II, 2016) where individual’s
“cannot see anything outside of their worldview” (Kramer, 2016, p.31). This would suggest
that individuals who grew up with technology will have a different mindset to those who grew
up without technology as they will not share the same learned or past experiences, subsequently
viewing the world, and marketing, through different lenses. This would also appear to indicate
that they see, accept, and understand events differently and favour the situations which are
aligned to their specific mindset (Fang et al., 2004) while disregarding those which are not
(Kramer, 2016). This may be problematic as Kramer (2016) further notes that “if someone
cannot see a problem clearly, or if their attention is focused on the wrong things, they cannot
take effective or timely action and they are therefore blind” (p. 29). The findings of this study
suggest an underlying mindset issue within modern marketing. The next section gives a
synopsis of each chapter within this research study.
1.5 Thesis Overview

Chapter 1: Introduction. This chapter introduces the problem under investigation, giving a brief insight into literature where, due to a lack of research in recent times, a significant gap has emerged. This chapter also identifies the research question and discusses both the focus and scope of the research, and, the aim of this study. A brief overview of this thesis is also provided.

Chapter 2: Literature Review. This chapter provides a review of the literature pertinent to this study. It summarises what is known and identifies what is unknown about the topic under study. The evolution of marketing, where digital is now a fundamental activity, is discussed, while skills gaps are also highlighted. The evolving nature of marketing has resulted in a scenario where marketers are not keeping pace with their industry, subsequently falling behind. This chapter also highlights a bigger issue than skills gaps which may be affecting marketing.

Accordingly, the literature on mindset is explored. Furthermore, this chapter also looks at areas such as marketing education and the modern career.

Chapter 3: Research Methods. The methodological decisions made in terms of this study are highlighted within this chapter. The researcher also justifies his rationale for making such methodological decisions, while other areas such as research design, data collection methods, research methodology, philosophy, ethical considerations and sampling are also discussed.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion. In this chapter, a factual reporting of the findings of this study are presented. Findings from in-depth interviews, Likert scale survey and online focus groups are presented concurrently. An underlying mindset issue is highlighted, where marketers, based on their career stage, display a variance in mindset. Subsequently, this seems to affect their marketing outlook and default actions in terms of marketing practice. An overreliance on marketing activities which fall within their purview, coupled with a resistance, or reluctance, with marketing activities which fall outside of the scope of their mindset is evidenced. This mindset issue is deemed a more significant issue than a skills gap.

The descriptive model is also presented within this chapter to give context to the findings from the online focus group. Furthermore, a discussion is provided on the importance and relevance of findings, with a focus on comparing and contrasting what was found in terms of the current literature.
Chapter 5: Conclusion. In this final chapter, the contributions that study findings make to knowledge are highlighted, while the importance and relevance of study findings are also noted. This chapter also discusses the limitations of this study. The implications of study findings are then detailed. These include implications for practice, education and policy, as well as implications for future research. This chapter also provides recommendations in the same areas. The chapter ends with a conclusion summarizing the overall findings of this study.

1.6 Conclusion
This chapter introduces this study and provides a background of the research area. The changing nature of marketing practice is well established in literature (Hill et al., 2018; Kumar, 2015; Suginraj, 2017) and digital technologies are considered to be a core element of modern marketing (Kannan, 2017; Thomas & Thomas, 2018). Notwithstanding the many benefits associated with digital (Malar, 2016; Nair, 2016), issues have become evident (Bajpai & Biberman, 2019; Hansen, 2017) and skills gaps have been noted within this constantly evolving domain (Crush, 2011; Day, 2011; Durkin, 2013; Hege, 2020; Quinn et al., 2016; Royle & Laing, 2014; Wood, 2011). This research area, however, is under-researched and under-theorised (Raghuraman, 2017; Royle & Laing, 2014) especially in terms of the experiences of marketing practitioners (Brady et al., 2008; Leeflang et al., 2014; Quinn et al., 2016; Reibstein et al., 2009; Valos et al., 2010).

This study is situated within this neglected research area and focuses on the experiences of modern marketers, specifically those at the early and later stages of their career. The research question emerged from the gap in literature, accordingly, this study investigates how the lived experiences of modern marketers provide an insight into the interplay between skills gaps and the digital transformation of marketing practice, with mindset emerging as a key area. The role of career stage also emerged as an important area as variations became evident between both cohorts of marketers. The researcher will now progress onto chapter two where the literature pertinent to this research study will be documented.
Chapter 2: Literature Review
2.0 Chapter Overview

Marketing has been significantly impacted by technology (Nair, 2016; Thomas & Thomas, 2018; Zhang & Xu, 2018) and according to Bajpai and Biberman (2019) the disruption caused by these technological developments has resulted in numerous issues for marketers. Notwithstanding, literature has neglected this area in recent times, and the impact of technology on marketing skills gaps is an under theorised area of research. This study, therefore, focuses on this under-researched domain and investigates how the digital disruption in marketing has impacted the experiences of modern marketers in terms of skills gaps. This chapter discusses the literature pertinent to this research study.

In chapter one a brief background of this research area was provided, and an overview of extant literature was discussed. Chapter two provides a more in-depth insight and reviews marketing literature and the literature on mindset, which has strong links to psychology. Marketing has become a very digital place (Thomas & Thomas, 2018) and the constantly changing environment has resulted in skills gaps in marketing. These skills gaps are detailed within this chapter, however, prior to this, a number of areas will firstly be discussed. These areas include the digital revolution (Leeflang et al., 2014; Wymbs, 2011) which has contributed to marketing becoming a fast-paced industry (Hill et al., 2018; Suginraj, 2017), the subsequent need for new skills (Bajpai & Biberman, 2019; Mgiba, 2019), and the modern career perspective. This chapter will then progress and highlight how marketing has transitioned from a traditional orientation to a digital orientation, where digital marketing technologies, specifically social media, have become dominant (Kumar, 2015; Nair, 2016; Thomas & Thomas, 2018; Zhang & Xu, 2018). The current state of marketing education will also be detailed. These sections provide an insight into the changes modern marketers have experienced, and continue to experience, which will help contextualise the section on marketing skills gaps.

While marketing skills gaps are evident within literature (Crush, 2011; Day, 2011; Durkin, 2013; Hege, 2020; Mgiba, 2019; Quinn et al., 2016; Royle & Laing, 2014; Wood, 2011) this area of research has been neglected in recent times (Raghuraman, 2017; Royle & Laing, 2014), and the findings of this study suggest an underlying mindset issue. The chapter will, therefore, progress onto the area of mindset and will discuss such topics as the human mindset, mental models, The Covert Processes Model and paradigms. Furthermore, the findings of this study also identify a variance in mindset where early and later career marketers exhibit divergent mindsets. The literature which looks at the varying levels of digital capabilities will also be
detailed. Herein, numerous metaphors, such as digital native, digital immigrant, digital resident, digital learner, will be documented. Firstly, however, the digital revolution in marketing will be discussed.

2.1 The Digital Revolution
Technological advancements are driving marketing practice (Quinn et al., 2016) and over the last few decades marketing has experienced significant changes (Kumar, 2015) with many of these changes being in response to digitalisation (Royle & Laing, 2014). Subsequently, marketing academics and practitioners have witnessed a major shift in practice, specifically in terms of the growth and prominence of digital, social media, and mobile marketing (Stephen & Lamberton, 2016). The introduction of the internet in the mid-1990s acted as a catalyst for the evolution of marketing (Schultz et al., 2013; Sharma & Sheth, 2004) and as the internet matured and evolved so too did the practice of marketing (Hill et al. 2018). These technological advancements transformed marketing (Wymbs, 2011) resulting in what Leeflang (2014) and Wymbs (2011) label the digital revolution, which refers to the growth, an importance, of both the internet and digital technologies in marketing. In 1993, the first ever Internet ad was sold in the United States (Landriault, 2015) and a quarter of a century later most, if not all, corporations now market in a digital world as not to do so would severely limit the prospects of the company (Kumar, 2015). This highlights the quick rise of digital technologies within marketing where they are now considered to be a core aspect of contemporary practice (Thomas & Thomas, 2018).

Digital media platforms, specifically social media, have revolutionized marketing offering new ways to communicate, engage, and learn about customers (Stephen & Lamberton, 2016) with Nair (2016) finding that digital marketing is the buzzword of this new marketing era where individuals must adapt or risk falling behind. In this era of digitalisation, the importance of digital marketing has increased year on year (Baltes, 2015). In fact, this finding appears as relevant today, as in 2015, due to the growing influence of digital technologies with Hill et al. (2018) noting that the past often is not worth following as new and interesting things are always coming out in marketing. Firms cannot afford to ignore digital marketing approaches (Kumar, 2015), especially as the word digital has become a familiar and an essential part of life in today’s highly technological world (Nair, 2016). Those who champion the digital revolution note that it as an exciting opportunity for marketing (Kietzmann et al., 2012) where the marketing discipline must transform itself to survive in a digital world (Quinn et al., 2016).
The digital transformation of marketing in recent times is reflected in the ways that firms and customers have embraced new technologies and how technology has facilitated novel market behaviours, interactions, and experiences (Stephen & Lamberton, 2016). The ways in which digital marketing has developed has changed how brands and businesses utilize technology for their marketing (Thomas & Thomas, 2018), with such digital developments previously found to shape the disciplinary imagination of marketing practice to an unparalleled degree (Quinn et al., 2016). Moreover, the digital developments in marketing have been exacerbated as more and more people are using digital devices as part of their everyday life, especially for making purchases, which has resulted in the increased use of digital marketing approaches (Kumar, 2015; Thomas & Thomas, 2018).

The digital revolution (Leeflang, 2014; Wymbs, 2011) has resulted in marketing being always on for most organisations (Stone & Woodcock, 2014) especially as the world is changing its outlook from traditional marketing and is in the process of accepting the conversion from the real world into virtual world (Nair, 2016). However, this finding by Nair may not truly describe the influence of digital technologies in contemporary practice, nor does it appear to reflect the current landscape in marketing. The conversion into the digital world appears to have been evident for some time. Other studies at a similar time better capture the dominant role of digital technologies. Malar (2016) notes how the importance of digital marketing cannot be overstated while Kannan (2017) further builds on this and argues that digital marketing techniques have become essential marketing tools as people have become so immersed in the digital era. These studies suggest that the conversion into the digital world has been evident for some time. Accordingly, marketing is now digitally orientated with digital marketing practices being both dominant and influential (Thomas & Thomas, 2018).

While it is obvious that marketing has become digitally orientated, the growth of digital technologies has also resulted in marketing being in a constant state of flux due to ongoing technological advancements (Hill et al., 2018). These advancements are known to drive marketing practice (Hill et al., 2018; Kumar, 2015; Royle & Laing, 2014; Schultz et al., 2013), consequently, marketing has become a fast-paced industry where change is perpetual. This has resulted in issues for marketers which will be discussed later in this chapter. Firstly, however, the constantly evolving nature of marketing will be further detailed. This will be followed by
a discussion on the need for reskilling and upskilling in the digital era, especially as marketing is in a state of constant flux.

2.2 Marketing in Flux

Marketing has been revolutionised by digital technologies (Leeflang et al., 2014; Wymbs, 2011) which has resulted in the practice of marketing being in a state of constant flux (Hill et al., 2018; Suginraj, 2017). The digital disruption within marketing appears perpetual, especially as Crittenden and Peterson (2019) found digital disruption to be continuous as it is “less a single event than a process that manifests itself over time” (p.3). Skog et al. (2018) define digital disruption as “digital technology-induced environment turbulence” (p.432) while Bolton et al. (2019) note, in simpler terms, that digital disruption is the change which occurs when new digital technologies change experiences, processes and business models. These descriptions appear especially pertinent to marketing which has undergone significant digitally-based changes in recent times (Hill et al., 2018; Kumar, 2015; Leeflang et al., 2014; Nair, 2016; Wymbs, 2011; Zhang & Xu, 2018). However, literature has neglected how these changes have impacted practitioners (Quinn et al., 2016), therefore, this study focuses on the experiences of modern marketers.

Digital disruption has resulted in digital marketing becoming a fundamental aspect of modern marketing practice with digital channels constantly growing in volume and strength (Thomas & Thomas, 2018; Hill et al., 2018). The benefits of digital marketing are plentiful (Malar, 2016; Brady et al., 2008; Simmons, 2008), specifically in terms of social media (Leeflang et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2013; Pentina et al., 2012) and these will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. However, a debate regarding the opportunities and barriers that digitalization presents to hyper competitive industries can be seen in literature (Simmons, 2008; Boyd & Crawford, 2012; Walker & Fung, 2013; Stone & Woodcock, 2014). Digitalisation was found to represent a phase change in the history of communications (Mulhern, 2009) where social media, in particular, represents a significant transformational period for most marketers (Quinn et al., 2016). The world of digital media is changing at a phenomenal pace (Ryan, 2014) and the evolving nature of marketing has resulted in consequences for marketers as the function of marketing remains unclear (Quinn et al., 2016).

The constantly changing environment has resulted in a state of unpredictability for marketing practitioners and they are struggling to keep pace with the changes within their industry (Sizhu
Hill et al. (2018) similarly note that there is much left to understand about digital marketing and where it is heading. This suggests that the evolving nature of marketing has resulted in marketers being unable to determine the future direction of their profession which is subsequently causing further issues for marketers. These issues appear to be exacerbated as Kung (2008) previously noted that while advancements in technology have always been the key drivers of change in media strategy, the digital environment varies in terms of its “velocity, entwinement and subsequent complexity” (p.82). This suggests that the level of change marketers are witnessing is incommensurable to that of the past, which may augment any unpredictability, especially as digitalisation has been noted as the greatest change marketing has ever witnessed (Kähler & Magnusson, 2018; Nair, 2016). This issue is further discussed later in this chapter.

Today's marketers are challenged in a dynamic world to create vibrant, interactive communities of consumers who make products and brands a part of their daily lives (Kotler et al., 2015). This challenge appears to be exacerbated as the constant changes in marketing have resulted in progressively fierce competition between enterprises (Zhang & Xu, 2018). Accordingly, the evolving nature of marketing in terms of digital channels, platforms, messages and competition has resulted in a troubling situation where uncertainty is prevailing (Quinn et al., 2016), which is a constant challenge for marketing practitioners (Sizhu & Shah, 2017). This appears especially true as environmental forces have been previously found to clearly pressure the marketing function (Webster et al., 2005) while the digital disruption in marketing has been found to create a sense of turmoil for marketers (Bajpai & Biberman, 2019). Correspondingly, skills gaps have been well established in literature (Crush, 2011; Day, 2011; Durkin, 2013; Hege, 2020; Mgiba, 2019; Quinn et al., 2016; Royle & Laing, 2014; Wood, 2011).

The previous sections highlight how marketing has witnessed significant changes in recent decades (Kumar, 2015; Nair, 2016; Stephen & Lamberton, 2016; Thomas & Thomas, 2018) which has resulted in marketing being is in a constant state of flux (Hill et al., 2018; Suginraj, 2017). These sections should be contemplated as the chapter progresses to put the issues which are detailed in later sections, such as skills gaps, into context. However, before this chapter arrives at marketing skills gaps, a discourse on areas such as the need for upskilling, the modern career, the transition from traditional marketing to digital marketing, the growth of social media and the state of marketing education will be provided. These sections will further emphasise the changes marketers have witnessed and will detail the issues they are experiencing. This will
additionally contextualise the key issues which emerge later in this chapter specifically skills gaps and mindset. Therefore, the proceeding sections should be considered as the chapter progresses and discusses how the changing environment has resulted in problems for marketers in terms of skills gaps (Crush, 2011; Day, 2011; Durkin, 2013; Hege, 2020; Mgiba, 2019; Quinn et al., 2016; Royle & Laing, 2014; Wood, 2011), a sense of chaos (Bajpai & Biberman, 2019), and potentially a bigger issue than skills gaps (Quinn et al., 2016). Firstly, however, the digital disruption in marketing and constantly evolving nature of practice calls for new skills (Mgiba, 2019), and this will be detailed in the next section.

2.3 The Importance of Upskilling and Reskilling for Marketers
The importance of digital marketing skills are well established in literature (Day, 2011; Quinn et al., 2016; Royle & Laing, 2014; Stephen, 2015; Wymbs, 2011) and without these skills marketers are at a disadvantage (Royle & Laing, 2014). Marketing has been significantly impacted by technology and these technological advances have resulted in a hyper connected world which requires a re-assessment of the knowledge and capabilities needed within practice (Jabado & Jallouli, 2021), especially as Bajpai and Biberman (2019) found that technological disruption can be linked to mismatched skills, employee displacement and the sense of turmoil. The disruptive nature of digitalization continues to reshape the skills needed to work within the digital environment and there is a need for both reskilling and upskilling of employees (Kuruczleki et al., 2016; Mgiba, 2019). Upskilling can be defined as “the conscious migration of one competency profile to another” (Underwood et al., 2021, p.438). On the other hand, reskilling is defined as “the process of learning new skills in order to do a different job, or training people to do a different job (Simpson et al., 2019, p.33).

Digital marketers must master a broad range of skills from user experience to media valuation in order to navigate an increasingly fragmented network of potential consumer touchpoints (PR Newswire, 2017). An aptitude for data and analysis is now an unconditional requirement according to Duncan and d’Anglade (2017). Moreover, Duncan and d’Anglade (2017) also found that marketing leaders are favouring digital and analytics capabilities over more traditional skills with 75% of respondent’s valuing analytical expertise above creative flair. The importance of data analytics was hailed by Davenport and Patil (2012) when they labelled it as “sexiest job of the 21st century” (p.70). While this study is almost ten years old the importance of analytical skills appears to have only increased as Jabado and Jallouli (2021) note the continued and growing importance of data analytics within contemporary marketing.
A recent global study by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) suggests that marketers do seem to be aware of the importance of upskilling and reskilling. Findings state that the vast majority of digital experts (76%) spend a significant amount of time on learning, while people who work for themselves, such as marketing consultants, are also more likely to spend significant time on learning (74%) compared to full-time employees (62%) (BCG, 2019). Moreover, it is evident that employees in Ireland are taking steps to upskill themselves, as, in the wake of Covid-19, the digital skills gap has only become more apparent, increasing the necessity for marketers to expand their knowledge and skills (Hege, 2020). Rather than keep pace with the changes in marketing Van Deursen and Van Dijk (2014) previously called for marketers to upskill to stay ahead of technological changes. However, no one can expect their skills to stay relevant in this era of unpredictable changes (Yang, 2019) especially in a profession like marketing where the pace of change is rapid (Hill et al., 2018; Suginraj, 2017). This recommendation by Van Deursen and Van Dijk (2014) does not seem to be appropriate as upskilling may be better looked at in terms of matching the rate of change rather than staying ahead of it, which may not be possible based on the changes in marketing. The digital evolution of marketing is complex (Kung, 2008) and has resulted in unprecedented changes to the field of marketing practice (Zhang & Xu, 2018) therefore, the incommensurable nature of these changes may result in a level of unpredictability which makes it impossible to stay ahead of the changes in marketing.

Mgiba (2019) appears to better express the real challenge which, for organisations, is in developing future ready employees by upskilling and reskilling them to be more agile and adaptive to change. This will depend on their readiness to reskill however (Pedron, 2018), with Mulhern (2009) previously noting that while the onslaught of digital technologies in an ever-changing world poses huge challenges, marketers lack both the “mindset and the technical expertise” to tackle this challenge (p.86). Conversely, Royle and Laing (2014) found otherwise. However, this observation is solely based on the fact that the twenty study respondents appeared focused on addressing the challenges associated with digital. The findings of this study suggest otherwise and the mindset issue which emerged appears broadly comparable to that of Mulhern. While the findings of this study suggest that marketers appear to be overly focused on the elements of marketing which are aligned to their mindset, while disregarding the aspects which fall outside the scope of their mindset, Mulhern (2009) takes a broader look at mindset. He notes that the evolution of marketing has resulted in a situation where marketers
must learn to participate in the consumer's world and this calls for an “entirely different mindset”, especially due to the significant media options available in the digital world (p.91). Marketers have struggled with the transition into the digital world however (Drury, 2008; Leeflang et al., 2014; Nair, 2016; Sizhu & Shah, 2017). This appears linked to the digital disruption within marketing which has been found to erode the boundaries and approaches that previously served as a foundation for practice (Karimi & Walter, 2015; Rauch et al., 2016; Weill & Woerner, 2015). This is an important point as previous foundational praxis may now be outdated or ineffective and, to revisit Mulhern (2009), marketers may need a new mindset for practice and for the subsequent skills needed. However, they may not have adapted their mindset and may be working from an outdated paradigm, something which may be limiting them. This issue will be further discussed later in this chapter. One thing which is clear, however, is that existing skills need to be augmented with new skills, especially if individuals wish to succeed within their current profession, or, if they wish to move to new positions (Bajpai & Biberman, 2019). Therefore, the modern career, where movement and flexibility are deemed important, will be discussed as the evolving nature of marketing and the constant demand for new skills may limit marketers in terms of career movement. However, prior to the modern career being discussed, the skills considered key to modern marketing in terms of upskilling and reskilling will firstly be detailed.

2.3.1 Key Digital Skills for Contemporary Marketing

According to Royle and Laing (2014) the most important skills needed in terms of marketing in the digital era are search engine optimisation (SEO), mobile marketing, video expertise, measurement metrics, using blogs and online discussion groups, website development and digital platforms. The ability to integrate strategic digital marketing knowledge with existing traditional marketing approaches, while also having a working overview of digital technologies, was also identified as a key skill (Royle & Laing, 2014). However, the study by Royle and Laing (2014) is over seven years old and some other skills may have become pertinent since this journal article was published. According to a recent industry report by BrainStation (2021), which is the global leader in terms of digital skills training and empowering brands to succeed in the digital age, the most important skills needed for digital marketers are search engine optimisation (SEO), search engine marketing (SEM), data analysis, social media marketing, pay-per-click (PPC) and email marketing. The importance of SEO, SEM and data analysis have also been identified by the Digital Marketing Institute
Table 2.1 provides a definition of each of these key skills according to the American Marketing Association (AMA) (2021).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Digital Marketing Skills Definitions (American Marketing Association, 2021)</th>
<th>Figure 2.1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)</strong></td>
<td>SEO is the practice of improving ranking within major search engines to increase online traffic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Search Engine Marketing (SEM)</strong></td>
<td>SEM leverages paid online advertising to increase website visibility within search engines. SEM is often used in conjunction with SEO.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Analysis / Analytics</strong></td>
<td>The ability to use Google Analytics and other analysis tools and gain detailed information about the most attractive keywords, the most popular times of day, and invaluable data on your audience’s age, gender, and location breakdown, as well as their interests and the devices they’re using to reach you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Media Marketing (SMM)</strong></td>
<td>SMM is the practice of using social media channels to promote business products or services. The use of social media influencers, often referred to as influencer marketing, is prevalent in SMM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pay-Per-Click (PPC)</strong></td>
<td>PPC is an online method for advertising where a business only pays for its ads when a person clicks on them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Email Marketing</strong></td>
<td>Email marketing enables businesses to send branded, promotional content directly to prospective customers via email. The use of automated newsletters is common in this context.</td>
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Other skills noted within the industry report by BrainStation (2021) include storytelling, basic design skills, creative problem solving, sales and persuasion, project leadership, agility and adaptability, and strategic planning. In terms of marketing literature, Di Gregorio et al. (2019) note the importance of possessing social media, mobile, analytics, SEO and SEM skills, while Kovacs (2021) similarly identified social media, mobile, SEO, SEM and digital software knowledge as the most important digital skills needed in digital marketing. The importance of analytical skills in marketing is also well established in literature (Davenport & Patil, 2012; Duncan & d’Anglade, 2017; Jabado & Jallouli, 2021).

In terms of attaining these skills, the range of upskilling options, in recent times, has grown with numerous professional marketing bodies offering a multitude of upskilling courses (Digital Marketing Institute, 2021b; The Marketing Institute of Ireland, 2021). For example, the digital marketing institute offers courses from thirty hours online to forty four weeks online (Digital Marketing Institute, 2021b) and is the leading global standard in terms of digital marketing certification with over 25,000 people certified and more than 150,000 members worldwide (Digital Marketing Institute, 2021a). Furthermore, events are regularly scheduled in terms of providing marketers opportunities to learn and upskill (DigiMarCon, 2021; Web Summit, 2021) while third level education offers numerous upskilling avenues such as the masters in science in marketing practice (Munster Technological University, 2021) and the masters in science in digital marketing and analytics (Technological University Dublin, 2021).

Kumar (2021) notes how blended learning, which combines traditional up close and personal education with technology, has become a popular method of upskilling for marketers in recent times. The use of technology has emerged as a key area in terms of learning (Crittenden et al., 2019; Granitz & Pitt, 2011; Payne et al., 2011; Uncles, 2018) and this is discussed in more detail in section 2.7. However, Kumar (2021) also notes that digital marketing covers a wide range of disciplines, including extremely broad topics like social media, accordingly, although digital marketers need a large and diverse range of skills the full list of skills required is somewhat dependent on a marketer’s place of work and position (BrainStation, 2021). The importance of upskilling in marketing is well established (Hege, 2020; Mgiba, 2019; Royle & Laing, 2014) and, as previously mentioned, Bajpai and Biberman (2019) highlight the necessity of augmenting existing skills with new skills, especially if individuals wish to succeed within their current profession, or, if they wish to move to new positions. Therefore, the next section will progress onto the modern career.
2.4 A Modern Career Perspective

The term career has been described as difficult to define, yet it is frequently used in theory, as well as in lay discourse, as if it were commonly understood (Coupland, 2004), while Baruch and Bozionelos (2011) further note the difficulty in terms of defining the term career. Therefore, this study uses the widely used (Arnold, 2011; Arthur, 2014) definition by Arthur et al. (1989) where the term career is defined as “the evolving sequence of a person’s work experiences over time” (p.8).

A central tenet of the new career perspective is that modern careers are associated with much more mobility than was those of the past (Chudzikowski, 2012). Career mobility can be defined as “vertical job shifting following an increase in salary, source of betterment, stage in life, or any type of career movement throughout an individual's entire employment history” (Kim & Brunner, 2009, p.77). Feldman and Ng (2007) note that career mobility relates to the ability to change job, organisation or occupation and these changes require such things as new skills, routines, training and education. Ng et al. (2007) argue that job mobility can be further characterized in terms of status changes; being upward, downward or lateral in terms of such things as esteem, responsibility, and financial rewards. While careers literature tends to accept that high career mobility has become the new normal (Inkson et al., 2012) and that it is desirable (Chudzikowski, 2012) marketers may be limited in terms of their career as the evolving nature of marketing and the continuous need for new skills signposts a crisis (Quinn et al., 2016) which may reduce their ability for such movement. Moreover, the decline of the traditional organizational career requires new ways of viewing careers and, in recent times, two new perspectives have become popular in literature, specifically the protean career and the boundaryless career (Briscoe et al., 2006).

Hall (1976) defined the protean career as a career where “the person, not the organization, is in charge, the core values are freedom and growth, and the main success criteria are subjective (psychological success) vs. objective (position, salary)” (p.201). Hall (2004) later refined his definition of protean careers to “a career that is self-determined, driven by personal values rather than organizational rewards, and serving the whole person, family, and life purpose” (p.2). The term protean is derived from the Greek god Proteus, who could change shape at will and according to Hall (1996) the organizational career has been replaced by “protean” careers which are determined by the individual, not the organization. The protean career as espoused
by Hall (1976) and Hall (2002) outlines a fundamental shift away from the traditional career to one that is now more protean. Hall (1996) outlines that the career of the 21st century will be protean, a career that is driven by the person, not the organization, and as the environment changes so too will the person. Individuals who hold protean career attitudes are intent upon using their own values to guide their career and take an independent role in managing their vocational behaviour, which simply means they are self-directed (Briscoe et al., 2006).

On the other hand, Inkson et al. (2012) note that the boundaryless career is a new dominant career form. Arthur and Rousseau (1996) define the boundaryless career as “not bounded, not tied to a single organization, not represented by an orderly sequence, marked by less vertical coordination and stability… put simply, boundaryless careers are the opposite of “organizational careers” – careers conceived to unfold in a single employment setting” (p.5). Compared to the protean career, “boundaryless careers” put more emphasis on navigating the changing work landscape in terms of movement, specifically physical and psychological movement (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). Forret and Sullivan (2002) highlight that whether voluntarily or involuntarily managers and professionals are switching jobs at an ever-increasing pace, and boundaryless careers were explained as outcomes of, and as a response to, wider changes in the economic and organizational landscape (Inkson et al., 2012). However, while both career perspectives suggest either movement or the ability to change with the environment as being important, marketers may struggle with such movement based on the issues highlighted within previous sections.

While the previous studies on protean and boundaryless careers focus on the general career, the marketing profession appears to have witnessed more change than most other industries, and the ability for movement or the ability to change with the environment may be more important for those within the marketing profession compared to those who are not in such a fast-paced industry. Therefore, the importance of these characteristics may be increased for marketers, while at the same time, marketers may not be well suited to either a protean or a boundaryless career due to the unpredictability associated with a constantly evolving environment (Hill et al., 2018; Kumar, 2015; Suginraj, 2017) and a notable skills gaps (Crush, 2011; Day, 2011; Durkin, 2013; Hege, 2020; Mgba, 2019; Quinn et al., 2016; Royle & Laing, 2014; Wood, 2011, 2011). These may restrict any such “movement” especially as Di Gregorio et al. (2019) note that the digital transformation of marketing has disrupted the marketing career path. As stated, awareness of the modern career should be considered as this chapter progresses,
especially in terms of the flexibility and mobility which are now considered important. Notwithstanding, as mentioned, marketers may struggle with such attributes. While previous sections have highlighted the dominant role of digital marketing within contemporary practice the next section will document the transition of marketing from traditional marketing practices to digital marketing practices. This will further emphasise some of the changes modern marketers have witnessed in recent times and which appear to play a role in terms of skills gaps.

2.5 Traditional Marketing to Digital Marketing
The marketing discipline has been constantly evolving over the years (Kumar, 2015) and although contemporary marketing is now a very digital place (Hill et al., 2018; Nair, 2016; Kumar, 2015), prior to this, traditional marketing techniques were dominant. According to Yasmin et al. (2015), traditional marketing is the most recognizable form of marketing and can be defined as “any non-digital way used to promote the products or services of a business entity” (p.72). The key aspect of this definition appears to be any “non-digital” way to promote the business. Accordingly, traditional marketing tools consist of billboards, physical print, point of purchase, television and radio (Geraghty & Conway, 2016). Prior to the digital revolution (Leeflang et al., 2014; Wymba, 2011) the four finite canvases of the television commercial, full-page print ad, radio ad and billboard were dominant within marketing practice (Rothenberg, 2013). Traditional marketing focuses on the product or service and the role of the marketing function was, historically, to stabilize demand through promotional activities and to meet product sales targets (Sharma & Sheth, 2004). Traditionally, millions of people observed advertising on the TV and radio, received regular flyers and leaflets and viewed billboards in cities (Kučera, 2019). However, whilst traditional marketing allows consumers to see and touch the products, the effect of such techniques is, in fact, low (Salehi et al., 2012). Moreover, traditional marketing is static and often referred to as “one-way” communication as customers cannot interact with business through a billboard or print ad, digital marketing, however, is an ever-changing, dynamic process which provides an avenue for two-way communication between a business and its actual or prospective customers (American Marketing Association, 2021). The efficiency and benefits offered by digital platforms (Malar, 2016) helped overpower traditional techniques (Quinn et al., 2016) and the prominence of traditional marketing has been decreasing in recent times as digital technologies has become the dominant force within marketing (Kučera, 2019).
While digital marketing is reshaping the marketing agenda (Germann et al., 2013), originally, the entire thought of digital marketing seemed like an fledgling idea which would not last, and the disbelief of traditional marketers further made it difficult for the corporate world to believe in this latest methodology (Nair, 2016). This belief may have played a part in certain marketers being caught off-guard as digital technologies emerged as the dominant force within marketing (Appel et al., 2020; Kučera, 2019; Kumar, 2015). Digital marketing can be described as the digital identity of a company; through which it presents itself in the virtual world to an enormous number of users (Sawicki, 2016). The term digital marketing is inclusive and involves digital and network communication technologies such as phones and digital television which enable firms to do business through all electronic platforms (Nair, 2016). Wymbs (2011) defines digital marketing as “the use of digital technologies to create an integrated, targeted and measurable communication which helps to acquire and retain customers while building deeper relationships with them” (p.94). Simply put, digital marketing consists in the promotion of products or brands through one of more electronic forms (Sawicki, 2016).

However, these descriptions, and definition by Wymbs (2011), may not truly expound the term digital marketing or the impact it has on modern marketing practice. Instead, in today’s fast paced environment digital marketing can be viewed as more of an umbrella term to describe the use of digital technologies for marketing purposes. Kannan and Li (2017) provide a more open-ended description of digital marketing where it can be used to acquire customers, learn about them, promote the brand, increase sales, and much more. Accordingly, Kannan and Li (2017) define digital marketing as “an adaptive, technology-enabled process by which firms collaborate with customers and partners to jointly create, communicate, deliver, and sustain value for all stakeholders” (p.23). This appears to better capture the affordances which allow marketers to creatively utilise digital marketing technologies for their benefit as new technologies and the constantly changing environment, and practices, would appear to negate any guidelines on how to best utilise digital marketing tools.

Digital marketing covers a wide range of disciplines (Kumar, 2021) and is widely used as an umbrella term (Järvinen et al., 2012; Kannan & Li, 2017; Kumar & Kumar, 2020; Shaikh & Nigade, 2020; Simula et al., 2015; Yamin, 2017). The key skills needed for marketing in a digital world (BrainStation, 2021; Di Gregorio et al., 2019; Digital Marketing Institute, 2018; Jabado & Jallouli, 2021; Kovacs, 2021) are detailed in Table 2.1 and include such skills as Search engine optimisation (SEO), Search engine marketing, (SEM), Social media marketing
(SMM) and pay per click (PPC). Moreover, digital marketing communications often fall under the term digital marketing. Digital marketing communications consist of such things as social media (Killian & McManus, 2015; Swani et al., 2017; Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014; Yadav et al., 2015), mobile (Guido et al., 2016; Rowles, 2017; Yadav et al., 2015), email (Bashirzadeh et al., 2021; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019), direct marketing (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Kim & Kumar, 2018), relationship marketing (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Finne & Grönroos, 2009, 2017), influencer marketing (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Martínez-López et al., 2020; Ye et al., 2021) and advertising (Juska, 2017; Lee & Cho, 2020). Therefore, to clarify, within this study the term digital marketing is used as an umbrella term to capture all aspects, and tools, which fall under the heading of digital marketing.

Digital marketing has numerous benefits such as customer relationship building, reduced costs, increased efficiency and greater flexibility, while marketers can also make changes on the fly, access global markets, track real time results, target specific demographics and measure results (Malar, 2016). Other benefits include global reach, low cost of entry, measurable return on investment (ROI), improved targeting, dynamic adaptability, immediate connection and relationship building (American Marketing Association, 2021). These benefits appear to be enhanced when comparisons are made to the affordances offered by traditional techniques. The benefits of digital marketing are plentiful (Malar, 2016; Durkin, 2013) and the subsequent importance placed on digital marketing technologies, and skills, is clear to see (Hill et al., 2018; Kumar, 2015; Malar, 2016; Nair, 2016; Royle & Laing, 2014; Thomas & Thomas, 2018; Wymbs, 2011). A key reason for the growth of digital technologies, according to Royle and Laing (2014), can be attributed to social media platforms, which were noted as being a game changer in several industries (Stephen, 2015). Levy and Birkner (2011) previously noted how social media has revolutionised business communication, with Kumar (2015) also noting how companies are increasing their social media budgets to allow for the rapid promotion of their brand. Accordingly, social media skills have long been noted as being vital for marketers (Drury, 2008; Royle & Laing, 2014) and the next section will explore social media, specifically looking at why it has become a key component of contemporary practice. This is followed by a discussion on the current state of marketing education and how educators are reacting to the changes in marketing.
2.6 Marketing and Social Media

Marketing is in the midst of constant reinvention with social media technologies engendering radically new ways of interacting (Elliott, 2013; Hansen et al., 2010). Digital marketing is an ever-growing part of modern marketing predominantly due to the widespread and increased adoption of social media platforms among the public (Royle & Laing, 2014). An early definition describes social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p.61). However, this definition is over a decade old and now appears too binary as social media offers much more to contemporary practice. Instead the researcher suggests that a more recent definition better captures the essence of social media. According to Dollarhide (2019) social media can be defined as “technology which facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through the building of virtual networks and communities” (p.1). This definition appears more inclusive of the key elements of social media, such as virtual communities, which marketers can exploit for marketing purposes. Additionally, it appears important to note that, similar to marketing, social media is also constantly evolving. While this allows marketers to reach their audience in new and innovative ways, it also results in a level of unpredictability which marketers are struggling to adapt too (Royle & Laing, 2014; Sizhu & Shah, 2017). Furthermore, the constantly evolving nature of social media makes it hard to explicitly define the concept, especially as it can be used in numerous ways for marketing purposes (Appel et al., 2020).

Early studies by Drury (2008) and Ritson (2010) found that marketers feel that they must engage with digital tools, such as social media, or risk losing out. This belief prompted a fundamental shift in practice where marketing practitioners began to rapidly increase their use of digital marketing channels (Crittenden & Crittenden, 2015). This was expedited by the fact that people are increasingly spending more time on interactive media than on traditional media (Kumar, 2015) as social media has become part of billions of people’s daily lives (Stephen, 2015). To highlight the modern and widespread use of social media platforms – as of July 2020, the total worldwide population was estimated to be 7.79 billion and, out of this, the internet has 4.57 billion users worldwide which accounts close to 60 percent of the world’s total population (Dataportal, 2020). Out of the 4.57 billion internet users 3.96 billion are social media users which means that more than half of the world’s population now uses social media, with the average number of social media accounts per internet user being 8.8 (Dataportal, 2020). Figure 2.1 provides a further insight into social media usage where the daily time spent using social media, based on five age categories, is presented. Subsequently, and with these numbers in
mind, the increased use of social media as a marketing tool is not surprising (Appel et al., 2020).

![Daily Time Spent Using Social Media](image)

Daily time spent using social media (Dataportal, 2020) Figure 2.1

The rise of social media has rapidly advanced the field of marketing, particularly on the practice side (Hill et al., 2018), and especially in terms of increasing customer engagement, gauging consumer trends, offering customer service and driving sales (Dollarhide, 2019). Moreover, earlier studies have also found that social media can create value-added content for customers, monitor negative customer sentiment, and increase customer engagement and value creation (Leeflang et al., 2014), while the strong effects of social networks on customer retention and adoption have been confirmed in multiple studies (Nitzan & Libai, 2011; Yoganarasimhan, 2012). The numerous benefits of utilising social media for marketing purposes are well established (Crittenden & Crittenden, 2015; Kumar, 2015; Royle & Laing, 2014; Voorveld et al., 2018) and these benefits, specifically compared to the affordances of traditional marketing (Salehi et al., 2012), resulted in companies enthusiastically integrating social media into their marketing plans (Voorveld et al., 2018). Accordingly, social media is now deemed to be an indispensable tool for businesses (Dollaride, 2019)

While social media has benefitted marketing, the practices of many marketers is far removed from considering customers at the granular level that digital enables (Feit et al., 2013). Quinton and Fennemore (2013) found barriers to use and a lack of social media marketing skills. A
similar finding is evident within a study by Deiser and Newton (2013) who also identified notable challenges in terms of social media usage by leaders at General Electric (GE). The transition from traditional marketing to digital marketing has further resulted in issues as Leeflang et al. (2014) found that many marketers are struggling to deal with the social environment. Royle and Laing (2014) highlight individual challenges facing practitioners due to differing uses of social media and digital marketing. These issues are associated with gaps in skills and include a lack of familiarity with mobile applications, SEO, metrics, and using blogs. However, these challenges may have changed due to the dynamism of practice. In fact, the study by Royle and Laing (2014) is almost eight years old, with more recent literature neglecting the individual challenges facing practitioners (Quinn et al., 2016). The fast pace of change associated with marketing would suggest that the experiences of modern marketers may have also changed in this time, and this study investigates this area. Moreover, there are increasingly more studies on how humans are affected by digitalization. The need to take “digital distance” has emerged in certain countries as people are actively taking a break from technology by switching off their phone, tablet, or computer (Kähler & Magnusson, 2018, p.6).

As previously highlighted the growing influence of social media is intertwined with the increased usage of such platforms, and if people begin to take “digital distance” and shut off, the efficacy of social media will be at risk as audience numbers fall.

The importance of both digital marketing and social media skills is clear to see, and a lack of such skills results in a distinct competitive disadvantage for marketers (Royle & Laing, 2014). While there is a clear need for digital skills, Drury (2008) found that the rise of digital, specifically social media, has led to many marketers being caught off guard despite the possibilities offered by new technologies being highlighted as far back as the mid-1990s by Peppers and Rogers (1995). As previously stated, Nair (2016) identified that in the early days of digital marketing many viewed it as a fledgling idea which would not last and this may have also played a part in marketers being caught off-guard, especially as digital marketing is in deep contrast to the traditional ways of marketing (Leeflang et al., 2014). This situation appears to have worsened in recent times (Kuruczleki et al., 2016; Mgiba, 2019; Sizhu & Shah, 2017), even after Durkin (2013) pointed to a technology driven paradigm shift in marketing. These issues appear to be exacerbated by a disconnect between education and practice where the marketing curricula does not appear to be aligned to industry needs. Therefore, the next section looks at the current state of marketing education, where it seems that the marketing curricula
is not keeping pace with changes in marketing, something which may also play a role in skills gaps.

### 2.7 Marketing Education

While digital marketing skills have long been identified as being crucial for future marketers (Day, 2011; Watson, 2012; Wymbs, 2011), skills gaps are evident within literature (Crush, 2011; Day, 2011; Durkin, 2013; Hege, 2020; Mgiba, 2019; Quinn et al., 2016; Royle & Laing, 2014; Wood, 2011). Students are being educated in an era of digital disruption where constant change has created the need for educational material which can shape and contribute to the emerging and evolving world of marketing (Crittenden & Peterson, 2019). Academic programs and educators face numerous challenges related to teaching digital marketing as today, with marketing firmly residing in a digital world, marketing courses have been found to struggle in terms of maintaining pace with the changes which influence the practice of marketing (Rohm et al., 2019).

Recent advances in technology have affected nearly every facet of marketing, however, less is known about the degree to which marketing education has responded to shifting capabilities and practices (Langan et al., 2019). Digital technologies are causing major changes in the practice and the operation of higher education and these changes are challenging marketing educators to innovate and to refresh the curriculum (Crittenden & Peterson, 2019) while Lederman (2017) believes that these changes will transform the way we think about educational delivery. According to Crittenden and Peterson (2019) the digital technology needed for marketing educators is threefold: (1) be aware of what marketing practitioners want in terms of the marketing graduates they hire, (2) be aware of what technologies are likely to lead to digital disruptions, and (3) be sufficiently knowledgeable about them so as to effectively and efficiently educate students (p.3). While Crittenden and Peterson (2019) propose these key areas, digitalisation is disruptive (Kuruczleki et al., 2016; Mgiba, 2019) and the evolving nature of marketing suggests that it may be hard for educators to keep pace with the changes in marketing practice and the subsequent demand for new skills. This appears especially true based on the previously suggested incommensurability, and subsequent unpredictability, which appears evident due to the significant changes marketing has witnessed. Accordingly, a disconnect between education and industry has been noted.
Marketing educators and practitioners alike need to be aware of, and knowledgeable about, a broad spectrum of digitally based technologies (Crittenden et al., 2019). Nonetheless, Heckman et al. (2018) point to a disconnect between the current marketing curricula and employer’s needs, while Crittenden and Crittenden (2015) contend that the topics needed to satisfy consumer demands are chronically under taught in universities. These chronically under taught topics include content marketing, search engine optimization, social media, marketing software skills and online-lead generations strategies, while according to Leeflang et al. (2014) analytical skills are challenging both companies and educational institutions across the globe. While these skills are identified as being under taught, it is important to note that scholars have previously highlighted the importance of such skills (Davenport & Patil, 2012; Day, 2011; Kung, 2008; Leeflang et al., 2014; Royle & Laing, 2014). This suggests that the disconnect between education and curricula may expand beyond the fast pace of change, and subsequent unpredictability, within the marketing environment as these skills are well established, yet they are not being taught. Therefore, marketing educators appear to struggle with incorporating well established competencies, not to mind emerging skills, into the curricula. Payne et al. (2011) also point to a gap in marketing education, and a failure to address the issues of digital marketing skills in the classroom is detrimental to graduates, negatively impacting their marketing ability (Royle & Laing, 2014). However, despite the importance of developing digital marketing skills in marketing students, there is a lack of research addressing this knowledge gap (Sizhu & Shah, 2017). To exacerbate the issue Sizhu and Shah (2017) also found that academia and industry vary in their understanding of the important skills required for succeeding in digital or social media marketing roles, while a new type of learner has complicated matters further. The next section will further discuss this new learner and how they are challenging universities and colleges.

### 2.7.1 A New Type of Learner

Wymbs (2011) found that there is a growing body of evidence suggesting that universities and colleges need to review their approaches to teaching marketing, a sentiment echoed by Royle and Laing (2014). Today’s college classrooms are full of technological savvy individuals who have grown up with technology and the assumption that these students learn the same way as in the past has come into question (Prensky, 2001c; Prensky & Berry, 2001). Thus, while educational efforts need to be adapted accordingly (Crittenden & Crittenden, 2015), university marketing departments are behind the curve, especially in terms of social media, where students can be more adept than those teaching the marketing classes (Frederiksen, 2015).
New technologies are affecting both the curriculum of marketing education as well as the tools used to teach that curriculum (Granitz & Pitt, 2011) and according to Wymbs (2011) the current approaches utilised by colleges in teaching marketing needs to be updated to incorporate the latest technological and digital developments. Crittenden et al. (2019) argue that marketing educators need to strongly embrace all emerging technologies that enhance student learning, not simply those known today. This may prove difficult, however, based on the issues highlighted in previous sections, specifically the unpredictability associated with digital disruption. This may be especially true if marketing educators are also struggling to incorporate well established skills into the curriculum, not mind emerging topics. Although digitalisation is disruptive, Uncles (2018) notes the benefits of embracing new technologies and asserts that there are considerable teaching opportunities within the higher education landscape when digital technologies and technology enabled learning is utilised. This concept is supported from previous findings by Buzzard et al. (2011) and Payne et al. (2011) who found that the use of digital technologies in the classroom resulted in positive experiences. Therefore, Twitter et al are being utilised by many educators as teaching aids where they are studied both as tools and as subjects (Al-Sharqi et al., 2016; Granitz & Pitt, 2011; Moghavvemi et al., 2018). Whilst the benefits are clear, Kerr and Kelly (2017) note many challenges with respect to keeping the marketing curriculum updated, with Rohm et al. (2019) also finding challenges and consequences with digital marketing courses.

Furthermore, to exacerbate the lack of digital skills (Crush, 2011; Day, 2011; Durkin, 2013; Hege, 2020; Mgiba, 2019; Quinn et al., 2016; Royle & Laing, 2014; Wood, 2011) and inadequate marketing curricula (Crittenden & Crittenden, 2015; Heckman et al., 2018; Rohm et al., 2019), marketers have been identified as being increasingly asked to do more in the digital era (Simmons, 2008) while under the expectation of possessing all the appropriate marketing skills (Manai & Holmlund, 2015). Leeflang et al. (2014) noted a digital talent gap which has led to repercussions for the future of marketing (Quinn et al., 2016). Consequently, marketing skills gaps clearly evident within literature (Crush, 2011; Day, 2011; Durkin, 2013; Hege, 2020; Mgiba, 2019; Quinn et al., 2016; Royle & Laing, 2014; Wood, 2011). However, before skills gaps are discussed, literature has neglected this research area in recent times (Raghuraman, 2017; Royle & Laing, 2014), therefore, the next section will further detail the scarcity of research in the area around marketing skills gaps. This should be contemplated as
the chapter progresses onto the section on skills gaps, and again when the concept of mindset is discussed.

2.8 A Scarcity of Research within Marketing Literature

The previous sections highlight the turbulent nature of marketing which has resulted in modern marketing becoming a very digital place (Kumar, 2015; Nair, 2016; Thomas & Thomas, 2018) where the environment is constantly evolving (Hill et al., 2018; Suginraj, 2017). While digital marketing has numerous benefits, the disruptive nature of digitalisation has been established (Bajpai & Biberman, 2019) and marketers have struggled in terms of adapting to the changes within the practice of marketing (Mulhern, 2009; Royle & Laing, 2014; Sizhu & Shah, 2017). Consequently, skills gaps are clearly evident (Crush, 2011; Day, 2011; Durkin, 2013; Hege, 2020; Mgiba, 2019; Quinn et al., 2016; Royle & Laing, 2014; Wood, 2011). Notwithstanding, a great deal of attention has focused on the tremendous opportunities associated with digital marketing, with little attention given to the real challenges associated with going digital (Leeflang et al., 2014). This is after previous studies called for literature to address practitioner concerns by concentrating on the current challenges and issues within industry (Brady et al., 2008; Reibstein et al., 2009) and on skills shortages (Valos et al., 2010). In fact, Boychev (2018) and Sarker et al. (2019) note how literature has instead focused on the relationships between marketing and the consumer. Hence, this has resulted in the research area around marketing skills gaps being both under-researched and under-theorised (Raghuraman, 2017; Royle & Laing, 2014). Seven years ago Leeflang et al. (2014) pointed out that there are only a few studies that truly aim to investigate the importance of challenges within practice and this issue remains unchanged in more recent times.

2.9 Skills Gaps in Marketing

The “digital revolution has fundamentally changed marketing at the core” (Wynbs, 2011, p. 95). Marketing has transitioned into a very digital place, and, while this offers numerous benefits, the increasing digitalization has also been found to create significant obstacles for marketing practitioners as they are confronted with volatile markets which are hard to command (Leeflang et al., 2014). The side effects of digitalisation have been noted (Hansen, 2017), specifically a sense of chaos, mismatched skills, and an increased need for reskilling and upskilling (Bajpai & Biberman, 2019). Consequently, there is a considerable digital skills gap within the field of marketing (Crush, 2011; Day, 2011; Hege, 2020; Mgiba, 2019; Quinn
et al., 2016; Royle & Laing, 2014; Wood, 2011), with Hart et al. (2007) defining skills gaps as “deficiencies in the skills which employees need to carry out their existing tasks” (p.272). Within the marketing realm, the researcher would like to critique this definition and suggests that the skills which will be necessary in future are also included in the definition rather than solely focusing on existing tasks. This appears important as Quinn et al. (2016) note that failure to develop the necessary skills and capabilities compounds a threat to the orthodox role of marketing. A review of literature reveals an acknowledgement of a clear skills gap, however, as stated, there is no particular focus upon these skills gaps in literature (Raghuraman, 2017; Royle & Laing, 2014).

Early studies highlighted the need for “new domain-relevant skills and new fields of expertise” (Kung, 2008, p.89) and called for digital marketing to be seen as a new academic major (Wymbs, 2011). Moreover, this was also at a time when Day (2011) noted the “need for expert knowledge of digital marketing skills and the damage that can be done if this skill set is not present” (p 184). However, while the need for digital skills was signposted early on, the lack of skills may not have been completely unavoidable. Marketers were found to lack the mindset (Mulhern, 2009) to meet the changing needs of the marketing environment while a disconnect between marketing curricula and industry was also noted by numerous scholars (Crittenden & Crittenden, 2015; Heckman et al., 2018; Rohm et al., 2019). Moreover, Kähler and Magnusson (2018) note how digitalisation is the biggest change that the marketing profession has ever witnessed which suggests a level of incommensurability, and subsequent unpredictability. This has arguably negated the ability to close any skills gaps fully as marketers may be unable to effectively plan ahead in such an unpredictable industry. While Van Deursen and Van Dijk (2014) previously called for marketers to upskill to stay ahead of the changes in marketing, yet again, this seems unsuitable as marketers may be limited to taking a reactionary approach to upskilling as a proactive approach may not be possible due to the fast pace of change, and subsequent unpredictability, within marketing. This point appears strengthened based on the finding by Hill et al. (2018) where they note that the past often is not worth following as new and interesting things are always coming out in marketing. Therefore, fully closing any skills gaps may be difficult.

Although this may be the case, the issue of skills gaps appears to have become more apparent as Quinn et al. (2016) noted a widening gap as the increasingly sophisticated technological focus and demand for new skills has resulted in a “sense of crisis for marketers” which is a
bigger issue than skills gaps (p.16). This study by Quinn et al. (2016) is not situated within the domain of marketing skills gaps, however, and these findings are noted within the wider scope of their study. In fact, this study was motivated by the need to better understand how the role and activities of marketing within the firm are changing as a consequence of technological advancements associated with the digital era. Subsequently, the study focuses on how strategic target-market selection decisions are shaped, challenged and driven in response to the rapidly evolving technological landscape. Therefore, marketing skills gaps were not the key area under investigation and, while their findings appear pertinent, the core focus of their study lay elsewhere.

Furthermore, while an emphasis has been placed on acquiring the relevant digital skills (Bajpai & Biberman, 2019; Malar, 2016; Mgiba, 2019; Royle & Laing, 2014) some scholars also express a concern that the dominant role of digital is affecting the non-digital elements of marketing. Durkin (2013) identified a detachment or separation where the current focus and professional activity is something discrete from marketing itself. In fact, Durkin (2013) argues that “a new marketing myopia has been created” where marketing choices are being narrowly defined by the technological innovation rather than the needs of the customers (p.51). This is a similar finding to Granitz and Pitt (2011) and Payne et al. (2011) who had previously found that marketing is being shaped by emerging tools such as social media rather than being improved through the development of these tools. These studies share similar findings and identify a risk to marketing practice as certain digital tools appear to be overly influencing practitioners. This may be attributed to the many benefits associated with using digital technologies (Kumar, 2015; Malar, 2016; Nair, 2016), specifically social media (Crittenden & Crittenden, 2015; Kumar, 2015; Royle & Laing, 2014; Voorveld et al., 2018) for marketing purposes. However, it appears that these benefits may be negated if the tools are not used appropriately, which may subsequently reduce effectiveness. This may be exacerbated by the importance placed on digital technologies, especially as digital tools are noted as indispensable within marketing practice (Dollarhide, 2019; Kannan & Li, 2017; Malar, 2016). This appears especially true as earlier studies noted how marketers were afraid of missing out if they did not utilise social media as a marketing tool (Drury, 2008; Ritson, 2010), a finding which appears as relevant today. Moreover, fundamental activities such as the core marketing principles may be cast aside in favour of a new agenda (Durkin, 2013; Leeflang et al., 2014; Quinn et al., 2016). Accordingly, Durkin (2013) asks that marketing returns to its roots to more effectively integrate digital solutions into the customer value proposition. However, Quinn et al. (2016)
observed a denial regarding the relevance of the core marketing principles, highlighting the changing nature of the digital marketplace has destroyed fundamental marketing understandings for some organizations.

While skills gaps have been clearly identified in literature, skills gaps may not be the pertinent issue. Durkin (2013) hints at a wider issue when he highlights how the marketing profession have collectively created a “monster” called digital marketing (p.51). It was also noted that marketers appear ill-equipped to handle the changes in marketing as they lack the mindset to do so (Mulhern, 2009). Accordingly, marketers have struggled with the transition into the digital world (Drury, 2008; Leeflang et al., 2014; Nair, 2016; Sizhu & Shah, 2017) especially as digital disruption has been found to erode the foundational boundaries which practitioners use as a basis for practice (Karimi & Walter, 2015; Rauch et al., 2016; Weill & Woerner, 2015). Correspondingly, and, as previously stated, Quinn et al (2016) suggest a bigger issue which “extends beyond simply remedying a skills-gap and is triggering a transformation that has repercussions for the future of marketing and its practice” (p.2). While Quinn et al. (2016) also point to a bigger issue than skills gaps, this bigger issue is not identified. This may be down to the fact that this issue was noted within the wider scope of their study. As mentioned, their study does not specifically focus on marketing skills gaps. Another reason why the potential “bigger issue” may not be identified may be as a result of the general lack of exploration around marketing skills gaps in recent literature. This research study explores this area however, and as stated in chapter 1, the findings of this study suggest an underlying mindset issue within contemporary marketing. Therefore, this chapter will now progress onto the area of mindset. However, before mindset is discussed, the next section will briefly provide an insight into the marketing literature relating to the term mindset. Thereafter, the proceeding section will discuss the difference between mindset and skillset, before progressing onto the human mindset.

### 2.10 Mindset in Marketing Literature

The term mindset is evident within numerous areas of marketing literature such as entrepreneurial mindset (Kraus et al., 2010; Sadiku-Dushi & Ramadani, 2020; Yadav & Bansal, 2020), global mindset (Gillespie & Hennessey, 2015; He et al., 2020; Lazaris & Freeman, 2018) and marketing mindset (Kotler et al., 2021; Shubar et al., 2020). However, most studies regarding mindset in marketing appear to relate to consumer mindset (Cain, 2021; Kübler et al., 2020; Murphy & Dweck, 2016; Petersen et al., 2018; Rubin et al., 2020; Wong et al., 2020). Notwithstanding the focus on mindset within marketing literature, scholars have
neglected mindset in terms of the marketing practitioner. This study identifies an underlying mindset issue within marketing which is not currently diagnosed within literature. Therefore, the researcher wishes to highlight that while mindset is evident within marketing literature, the mindset issue identified within this study is different to existing studies and is not currently evident within extant marketing literature. The next section will discuss mindset versus skillset, where scholars have called for more emphasis to be placed on mindset development rather than on the development of skills.

2.11 Mindset Versus Skillset

Mindset can simply be defined as “I (we) believe” (Fang et al., 2004, p.298) with Kotler et al. (2021) describing mindset as a person’s dynamic logic of thought that triggers their actions and is co-determined by their context. Definitions of skills and skillset, which this study views as synonymous, vary in literature. For example, Augustin et al. (2010) defines skills as “an atomic and well-defined entity of knowledge or ability, which ideally can be formalized as a proposition of two related concepts” (p.3). On the other hand, Ananiadou and Claro (2009) provide a much more open-ended definition where skillsets are defined as “the skills young people will be required to have in order to be effective workers and citizens in the knowledge society of the 21st century” (p.8). However, this definition appears to exclude older people, and previous studies have highlighted the need for all marketing groups to acquire the necessary skills (Kuruczleki et al., 2016; Mgiba, 2019). Therefore, neither of these definitions sit well with this study and the researcher instead uses a definition from the Oxford Dictionary (2021) where skill sets are defined as “a person’s range of skills or abilities”, with Binkley et al. (2012) concisely describing skillsets as the knowledge, set of skills, work habits, and character traits which are necessary for success today and in the future.

According to Kennedy et al. (2013) the difference between skillset and mindset can be situated within a landscape of shifting trends in social theory and philosophy. Kennedy et al. (2013) believe that skillset development is aligned to what Marshak and Grant (2008) label the classic period situated between the years 1950 – 1980 whereas a mindset orientation is positioned with more recent ideas about the social world. Within this new focus is the acknowledgement that change is continuous and ongoing with an emphasis placed on mindset rather than learning new skills (Marshak & Grant, 2008). This new focus appears especially suited to marketing due to the disruption caused by digital technologies and the subsequent change within practice, especially as marketers have been noted as struggling to adapt to such digital changes (Sizhu
& Shah, 2017). This would suggest that more emphasis may be needed on mindset development within marketing as Kulatilaka and Venkatraman (2001) previously noted that being successful in the digital era requires a new mindset. This appears especially true as Mulhern (2009) identified that marketers lack the mindset to effectively tackle the challenge of adapting to digital technologies.

Moreover, in their work on leadership mindset, Kennedy et al. (2013) called for a new paradigm where the need to concentrate on mindset trumps that of building skills. Similarly, Kramer (2016) argued for a new paradigm with a focus on transforming mindsets over skillsets. Kramer (2016) also calls for the transformation of current mindsets when they are outdated or obsolete, and subsequently no longer useful, as this will lead to improved foresight through the creation of greater thinking capacity. This is an important point and although this research is within the field of leadership skillsets, a similar approach would seem suitable within the marketing. The marketing domain is known to be continuously evolving (Hill et al., 2018; Sugrinraj, 2017) and this high level of change requires new ways of thinking which may include the transformation of current mindsets. As marketing evolves, and aligned to Kramer (2016), outdated mindsets may need to be transformed and this appears particularly true within the marketing sphere as Jabado and Jallouli (2021) note how the changing marketing environment calls for a re-evaluation of the knowledge and capabilities needed within practice. This suggests that the ability to transform mindset to adapt to environmental changes is important. However, the transformation of mindsets is not an easy process and requires unlearning. This concept will be discussed later in this chapter. The next section details the human mindset, which is followed by a discussion on mental models and the covert processes model. This model states that individuals view the world through a specific lens which affects both behaviours and actions.

### 2.12 The Human Mindset

Mindsets are unlike human traits, they are not innate but learned (Fang et al., 2004). Accordingly, current mindsets that people possess are products of learning from their past experiences (Kramer, 2016). According to French II (2016) “the defining characteristic of mindset conceptualization is a specific focus (or filter) used throughout the totality of an individual or organization’s cognition” (p. 678). This filter is further discussed later in this chapter in the form of the Covert Processes Model. Mindsets are relatively consistent frameworks to see, accept, and understand the world. Therefore, people’s knowledge and especially its application to situations can be an appropriate indicator of someone’s mindset,
with individuals tending to be more favourable to situations which are more aligned with their mindset (Fang et al., 2004). Schemas are often seen as similar to mindset, however, to differentiate them – schemas are cognitive knowledge structures based on specific concepts, entities and events (Markus, 1977). Similarly, Harris (1994) notes that schemas are related to a specific interest. This “specific interest” element is the key differentiator as individuals were found to have numerous schemas for things like sports, science, or for particular product categories (Meyers-Levy & Tybout, 1989). Therefore, a marketer may have a schema for work and another schema for personal life, where a specific concept or interest may be acceptable in one, and not in the other. Mindset, on the other hand, is a more generalisable outlook in terms of a phenomena across personal life, work life and so forth.

The importance of mindset theories in terms of being successful in the midst of global interconnectedness can be seen within literature (Dweck, 2012; Issa & Pick, 2010; Kennedy et al., 2013; Brooks et al., 2012). However, the ways in which scholars implement and conceptualize theories of mindsets vary significantly between disciplines and also among scholars within the same discipline (French II, 2016). Nonetheless, scholars have identified the potential benefits of understanding mindsets for both the individual and the organisation, such as improving an individual’s abilities to complete goals, shaping beliefs, strengthening one’s attitude and resolve, improving decision making, increasing advertising and business success, along with many others (French II, 2016). Research by Den Hartog and Dickson (2012) also found benefits for both the individual and the organization by identifying, developing, and shaping a belief or set of beliefs (i.e. mindset). French II (2016) highlights the importance, for organizational praxis, of correctly identifying and influencing the individual or collective mindset via efficient and effective development. However, this may prove difficult within marketing due to the changing nature of practice, specifically as various mindsets appear evident. A ubiquitous approach to development may not be appropriate as techniques tailored to individual needs may be more appropriate. Furthermore, in terms of mindset development, mental models, which are assumptions we hold about ourselves, our organizations and the challenges we face (Kramer, 2016) play an important role and will therefore be discussed next.

2.12.1 Mental Models

Mental models are an integral part of an individual’s mindset. Kramer (2016) notes that mental models compose our mindset and rule how we see, think, feel and act, therefore, in terms of our mindset, mental models are the rules which frame the world for us. Senge (1990) defines
Mental models represent the general idea of an individual with respect to a specific phenomenon and, as these are subjective, they are vulnerable to inaccuracies or errors (Norman, 1983). Very often we are not aware of our mental models or the effects they have on our behaviour. According to Berger and Johnston (2015) we are unable to see these “rules” that drive us as they are as “invisible as the air we breathe, and just as necessary” (p.178). Individuals need these invisible rules or programs in the mind, and mental models make people more efficient as valuable time or energy is not wasted rethinking every routine situation (Kahneman et al., 1982). Therefore, according to Kramer (2016), mental models are “habits of the mind” and we “cannot live without them” (p.31).

However, while mental models may make people more efficient, this claim may not be ubiquitous in all industries as Kramer (2016) also notes that “we cannot see anything not within our worldview” (p.31). This points to potential risks within fast paced industries, such as marketing, where “habits of the mind” may result in individuals using outdated assumptions and relying on past practices. Therefore, in relation to marketing, it is possible that marketers may be reusing past or routine behaviours, or “habits”, for current situations which may be outdated and no longer be suitable due to the dynamism of modern marketing. Comparably, Kramer (2016) found that “if you cannot see a problem clearly or if your attention is focused on the wrong things you cannot take effective or timely action and you are therefore blind” (p.29). Consequently, it appears that mental models may also reduce effectiveness, specifically within fast paced industries. Without a change in mindset people will continue to see situations in the same way and develop the same responses no matter how much they may rationally or
emotionally wish to change (Marshak, 2006). The inability to see situations in a new light does not seem suited to industries like marketing. This further highlights the possible need for unlearning, which as mentioned, will be discussed in the coming sections.

Furthermore, in terms of mindset conceptualisation, specifically with regard to perceiving and making sense of the world, Kramer (2016) notes that our view of the world is filtered through a cognitive prism which is refined by such things as childhood learnings, taken for granted beliefs, assumptions and values, paradigms, and societal conditioning. This cognitive prism was previously emphasised by Marshak and Katz (1999) in their framework titled The Covert Processes Model. This model aims to better understand the hidden dimensions which impact all social systems and their research highlights that individuals view the world through a lens or prism. This is comparable to the specific filter through which individuals view the world, which is the defining characteristic of mindset conceptualisation according to French II (2016). This filter, emphasised in the form of a prism, affects the way people view situations which subsequently affects their actions or behaviour. This is important as the findings of this study suggest that marketers view marketing through a lens which can affect their behaviour and outlook. They seem to focus on the elements of marketing which are aligned to their mindset, while disregarding or dismissing things which don’t. Therefore, the next section will further discuss this concept.

2.12.2 The Covert Processes Model

To help people understand the hidden dimensions that impact all social systems Marshak and Katz (1999) developed The Covert Processes Model. Included in the model is the premise that all social systems have conscious, unconscious, and out-of-awareness dimensions that impact perception and behaviour (Marshak & Katz, 2001). Our view of the world is filtered through a prism, where we view events through a lens (Bennett, 1987). This filter, or lens, is impacted by life experiences which include age, education, race, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, professional identity, family experiences (Marshak & Katz, 2001). An individual’s prism is the mental framework that organizes “meaning making”, it’s the lens through which people look at themselves and the world as their prism contains the structure of their mind (Kramer, 2016). While the covert processes model is multifaceted, the concept of the prism is what is most pertinent to this study. Therefore, the prism, and lens, which people view the world through will be looked at in more detail.
The contents of the prism are the primary determinant of how things will be seen and interpreted, whether the glass is half full or half empty depends on your prism and not on the actual quantity of liquid in the glass (Marshak, 2006). There are also a number of belief components which exist within the prism, as seen figure 2.2, which is presented on the following page. Each component plays a part in defining how things will be seen and interpreted (Marshak, 2006). For example, overt processes, or “on the table”, include topics and issues that are defined as acceptable, proper, reasonable and legitimate, while covert processes are behaviours and beliefs that are not, or cannot be, put out on the table, therefore they are “off the table”, becoming hidden as they are seen as illegitimate (Marshak & Katz, 2001). However, similar to mental models, this may also limit an individual, specifically within dynamic industries. In terms of marketing, the fast pace of change calls for new ways of looking at things (Jabado & Jallouli, 2021) and re-using past “habits” or “legitimate” behaviours may no longer be suited as the changing environment may have made such behaviours unsuitable or inappropriate. Kramer (2016) argues that while “habits” are useful for solving technical problems which do not require rethinking as practices which worked in the past will continue to work today, this is no longer suitable and rethinking “habits” is exactly what is needed in today’s world of permanent volatility and uncertainty. Similarly, the evolving nature of practice may have “legitimised” certain behaviours or actions which were previously classed as “off the table”, or illegitimate. However, certain marketers may view marketing through an outdated lens where they still view certain actions as illegitimate, when in fact they may now be legitimate, and therefore refuse to utilise such actions or tools. Marketers may be restricted in their ability to adapt to the changes within practice if they continue to view marketing through the same lens.
As highlighted within figure 2.2, there are numerous elements which exist within the prism including paradigms, which will be further discussed in the next section. However, prior to this, the elements of the prism which play a part in defining both reality and an individual’s subsequent responses will be detailed. Each element also serves to interpret and/or provide meaning to data and events where people tend to view certain situations more favourably. A summarised description of these elements is provided below (Marshak, 2006, p. 22–23).

- **Childhood lessons learned** including “tapes” and introjections from parents, teachers, and other authority figures about what is right and wrong, how one should behave.

- **Beliefs, assumptions, and values** including the broadest array of concepts that order, judge, link, or otherwise explain events. They include biases and prejudices, habitual thought patterns, proverbs, sayings, and learned or assimilated ways of thinking carried forward from childhood.

- **Formal theories and systems of thought** including all aspects of what one learns through formal education, as well as training and/or exposure to religious, philosophical, and/or professional ideals and concepts.
• **Organizational and societal cultures** that represent taken-for-granted assumptions about the most basic aspects of life in the organization and society, e.g. the nature of people, how one survives and prospers. Until one encounters another culture or society these aspects of one’s prism are usually assumed to be “givens” i.e. the “natural” way the world operates.

• **Paradigms** are often out of awareness of conceptual schemas that guide how one organizes and thinks about some class of phenomenon. Formal theories and systems of thought usually develop and exist within the framework of a particular paradigm. It is virtually impossible to “see” something that does not exist within the viewer’s operating paradigm. A change in paradigm can be so powerful that it is revolutionary or transformational.

Paradigms are an elemental part of the prism and in order to have a deeper understanding of the term mindset, and its importance, paradigms will be further explored, specifically in terms of a shift in focus / paradigm. As mentioned, marketing has witnessed a technologically driven paradigm shift (Durkin, 2013) and marketers may not have adapted accordingly and may be working off past “habits” which are no longer appropriate. The next section builds on this and discusses paradigm shifts.

**2.12.3 Paradigm Shift**

Thomas Kuhn, a leading scholar in terms of the literature on paradigms (Bhopal, 1999; Blaug, 1976; Bokulich, 2006; Brad Wray, 2011; Bryant, 1975), argues that a paradigm consists of “rules that guide particular normal tradition” (Kuhn, 1962, p. 16). Accordingly, Patton (1990) defines a paradigm as “a world view, a general perspective, and a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world” (p. 37). A paradigm is a model or an exemplar which forms the foundation that prepares people for professional practice, and as they are well defined and rigid, when people accept a paradigm it becomes a firmly fixed belief in their mind (Fang et al., 2004). Accordingly, in terms of paradigms or worldviews, people are prevented from imagining possibilities that exist outside of their unexamined assumptions (Marshak, 2006), with Argyris (1977) being one of the first scholars to point out the limiting power of hidden mindsets. Therefore, comparable to mental models and The Covert Processes Model,
individuals may be limited by their mindset. As mentioned, Kramer (2016) argues that individuals cannot see anything which is not situated within their worldview. This appears especially problematic if a paradigm shift occurs and individuals do not, or cannot, adapt accordingly as their mindset remains aligned to the previous paradigm. As mentioned, this does not seem appropriate for industries like marketing where the changing environment calls for a re-assessment of skills and capabilities needed for practice (Jabado & Jallouli, 2021).

A paradigm shift is the result of an anomaly which undermines the rudimentary beliefs primary to basic practice (Fang et al., 2004) and can be defined as “a revolution, a transformation, or a kind of metamorphosis, it is a fundamental change from one way of thinking to another” (Fang et al., 2004, p.298). The paradigm shift doesn’t refer to a piecemeal change or a minor modification of the current practice, instead it is a revolution or a transformation, which would be comparable to the “digital revolution” in marketing (Leeflang, 2014; Wymbs, 2011). Kuhn (1962) highlights that a paradigm shift occurs as a response to a crisis, which according to Quinn et al. (2016) modern marketing is in. In most cases a crisis is born from the awareness of an anomaly in a changing environment such as the emergence of new objects which is similar to the influx of digital technologies in marketing (Nair, 2016; Kumar, 2015; leeflang, 2014; Wymbs, 2011). Moreover, if the existing paradigm fails to explain the emerging phenomena or solve the new puzzles, a search for creative or adaptive responses will be demanded (Fang et al., 2004). Durkin (2013) argues that a technology driven paradigm shift appeared in marketing some years ago, which was the greatest change marketing has ever witnessed (Kähler & Magnusson, 2018). As previously highlighted, this suggests a level of incommensurability with Sizhu and Shah (2017) noting how marketers have struggled to adapt to the digital world. Therefore, while a paradigm shift may have occurred, individuals may not have adapted, and their mindset may be aligned to the previous paradigm, a concept supported by Dweck and Yeager (2019). Subsequently, their mindset may need to be altered. This can be achieved through a process called unlearning, which the next section will further detail.

2.12.4 Unlearning
Mental models and paradigms play an important role in terms of mindset, and the previous sections highlighted how individuals may be limited by their mental models, especially if a paradigm shift has occurred and they have not adapted accordingly. This appears especially important in marketing as Fang et al. (2004) previously noted how the rise of digital technologies had led to a change of mindset. Kramer (2016) highlights that individuals must
learn how to reflect on their own mindsets and relinquish their past assumptions or beliefs which may have once helped them succeed but are no longer effective. This would appear to be especially true in dynamic industries where change is constant, and where people may be reusing past “habits” which may no longer be suitable. Hence, a change in mindset may be necessary. According to Harrison et al. (2007) the only way to transform an individual’s mindset is through a process called unlearning. Unlearning can be defined as “a process of consciously choosing to abandon or give up particular knowledge, values, or behaviours” (Hislop et al., 2014, p541) or as Kramer (2016) argues – separating, breaking away from, dropping, letting go of, tearing the fabric of our conventional thinking, feeling and acting. Unlearning involves separation from one’s self, as we have been culturally conditioned to conform to familial, group, occupational or organizational allegiances (Kramer, 2016). An individual must learn how to separate not only from others, but also, from themselves and they must learn how to change themselves by separating from their own ego (Kramer, 1995b, 1995a).

In most cases, this separation introduces a state of (organizational and personal) instability, leading sometimes to resistance (Peschl, 2019). Hislop et al. (2014) consider unlearning to be paramount “as the inability to give up or abandon knowledge, values, beliefs, and/or practices can produce a rigidity in thinking and acting, limiting a person’s or organization’s adaptability” (p.541). Yet again, this appears especially true in dynamic industries, therefore, within an organizational context, learning how to unlearn is vital “because what we have learned has become embedded in various routines and may have become part of our personal and group identity” (Schein, 2004, p.321). Furthermore, if we revisit the Covert Processes Model, the covert beliefs, values, and assumptions guide and interpret the most fundamental aspects of how we view the world (Marshak, 2006). Accordingly, individual and organizational mindsets can form covert conceptual traps that limit our thinking, and which require a mental revolution to change how we act and react in the world (Marshak, 2006). This appears to further emphasise the importance of unlearning as people may be limited by past ways of thinking resulting in covert conceptual traps.

Becker (2018) suggests for unlearning to be successful it is necessary that both individuals and organizations enter into a process of reframing (Schein, 1993) and reflecting, where their mental models are questioned (Johnson-Laird, 2004). Reframing can be defined as “changing the way people see things and trying to find alternative ways of perceiving ideas, events, or
Accordingly, the letting go of behaviours, routines and frames of reference also plays an important role in the success of unlearning (Peschl, 2019). Leeflang et al. (2014) previously found that the digital revolution is threatening existing business models, and this appears to increase the importance of being able to “reframe” to ensure that individuals can match the pace of change within practice and are therefore not limited by previous “habits”. This may be especially true in terms of marketing teams, particularly teams made up of marketers with varying levels of experience. The ability to question current mental models and to “reframe” when necessary appears important. Team cohesiveness could be affected if varying mindsets are evident within the team setting, which may result in conflict. However, this may not be easily achieved as managers have been previously found to regularly struggle in terms of adapting to technological change (Day, 2011; Finch et al., 2013; Wymbs, 2011). This issue was also noted in marketers, specifically those who have not grown up in a digital environment (Slater et al., 2010).

While unlearning has been discussed as a possible method to change mindset and alter the lens through which situations are viewed, it is an onerous task. The unlearning of behaviours and routines is so hard (Rank & Atkinson 1932) and may be extremely painful (Kramer, 1995b, 1995a) which makes unlearning a difficult process. Harrison et al. (2007) note that “such a process of unlearning comes through a direct confrontation between the current system of sense making and expectation and the shock of an alternative plausible interpretation of reality” (p.338). This makes unlearning challenging as Kramer (2016) argues that individuals cannot see anything outside of their worldview, therefore, marketers may struggle to “unlearn” and “reframe” if they are limited by their mindset and cannot see anything outside of their purview.

As previously highlighted, there was a technology driven paradigm shift in marketing (Durkin, 2013) and we now live in a digital era (Nair, 2016). While digital technologies are now a contemporary aspect of modern marketing, this was not always the case with Dweck and Yeager (2019) noting that individuals from different eras have different mindsets. Accordingly, individuals may have different mental models and different “habits” which may limit their thinking. This appears strengthened by previous discussions on the limiting power of mindset, specifically mental models. As mentioned, there is a lack of research in the area around marketing skills gaps and this study provides a greater insight into the area by identifying an underlying mindset issue. Herein, this study also notes a variance in terms of digital
proficiency. Therefore, the next section looks at the literature which identifies variances in terms of digital capabilities.

2.13 The Effect of Digital on Mindset

According to Marshak and Katz (2001) individuals view situations through a prism which is framed by such things as their beliefs, views and paradigms. Furthermore, section 2.12 highlights that mindset is learned (Fang et al., 2004), based on past experiences (Kramer, 2016) and the world is viewed through a lens (French II, 2016) where individual’s cannot see anything outside of their worldview (Kramer, 2016). The rapid dissemination of digital technologies has resulted in significant changes and there is no going back as things have changed on a fundamental level (Prensky, 2001b, 2001c). Moreover, today’s learners are technologically savvy and have a mindset that is different to previous generations (Stoerger, 2009) as exposure to certain technologies, namely video games and virtual worlds, has been found to alter the mindsets of learners (Prensky, 2001a). Young people are viewed as prolific users of technology and are stereotyped as constantly connected, always in touch, anytime or anyplace (Stoerger, 2009). However, while younger individuals have been described as technologically savvy (Prensky, 2001b) this is not the case for older individuals (Prensky, 2001c). Therefore, the extent individuals have been affected by technology, or, there lack of, will be discussed next. The following section highlights the literature around digital abilities, specifically in terms of those who grew up with technology and those who didn’t, where numerous metaphors are used to describe the suggested variance in terms of digital competence.

2.13.1 Digital Natives Versus Digital Immigrants

Prensky (2001b) used the term “digital natives” to describe a group of individuals who grew up in the digital era and who are comfortable with the internet and related technologies. Digital natives can be defined as “someone who multi-tasks, has access to a range of new technologies, is confident in their use of technologies, uses the Internet as a first port of call for information and uses the Internet for learning as well as other activities” (Helsper & Eynon, 2010, p.6). Digital natives are native speakers of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet as they have grown up with this new technology (Prensky, 2001d). They have spent their entire lives surrounded by, and using, computers, videogames, digital music, mobile phones and a multitude of other digitally related toys and tools of the digital age (Prensky, 2001b). On the other hand, “digital immigrants” do not speak this new digital language as they did not grow up with such technologies. Digital immigrants can be defined as “individuals who
grew up in a world without technology and as a result lack confidence and familiarity when using technology” (Prensky, 2001b, p.1). Individuals within the digital immigrant classification grew up in a different era compared to their kids and are now in the process of learning a new digital language and, according to scientists, a language learned later in life goes into a different part of the brain (Prensky, 2001d). Like all immigrants they learn to adapt to their environment with varying levels of success (Prensky, 2001b). However, they retain, on some level, their "accent" or a foot in their past such as turning to the Internet for information second rather than first (Prensky, 2001d).

However, some academics have criticised the digital native and immigrant metaphor. While the digital native and digital immigrant metaphor (Prensky, 2001b, 2001d) has been used to make a distinction between those with technology skills and those without, Stoerger (2009) argues that such metaphors are useful only during initial conversations and over time they become inaccurate and dangerous. Correspondingly, Holton (2010) argues that the digital natives and digital immigrants distinction is dead, or at least dying. McKenzie (2007) also strongly criticises the native and immigrant typology, identifying numerous thinly supported claims while Kennedy et al. (2010) found that the age related hypothesis is significantly less clear cut than the natives and immigrants dichotomy implies. In fact, it may be that “there is as much variation within the digital native generation as between the generations” (Bennett et al., 2008, p. 777). The digital native and immigrant metaphor also implies that the immigrant can never become a native (Stoerger, 2009) while Helsper and Eynon (2010) argue that generation alone does not adequately define if someone is a digital native or not. Moreover, digital native graduates have been found to struggle in terms of succeeding in the real world (Taylor, 2006) as they have technological skills but they lack basic and applied skills (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). In fact, according to Kirschner and De Bruyckere (2017) “there is no such thing as a digital native”, and the term is a “myth” (p135). Notwithstanding significant criticism, White and Le Cornu (2011) point to the usefulness of Prensky’s typologies and despite their drawbacks, with many criticisms of Prensky being valid, an important dialogue was initiated which offered a framework for people to use. However, many still criticised Prensky and subsequently began proposing alternative metaphors.

2.13.2 Alternative Metaphors / Terminology
While the digital immigrant and digital native typologies were deemed useful in terms of initially creating a dialogue on the issue, numerous scholars began proposing alternative
metaphors which were deemed to better describe the divide in terms of digital capabilities. According to De Saille (2006) if a metaphor must be used the term “digital colonist” is a more accurate characterisation of the immigrant group. Palfrey et al. (2009) argue that the term “digital population” is a more suitable characterisation compared to the phrase digital native, while according to Gallardo-Echenique et al. (2015), the term “digital learner” is the most useful term because it offers a more global vision of the 21st century learner. However, while these scholars argued over terminology, the only change appears on the surface where the metaphor changes rather than the underlying assumptions. Some scholars did change more than typology. Due to criticism Prensky was forced to question the validity of his original thinking regarding the native and immigrant metaphor (Prensky, 2001b, 2001d). Accordingly, Prensky (2009) proposed the concept of digital wisdom. Moreover, White and Le Cornu (2011), who criticised Prensky, proposed the visitor and residents metaphor.

Prensky’s updated metaphor, digital wisdom, argues that wisdom occurs from, and in the use of, technology. Explained in more detail Prensky (2009) defines digital wisdom as “a twofold concept, referring both to wisdom arising from the use of digital technology to access cognitive power beyond our innate capacity and to wisdom in the prudent use of technology to enhance our capabilities” (p.1). While Prensky (2009) implied that knowledge at one’s fingertips equates to wisdom, Brown and Duguid (2000) have previously argued that interactions with technology does not equal knowledge acquisition. Nonetheless, given that the brain is now generally understood to be highly plastic (Doidge, 2007; Dweck, 2007; Prensky, 2009) and continually adapting to the input it receives, Prensky (2009) argued that it is possible that the brains of those who frequently interact with technology will be “restructured” by that interaction (p.1). Unlike the digital native and immigrant metaphor, digital wisdom transcends generational boundaries (Prensky, 2009) and although digital immigrants can never actually become digital natives, they can acquire and possess digital wisdom (Stoerger, 2009). This concept suggests that digital immigrants can enter the technological areas where digital natives reside, however, even though they have the opportunity to become digitally wise, these digital immigrants still remain segregated from the natives (Prensky, 2009). While Prensky appears to have updated his original metaphor it seems the core belief which categorises an individual as either an immigrant or native is still present. Arguably, the concept of digital wisdom, which transcends generational boundaries and appears to soften the dichotomy, may have been proposed to counter the many scholars who criticised of his original work (Helsper & Eynon, 2010; Holton, 2010; Kennedy et al., 2010; Kirschner & De Bruyckere, 2017; McKenzie, 2007;
Stoerger, 2009). However, Prensky still argues that while a digital immigrant can acquire digital wisdom, they can never become digital natives and he situates both groups at opposite ends of a spectrum.

White and Le Cornu (2011, 2017), rather than associate engagement with age, suggest a different metaphor – visitors and residents. Visitors are defined as those who “understand the web as akin to an untidy garden tool shed. They have defined a goal or task and go into the shed to select an appropriate tool which they use to attain their goal. Task over, the tool is returned to the shed and no visible trace of their entrance or use of the tool is evident” (White & Le Cornu, 2017, p.2). It may not have been perfect for the task, but they are happy to make do so long as some progress is made. Residents, on the other hand, are defined as those who “see the web as a place, perhaps like a park or a building, in which there are clusters of friends and colleagues with whom they interact” (White & Le Cornu, 2011, p.7). A proportion of their life is actually lived out online where the distinction between online and offline is increasingly blurred (White & Le Cornu, 2011).

In fact, the visitor and resident typology should be understood as a continuum rather than in terms of binary opposition. It was developed into a mapping process which helps individuals to visualise, and reflect on, the digital tools and places they use or spend time in (White & Le Cornu, 2017). This is a key difference to digital wisdom. Individuals may be able to place themselves at a particular point along a continuum rather than being confined to one of two boxes. This suggests a potential for progression and growth as individuals are not permanently located at opposite ends of the spectrum and are able to move along the continuum as their levels of digital competence improve. Conversely, while Prensky (2009) argues that an individual can acquire digital wisdom, they are still confined to digital immigrant status, which appears to de-emphasise progress. Accordingly, White and Le Cornu (2011) argue that their paradigm describes the lived experience and the practice of technological engagement in a more accurate way than Prensky’s natives and immigrants typology. Subsequently, the metaphors of visitor and resident have proven useful, specifically in terms of their practical value, as individuals and teams from a wide variety of employment contexts and professional roles have used them as a simple structure on which to base reflection and exploration (White, 2016). However, while different approaches, and views, are evident within literature, all metaphors, and scholars, are pointing to a dichotomy in terms of digital abilities. Therefore, the next section will further discuss this.
2.13.3 Digital Dichotomy
This study identifies a divergence in terms of digital proficiency within modern marketing. A similar divide in terms of digital capabilities can also be seen within literature. Numerous metaphors are visible within scholarly studies, namely digital native and immigrant (Prensky, 2001b, 2001d), digital colonist (De Saille, 2006), digital population (Palfrey et al., 2009), visitors and residents (White & Le Cornu, 2011) and digital learner (Gallardo-Echenique et al., 2015). However, while scholars argue over typology, all metaphors point to a dichotomy in terms of digital proficiency. Although the terminology varies, academics are united by the fact that they all identify a divergence in terms of digital competence. Therefore, literature highlights a divide in terms of digital proficiency (White & Le Cornu, 2011; Palfrey et al., 2009; De Saille, 2006; Prensky 2001b; 2001c), with this chasm being attributed to characteristics such as generation (Prensky, 2001b, 2001d), digital exposure (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005) and digital interaction (Prensky, 2009).

2.14 Conclusion
The turbulent nature of modern marketing is emphasised within this chapter. Digital technologies have revolutionised marketing (Leeflang et al., 2014; Wymbs, 2011) and are deemed indispensable within contemporary practice (Dollarhide, 2019; Kannan & Li, 2017; Malar, 2016). Although the benefits of digital marketing are clear (Voorveld et al., 2018; Quinn et al., 2016; Nair, 2016; Malar, 2016), the associated challenges are not as well established. Marketing is constantly evolving, and the complexity of marketing in a fast-paced digitally-orientated world seems to have resulted in issues for marketers. This appears exacerbated by a disconnect between marketing education and industry needs where marketing curricula cannot, and is not, matching the pace of change within practice (Crittenden & Peterson, 2019; Rohm et al., 2019). Hence, skills gaps are evident within literature (Crush, 2011; Day, 2011; Durkin, 2013; Hege, 2020; Mgiba, 2019; Quinn et al., 2016; Royle & Laing, 2014; Wood, 2011). However, there is a scarcity of research within this area (Raghuraman, 2017; Royle & Laing, 2014) which has resulted in a lack of updated theory. Accordingly, some scholars have hinted that skills gaps may not be the pertinent issue (Durkin, 2013; Quinn et al., 2016), and the findings of this study identify an underlying mindset issue.

As previously documented, mindset is learned (Fang et al., 2004), based on past experiences (Kramer, 2016) and the world is viewed through a lens (French II, 2016) where an individual
cannot see anything outside of their worldview (Kramer, 2016). Marshak and Katz (2001) highlight that individuals view situations through a prism which is framed by their beliefs, views and paradigms. This would suggest that marketers view marketing through a lens which is based on their past or learned experiences, therefore, marketers who grew up in the digital era will have a different mindset to those who grew up without technology. The findings of this study suggest that early career marketers have a digital mindset and later career marketers have a non-digital mindset. This appears to be supported in literature as a dichotomy in terms digital proficiency has previously been identified by numerous scholars (White & Le Cornu, 2011; Palfrey et al., 2009; De Saille, 2006; Prensky 2001b; 2001c).

Furthermore, mental models compose our mindset (Kramer, 2016) and limit us to familiar ways of thinking and acting (Senge, 1990). Marketers may be limited to the activities which are situated within their specific mindset, and they may be closed to behaviours which fall outside of their purview. The dynamism of the marketing industry, which is well established within this chapter, calls for a re-evaluation of the knowledge and capabilities needed within practice (Jabado & Jallouli, 2021), therefore, marketers may need to “reframe” as marketing evolves. This may prove difficult as individuals are unable to see anything outside of their worldview, and if they are unable to see a problem clearly, they cannot take effective action (Kramer, 2016). This may limit individuals to past “habits” which may no longer be suitable or effective. Durkin (2013) notes a paradigm shift within marketing and certain marketers may not have adapted, and may be re-using outdated assumptions and relying on past practices which may now be inappropriate. Marshak (2006) suggests that without a change in mindset people will continue to see situations the same way and will develop the same responses. This scenario may not be compatible to industries such as marketing where the evolving landscape requires new ways of thinking and the ability to view emerging situations in new and innovative ways. If marketers are limited by their mindset they may not be marketing to their fullest ability, which may potentially affect areas such as marketing practice, organisational effectiveness, upskilling and reskilling, and an individual’s career. However, as mentioned, this area of research has been neglected by literature in recent times resulting in a lack of exploration, and subsequent theory, in this area. The next chapter will discuss the research methods used as part of this study.
Chapter 3: Research Methods
3.0 Chapter Overview

Modern marketing has changed significantly in recent times (Hill et al., 2010; Jabado & Jallouli, 2021; Kumar, 2015; Leeflang et al., 2014; Nair, 2016; Wymbis, 2011) and this study investigates the experiences of modern marketers. This chapter highlights the research methods and the methodological decisions made within this study. These decisions, and choices, supported the researcher in terms of answering the research question which is detailed in section 1.2. As this study is situated within an under-researched and under-theorised area, a grounded theory methodology, which describes the experiences of those under study, was deemed pertinent. This methodology underpins this study as it allows for theory to be built. A flexible research design which allows for the data to be followed was therefore necessary for this study. A mixed method approach to data collection was chosen for this study, specifically due to the flexibility afforded by such techniques. Hence, this chapter will expand on these areas and will also discuss philosophy and strategy, data collection methods, sampling, ethical considerations, and data analysis. In addition, as this study utilises a mixed method approach to data collection, both qualitative and quantitative research will be explored. Finally, credibility and trustworthiness, rather than validity and reliability, will be discussed. However, as stated, the researcher will firstly discuss the motivation behind this study and will justify the research question.

3.1 Research Design

The research question emerged from the identified gap in literature. A similar approach to Hair et al. (2003) was taken where an appropriate research design is deemed essential due to the fact that it guides the researcher and determines the type of data, data collection technique, the sampling methodology, the schedule, and the budget. However, as this study is underpinned by a grounded theory methodology, flexibility was deemed important to allow the research study to be data led. There are no model research designs to guide the researcher as numerous research designs, which will achieve the same outcome, can be utilised (Burns & Bush, 2008). Therefore, the research design was tailored to this specific study.

A mixed methods approach was taken in terms of answering the research question of this study. The initial phase of data collection was the in-depth interview. This was done to gain an in-depth understanding of contemporary marketing from the perspective of the modern marketing practitioner and to also gain an insight into their experiences. The in-depth interview was utilised as the principle data collection method where both later and early career marketers
were interviewed. Initially, later career marketers were interviewed due to their over-arching experience within contemporary practice. Initial data shifted focus to early career marketers, who were then interviewed. These interviews were followed by a Likert scale survey where the data was further explored. The final data collection stage was the online focus group. The descriptive model which describes the experiences of modern marketers and demonstrates the mindset theory was presented to informed marketers to gain feedback. The decisions made as part of this study, including data collection methods, will be further discussed and justified later in this chapter. However, the philosophical decisions made regarding this research study will be discussed next.

3.2 Research Philosophy
Research philosophy refers to the development of knowledge by researchers, and within a study, the approach taken will depend on the social phenomena being researched (Morgan & Smircich, 1980). The researcher made sure to understand the chosen research philosophy to ensure its appropriateness for this study, specifically in terms of the related beliefs and assumptions about how the world is viewed. The philosophy was also chosen due to its suitability to the research methods and methodology. This ensured that all elements of this study are in harmony as certain philosophical stances, research styles, and methodologies are incompatible. With this in mind, a constructivist philosophical stance was taken for this study. This philosophical stance is also aligned to the researchers own personal views and is pertinent to both mixed method research and the constructivist grounded theory methodology which underpins this study, and which will be further discussed in later sections. The researcher will now further expand on constructivism and justify why it was deemed most appropriate for this study.

3.2.1 Constructivism
The researcher does not believe in an objective reality, instead believing in the existence of multiple realities. Furthermore, he believes that researchers should not be separated from the research process as they play an integral role in decoding and giving voice to participants experiences and realities. The researcher identifies with a constructivist philosophy, and has, therefore, taken this philosophical stance for this study. Constructivism is a research paradigm which opposes the idea of an objective reality, “asserting instead that realities are social constructions of the mind, and that there exist as many such constructions as there are individuals (although clearly many constructions will be shared)” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989,
p.43). This philosophical paradigm guided the research methods employed within this study and shares basic assumptions with a constructivist grounded theory methodology, which will be discussed in the next section. Constructivism can be considered a label given to a variety of research approaches and philosophies about reality and truth, while “constructivist” scholars are united by the fact that they have moved away from trying to explain an objective reality (Knol, 2011).

This study investigates how the lived experiences of modern marketers provide an insight into the interplay between skills gaps and the digital transformation of marketing practice, and a constructivist philosophical stance allowed the researcher to give voice to the modern marketer, while also aiding him in understanding the reality or experiences of modern practitioners. Constructivism aims to understand “the world of human experience” (Cohen & Manion, 1994 p.36) suggesting that “reality is socially constructed” (Martens, 2005 p.12) and the researcher is key to this. Constructivist research relies upon the “participants view of the situation being studied” (Creswell, 2003, p.8) while also recognising the impact of the researchers own background and experiences on the research (Haverkamp & Young, 2007). This is an important point as, according to Keller et al (2014), it is impossible to separate the researcher from their research or to be neutral or unbiased. Hence, it was important for the researcher to be honest about his history, while also taking time to reflect upon how it might influence this study. The researcher was aware of his role within the research process and, as reality is socially constructed, he believes that the role of the researcher is to decode and build a theory based on the experiences of the participants. For this to happen, he cannot be separated from the research. The researcher did, however, use reflexive strategies which are aligned to the chosen methodology. Groundness was ensured by specifically favouring the data over any other input which aims to counter possible biases associated with the researcher being immersed within the study. Further strategies used will be detailed in section 3.13.

Moreover, a constructivist stance supports the use of a qualitative research approach, the principle research method of this study. According to Haverkamp and Young (2007) the search for an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon and to develop rich descriptions of lived experiences fits best with the qualitative methodology, specifically when it is within the constructivist paradigm. Moreover, Resnick (1987) highlights that constructivism is a theory of meaning making while Thompson (2000) suggests that constructivism is a model of knowing and can be used to build a theory. The ability to build a theory using the constructivist paradigm
is also important as it is aligned to a grounded theory methodology which is characterised by creating a model or theory, and which underpins this study. As highlighted in previous chapters, there is a scarcity of research in the area around marketing skills gaps. Consequently, this research area is both under-researched and under-theorised. Therefore, the ability to build theory is an important aspect of this study, and the next section will discuss grounded theory.

3.3 Grounded Theory

Classical grounded theory is a systematic qualitative research approach emphasizing the generation of middle range theory from data at a substantive or formal level (Glaser, 1978). However, grounded theory has undergone considerable development during the past four decades and can now be seen as an umbrella term for the three prevailing traditions: Classic, Straussian, and Constructivist grounded theory (Kenny & Fourie, 2015). While multiple versions of grounded theory exist, there are certain core features all grounded theory approaches have. Charmaz (2011) best describes these keys features:

- Simultaneous collection and analysis of data
- Creation of analytic codes and categories developed from data and not by pre-existing conceptualisations (theoretical sensitivity)
- Discovery of basic social processes in the data
- Inductive construction of abstract categories
- Theoretical sampling to refine categories
- Writing analytical memos as the stage between coding and writing
- The integration of categories into a theoretical framework.

3.3.1 Constructivist Grounded Theory

Early characterisations of classical grounded theory exhibited a positivist orientation no longer tenable (Bryant, 2003) and researchers have moved from positivism towards constructivism (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012) as a response to the critiques of positivism (Houston, 2001). The researcher’s constructivist philosophical stance does not situate well within a positivist classical grounded theory, however, the contemporary approach to grounded theory by Kathy Charmaz was identified as the appropriate methodology. Constructivist grounded theory (CGT) is a qualitative research methodology that seeks to understand and explore a social process where no adequate prior theory exists, which makes CGT ideally suited to this study.
Chapter two highlights the changing nature of marketing, where the area of skills gaps is both under-researched and under-theorised. Therefore, the ability to build theory was identified as being important in terms of this study.

Moreover, studies underpinned by a grounded theory methodology generally begin with a broad research question (Glaser, 1998) which may change as the study progresses (O’Connor et al., 2018). Chapter one identifies a pivot in the research journey. This study began with a broad research question which evolved as the study progressed. Initially the study aimed to explore the under-theorised areas of skills gaps and the experiences of modern marketers and looked at the potential role that the cognitive apprenticeship model (CAM) and peer assisted learning (PAL) may play. However, the data began to point to a different issue, accordingly, the research question evolved. As stated, this is common within grounded theory studies. The flexibility offered by a grounded theory methodology, especially in a research area which has been neglected in recent times, enabled the researcher to follow the data and build theory. This flexibility also enabled the researcher to describe the experiences of modern marketers. The appropriateness of this methodology is further exhibited as it generates theory from data gathered, specifically via participant interviews or focus groups, which were both utilised as part of this study.

Furthermore, the researcher has numerous other justifications for choosing a constructivist grounded theory methodology. Firstly, it was highlighted in chapters one and two that the research area around marketing skills gaps is under theorised. Naturally, this pointed to grounded theory being the ideal methodology for this specific study as a fundamental aim of grounded theory, according to Glaser and Strauss (1967), is to generate or discover a theory. Secondly, grounded theory can be defined as “the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967 p.2), which is best achieved by qualitative means, the primary data collection method for this study. Constructivist grounded theory also encourages researchers to make conjectures and check them (Charmaz, 2011) which highlights its suitability to this study yet again as it allowed the researcher to utilise a Likert scale survey as a means of further exploring the initial key data from in-depth interviews, and to gain feedback on the final theory via focus groups.

Thirdly, grounded theory, as highlighted by Crooks (2001) is ideal for exploring integral social relationships and the behaviour of groups where there has been little exploration of the
contextual factors which affect individual’s lives. As previously highlighted, there is a lack of exploration within marketing literature in terms of the experiences and challenges of modern marketers (Leeflang et al., 2014; Quinn et al., 2016). Fourthly, constructivist grounded theory, unlike classical grounded theory, posits that the researcher plays a key role and their voice in the resulting theory should not be excluded, avoided, or hidden, which is aligned to the researchers views and subsequent constructivist philosophical stance. Here, the grounded theory methodology is the tool, rather than a prescription (Charmaz, 2000). Fifthly, grounded theory has strong links to constructivism and is a popular method for research studies (Mills et al., 2006) with several authors identifying with grounded theory when it is underpinned by a constructivist paradigm (Charmaz, 1994, 1995, 2000; McCann & Clark, 2003a, 2003b; Norton, 1999).

Sixthly, a constructivist grounded theory methodology, supported by a constructivist philosophical stance, allowed for the gathering of opinions and perceptions of the modern marketer through qualitative means. To successfully answer the research question of this study, the researcher needed to gain an in-depth insight into the experiences of modern marketers and constructivist grounded theory supported such an endeavour. Finally, grounded theory is also pertinent in terms of the decisions made regarding the choice of philosophy and research styles. Therefore, a grounded theory approach was best suited for this study as it supported the researcher in gaining an insight into modern marketing through the eyes of the marketing practitioner. This enabled both a contribution to knowledge in terms of theory, which also provides a basis on which future research can be constructed upon. The researcher will now progress onto the next section which discusses the different research styles, namely qualitative and quantitative, which were utilised within this study.

3.4 Qualitative and Quantitative Research Approaches

Generally, two research approaches known as quantitative and qualitative have been followed when carrying out research. Quantitative research places an emphasis on quantities or amounts, and information is quantified with data analysis tending to be more straightforward and simplistic. The researcher is aware of the many benefits offered by a quantitative approach; however, these benefits are only actualised when the research is based on quantities or numerical data, and as this study is not, quantitative research was deemed unsuitable in terms of being the primary research approach for this study. However, quantitative research was deemed appropriate in the form of a typical 5-point Likert scale survey which was utilised to
provide further insight into the key initial data obtained from qualitative interviews, which is aligned to the chosen methodology. Therefore, an overall mixed method approach was taken for this study which allowed the researcher to reap the benefits of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. This will be further discussed later in this section.

The researcher deemed it pertinent to gain a rich and in-depth understanding of the marketing practitioner, and to also interpret or describe their experiences. Therefore, aided by a constructivism which relies on participants view of the area under study, and a constructivist grounded theory methodology which welcomes the researcher into the research process, a qualitative research approach was deemed pertinent as the principle research method for this study. Qualitative research centres around the participant and uses non-numerical data to focus on meanings, providing rich insights which enabled the researcher to describe the realities of the modern marketer. Qualitative research is also, generally speaking, exploratory, and due to the scarcity of research in the area under study, highlighted in chapter 2, the in-depth interview was chosen as the principle data collection method. The qualitative approach allowed for a deep understanding of opinions, perceptions and motivations, and provided an insight into modern marketing through the eyes of the marketing practitioner. A quantitative approach then allowed for further insight into key initial data which emerged from the interview stage. This may increase the trustworthiness and credibility of a study. In terms of accountability, the researcher posits that trustworthiness and credibility are best suited to this study. This will be further detailed later in this chapter.

Moreover, as qualitative research is an array of interpretative techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, rather than frequency, this further highlights its suitability for this research study. Especially, as it enabled the researcher to delve deeper into a problem to uncover trends in thoughts, opinions and realities. As previously stated, the researcher plays a crucial role in achieving this, and by taking a constructivist philosophical stance, coupled with a constructivist grounded theory methodology, the researcher was fully able to capitalise on the associated benefits of using qualitative data collection methods. Furthermore, such insights would not have been possible if, for example, a positivist stance which asserts an objective reality and assumes that the researcher must be purged from the research and remain on the outside was taken. However, as mentioned in previous sections, the researcher sees his place within the research process and
through this inclusion and commitment to the analyse the data, he was allowed to construct theory.

3.4.1 Mixed method Research

As stated, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were utilised as part of this study. Traditionally, the difference between these research techniques was often seen as quite fundamental, leading people to talk about “paradigm wars” in which quantitative and qualitative research were seen as incompatible factions (Sukamolson, 2007). However, that is no longer the case as researchers now follow the path most suited to their area of research (Bryman, 2006). Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) define mixed methods research, in broad terms, as “research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches” (p.3). Mixed methods research became popular where both research traditions are combined as researchers recognise the benefits of doing so. Fielding and Schreier (2001) highlight that an approach based on the combination of different methods is more rigorous, while Eisner (1991) previously cautioned against a dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative research, while also asserting that they can be combined. Therefore, the researcher deemed it beneficial to combine both qualitative and quantitative research methods in this study.

The qualitative, naturalistic approach was used to observe and interpret reality to develop theory which described the experiences and realities of modern marketers, while the quantitative approach was used to further explore initial key interview data. The basis for employing this research design is generally varied, however, a core reason why this study utilises a mixed method approach is due to the ability to offset the weaknesses of using just one approach. The researcher is aware of the disadvantages associated with qualitative research and by utilising a mixed method approach these weaknesses, or disadvantages, were minimised. This was achieved by being able to compare initial key data, obtained through qualitative means, with the data from the Likert scale survey. This also increased credibility and trustworthiness within this study as Likert scale data was aligned to the interview data. Another reason why a mixed method approach was chosen is down to its suitability to constructivist grounded theory methodology which underpins this study. According to Guetterman et al (2019) key scholars have lauded the benefits of integrating mixed methods and grounded theory, while Johnson et al (2010) highlight how grounded theory can be tailored to work well with mixed methods research and can be used in connecting theory generation with theory
testing, therefore linking theory and practice. This is important due to the under-researched subject area where this study is based. The researcher will now progress onto the next section which identifies, and justifies, the different data collection methods used within this study.

3.5 Data Collection Methods
The data collection methods employed for this study were solely based on answering the research question set out previously in section 3.1. The mixed methods to research which were utilised within this study are further detailed in this section.

3.5.1 The In-Depth Interview
The interview enabled the researcher to probe respondents to gain an in-depth understanding of modern marketing and an insight into the related issues and pressures from the perspective of the marketing practitioner. The semi-structured nature of the interview provided flexibility which allowed the researcher to follow the data in accordance with a constructivist grounded theory methodology. Jones (1985) espouses the virtues of the semi-structured interview by advising that although researchers are, to some extent, tied to their framework, they should refrain from being totally confined by them. This is something deemed vital, as explained in chapter 2, looking at practitioner challenges and issues is an under-theorised area of research. This flexibility, supported by a grounded theory methodology, enabled the researcher to follow the data, allowing theory to emerge. The in-depth interview also brings the researcher into the research process. This provided an in-depth insight into the modern marketer while also supporting the researcher in probing possible areas of potential embarrassment for marketers such as an ineptness due to a lack of marketing knowledge or skills gaps. This allowed for a greater understanding of the modern marketer as this level of insight would not be possible in a group setting where respondents tend to be less willing to share certain particulars for fear of being judged, or seen as incompetent, by their peers.

Notwithstanding, the researcher was aware of potential pitfalls associated with the in-depth interview, specifically how he may impose his own perspective on the respondent even though the researcher’s comments and contributions, based on prior experiential knowledge and learning, will undoubtedly enhance overall data collection – a key reason why a constructivist philosophical stance was chosen. Other potential issues with the in-depth interview include results which are too varied to offer sufficient insights into the research problem, the findings being difficult to analyse and interpret as the sample size might be small, or that the
interpretation of data is subjective and dependent on the interviewer’s view of what was said (Burns & Bush, 2008). However, a research method which facilitates the collection of rich, in-depth, and descriptive data, while also offering the flexibility to change course to follow the data, was deemed pertinent for this study. Therefore, the in-depth interview was chosen as the primary data collection method as it allowed for an in-depth understanding of the experiences of modern marketers. The researcher believes that the many benefits of utilising the in-depth interview outweigh any drawbacks and, to limit certain pitfalls, the researcher decided it was important to further explore the initial interview findings via a quantitative Likert scale survey. As stated, this also increases the credibility and trustworthiness of this study, and the Likert scale will be explained next.

3.5.2 Likert Scale Survey

The Likert scale survey is the most widely used method of attitude measurement in numerous fields (Babbie, 1998) and is commonly used to measure attitude by providing a range of responses to a given question or statement (Cohen et al., 2000). While this study predominantly utilised qualitative data collection methods, the Likert scale survey is useful in social sciences (Croasmun & Ostrom, 2011) and is most frequently used to measure psychological constructs, which is one aspect of a person’s cognition (Nemoto & Beglar, 2014). Accordingly, the researcher considers the Likert scale to be well suited to this research. The interview stage provided rich data and, as previously highlighted, the researcher was aware of the possible pitfalls with the in-depth interview. Therefore, the Likert scale helped counter the limitations of the in-depth interview and also provided further insight into key interview data. Preliminary findings, which emerged after the first round of coding, were used as the basis for the Likert scale statements. These will be discussed later in more detail.

Typically, a Likert scale is a 5- or 7-point ordinal scale used by respondents to rate the degree to which they agree or disagree with a statement, with the scales ranging from a group of categories such as how much they agree or disagree with a statement (Allen & Seaman, 2007). Generally, there are five categories of response, and figure 3.1 illustrates a typical Likert Scale and one which is of the same format used in this study. Thirteen statements were provided to respondents who were asked to state their response based on the options highlighted in figure 3.1.
A typical 5-point Likert scale survey

Figure 3.1

Likert scale surveys are flexible and can be built in numerous ways. Usually they include at least five response categories, however, scales are sometimes truncated to an even number of categories, typically four, to eliminate the “neutral” option in a “forced choice” survey scale (Allen & Seaman, 2007). The researcher did not want to “force” any respondents into choosing an option with which they did not totally agree, or disagree with; therefore, a neutral option was provided. The researcher believes that a neutral option is important as without one there is a risk that results may be skewed if respondents were “forced” into choosing an option they were not in total agreement with. As stated, preliminary findings from the in-depth interview stage were used as a basis for the Likert scale survey statements. Survey results were generally supportive of initial interview data and this allowed the researcher to progress the research study. The final data collection method utilised within this study was the online focus group. The descriptive model and mindset theory were presented to a group of marketing practitioners during two online focus groups.

3.5.3 Online Focus Group

The final data collection stage returned to a qualitative research method in the form of an online focus group. The focus group is a robust tool and can be used at the preliminary or exploratory stages of a study (Krueger, 1988), during a study, as an evaluation or development tool (Race et al., 1994) or afterwards to assess impact or to generate further avenues of research (Gibbs, 1997). Traditionally, focus groups have been conducted in a face to face situation. In recent times, however, electronic communication technologies have enabled researchers to utilize new approaches to focus group research (Rezabek, 2000) with Internet based data collection now part of the mainstream canon of methodological choices (Stewart & Williams, 2005). Accordingly, Stewart and Williams (2005) also note that the online focus group has numerous benefits particularly compared to traditional focus groups. These include such things as respondent sampling, convenience, lower cost, and less pressure on respondents to “conform”. Several studies have compared findings from traditional focus groups and online focus groups and findings suggest that the quantity and quality of data obtained online are broadly
comparable to those obtained by traditional focus group discussions (Reid & Reid, 2005; Schneider et al., 2002; Underhill & Olmsted, 2003).

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic both focus groups took place online. Two synchronous online focus groups were run where the descriptive model was presented to a group of marketing professionals. Both online focus groups took place via Microsoft Teams and were recorded. All respondents were online at the same time and were able to view and react to the comments of the moderator and their fellow participants. This allowed for direct interaction and a group discussion. The moderator, in line with Brüggen and Willems (2009), led discussions, asked questions, clarified ambiguities, summarised the discussion and ensured that all important topics were discussed. The online focus group allowed the researcher to safely present his model to an adept audience and to engage in conversation around the key findings, specifically mindset. While a key aim of the online focus group was to present the finalised model to marketers, the online focus group also allowed for further exploration, and discussion, of the key findings which emerged within this study. Accordingly, the collection of further data was also facilitated. Therefore, the final data collection stage was utilised to achieve numerous objectives. The researcher has justified each choice made regarding the chosen research methods for this study and will now progress onto the next section which details the samples for each of the previous research methods.

3.6 Sample Structure and Size
Within research, the ideal scenario is to test all the individuals in the relevant population, however, as this is generally not possible, sampling techniques should be utilised (Sharma, 2017). For this study, it was not possible to reach the entire marketing population, therefore, sampling techniques were employed. Suitable marketers were systematically selected from the marketing arena for this study. As excessive and inadequate samples can affect both the quality and accuracy of the research, the researcher predominantly used non-probability sampling to ensure high quality respondents. Purposive sampling was utilised for the in-depth interviews and online focus groups. Marketers were selected based on the purpose of this study and with the expectation that each participant would provide unique and rich information of value. Total population sampling was utilised for the Likert scale survey.

Generally, larger size samples give more reliable results than smaller samples, but it is not always possible, or appropriate, to choose large samples. As this study predominantly utilised
qualitative research methods, namely the in-depth interview and focus group, smaller sample sizes were pertinent. However, the sample sizes were significant enough to achieve data saturation. The researcher also highlights that the richness of data which emerged from the qualitative research methods would not have been achieved if other research methods with larger samples were utilised. The collection of rich, descriptive data was facilitated by both the in-depth interview and focus group where smaller samples are advantageous.

Furthermore, and as highlighted previously, the research area where this study is based is under-researched. Accordingly, this study does not specifically concentrate on marketers who work in an in-house or agency setting. Instead, this study focuses on the experiences of both early and later career modern marketers from the general marketing population. Therefore, in terms of sampling, respondents are spread across both in-house and agency. This is also the case in terms of the online focus groups. While marketers are not segmented based on their current job position, the majority of interviewees and focus group respondents, specifically those within the later career cohort, have experience across both areas of marketing. This may have implications in terms of data collected and data analysis, however, the researcher would like to note that no variations between those currently working in an agency or those currently working in an in-house marketing position were noted in the data. In fact, the sentiments of marketers across both areas of marketing were aligned.

3.6.1 In-Depth Interview Sampling
The in-depth interview was utilised with the aim of gaining an insight into modern marketing through the eyes of the marketing practitioner. The researcher decided upon later career marketers, labelled “Cohort A”, as the ideal cohort to interview first due to their overarching knowledge and extensive experience of modern marketing. The term “later career” refers to marketers who are experienced in marketing, occupying senior marketing roles or with significant experience within the marketing sphere. Prior to the first interview, the researcher piloted the research guide with colleagues who were informed in relation to modern marketing. The interview guide was then finalised to include any recommendations or suggested changes. In total, fifteen later career marketers were interviewed.

3.6.1.1 Later Career Sample
All interview respondents had formal marketing education, either at undergraduate or postgraduate level, and sometimes both. The researcher targeted later career marketers due to
their considerable expertise and to unearth a comprehensive insight into contemporary marketing. Owing to this, a key strength of this study is linked to the access of highly experienced marketers. Such insights are seldom documented in empirical marketing studies (Quinn et al., 2016), despite evidence suggesting that higher-ranking informants tend to be “more reliable sources of information than their lower status counterparts” (Phillips, 1981, p.412). In total, out of the fifteen interviews, twelve interviews took place face to face while, due to geographical reasons, one took place via video call, and two via phone call. All interviews were fully recorded using a dictaphone and the researcher also took notes during each interview. Table 3.1 highlights a brief biography and anonymised names of each interview respondent within the later career stratification along with the date and length of each interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Short Bio</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>Senior Marketing Manager, B2B, In-House</td>
<td>16/1/2017</td>
<td>39.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>Head of Sales &amp; Marketing, B2C, In-House</td>
<td>17/1/2017</td>
<td>35.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>Managing Director - PR &amp; Marketing Agency, Cork &amp; Dub</td>
<td>17/1/2017</td>
<td>35.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle</td>
<td>Marketing Manager, National Organisation, In-House</td>
<td>18/1/2017</td>
<td>33.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward</td>
<td>Marketing Consultant &amp; University Marketing Lecturer</td>
<td>20/1/2017</td>
<td>43.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Marketing / Head of Sales, National Wholesaler</td>
<td>23/1/2017</td>
<td>31.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabby</td>
<td>Managing Director – Marketing Agency</td>
<td>24/1/2017</td>
<td>31.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>Marketer, Trainer, Industry Judge &amp; Conference Speaker</td>
<td>25/1/2017</td>
<td>35.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian</td>
<td>Agency Founder, Marketing Consultant, Mentor, Trainer &amp; Digital Lecturer</td>
<td>27/1/2017</td>
<td>56.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>Managing Director, National Marketing Agency</td>
<td>30/1/2017</td>
<td>47.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>CEO - Marketing Agency for 25 Years</td>
<td>2/2/2017</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>Marketing Director Covering Multiple 5-Star Hotels</td>
<td>8/2/2017</td>
<td>46.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neil</td>
<td>Founder of Marketing Agencies, Past – Agency Director, Marketing Manager</td>
<td>17/2/2017</td>
<td>33.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.6.1.2 Early Career Sample

Having interviewed the later career cohort, the preliminary data pointed the researcher in the direction of early career marketers. This is known as theoretical sampling and is a key aspect of grounded theory methodologies. Certain issues emerged during initial data analysis which suggested that early career marketers were overly focused on digital technologies, while also exhibiting a lack of knowledge around the non-digital elements of marketing. Therefore, to continue to gain an insight into modern marketing, the researcher adjudged interviewing early career marketers not only logical, but also exigent. Thereafter, early career marketers, labelled “Cohort B”, were interviewed. The term “early career” refers to marketers with limited marketing experience, respondents within this cohort had between 1-5 years of experience within the marketing arena. A similar piloting procedure to that of the first set of interviews took place here also. In total, eleven early career marketers were interviewed. Yet again, all interview respondents had formal marketing education, either at undergraduate or postgraduate level, and sometimes both.

These interviews further augmented the researcher’s insight into modern marketing and also enabled him to delve into the issues which were highlighted by later career marketers in the earlier interviews. All eleven early career marketers were interviewed over the phone. The researcher, having previously interviewed respondents in person and over the phone, did not perceive any difference, or associated benefits with interviews that were face to face. Therefore, he decided to interview all eleven early career respondents over the phone. All interviews, similar to those of the later career cohort, were fully recorded using a dictaphone and the researcher also took notes during each interview. Table 3.2 highlights a brief biography and anonymised names of each interview respondent within the early career cohort along with the date and length of each interview.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Name</th>
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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pam</td>
<td>Marketing Executive, Predominantly B2B</td>
<td>16/1/2018</td>
<td>30.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quinton</td>
<td>Marketing Executive, Past – Marketing Assistant &amp; Digital Marketing Postgrad</td>
<td>17/1/2018</td>
<td>1.08.37</td>
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<td>Rita</td>
<td>Marketing Coordinator, Hotel Group</td>
<td>23/1/2018</td>
<td>32.35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sinead</td>
<td>Marketing Coordinator, Past - Digital Marketing Specialist</td>
<td>24/1/2018</td>
<td>30.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>Marketing Manager, B2B / B2C Experience</td>
<td>30/1/2018</td>
<td>34.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uriah</td>
<td>Marketing Executive, Leisure Industry, Predominantly B2C</td>
<td>8/2/2018</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viv</td>
<td>Marketing Specialist, Retail Industry</td>
<td>9/2/2018</td>
<td>31.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>Marketing Executive, Software Industry, B2B</td>
<td>14/2/2018</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xena</td>
<td>Digital Marketing Executive, Health &amp; Wellness, Predominantly B2B</td>
<td>19/2/2018</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasmin</td>
<td>Direct Marketing Executive, Financial Services, B2B</td>
<td>26/2/2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zahid</td>
<td>Marketing Executive, Printing Industry, Predominantly B2B</td>
<td>28/2/2018</td>
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Anonymised Biographies - Early Career Cohort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Short Bio</th>
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<td>Uriah</td>
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<td>8/2/2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Viv</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will</td>
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<td>Xena</td>
<td>Digital Marketing Executive, Health &amp; Wellness, Predominantly B2B</td>
<td>19/2/2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yasmin</td>
<td>Direct Marketing Executive, Financial Services, B2B</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zahid</td>
<td>Marketing Executive, Printing Industry, Predominantly B2B</td>
<td>28/2/2018</td>
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3.6.2 Likert Scale Sample

As discussed in section 3.6, due to the richness of the data which emerged from both sets of in-depth interviews, the researcher decided to utilise a typical 5-point Likert scale survey which provided further insight into interview data. This was also considered necessary due to the lack of scholarly research available in this area which meant that study findings could not be compared to current literature. A total of thirteen statements were provided and respondents were instructed to rank each statement on a Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, with each statement being informed by the findings from the interview stage. Sampling for the survey was based on total population sampling and the survey was put out to all marketers with the aim of further exploring initial interview findings with the general marketing population. Prior to its launch, the researcher piloted the Likert scale survey with informed colleagues, taking on board any suggestions or edits. The pilot data was then deleted before the Likert scale survey went live. The Likert scale survey was open from 29/3/19 to
6/5/19 and a total of one hundred and eighty-six marketing practitioners participated in the survey.

The principal reason for utilising the Likert scale was to gain an insight into the feelings and opinions of the general marketing population. Accordingly, the findings of the Likert scale survey are principally presented in such a manner where career stage is not taken into account. Instead, the views of the general marketing population are presented. However, four categories of experience were provided at the beginning of the survey and marketers were instructed to identify which category best described their marketing experience. The four categories offered were 1-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-20 years and 21+ years. While the principal results from the Likert scale survey, which are presented in in chapter 4, are based on the general marketing population, the four categorisations provided a more nuanced insight into modern marketers which also allowed the researcher to gain further insight into any variations in opinions and experiences which may be evident. Accordingly, results are also provided in terms of viewing marketing in smaller classifications which are based on marketing experience. Therefore, while the four categorisations were provided to better understand modern marketers and to gain a more in-depth insight into the area of study, the principal aim of the Likert scale survey was to gain an insight into the feelings and opinions of the general marketing population.

### 3.6.3 Online Focus Group Sample

The suggested size of traditional focus groups is six to twelve participants (Krueger, 1994; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). However, similar to Stylos et al. (2021) the researcher utilised an online focus group where larger numbers are not considered apt due to the online setting. Accordingly, six respondents were identified as pertinent for this study which helped enhance the effectiveness of the focus group. This was achieved by creating an environment which encouraged all respondents to contribute, while also enabling the researcher to ensure, firstly, that all members have their say and, secondly, that all pertinent data is collected. The researcher believes that a larger cohort does not suit the online setting as they are harder to manage, which could have a negative effect on the collection of rich data. Larger focus groups can also become side-lined with personal conversations or disagreements and, therefore, are harder to mediate. The researcher would like to highlight that the smaller cohort, in both focus groups, allowed for a more in-depth discussion on the pertinent areas related to this study and did not disadvantage this study.
Focus groups respondents were purposively sampled to ensure high quality respondents. The researcher piloted a smaller online focus group consisting of five people. Feedback and observations regarding the running of the focus group were detailed and the researcher utilised this information to ensure the smooth running of the bona fide focus groups. In total, two online focus groups took place. Respondents were predominantly from early and later career stratifications; however, each focus group also had a marketer who was “somewhere in the middle” in terms of experience and career stage. This marketer was neither at the early or later stage of their marketing career. They had more experience than early career marketers yet less experience, and seniority, than later career marketers. Each marketer had professional experience working with both early and later career marketers, therefore, they were included in the online focus groups to provide a different perspective on the matters under discussion with the aim of also fostering further discussion. They were also included to gain insight from a marketer who was not considered to be at the early or later stages of their career themselves but who, as stated, had experience of both early and later career marketers. Accordingly, their insight was considered to be valuable as it added an extra dimension to the online focus group. Similar criteria to that of the interview stage were used for both focus groups. All focus group members had a marketing education at either undergraduate or postgraduate level, and some had both.

As stated, two online focus groups took place – the first focus group originally had six respondents confirmed, however, less than twenty-four hours prior to the focus group two respondents had to drop out due to work obligations and could not be replaced at such short notice by marketers of the requisite experience. Therefore, the first focus group consisted of four people. The researcher decided to run a second focus group and had eight participants confirmed, however, yet again, two participants had to withdraw from the study due to worked related issues. The second focus group had six people confirmed, notwithstanding, one person did not join and efforts to contact them were unsuccessful. Therefore, the second focus group consisted of five participants. The researcher would like to highlight the difficulty in recruiting suitable marketers for the online focus group. Although almost eighty marketers were contacted, the vast majority of people were unavailable, unwilling to partake, or simply did not respond. The extra workload associated with Covid-19 was a common reason given to the researcher. Members of both focus groups, with anonymised names, are detailed in table 3.3 and 3.4, respectively. Focus group 2 had two participants who were previously interviewed during the initial stage of data collection. This is a similar approach taken by Royle and Laing
(2014) in their study. These two respondents are identifiable by a * next to their anonymised names and consist of one later career marketer and one early career marketer. Table 3.3 and 3.4 provide further details of both focus groups.

<table>
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<th>Date</th>
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<td>Group Marketing Manager, Tourism &amp; Hospitality Sector, Senior Marketer</td>
<td>8/7/20</td>
<td>48.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>Marketing Institute of Ireland (MII) Past - Marketing Executive</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Frances</td>
<td>Senior Marketing Manager at Virgin Media, Past – Marketing Manager Allied Irish Bank (AIB)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Anonymised Biographies – Focus Group 1

(*Previously Interviewed)

<table>
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Short Bio</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>Maura</td>
<td>Digital Marketing Consultant &amp; Lecturer, Past – Agency and In-house Marketing</td>
<td>16/8/20</td>
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<td>Ian*</td>
<td>Agency Founder, Marketing Consultant, Mentor, Trainer &amp; Digital Lecturer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kyle</td>
<td>Chief Marketing Officer, Past – International Marketing Manager – Heineken</td>
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<td>Quinton*</td>
<td>Marketing Executive, Past – Marketing Assistant &amp; Digital Marketing Postgrad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erica</td>
<td>Marketing Manager Global Tech Firm, Past – Senior Marketing Manager</td>
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Anonymised Biographies – Focus Group 2

3.7 Recruitment of Participants

As previously stated, fifteen later career marketers and eleven early career marketers were interviewed. All participants were purposively sampled to ensure high quality respondents. After an initial online background search to ensure suitability, respondents were contacted via
a generic email which briefly detailed the study and asked them to be part of the research. A suitable time and date were agreed upon with those willing to be interviewed. The lower number of early career interviews is down to numerous factors. Firstly, early career marketers proved much harder to recruit in terms of agreeing to an interview, with several interviewees cancelling, or simply ignoring the researchers calls having originally agreed to be interviewed. Secondly, data saturation was achieved, thus rendering the need to further interview respondents unnecessary. Thirdly, the researcher did not want to dilute the credibility or trustworthiness of the findings by interviewing marketers who were unsuitable for this study.

Total population sampling was used for the Likert scale survey. The general marketing population was targeted for this survey. The survey was shared online via LinkedIn where the researcher has significant contacts within the marketing sphere. The survey was aimed at the general marketing population and this was clearly explained within the LinkedIn post and on the cover page of the survey. However, the researcher must note that all efforts were taken to ensure that the survey was only taken by marketers, this cannot be guaranteed. In total one hundred and eighty-six respondents took part in the survey.

Finally, with regard to focus group recruitment, which was similar to the recruitment of interview participants. Suitable individuals were identified, and contact was made via email and LinkedIn mail. A brief background of the study was shared with respondents and they were then asked to take part in the focus group. A time and date had been previously set, and this information was included in the first email. The first online focus group took place at 7pm, while the second online focus group took place at 4pm. All marketers who did not respond to the original email or LinkedIn mail received a follow up message or email.

3.8 Ethical Considerations
Ethical guidelines and data protection procedures were strictly adhered to in order to maintain anonymity and to ensure that participants could not be identified in this PhD thesis or, within published literature. All data was treated confidentially, which was explained to the respondents, along with the aims of the study. Also, all respondents were able to withdraw their permission at any time during the study without any consequences by indicating this decision to the researcher. There were no known or anticipated risks to participation in this study and the study had been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee at Munster Technological University (MTU). This research was also carried out in strict accordance with
the ethical standards code of practice of Munster Technological University (MTU), provided below: The guidelines set down by the MTU Research Ethics Committee (REC) were followed at all times.

- Researchers in MTU will seek to follow the highest ethical principles in conducting their research. Honesty, integrity, openness, accountability and fairness should inform all research practice.
- Researchers in MTU will undertake to participate only in work which conforms to national and EU law and pertinent international regulations and to accepted ethical standards, with the MTU Code of Good Practice in Research serving as the primary reference. Ethical issues which cannot be decided with reference to this code should be referred to the MTU Research Ethics Committee.

As the research involved human subjects, the following ethical considerations were relevant:

1. To ensure fair treatment and due process, informed consent was verbally agreed before each interview. The researcher, prior to each interview commencing, outlined how the interview data will be used, and gave the interviewee an opportunity to withdraw from the process if they so wished.
2. Sufficient information on the study was provided to potential interview participants, via email, in advance to allow for informed valid consent.
3. All respondents who participated in the Likert scale survey were provided with information on how their data will be used and were informed that their participation is completely voluntary. Further, they were advised that they may decline altogether or, may ask for their data to be deleted at any time without any need for explanation. Each respondent was also informed that by continuing they agree to participate in this research project, thus providing informed consent.
4. Participation was voluntary allowing respondents to withdraw consent and discontinue participation at any time without reason, or consequence.
5. All data was recorded and coded so that respondents could not be identified by anyone apart from the research team, ensuring confidentiality.
6. Data protection procedures were strictly adhered to in order to maintain anonymity and to ensure that participants cannot be identified in the PhD thesis or published literature.
7. All interview participants were over the age of 18, so Garda vetting, or related procedures regarding research and children were not relevant.

As the research involved human subjects, the following ethical considerations were also applicable:

1. Selecting informants – key informants for this research were marketing practitioners.
2. Gaining access to /contact/approach potential interview respondents – an initial email was sent to possible participants outlining the research and explaining why the researcher felt they were suitable to be part of this study.
3. Anonymity and confidentiality – This research study did not require respondents to provide personal information. The email inviting respondents to take part stated that the information provided would be dealt with in strictest confidence and would be used for academic purposes only.
4. Informants were clearly informed of the overall purpose of the research during the initial email contact.
5. Informants were aware of their right to refuse to participate or withdraw at any time. This was clearly explained in the initial email and before each interview commenced. The Likert scale survey also clearly expressed this in the cover page prior to the survey being taken. An opt-out facility was in place throughout the research.

3.9 Analysis of Data
Jones (1985) believes that the purpose of data analysis is to obtain meaning from the collected data, with there being many approaches prescribed for the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data. These approaches in themselves are often quite difficult to articulate, with no one right way to analyse research findings (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). The search for meaning can take many forms, but the preliminary analytical steps of editing, coding, and tabulation are the common starting points for most studies (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2004). The majority of qualitative researchers use some sort of content analysis to analyse data, which involves coding groups of words or phrases from the interview transcripts into categories (Carson et al., 2001) and these words or phrases are the raw data, which must be interpreted rather than calculated. This study predominantly utilised qualitative research methods, consisting of twenty-six in-depth interviews and two online focus groups, while the quantitative element of this research encompassed a Likert scale survey where one hundred and eighty-six
respondents took part. The methods of data analysis used for both qualitative and quantitative analysis will now be further detailed.

3.9.1 In-Depth Interview Analysis

The analysis of qualitative data is a creative process, there are no formulas as would be the case with quantitative data analysis. In approaching qualitative data analysis there are many techniques described by qualitative research literature, however, it is important to note that there is no universally correct approach (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006). As this study is underpinned by a grounded theory methodology, a key consideration was to utilise a method of analysis which extracted the actual experiences, or realities, of marketing practitioners. Therefore, a form of analysis known as coding, an important aspect of grounded theory, was used as it allowed the different themes to emerge from the data. The use of coding also allowed for theory to be obtained from the data, which adds credibility of the grounded theory approach. The data was coded into themes and categories which efficiently whittled down the large volumes of information. This would have been very difficult if coding was not used, while coding also provided the researcher with a tool for linking categories to allow the various themes to emerge (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). By using this coding process, the researcher was able to develop a number of categories or themes and was also able to compare and contrast the emerging categories to see if there were any similarities or differences for that matter. In grounded theory methodology this is referred to as constant comparison analysis.

The first task for the researcher, however, was to become familiar with the data. All twenty-six interviews recordings were transcribed, and the data was then analysed using coding software called QDA Miner. Coding is a subjective process and descriptive coding was utilised within this study. Descriptive words or phrases which best described what was happening in the data were utilised. Some codes were named based on the terms or phrases used by respondents while others were named using a phrase or term which the researcher felt best described the experience being shared. Having analysed the data for some time, the researcher was then able to loosely identify the emerging themes. The potential findings of the study began to come together and emerge from the data. Codes, categories and concepts are the main building blocks of grounded theory which explain what is going on in a given situation or phenomena and the researcher was able to see theory emerge from the data. A key benefit of using coding software is the ability to determine more grounded linkages and evident themes within the data. This is known as axial coding where these new emerging themes were grouped together into major
categories. Figure 3.2 provides an overview of first, second and third order codes. First order codes are in CAPITALS, second order codes are underlined, and the third order code is in bold.

"BIG PICTURE MARKETING" "CORE MARKETING PRINCIPLES" "SOCIAL MEDIA"
"TRADITIONAL MARKETING" "MARKETING IS STILL MARKETING" "DIGITAL MARKETING" "DIGITAL EFFICIENCY" "DOMINANT ROLE OF DIGITAL" "RELEVANT TO THE CUSTOMER" "TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED" "TOOL OR PLATFORM LED"
"DIGITAL KNOWLEDGE" "SOCIAL MEDIA IS MARKETING" "DIGITAL EVOLUTION"
"EXPECTED TO HAVE" "PRESSURE TO USE DIGITAL MARKETING" "CONSTANT CHANGE" "LACK OF FUNDAMENTAL KNOWLEDGE" "NEED TO UPSKILL"
"EXTINCT MARKETER" "LEFT BEHIND" "LATER EXPERIENCE" "YOUNG PERSON INDUSTRY" "HIRE" "DELEGATE" "WILLINGNESS BARRIER" "LEARN ON THE JOB"
"EDUCATION ADEQUACY" "COLLEGE AND REAL LIFE" "NOT MARKETING EDUCATED" "LEARN FROM YOUTH" "SOCIAL MEDIA KNOWLEDGE GAINS"

Throughout the coding process numerous initial codes were discarded as they did not fit with the emerging themes and subsequently did not add any value, or relevance, to the overall research. This is a common aspect of a grounded theory methodology (Bluff, 2005; Charmaz, 2011; Glaser, 1978; Star, 2007) as initial open coding often results in a high volume of codes. In terms of evaluating individual categories, the researcher was accustomed to the principles of Glaser (1978) which allowed him to decide if categories were important enough to contribute to the emerging theory. These principles also helped to ensure that categories, and theories, emerge from the data rather than making the data which was emerging fit with existing categories. This was achieved due to the inclusion of the researcher in the research process and, as mentioned in previous sections, in constructivist grounded theory the researcher cannot be purged from data collection and analysis as both are created from shared experiences, and
relationships, with participants. Therefore, the resulting theory depends on the researcher’s view, it does not, and cannot, stand outside of it.

3.9.2 Likert Scale Data Analysis
Analysis of the quantitative data predominantly consisted of utilising the analysis tools on the survey software. As previously stated, the quantitative survey was undertaken as a means of gaining further insight into initial key interview findings. Quantitative analysis, specifically graphs and charts, enabled the researcher to quantify and illustrate the key initial findings from the interview stage, which can also increase the credibility and trustworthiness of studies. The quantitative findings were largely supportive of qualitative findings which enabled the researcher to progress the research study. The final data collection stage consisted of two online focus groups where the descriptive model was presented to informed marketers.

3.9.3 Online Focus Group Analysis
The online focus group was used to present the descriptive model to a group of informed marketers and to further explore key findings. As stated, the model describes the experiences of modern marketers and illustrates the mindset theory. The online focus group was used to further explore key findings and to gain feedback on whether the model is representative of the experiences of modern marketers, something which also can increase the credibility and trustworthiness of a study. The focus groups also probed key findings which provided the researcher with additional data. Both online focus groups were recorded and fully transcribed. Once transcribed, the data was analysed. Data was naturally grouped under each question, however, any pertinent data which may have emerged at a different point in the focus group was moved under the appropriate heading. As one purpose of the focus group was to gain feedback on the descriptive model, key quotes and statements were extracted from the data. These excerpts provided an insight into the feelings and experiences of modern marketers which highlights their thoughts and opinions in terms of the mindset theory and descriptive model. Constant comparative analysis was also utilised during the analysis of both online focus groups. This allowed for the comparison of findings across both focus groups where the data appeared consistent. The next section discusses reliability and validity and why the researcher does not consider these to be the most suited terms, with regard to accountability, for this particular research study. Instead, this study aimed to achieve credibility and trustworthiness as it was considered most appropriate.
3.10 Reliability and Validity

“Reliability and validity are tools of an essentially positivist epistemology”

(Watling, as cited in Winter, 2000, p.7)

The researcher posits, based on his constructivist philosophical stance and constructivist grounded theory methodology, that the concepts of reliability and validity are not as well suited to this particular study as they are to other studies, specifically those underpinned by a positivist philosophical stance. Moreover, and as previously stated, the researcher, aligned to constructivist grounded theory and the philosophical stance of constructivism, strongly believes that researchers must be involved within their research study. This further suggests that the terms reliability and validity are not as well suited to this study, and points to them being better aligned to purely quantitative studies. Quantitative researchers attempt to disassociate themselves as much as possible from the research process, while, similar to this study, the qualitative researcher embraces their involvement and role within the research. As mentioned, this study is underpinned by a constructivist philosophy. Constructivism aims to understand “the world of human experience” (Cohen & Manion, 1994 p.36) and relies upon the “participants view of the situation being studied” (Creswell, 2003, p.8) where “reality is socially constructed” (Martens, 2005 p.12). Therefore, the researcher plays an important role. Within this study, he decoded the data and built theory based on the experiences of the participants. For this to happen, he cannot be separated from the research. For quantitative researchers this involvement would greatly reduce the validity of a test, while, paradoxically, for qualitative researchers, denying one's role within research also threatens the validity of the research (Winter, 2000).

Some qualitative researchers argue that the term validity is simply not applicable to qualitative research, while certain qualitative researchers have gone as far as to completely reject the notion of “validity” in any form, simultaneously identifying it as entirely inappropriate to qualitative research (Winter, 2000). While both validity and reliability have undoubtedly proved useful in providing checks and balances for quantitative studies, they sit uncomfortably in qualitative research studies (Simco & Warin, 1997). Furthermore, the concept of quality in terms of quantitative and qualitative research also plays an important role - quality in terms of quantitative studies relates to the “purpose of explaining” while quality in qualitative studies related to “generating understanding” (Stenbacka, 2001, p.551). The difference in purposes of
evaluating the quality of studies in quantitative and quantitative research is one of the reasons that the concept of reliability is irrelevant in qualitative research, and according to Stenbacka (2001) “the concept of reliability is even misleading in qualitative research. If a qualitative study is discussed with reliability as a criterion, the consequence is rather that the study is no good” (p. 552).

Notwithstanding, the researcher acknowledges that reliability and validity do play an important role in research, and the researcher champions the need for some form of accountability in research. Accordingly, many qualitative researchers have espoused their own theories of “validity” and “reliability” with Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.300), as one example, using “dependability” in qualitative research, which closely corresponds to the notion of “reliability” in quantitative research. Similarly, many researchers have developed their own concepts of “validity” and have often generated or adopted what they consider to be more appropriate terms, such as quality, rigor and trustworthiness (Davies & Dodd, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Seale, 1999; Stenbacka, 2001). Therefore, the researcher moved away from the term’s reliability and validity, and instead utilised strategies to ensure credibility and trustworthiness, which he argues are better suited to this particular research study.

3.11 Credibility and Trustworthiness

Numerous strategies were utilised to increase the credibility and the trustworthiness of this study and will be discussed in three broad areas. Firstly, both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies were used. The researcher utilised three different data collection methods, namely the in-depth interview, Likert scale survey, and focus group. Therefore, multiple sources were used to draw conclusions, which strengthens a study and limits potential bias. Initial key data from the in-depth interviews was used for the basis of a typical 5-point Likert scale survey. The data obtained from the Likert scale supported the initial findings from the interview stage. This provided a solid foundation on which this study is built upon. The descriptive model, which describes the experiences of modern marketers and illustrates the mindset theory, was presented to marketers during two different focus groups. Respondents indicated that the model is representative of their experiences in marketing, with many instantly relating to certain aspects of the model, and, according to Sandelowski (1986), a qualitative study is considered credible if the descriptions of human experience are immediately recognized by individuals that share the same experience. While Sandelowski (1986) was one
of the first scholars to establish this, in more recent times Hammarberg et al. (2015) also noted the same finding.

Secondly, to limit any potential researcher bias, the researcher practised reflexivity, which is important within qualitative research studies (Elliott et al., 2012; Hertz, 1997, 1996). Reflexivity is an explicit evaluation of the self (Shaw, 2010) which emphasizes an awareness of the researcher’s own presence in the research process with the aim to improve the quality of the research (Barry et al., 1999). Schwandt (1997) defines reflexivity as having two aspects: the first is the fact that “the inquirer is part of the setting, context, and social phenomenon being studied” and the second is “a process of self-reflection of one’s biases, theoretical predispositions, preferences and so forth” (p.135). Reflexivity is the awareness of the researcher’s self-awareness and understanding of what they bring to the research study. This includes their capabilities, knowledge, experience, values, hopes, fears, as well as their epistemological and ontological assumptions (Woods et al., 2016). When being reflexive, I did not try to simply ignore or avoid my own biases (as this would likely be impossible), instead, I reflected upon and clearly articulated my position and subjectivities (world view, perspectives, biases). From this perspective, bias and subjectivity are not inherently negative but they are unavoidable. Therefore, within this study, the researcher was aware of such things as his values, background, and previous experience with marketing and how it may affect the research process.

Moreover, when conducting qualitative research, the researcher is considered the research instrument and must avoid researcher bias, and this was also achieved by ensuring groundness. The data was specifically favoured over any other input, with this strategy aiming to counter possible biases associated with the researcher being immersed within the study, and which is also aligned to constructivist grounded theory. Reflexivity was also enhanced through the use of constant comparative analysis and memoing, also aligned to the chosen methodology of this research study. Throughout data analysis the researcher utilised constant comparative analysis which is a process whereby each interpretation and finding is compared with existing findings as it emerges from the data analysis. This enabled emerging data to be compared with previous findings, allowing for the identification of any contradictory, or conflicting findings. Memoing, the act of recording reflective notes about what the researcher (fieldworker, data coder, and/or analyst) is learning from the data, was also used. According to Given (2008) memos add to the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research and provide a record of the meanings
derived from the data. However, unlike this study, many other researchers fail to capitalize on this valuable tool, which is a major shortfall of most qualitative research studies (Clarke, 2005).

Thirdly, an audit trail, which is a key strategy to enhance credibility of qualitative research (Ryan-Nicholls & Will, 2009) was created. Audit trails consist of a collection of materials, and notes, used in the research process that documents the researcher’s decisions and assumptions. Examples include interview transcripts, data analysis and process notes, and drafts of the final report. The researcher had a library of detailed notes, interview transcripts, codebooks and much more which allowed him to check early conjectures or assumptions and revisit past decisions, and the rationale for making those decisions. Finally, credibility was increased by supplying evidence to the reader. This was done by providing rich, vivid quotes from the participants of this study. The reader was given an insight into the experiences of modern marketers as their voice had been captured and subsequently relayed to the reader in terms of rich, vivid quotes, allowing them to personally critique the credibility of the study and substantiate the interpretations.

3.12 Conclusion
This study investigates how the lived experiences of modern marketers provide an insight into the interplay between skills gaps and the digital transformation of marketing practice, and this chapter details the research design and the methodological choices made within this study in terms of answering the research question. As this study is situated within an under-researched domain, where a lack of theory appears evident, constructivist grounded theory allowed for the building of theory. Similarly, the philosophical stance of constructivism, which has strong links to constructivist grounded theory (Mills et al., 2006), supported the researcher in gaining an insight into “the world of human experience” (Cohen & Manion, 1994 p.36). This was noted as important in terms of answering the research question and a mixed method approach to research was used to gain such an insight. Both qualitative and quantitative research techniques were utilised, specifically the in-depth interview, Likert scale survey and online focus group. This is supported by Guetterman et al. (2019) who note the benefits of integrating mixed methods with grounded theory.

The in-depth interview, which is the principle data collection tool within this study, produced rich, descriptive data. This provided a comprehensive insight into the experiences of modern marketers which allowed the researcher to understand their realities and experiences. Such an
insight would not have been possible without the affordances offered by constructivist grounded theory. The Likert scale survey was utilised to gain further insight into initial interview data before further rounds of coding took place. The researcher was then able to progress the study where certain issues emerged from the data. These issues are illustrated in the form of a descriptive model which describes the experiences of modern marketers. The online focus group was then used to present the model to marketers. Accordingly, these choices provided an insight into modern marketing and allowed the researcher to understand the realities and experiences of modern marketers. This enabled the researcher to answer the research question, with the findings of this study being discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion
4.0 Chapter Overview

Previous chapters highlight the lack of research in the area where this study is situated. Accordingly, this research study aims to address this issue by investigating how the lived experiences of modern marketers provide an insight into the interplay between skills gaps and the digital transformation of marketing practice. This chapter documents the findings of this study. Findings from the interviews, Likert scale survey and online focus groups are integrated and discussed concurrently. The researcher lets the participants voice tell the story and has, therefore, included the most representative quotes. Significant data was collected, however, not all statements are provided due to the sheer volume of data. Instead, rich and in-depth quotes which best describe the experiences of marketers are presented. This chapter also provides a discussion on key findings and specifically discusses mindset, skills gaps, and an overuse of digital tools. As detailed in section 3.10.1, a detailed coding analysis aligned to constructivist grounded theory was utilised for this study. Herein, the researcher plays an active role and should not be excluded from the research study. Therefore, the researcher played an important role within this study and collected and decoded the data to describe the experiences of modern marketers. Key concepts and themes emerged from the data which provided an insight into the experiences of modern marketers and these insights allowed the research question to be answered. Within this chapter, first order codes are in CAPITALS, second order codes are underlined, and third order codes are in bold. Moreover, this chapter also presents the descriptive model. To contextualise findings, the reader is introduced to the model graphic before the findings from the focus groups, which are directly related to the model, are presented. Firstly, however, the findings of this study are presented.

4.1 Digital Evolution

The DIGITAL EVOLUTION of marketing became evident within this study as later career marketers, who have significant marketing experience, indicated that the main changes they have witnessed in recent years are digitally based. The implications of the technological advancements within marketing have resulted in current marketing practices being different to those used in the past. The growing influence of digital technologies in marketing was identified by later career marketers and the feelings of those within this cohort are captured well in the following quote.

*Technology has changed the game; the stakes are higher. Marketing is noisier and a lot more cluttered.* (Oliver)
Accordingly, later career marketers indicated that marketing has changed and is now digitally orientated where there is an increased emphasis being placed on digital technologies. In fact, later career marketers believe that DIGITAL MARKETING is now at the forefront of people’s minds in terms of marketing practice as digital channels have grown in importance and influence.

*The digital element is huge, it has become the forefront in a lot of people’s minds with everything now being digitally led.* (Ken)

The data suggests that the important role of digital technologies in marketing is well established as later career marketers indicated that these technologies are key to modern marketing. However, not all later career marketers had the same opinion. Although twelve later career respondents indicated that DIGITAL MARKETING has grown in prominence and is leading the way in marketing, three later career respondents indicated that digital marketing is not something every business should be focusing on. The below quotes capture their opinions well.

*You can’t put a catch all on and say that businesses which don’t do digital marketing are behind the times.* (Jim)

*Not every brand should be utilising digital marketing.* (Neil)

This is in contrast to the general opinion of those within the later career cohort, nevertheless, the data exposes varying opinions in terms of the significance of DIGITAL MARKETING with later career marketers. This highlights that not all later career marketers share a similar belief in terms of the importance of digital technologies, in fact, certain respondents indicated that digital technologies are not necessary or beneficial within contemporary practice. This indicates a variance in terms of outlook within the later career cohort, specifically in terms of the importance of digital marketing technologies within modern practice. While twelve later career respondents indicated that digital technologies are important, not all shared a similar opinion as three later career marketers believe otherwise. This dichotomy suggests that certain later career marketers may not have adapted to the changes in marketing and consequently do not see the value or need or utilising such technologies within practice. This is emphasised by the data which highlights that not all brands should be utilising digital marketing.
Conversely, the importance of digital technologies was clearly highlighted by those within the early career cohort as the DOMINANT ROLE OF DIGITAL within modern marketing became evident. All respondents within the early career cohort appeared focused on digital technologies as they were identified as being core to contemporary marketing playing a fundamental role in practice. In fact, respondents championed the use of digital technologies to the point where nothing else can be as effective. It also became evident that early career marketers believe that digital marketing has reinvented the marketing industry which suggests that they see digital as being most important, where the non-digital aspects of marketing may be negatively impacted.

*My job is digital, solely digital. I don't touch any other side of marketing. I think that digital is the future and the now, it is where all the marketing is going to go. If you look at jobs they are all in digital marketing. (Sinead)*

*The digital aspect has reinvented the industry, no business can ignore digital technologies in their marketing campaigns. (Pam)*

Unlike their later career counterparts, early career marketers shared a single outlook and clearly identified the importance of digital technologies within marketing as all respondents championed digital marketing techniques. It also appears that early career marketers are solely working within the digital side of marketing, where other areas may be neglected. Accordingly, a lack of skills in these areas, and emphasis, may be a consequence. Early career marketers pointed to the efficiency and ease associated with DIGITAL MARKETING as a reason for its growth and prominence. This DIGITAL EFFICIENCY emerged as a reason why digital marketing may have become so important and dominant with the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of non-digital approaches also emerging. In fact, it emerged that without digital technologies a marketer cannot be truly effective.

*Using a digital medium is a lot easier and more efficient than traditional options. (Pam)*

*If you want a national audience but you aren't online, you really can’t market effectively today. (Uriah)*
The important role of digital technologies within modern marketing was further emphasised by those within the early career cohort. The DIGITAL EFFICIENCY also seems to play a part in the DOMINANT ROLE OF DIGITAL as all early career marketers indicated that DIGITAL MARKETING is number one in terms of marketing practice and cannot be ignored. This belief is not omnipresent throughout marketing however, as a variance became evident between both cohorts in terms of the importance of digital marketing. Later career marketers share mixed opinions while all early career marketers clearly highlighted the importance of digital marketing. This suggests a divide within modern marketing where dissimilar views and approaches may be evident between those at the early and later stages of their career. The data identifies varying outlooks in terms of digital which has a potential to impact marketing practice, specifically in terms of departments or teams which boast marketers from different career stages.

This divide is further emphasised as later career respondents were quick to indicate that MARKETING IS STILL MARKETING and although DIGITAL MARKETING has become popular, marketing hasn’t changed. In fact, those within the later career cohort indicated that marketing knowledge is more important than knowledge of digital marketing which suggests that they value marketing knowledge over digital capabilities. The below quotes are representative of the overall consensus of those within the later career cohort.

*Marketing has not changed, the only thing that has changed is the technology, the how to, but that's not marketing. That's just something that helps or enables it. (Brenda)*

*Marketing over digital, 100%. (Neil)*

However, later career marketers have previously indicated that, due to technology, marketing has changed in recent years and digital marketing is now at the forefront of people’s minds. In fact, twelve respondents within the later career cohort believe that digital technologies have changed the game which suggests that marketing has actually changed. This, coupled with the varying opinions on the importance of digital technologies within the later career cohort, suggests that not all later career marketers may have adapted to, or are aware of, the influence of digital technologies. Therefore, not all later career marketers appear to have embraced the digital changes in marketing and they may not be aware of the affordances offered by digital
technologies. This appears especially true if they are instead focused on the more fundamental aspects of marketing such as marketing knowledge or traditional marketing.

The data suggests that later career marketers identify general marketing knowledge as being more important than digital marketing skills. This focus also includes other non-digital elements of marketing, specifically TRADITIONAL MARKETING. While digital technologies seem to be gaining most attention in marketing, later career marketers highlighted that they view traditional marketing techniques as still being relevant and important within contemporary practice. All members of this cohort indicated that TRADITIONAL MARKETING still has value, with respondents also believing traditional marketing techniques are as important as DIGITAL MARKETING. This suggests that later career marketers may place the same emphasis on using traditional techniques as they do on using digital platforms. Accordingly, if they believe that the affordances offered by both types of marketing are equal they may not see the need to use newer digital technologies.

*Traditional marketing is still so important. (Frank)*

*Digital is important but traditional marketing can be equally important. (Ken)*

Notwithstanding this perceived importance, respondents highlighted that the traditional techniques are overlooked in modern marketing as the growth of digital marketing has shifted focus away from TRADITIONAL MARKETING. It appears that there is much less emphasis placed on traditional techniques, accordingly, such techniques are in decline. However, it also seems that they are being forgotten in contemporary practice which suggests that the associated skills may also be forgotten and lost which may exacerbate the decline of traditional marketing techniques.

*There is much less emphasis now put on traditional marketing. (Alice)*

*The traditional ways of marketing are being forgotten about even though they are actually important as well. (Ken)*

While all later career marketers indicated that traditional marketing is still important, one later career respondent, who had previously indicated that traditional techniques are still relevant,
did add a criticism. He stated that, at this moment in time, traditional doesn’t offer the same value as digital. However, he also indicated that he would be the first to use traditional methods in the future when prices have lowered which suggests that he is aware of the importance of traditional techniques but the cost of these methods is the actual issue. Therefore, the costs associated with traditional approaches may be putting off marketers, especially as digital is considered cheaper, and more effective, which suggests that the decline of traditional marketing techniques may be self-inflicted due to the high prices of utilising such approaches.

*I am a big critic of print, radio and all of that at the moment because I think it is too expensive for what is available online. In the next five to ten years that whole industry is going to collapse because everything is going to go online. However, saying that, in ten years’ time if I’m consulting for a business and the radio industry has collapsed I am going to be the first marketer to go back into radio because it’s going to be so cheap and I am going to get the conversions I need.* (Edward)

While later career marketers clearly indicated the importance of TRADITIONAL MARKETING techniques, a further dichotomy in outlook became evident as early career marketers did not share the same opinion as their later career counterparts. Early career marketers indicated that digital marketing has replaced traditional techniques as digital tools and platforms offer much more than TRADITIONAL MARKETING techniques. In fact, those within the early career cohort specifically identified social media as the tools which are replacing the traditional approaches which points to such platforms being identified as best practice by early career marketers, where traditional approaches may be disregarded.

*I think the options and tools of digital have replaced the traditional techniques.* (Pam)

*Before when you went to launch a product, it was really traditional, but now we have a different way of achieving things. Now we have digital, Facebook, other social media, and other digital platforms.* (Viv)

The data further points to a variance in opinion between both early and later career cohorts as those within the early career cohort yet again appear to have a digital outlook in terms of marketing practice as they appear to focus on the digital side of marketing. Notwithstanding this focus, two early career respondents indicated that they believe TRADITIONAL
MARKETING can still have value, even though digital offers much more. However, the applicability of traditional techniques was also questioned.

*It is important for us to remember to use more traditional methods as well. I go to events and that kind of thing still works. (Tina)*

*The use of traditional marketing depends on the business. I was educated in traditional marketing whereas now that I am working I find that it might not be as applicable. (Pam)*

While two early career respondents exhibited an awareness that traditional marketing techniques may still have value, both these respondents had previously championed digital technologies and indicated that digital marketing is most important. This further suggests that early career marketers appear to be digitally inclined in terms of marketing practice, specifically social media, which will be discussed in the next section. Early career marketers may not be aware of the potential affordances of traditional techniques, especially if they view digital tools as offering more value and being more efficient. This may further detach them from using traditional tools as only two early career respondents showed an awareness that these techniques may still offer value. Conversely, later career marketers appear to place their focus on these traditional tools as they highlighted the importance, and declining nature, of traditional marketing techniques. Therefore, while the role of digital was identified within this study, both cohorts shared divergent outlooks which further points to a dichotomy between cohorts. This also suggests that a unified approach to marketing may not be evident within practice as marketers may be focusing on specific aspects of marketing while disregarding others.

4.2 Social Media
The chasm in focus which emerged within this study is further emphasised in terms of SOCIAL MEDIA. The importance of SOCIAL MEDIA platforms became evident within this study, however, varying opinions emerged as later career marketers shared mixed opinions in terms of the importance of social media within contemporary marketing.

*You need social media, it is fundamental to marketing. It is very powerful, and you have to be on it. It's all leading to there at this stage. (Frank)*
Social media is pretty much a waste of time. (Jim)

While twelve respondents within the later career cohort indicated that social media is important, three later career respondents believe otherwise. These respondents indicated that the benefits of social media may not be so clear, and that SOCIAL MEDIA may not be as essential as people seem to think. In fact, one senior marketer stated that social media is a waste of time. Previously, within the later career cohort, individuals indicated that DIGITAL MARKETING may not be as important as people think. This finding appears similar and further suggests that not all later career marketers have embraced, or adapted to, the digital changes in marketing. This means these marketers may not be aware of the affordances of utilising such digital tools and platforms and may therefore lack efficacy in terms of modern marketing practices. In fact, they may be exacerbating any divide in marketing. They appear reluctant to embrace new technologies, while others are actively using these digital tools, which may limit their marketing effectiveness now and in the future. It also suggests that these marketers may be overly focused on the non-digital aspects of marketing where they are reluctant to adopt digital approaches. Accordingly, these new digital approaches may be identified as unimportant or unnecessary.

Furthermore, a reluctance or danger associated with social media emerged as later career marketers identified a potential danger in the form of negative word of mouth. Respondents highlighted how customers can easily talk about the brand and can spread negative word of mouth online. This issue was identified by three respondents who exhibited a cautious stance in terms of using social media due to this potential danger, with the below quote being representative of their views.

Social media can be a very dangerous place, things can go viral, we have all seen the stories over the years. (Ken)

This further indicates that some later career marketers may not have truly embraced digital technologies and may not be marketing to their fullest capabilities. Previously, twelve respondents within the later career cohort indicated that digital technologies have changed marketing and they are important. However, the actions and behaviours of some later career marketers do not always represent such an indication. Instead, they appear wary of utilising certain technologies and may be overly focused on the negatives, rather than affordances, of
digital tools. This may limit their effectiveness in terms of marketing practice if they are reluctant to fully embrace the technologies previously identified as important within practice. This further points to a dichotomy between those at the early and later stages of their career, especially as all early career marketers indicated that social media is an extremely important aspect of modern marketing and cannot be ignored.

The focus placed on digital technologies became evident yet again as the use of SOCIAL MEDIA platforms, especially over traditional techniques, was identified as a key area of modern marketing by those within the early career cohort. The below quote captures the feelings of early career respondents particularly well.

_Social media is huge. The push towards digital is massive, everything is going to be digital. Social media is the future and I think anyone selling a product has to get onto Facebook, Instagram etc because people use these on a daily basis. If you don't get onto them, you are lagging behind._ (Ken)

The importance placed on digital by this cohort is further emphasised. In fact, the data suggests that digital tools and platforms may potentially be used as a default. Blanket statements became evident in terms of utilising digital marketing and social media.

_All companies should use digital marketing. Everyone needs to be on social media. Obviously, you can reach a much bigger audience, but it is also about gaining greater insight into who your customers are through Facebook insights and Google analytics._ (Sinead)

_Social media cannot be ignored._ (Viv)

Previous data indicates that early career marketers champion the use of digital technologies within marketing. The data also suggests that they focus on digital tools and platforms within practice. However, the data now suggests a possible blanket approach being taken where DIGITAL MARKETING, specifically SOCIAL MEDIA, may be seen as a panacea. As mentioned, while early career marketers indicated that digital marketing is the most important aspect of contemporary practice, the data suggests that their digital outlook may have resulted in an unbridled digital usage where they are using digital tools, specifically social media, without questioning its applicability. In fact, the data further suggests that this cohort have a
digital outlook as all respondents within the early career cohort indicated that they are digitally orientated and think digitally first. This reinforces their apparent digital focus where other, non-digital aspects of marketing, such as traditional marketing techniques, are not being utilised in modern practice. Instead, early career marketers appear to use digital marketing techniques as their default as it also appears to be their fundamental way of thinking or acting. This is further discussed in the next section. The below quotes are particularly representative of the feelings of those within the early career cohort.

*I would think digitally first.* (Pam)

*There is a big emphasis on digital. Everything I am doing now is digital. It is one of the most important things.* (Tina)

This focus on digital, where digital tools are at risk of being used as a default, may result in an overuse of digital platforms as the most appropriate option may not always be chosen. This may also have a part to play in terms of early career marketers identifying traditional marketing techniques as irrelevant within modern marketing. This suggests that early career marketers think digitally first and may be using digital technologies as a default. Therefore, they may not critically evaluate marketing options and instead may use digital marketing technologies as a default and at the expense of other non-digital options, especially if early career marketers view digital marketing as a panacea. Accordingly, the focus on digital tools and platforms appears to impact traditional marketing techniques where they are being ignored and forgotten.

Moreover, and aligned to the focus and importance placed on social media, later career respondents identified a further issue. Respondents indicated that, due to the emphasis now being placed on digital technologies, specifically social media, some marketers now believe that SOCIAL MEDIA IS MARKETING. This code represents those who seemingly think that social media is in fact marketing, and if you are adept at social media you are equipped with the necessary skills to be a marketer. However, while later career marketers identified this as an issue, this may be linked to previous data where certain individuals indicated that digital tools and technologies are not important. Therefore, while these digital tools and platforms were noted as being a key aspect of modern marketing, if people do not value them they may feel that any focus on such tools is too much, and unnecessary.
A lot of people think that because marketing isn't accountancy or law you don't need a degree to be a marketer, people think that they are marketers because they can use social media. (Edward)

People think social media is marketing, every Tom, Dick and Harry, our craft is bastardized by a lot of people in Ireland. Just because you know how to design a webpage, it doesn't make you a marketer. (Oliver)

These quotes suggest a potential over focus on digital technologies where individuals now believe that all that is needed to be a marketer is social media skills. This issue was noted by later career respondents which may be aligned to any reluctance in terms of embracing new technologies, especially if they are focused on the non-digital aspects of marketing instead. It also appears aligned to the digital focus of early career marketers who not only champion digital technologies but who may also use them as a default. Accordingly, they may believe that the platforms they identified as the most important aspect of marketing are all that is needed for marketing in the modern era. Too much emphasis may be placed on these platforms, in fact, later career marketers indicated that they believe modern marketing is TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED, where too much emphasis is being placed on digital technologies. This will be further discussed in the next section.

4.3 An Overuse of Digital Technologies in Marketing

While twelve later career respondents indicated that digital technologies have changed marketing and are important, this belief was not shared by all respondents as varying opinions were evident. While digital was identified as a key aspect of modern marketing later career marketers also indicated that traditional marketing techniques are as important as digital marketing. In fact, while they highlighted how digital is important, their behaviour indicates otherwise as they appear to market with one foot in the past as they revert to traditional techniques. Therefore, as stated, some later career marketers may not have actively embraced digital technologies as an issue emerged where respondents indicated that marketers have become TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED. This code represents a situation where marketers are overly focused on digital technologies, with the below quotes’ being representative of the feelings of those within the later career cohort. These quotes highlight the emphasis placed on digital technologies, while also suggesting that other non-digital options are being disregarded.
People have access to all these tools, they feel like they need to be everywhere. They are too focused on digital. (Edward)

Some people think that the only place to be active is digital which is nonsense. (Neil)

Modern marketing has become too focused on digital platforms

Answered: 186   Skipped: 0

Likert Scale Survey Results  Figure 4.1

Modern marketing has become too focused on digital platforms

Answered: 186   Skipped: 0

Likert Scale Survey Results  Figure 4.2
The Likert scale results, evident in figure 4.1, suggests that almost half of all those surveyed believe that marketing is too focused on digital platforms. Notwithstanding, over 30% of respondents indicated that they disagree with this finding which means they feel that marketing is not too digitally focused. Figure 4.2 provides further insight into the issue and looks at marketers in smaller groups, however, no significant variations were noted. Marketers with 1-5 years of marketing experience had the highest agreement of all stratifications that marketing is too focused on digital technologies, while results also highlight that marketers with 21 years+ had strong disagreement with this finding. During interviews, later career marketers indicated that marketing has become too focused on digital technologies, and about half of all respondents surveyed agreed with this. Figure 4.2 looks at marketing in smaller stratifications and results show that around half of all groups, except those with 6-10 years’ experience, believe that marketing is too focused on digital technologies.

Moreover, later career respondents pointed to younger marketers who are in the early stages of their career as those who especially as risk of being TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED. All later career respondents indicated that early career marketers are inclined to focus on digital technologies without considering anything which falls outside the canon of digital marketing techniques. This appears aligned to previous data where early career marketers both championed digital technologies and indicated that they are essential to marketing. Therefore, they may be overusing these technologies. Later career respondents suggest that early career marketers seem to have a focal point which is specifically centred on digital marketing techniques. In fact, it was suggested that early career marketers know nothing but the digital world which indicates that there may be a lack of knowledge, and awareness, regarding the potential of non-digital marketing options. Accordingly, these options may not be used even when appropriate. The below quotes capture the feelings of those within later career cohort quite well.

*The younger, less experienced marketers are too focused on the digital channels and social media. (Harry)*

*Younger marketers know nothing but the digital world. (Oliver)*
Junior or early career marketers are more likely to focus too much on digital

Likert Scale Survey Results

Figure 4.3

The results from the Likert scale survey, evidenced in figure 4.3, strongly support this finding as 80% of all marketers agreed that early career marketers are most likely to focus too much on digital. Figure 4.4 highlights the results when marketing is viewed in a more in-depth manner and findings are aligned to that of the general marketing population with strong support across all groups. This also further supports previously discussed findings where early career marketers exhibited a digital orientation where they appear to be focused on digital
technologies where they may be using them as a default. Similarly, the non-digital elements of marketing such as traditional marketing techniques are not considered as important which further points to early career marketers having a digital focus where they may be overusing digital marketing technologies.

The issue of marketing being TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED also emerged within the interviews of early career marketers. Although all those within the early career cohort had previously championed digital technologies, identifying them as key to modern marketing, five respondents stated that marketing is actually too focused on digital technologies.

*People are too fixated on digital. (Quinton)*

*Digital has been put on a bit of a pedestal at the moment, especially for younger people. (Sinead)*

The data suggests that marketing has become too focused on digital technologies where digital appears to be situated on a pedestal, especially for younger marketers. This may increase the usage of digital for younger marketers. In fact, three early career respondents self-identified as being TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED themselves. They indicated that they are at fault as they feel that they focus too much on digital technologies.

*I think people have become too focused on digital and I am at fault myself. I get too focused on the digital side of things. (Will)*

This suggests that certain early career marketers are aware that there is a digital focus in marketing, however, awareness does not appear to affect their behaviour as they continue to utilise digital technologies. The focus groups further explored the finding where early career marketers are considered to be TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED. Firstly, both focus groups were in agreement with this finding and the potential reasons for this digital focus were also discussed. Moreover, Frances also provides further insight into this issue and highlights how early career marketers can be “pigeonholed” into the digital side of marketing by their later career counterparts. This suggests that later career marketers may have a role to play in terms of any over use of digital tools by early career marketers.
For young people, digital marketing is probably sexier than the more traditional side of marketing, it has more excitement and it is faster. You can see the changes there and then whereas traditional marketing can take a lot of time. It is easier to update Facebook post than to use traditional marketing, it takes a lot of time. Traditional is also more expensive, people don’t want to put the time into it while digital is quick, easy, successful and you can do it straight away. (Alice)

I think it’s to do with their habits, we see graduates and they don’t really read newspapers, listen to the radio, pay attention to billboards etc. They want to focus on what they are used to and what they have a passion for. I think that they are more familiar with digital and they like the shiny parts of marketing. People who study marketing probably go into it with the goal of working in digital marketing. (Maura)

It’s the junior person coming in, the graduates, they are probably pigeonholed into that side of things. That’s probably where they are most comfortable. I’m guilty myself, if there are any brainstorming meetings I would bring the grads in, they are full of ideas across digital and the social channels. So, they are probably pigeonholed into that area alright. (Frances)

The focus groups allowed for further exploration of this area and respondents indicated that digital is easier or “sexier” than traditional marketing and has more of a draw because it is aligned to what early career marketers know and use in their daily lives. However, Frances shines further light on this topic and indicates that later career marketers may have a role to play in terms of early career marketers being too digitally focused. She indicated that early career marketers may be “pigeonholed” into digital positions by later career marketers and she also stated that it is something she has done previously. Therefore, this suggests that while early career marketers have been identified as being overly focused on digital, it may not be solely their fault, or within their power to change, if they are only given digital tasks. This may also affect their views of traditional marketing as they are not given the opportunity to utilise such techniques and may instead view them as irrelevant if they are consistently given digital tasks. Nonetheless, early career marketers continually champion digital technologies and appear to view marketing with a digital focus which, as previously highlighted, is evidenced by them indicating that they think digitally first where digital is one of the most important aspects of marketing. However, the data also suggests that this focus may be exacerbated by their later career counterparts.
Aligned to marketers being TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED, a similar issue also emerged. Later career marketers indicated that individuals are also TOOL OR PLATFORM LED. While TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED represents marketers who are too focused on digital technologies, as a whole, TOOL OR PLATFORM LED represents marketers who are being led or overly influenced by specific digital tools and who only use them because they are popular, or because they don’t want to miss out. All later career marketers highlighted an issue where marketers are at risk of being led or overly influenced by digital tools or platforms, with the below quotes capturing their feeling well.

*People are afraid of missing out, they are being led and influenced by the marketing tools and platforms. (Ken)*

*Marketers are being led and distracted by the tools and platforms of digital. They jump on the latest bandwagon. (Ian)*

**Likert Scale Survey Results**

**Figure 4.5**
This finding is supported by the survey data, which is presented in figure 4.5, as just over 65% of all marketers surveyed agreed that marketers tend to be led or overly influenced by digital platforms. Figure 4.6 looks at marketing in smaller stratifications with strong support evident across all groups with only slight variations evident. In fact, those in the 1-5-year marketing experience bracket expressed the highest agreement across all four groups as 70% of respondents agreed that marketers tend be led or overly influenced by digital platforms. Notwithstanding, and evident within figure 4.2, only 53% of respondents with 1-5 years’ marketing experience believe that marketing is too digitally focused. Therefore, while those within the 1-5-year stratification believe that marketers tend be led or overly influenced by digital platforms, not all believe that marketing is actually too focused on digital technologies. Furthermore, while figure 4.1 highlights that almost half of all respondents agreed that marketing is too digitally focused, 65% of respondents agreed that marketers tend to be led or overly influenced by digital technologies believe. This further suggests that not all those who believe that marketers tend to be led or overly influenced by digital technologies believe that marketing is actually too focused on digital. Hence, certain marketers may not see being led or overly influenced as an issue, especially if they place their focus on these technologies.
The interview data indicates that this issue seems to be heightened as people are being led or overly influenced specifically by the “buzzwords” or the tools which are deemed to be in vogue. Marketers fear that if they do not engage with these popular tools they will miss out. Later career respondents highlighted that the “buzzwords” are seen to be popular and a subsequent focus, and necessity to utilise them in terms of marketing practice, became evident. This would seem to be aligned to the previous finding where marketers were identified as being TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED.

*People don't understand social media and they are using the buzzwords whether they will be effective or not. They are led by the buzzwords and because of that you have a lot of incredibly bad marketing.* (Edward)

Notwithstanding, while the importance of digital technologies was identified within the later career cohort not all marketers shared a similar belief. This suggests that some marketers may not have embraced digital technologies and may therefore believe that there is too much focus placed on these technologies because they may be unaware of how popular such tools and platforms have actually become. Accordingly, while there does seem to be an issue where digital tools are being overutilized, the lack of awareness or emphasis placed on these technologies by some later career marketers may also play a part in this issue.

While later career respondents indicated that marketers are being led or overly influenced by these popular tools, often using them in an unbridled fashion, early career marketers were identified as being most likely to overly focus on the “buzzwords” and be TOOL OR PLATFORM LED. This finding seems to be aligned to, and supportive of, the previous finding which pointed to younger marketers as being TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED, with the below quote being representative of the general feeling of those within the later career cohort in terms of early career marketers being TOOL OR PLATFORM LED.

*Young marketers just want to use social media. There is a complete lack of critical thinking in terms of is the platform suitable for the business or the target audience.* (Harry)

The data suggests that early career marketers appear to lack the ability to critically think and evaluate if the tool or platform is suitable, instead they seem to revert to using digital tools as a default. Previous data appears supportive of this, specifically in terms of the importance
placed on digital tools and platforms at the expense of non-digital options, which early career marketers do not appear to value. Accordingly, this lack of critical thinking may negate marketing effectiveness if default actions are continuously used without asking if they are suitable.

The issue of marketers being TOOL OR PLATFORM LED also emerged within the interviews of early career marketers. Previously, early career marketers had identified that they are digitally orientated digital with three respondents indicating that they believe that they are TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED themselves. Similarly, four respondents stated that they marketers can be led by digital tools, with the below quote capturing the consensus of those who shared such a belief.

*I think people can be led by digital tools. If everyone is on snapchat, for absolutely no reason they set up a snapchat account and they have three people watching them. They just go with it because it is the fad at the time. People become too reliant on certain digital tools or platforms and they almost end up not thinking for themselves. They become so reliant on these tools they just stop doing it for themselves. (Will)*

Literature suggests that marketing is being narrowly driven and shaped by emerging tools such as social media rather than being improved through the development of such tools (Durkin, 2013; Granitz & Pitt, 2011; Payne et al., 2011). This issue also emerged within this study in the form of marketers being too digitally focused where they are being led or overly influenced by digital tools or platforms. Literature appears to view the marketing profession as a single group which points to this issue being prevalent throughout the marketing sphere. However, study findings indicate otherwise and suggest that the issue is specifically visible within the early career cohort. In fact, this problem was not observed within the later career cohort as they were identified as lacking such digital knowledge, which will be further discussed later in this chapter. The data indicates that early career marketers are overly focused on digital tools and platforms where they are using digital marketing technologies as a default and in an unbridled manner. Therefore, it appears that the overuse of digital tools within marketing is not pervasive throughout the marketing sphere and is most evident within the cohort of early career marketers.
Furthermore, while early career marketers identify, and therefore seem to be aware of, the issues of being TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED and TOOL OR PLATFORM LED, their behaviour does not seem to indicate such an awareness as they still identified themselves as being too focused on digital tools. This suggests that awareness may not be enough to alter behaviour. The data seems to suggest that early career marketers have a digital focus where they revert to using digital technologies as a default. This digital focus or the default use of digital technologies is further emphasised as four early career marketers indicated that they would use digital marketing tools or platforms even if their customer base were not present and that they go with new tools rather than ones which may be better suited, and therefore more effective.

*Even if our customers are not on the platform, I would always post on all the platforms anyway.* (Uriah)

*We tend to go with whatever is new regardless of how effective it may be.* (Will)

While these quotes further indicate a digital focus within early career marketers, they also suggest that early career marketers may lack the ability to critically question if their choice is suitable, instead using digital tools and platforms in an unbridled manner. This is similar to the later career data which also indicated that early career marketers lack the ability to critically questions their marketing choices. Moreover, those within the early career cohort exhibited an awareness that marketing is too focused on digital tools and platforms where marketers can be led or overly influenced by digital tools. Notwithstanding, awareness and behaviour appear to be disconnected as marketers still indicated that they would use digital tools even if their customer base where not present with members of this cohort instead favouring whatever is new. While later career marketers may play a role in the increased focus on digital, those within the early career cohort exhibit an inherent digital focus. Subsequently, digital tools appear to be used as a default, whether they are appropriate or not, and awareness does not seem to alter their behaviour as they continued to revert to digital technologies as their default. Previous data suggests that this cohort have a digital focus, however, they may in fact be overly focused on digital tools where they do not consider, or dismiss, the non-digital side of marketing. Accordingly, a further issue emerged which appears linked to marketers being TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED and TOOL OR PLATFORM LED. A lack of knowledge regarding
the CORE MARKETING PRINCIPLES, also known as the marketing fundamentals, became evident.

*I think marketers fall into the trap of forgetting about the core marketing principles and falling into the tools. Let's all put up a Facebook live thing today without asking why.* (Martin)

4.4 The Core Marketing Principles

Later career marketers champion the non-digital side of marketing, specifically traditional marketing, and the CORE MARKETING PRINCIPLES similarly emerged as an important area. While later career marketers highlighted the relevance and importance of the core marketing principles in a digital world, all later career respondents indicated that there has been a shift of focus in recent times, where the fundamental principles are not considered as important as they once were. While this may be the case, the importance of the core marketing principles was clearly evident as all later career marketers believe that they are still as relevant as ever.

*The core marketing principles are the same whether I am selling you a box of matches or if I am selling you a holiday.* (Martin)

*You really need to understand who you are speaking to before you get out there. You don't just pay money and begin promoting something on a channel unless your customers are there. People forget that. It is linked to the marketing fundamentals.* (Ken)

However, while the data points to the core marketing principles being the same as the past, and equally important, it seems that they may not be as well-known or understood as they once were and are being lost. The data suggests that this is an issue which has the potential to impact overall marketing effectiveness if this fundamental skillset is not known or is lost. Any lack of such foundational marketing knowledge may exacerbate such issues as a lack of critical thinking where marketers instead utilise digital tools and platforms as a default, without questioning if they are suitable for the task at hand. Yet again, this may result in inappropriate practices being chosen which may limit marketing effectiveness. This may also augment the previous issues which emerged within this study, specifically TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED, TOOL OR PLATFORM LED and SOCIAL MEDIA IS MARKETING especially if individuals do not possess knowledge of the core marketing principles.
A lot of the industry don’t understand the core marketing principles. They don’t have a fundamental understanding of the basics of marketing. (Martin)

There is a lack of talent from a marketing point of view and it is very prevalent. It is a huge challenge and a lot of marketers don’t have this fundamental skillset. (Oliver)

The core marketing principles are being forgotten or overlooked

Likert Scale Survey Results

Figure 4.7
While figure 4.7 indicates that 57% of all Likert scale respondents believe that the core marketing principles are being forgotten or overlooked, figure 4.8 highlights noticeable variations when marketing is viewed in smaller groups. Those within the 1-5-year group have the lowest agreement of all groups, with those in the 21+ group having the highest. These results highlight significant variations in opinion when marketing is viewed in smaller classifications which indicates that not all marketers share similar opinions. Therefore, the importance placed on the core marketing principles does not appear omnipresent throughout marketing which means not all marketers appear to consider them important. This suggests that only certain marketers may be utilising these fundamental marketing principles within practice.

Later career marketers stated that the core principles of marketing, although still important, are not as prominent as they once were and the focus placed on digital technologies was suggested as a potential reason for this. Respondents indicated that the core marketing principles are being forgotten due to the influence of digital technologies which appears associated to marketers being TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED and TOOL OR PLATFORM LED.

*The fundamentals or core marketing principles are the same, the four P's can still be applied today but people only know digital.* (Oliver)
We can’t forget the basics, it’s frustrating that the core principles of marketing are lost, people don’t know why they are on Facebook or Twitter, they have lost the reason. (Lisa)

**Likert Scale Survey Results**

**Figure 4.9**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1: 1-5 Years</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>NEUTRAL</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.99%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7.79%</td>
<td>41.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1: 5-10 Years</td>
<td>6.82%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.13%</td>
<td>23.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1: 11-20 Years</td>
<td>12.82%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.13%</td>
<td>20.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1: 21+ Years</td>
<td>19.23%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>13.98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents: 196

**Figure 4.10**
Figure 4.9 highlights that over half of all respondents believe that the dominant role of digital technologies has resulted in the core marketing principles being lost or forgotten which indicated that the emphasis now place don digital tools may be impacting other aspects of marketing, specifically the non-digital elements. Figure 4.10 further identifies nuances when marketing is looked at in smaller classifications which indicates that marketers with varying levels of marketing experience have different opinions on the core marketing principles, especially in terms of them being forgotten due to the dominant role of digital. These findings are similar to figure 4.8 which also showcased variations between stratifications. This further points to a dissimilar outlook in marketing where marketing experience plays a role in terms of how the core marketing principles are perceived and considered either important or not.

Furthermore, while later career marketers highlighted that the core marketing principles, or fundamentals of marketing, are being forgotten, they believe that early career marketers are the ones who are most at fault. Later career respondents indicated that their early career counterparts LACK FUNDAMENTAL KNOWLEDGE because they are TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED and TOOL OR PLATFORM LED. The data further points to a digital focus within the early career cohort, where they may be neglecting the non-digital elements of marketing, such as the core marketing principles.

*Early career marketers frustrate the hell out of me in their naivety and their fundamental laziness. They lack an understanding of the importance of the fundamental thinking which is being forgotten in the digital age.* (Martin)

*The millennials are coming through and they don't care about the core marketing principles.* (Oliver)
The results of the Likert scale survey further identified variances in opinion. Figure 4.11 shows that 64% of all respondents agreed, and 18% disagreed, that junior or early career marketers are more likely to overlook the core marketing principles, however, figure 4.12 identifies variances in terms of agreement and disagreement across the smaller classifications. Those in the 1-5-year experience classification had the lowest agreement, and highest disagreement,
with this finding across all groups. Conversely, those in the 11-20 and 21+ classification had much higher levels of agreement. This indicates the varying opinions of marketers based on their marketing experience where those with 1-5 experience may not believe that they are overlooking the core marketing principles because they do not view them as important. This is aligned to previous survey data, evidenced within figure 4.8, where 45% of those with 1-5-year marketing experience believe that the core marketing principles are being forgotten.

The issue where junior or early career marketers are considered most likely to overlook the core marketing principles was further explored within the focus groups. Respondents indicated that early career marketers appear to lack knowledge of the core marketing principles, which appears linked to their digital outlook and, to previous findings. This further suggests a digital focus of early career marketers where they lack knowledge of, and do not seem to consider the importance of, the non-digital aspects of marketing.

In my last role I was working with the Marketing Institute of Ireland (MII) and their insight is that in the last few years everyone is too focused in terms of digital training courses, seminars and events. They were all digital, the fundamentals and the core marketing principles were lost and missed. Consequently, I believe that a lot of early career marketers don’t have those fundamental skills. (Frances)

Graduates have the digital skills, but they don’t know how to apply them on the job. They have to get down to the nitty gritty, they have to learn on the job. A lot of people are focused on digital, but you need the core marketing principles to get to where you want to be. (Alice)

Early career marketers are straight out of college and I find they have this sense that “I am on Instagram, I have 2000 followers, I get loads of likes and I am an expert”. They go into a company and they ignore the fact that the company focuses on lead generation and they say look at this, I got this many likes on your post. They embrace the shiny things and don’t really think about the actual core business and what they want to achieve. I think you have the “expert” straight out of college won’t know what to do because they are just used to doing the shiny things, as that’s what they like doing. (Maura)

The digital focus of early career marketers appears to have affected the non-digital elements of marketing as they appear to lack knowledge of the core marketing principles. Early career
marketers don’t seem to put an emphasis on having these skills and instead are drawn to the digital side of marketing as that is what they know and like. However, this appears problematic as core business activities may be ignored as the digital tools may be focused on. This appears exacerbated as Frances notes that in recent times there has been an increased emphasis on digital courses and events which has resulted in a lack of knowledge in terms of the fundamental principles. While the data suggests that knowledge of the core marketing principles should underpin digital activities, this doesn’t not appear to be evident as early career marketers are focused on the digital tools. This points to ineffective marketing if such fundamental knowledge is unknown.

This issue regarding the CORE MARKETING PRINCIPLES, or marketing fundamentals, also became evident within the early career cohort. Early career respondents displayed varying outlooks in terms of the applicability and usefulness of the core marketing principles in modern marketing. The DOMINANT ROLE OF DIGITAL appears to have emerged yet again. While three respondents indicated that the core marketing principles are useful, they also displayed a digital focus by linking them to digital technologies and putting them on a social platform. This suggests that early career marketers may be looking at marketing through a digital lens and may be prioritising digital tools.

*The core marketing principles are still useful today. I think marketing is the same thing, it’s just about putting it on a social platform.* (Sinead)

Furthermore, early career marketers highlighted that there is a lack of knowledge regarding the core marketing principles within modern marketing as individuals LACK FUNDAMENTAL KNOWLEDGE. This code represents marketers who lack knowledge of the core marketing principles. In fact, it appears that early career marketers are more interested in newer technologies than on the core marketing principles which supports previous data where early career marketers were identified as being overly focused on the digital “buzzwords”.

*I think we forget to go back to the fundamentals of marketing, we tend to forget about the core marketing principles and go with what is new.* (Will)

*There’s a lack of the core marketing principles in marketing today, it is a bit scattered. There is not really a set of instructions on how to do it. I don't think there is a structure to a lot of it,*
people are just going with the flow. There are no real principles from what I did in college. (Zahid)

Early career marketers also indicated that they are not well versed in these principles themselves and admitted that they don’t use them or even know what they are. This appears supportive of previous findings where marketers, specifically early career marketers, lack knowledge of the core marketing principles which may be linked to the focus they place on digital tools.

*I wouldn’t really be using any of the core marketing principles, you would forget about them* (Tina).

*I think that there is a lack of core marketing principles in marketing because I don't think anyone my age knows them, I definitely don't.* (Rita)

Another issue emerged from the data as three early marketers believe that the CORE MARKETING PRINCIPLES have actually changed.

*I think the core marketing principles have changed. I am only in marketing recently enough, but I think they have changed.* (Tina)

*People look at it from completely different points of view, if you asked all of my class from the masters we would have completely different ideas of what the core marketing principles are, it’s not something set in stone.* (Rita)

The data suggests that early career marketers are not well versed in the core marketing principles. This appears linked to previous findings where their focus on digital tools has resulted in a lack of knowledge in terms of the non-digital aspects of marketing, specifically the core marketing principles. While three early career respondents indicated that these principles are still important, they were referenced solely in terms of digital platforms. In fact, most respondents indicated that they do not know or use the core marketing principles themselves. Moreover, three early career marketers indicated that they believe these principles to no longer be important or necessary and marketers can be effective without them. The dominant role of digital within modern marketing emerged as a key reason for this.
Due to digital, the core principles of marketing are not as relevant (Tina)

*I think you can be successful in marketing without the core marketing principles. It depends on where your market is too. If your market is just Cork city you probably can market effectively without the fundamental principles. (Uriah)*

The data indicates that early career marketers do not value the core marketing principles and instead appear to centre their attention on digital tools and platforms. Previous findings have pointed to an emphasis being placed on digital tools and the data now highlights the associated issues, specifically a lack of knowledge in the core marketing principles where they are unknown or not considered important. However, this may also be as a result of early career marketers being “pigeonholed” into digital tasks where later career marketers may also be at fault. The impact of this may have resulted in early career marketers placing less emphasis on these principles as they are generally involved in digital tasks where digital knowledge and skills are considered more important. Accordingly, while all later career marketers champion the core marketing principles, the data suggests that, within the early career cohort, these fundamental principles are unknown, being forgotten, or are no longer considered relevant or necessary in the modern era. This, however, may not inappropriate and may be limiting their effectiveness. Results from the Likert scale survey indicate that without these fundamental skills, early career marketers cannot market effectively. This suggests that the core marketing principles are still important and not possessing such skills will negatively affect a marketer’s ability to market.
Figure 4.13 shows that 74% of all respondents agreed that early career marketers cannot perform effectively without the core marketing principles, however, variations are yet again evident in figure 4.14. Respondents within the 21+ classification had the highest level of agreement, 88%, with very strong support also evident within the 6-10 and 11-20 groups. Marketers with 1-5 years’ experience had the lowest agreement, 57%, across all groups.
However, only 18% of these respondents disagreed with the statement while 25% remained neutral. The numbers remaining neutral may be linked to a lack of knowledge in terms of what the core marketing principles are. The importance of possessing knowledge regarding the core marketing principles varies based on a marketer’s level of marketing experience which further indicates that these fundamental principles may not be used by all marketers, especially those with limited marketing experience. In fact, just over half of marketers with 1-5 years’ experience believe that they cannot perform effectively without knowledge of the core marketing principles.

Literature suggests that the core marketing principles are being cast aside in favour of digital technologies (Leeflang et al., 2014) and are consequently being ignored in the digital world (Quinn et al., 2016). A debate regarding the importance of the core marketing principles can also be seen in literature. While scholars dispute the relevance (Heckman et al., 2018) and irrelevance (English, 2000; Finch et al., 2013; Gordon, 2012; Sheth, 2002) of these fundamental principles, study findings refine current literature by accentuating the role of career stage. In fact, findings highlight the role of career stage as a potential indicator of how the core marketing principles are perceived. Findings suggest that later career marketers champion these fundamental principles, while their early career counterparts dismiss them and consider them irrelevant within modern marketing. Therefore, this suggests that this issue is not ubiquitous throughout marketing as varying opinions became evident. Both these outlooks appear aligned to their respective foci which were identified within this study.

Furthermore, while literature also references a lack of knowledge regarding the core marketing principles (Durkin, 2013; Leeflang et al., 2014; Quinn et al., 2016) study findings note further variations between both cohorts as career stage emerged as an indicator of whether the core marketing principles appear to be known or unknown. As mentioned, later career marketers champion the core marketing principles and accordingly displayed an awareness and knowledge of these principles. Conversely, and parallel to the previous finding where the core marketing principles were identified as no longer relevant, early career marketers exhibited a lack of knowledge in this area. The lack of emphasis or pertinence placed on these principles seems to have resulted in a lack of knowledge in this area as they appear to be perceived as unimportant or unnecessary, and therefore seem to be disregarded or dismissed. Hence, while a lack of knowledge regarding these fundamentals principles is evident within literature (Durkin, 2013; Leeflang et al., 2014; Quinn et al., 2016), with these studies viewing the
marketing profession as a single group, this study provides more insight into the area. The data indicates that a lack of knowledge regarding the core marketing principles is specifically evident within the early career cohort rather than the issue being pervasive throughout the entire marketing population, with findings also indicating that early career marketers cannot perform effectively without knowledge of the core marketing principles. This suggests potential issues such as a lack of marketing efficacy if early career marketers do not possess the requisite knowledge of these fundamental marketing principles.

A reason why the core marketing principles are being forgotten, are unknown, or are now considered no longer necessary was provided by one early career marketer. It was noted that marketing has witnessed an increase in people who are NOT MARKETING EDUCATED enter the marketing sphere and being working as a marketer.

*You are getting a dilution of marketing educated people in marketing. Now, there are people who never studied marketing working in marketing. On my team, there is one person who is doing a master’s in marketing, but he did a degree in law. How did he even get a job in marketing in the first place, he had a degree in law? You also have a lot of sales people in marketing, they are grand, but they don't understand the marketing basics. (Quinton)*

This suggests that any lack of knowledge regarding the CORE MARKETING PRINCIPLES may be linked to the influx of people who work in marketing but do not have any formal marketing education. Accordingly, this points to a dilution of key marketing knowledge within the marketing sphere as individuals enter the marketing profession without a grounding in the core marketing principles. This also appears linked to the previous issue where later career marketers identified an issue where certain individuals believe that SOCIAL MEDIA IS MARKETING. This belief, where social media is in fact all that is needed for marketing, may attract technologically savvy individuals who are good with social media but do not possess the requisite knowledge of marketing. This would appear to further augment any lack of knowledge regarding the core marketing principles. However, in terms of non-marketing educated people lacking knowledge of the core marketing principles, all early career respondents are marketing educated and interviewees indicated that they themselves lack knowledge of these fundamental principles. This suggests that a lack of fundamental marketing knowledge may not be solely confined to non-marketing educated people and may also be prevalent with individuals who have a marketing background. The influx of non-marketing
educated people working within the marketing sphere was further explored within the focus groups where the data provides further insight.

In recent times I have seen a lot of people who don’t have a marketing education working in marketing. It is a weird one. For example, on Instagram, people are “marketers”, however, all they can do is filter an image and I think people don’t understand what digital marketing is about. For me it is about the advertising, the campaigns, google AdWords, and analytics. Some people view digital marketing as content creation, filtering an image or doing a nice collage. There is a vagueness to what an actual digital marketer is, it is more like an influencer and I think that is what they are gearing digital marketers towards. (Jennifer)

There is definitely a lack of focus with regards to what marketers are actually there to do. It’s should actually be less about the tech and what that enables. At the end of the day marketing is there to build a brand and sell stuff and if you are not doing that, no matter what channel you are using, I don’t think you are doing what you are supposed to be doing. That is probably where the lack of focus is, it is due to an individual not being marketing educated. (Frances)

It appears that there may be an issue in marketing where people are entering the industry without the requisite knowledge or skills and believe that social media skills are all that is needed to succeed. Accordingly, there may be a focus on content creation rather than on marketing. Issues such as SOCIAL MEDIA IS MARKETING may be aggravated if people do not have an underpinning in the basics of marketing. Similarly, a lack of focus of what marketing is all about was also mentioned. Individuals may not truly understand what their job as a marketer is. Instead, they appear to concentrate on the digital aspects without understanding what they are actually there to do. This may have repercussions throughout marketing arena. Other issues such as being TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED and a lack of knowledge, or perceived importance, regarding the core marketing principles may be exacerbated if individuals are NOT MARKETING EDUCATED and believe that SOCIAL MEDIA IS MARKETING where all that is needed to work in marketing is digital skills. This could lead to ineffective marketing practices being utilised and an erosion of fundamental marketing knowledge, especially if individuals believe that solely having digital abilities is all that is needed to work in marketing. This points to a long-term consequence where marketing underpinnings will be forgotten and replaced by digital technologies, which may threaten the future of marketing practice, while also intensifying issues identified within this study such as
the overuse of digital technologies coupled with the decline of the non-digital elements of marketing.

Furthermore, although varying opinions on the importance of the core marketing principles became evident within this study, the importance of marketing choices being RELEVANT TO THE CUSTOMER became apparent. The data suggests that marketing decisions, in terms of tool or platform choices, are not always based on what is RELEVANT TO THE CUSTOMER. This may be linked to previous findings where a lack of knowledge regarding the core marketing principles and a digital focus may lower an individual’s ability to critically analyse their marketing decisions and choose tools or platforms which are aligned to the target audience. Instead, their focus on digital may be resulting in unbridled digital usage at the expense of non-digital options which may be appropriate. Therefore, marketers may be distracted by new tools and may not be picking the best options in terms of meeting their target audience. All respondents within the later career cohort indicated that you must choose platforms or tools which are aligned to your customers. The below quotes capture the feelings of this cohort quite well.

*Understanding that a channel exists and how it could be used is one thing but asking is it correct for your business and your target audience is another thing. This question isn’t always asked.* (Harry)

*There is a new development that happens every day, which is great, but it mightn't be relevant for your customers, so you don't have to get overly excited about it. You have to be careful not to get distracted and run off in fifty different directions. You need to stay focused on the customer* (Brenda)

These quotes suggest that marketers must not lose focus on their target audience and should only uses tools and platforms which are suited to their brand or target audience. While new technologies are regularly being introduced, marketers must not worry about all of them. However, later career marketers previously indicated that there seems to be an increased focus on digital technologies within marketing where marketers, specifically early career marketers, can be TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED and TOOL OR PLATFORM LED. They appear to be utilising digital tools in an unbridled manner without questioning if the tool is suitable or RELEVANT TO THE CUSTOMER which points to inappropriate tool and platform choices.
being made. Here, marketing decisions may be made on what is new and in vogue rather than what is most effective and suited to the company and audience which could negatively impact marketing efficacy.

The importance of marketing choices being RELEVANT TO THE CUSTOMER also emerged within the early career cohort. While early career respondents indicated the importance of digital technologies in marketing, an awareness of picking tools or platforms which are RELEVANT TO THE CUSTOMER was also evident. However, while respondents within the early career cohort stated the importance of choosing tools or platforms which are relevant to the customer, aligned to their suggested digital focus, all the tools and platforms discussed fell within the canon of digital marketing options, specifically SOCIAL MEDIA. No traditional marketing techniques were mentioned as potential options. This appears to further highlight the DOMINANT ROLE OF DIGITAL which further emphasises a digital focus of early career marketers where they appear to be using digital tools and platforms as their default and in an unbridled manner. The below quotes represent the feelings of those within the early career cohort and highlight the inherent focus on digital, where non-digital options do not appear to be considered.

*Our clients are more on LinkedIn and Twitter. The company had a Facebook page and zero interaction. I decided it was a waste of time and cut the page to focus on LinkedIn and Twitter instead.* (Pam)

*I have started to ignore Twitter recently because the audience I am dealing with aren't there. They are on Snapchat or Facebook. It goes back to knowing your audience and is it relevant? Snapchat for the younger people and Facebook for the older people.* (Quinton)

This further points to a digital focus, and also suggests that a chasm may be present in terms of awareness and actual behaviour. Although early career marketers seem to be aware of being TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED, TOOL OR PLATFORM LED and the importance of their marketing choices being RELEVANT TO THE CUSTOMER, their actions do not appear to be aligned. The data continues to suggest that early career marketers have a specific digital focus where the use of digital technologies is their default. However, as previously highlighted, later career marketers may have a role to play in the digital focus of their early career counterparts. This is further emphasised as two early career marketers identified a PRESSURE
TO USE DIGITAL. This is where bosses or later career marketers may pressure their earlier career counterparts into using digital channels or platforms. The below quote highlights that senior marketers may be pressuring their early career counterparts to use certain digital tools and platforms even though the early career marketer does not consider it appropriate. Previously, later career marketers highlighted the importance of marketing choices being relevant to the customer, however, this behaviour suggests otherwise. This may result in inappropriate tools or platforms being utilised when they are in fact unsuitable for the business or target audience.

*My boss really wanted us to use Snapchat, however, it isn’t suitable for our target market realistically, so I am trying to get that across to him.* (Tina)

This further indicates the role that later career marketers may play in terms of increasing the digital focus of early career marketers, especially if they themselves do not have the requisite digital knowledge and are overly relying on their junior counterparts in terms of digital marketing. This is further discussed in the next section.

### 4.5 Digital Marketing Knowledge

Although later career marketers highlighted the DIGITAL EVOLUTION of marketing where an increased emphasis seems to be placed on digital technologies, their focus appears fixed on the non-digital elements of marketing where they emphasised the importance of TRADITIONAL MARKETING and the CORE MARKETING PRINCIPLES. However, the importance of DIGITAL KNOWLEDGE was also identified with eleven later career respondents indicating that DIGITAL KNOWLEDGE is extremely important and without such knowledge marketers are wasting their time. In fact, it was noted that marketers need to be as digitally aware and savvy as those who work on the digital team which suggests that an in-depth knowledge of digital is needed.

*Without digital skills I just don't think the opportunity is there in marketing really. Literally, without digital skills I believe marketers cannot effectively market today and that they are wasting their time.* (Alice)

*You need to be as digitally aware and digitally savvy as the person on the digital team doing the social media.* (Ken)
However, not all respondents shared a similar opinion and four later career marketers highlighted that although digital knowledge is important, it may not be as essential as some say.

_Digital knowledge is important, but it will only take you so far._ (Brenda)

While most later career marketers indicated that digital knowledge is extremely important, mixed opinions in terms of digital became evident within the later career cohort. Four respondents appeared to repudiate the importance of digital knowledge which further suggests that not all later career marketers have adapted to, and subsequently embrace, the growing influence of digital technologies within marketing. Accordingly, they may be reluctant to utilise such technologies if they do not value them with a potential long-term impact being a lack of knowledge or awareness of these tools. Marketers may also be missing out by not taking advantage of the affordances offered by new and emerging digital tools.

Contrastingly, all early career respondents highlighted the necessity and importance of digital knowledge. In fact, respondents identified DIGITAL KNOWLEDGE as the most important skill to have in contemporary marketing, with the below quote representative of the feeling of all those within the early career cohort.

_I think that digital marketing knowledge is really important. Digital marketing skills are 100% the most important. I think digital marketing is especially important for small businesses. I recommend that everyone should use it._ (Sinead)

The importance placed on digital knowledge and skills was clearly evident by those within the early career cohort. This further supports previous findings where early career marketers appear to centre their attention on the digital side of marketing. The above quote also highlights the emphasis placed on digital marketing by early career marketers as Sinead highlights how everyone should use digital marketing. This similarly points to the unbridled digital focus where digital tools are used as a default. Although, the importance of tools and platforms being RELEVANT TO THE CUSTOMER, was highlighted by this cohort, albeit in terms of digital choices the lure of digital may result in unbridled digital usage.
Moreover, varying opinions, in terms of the importance of digital knowledge, became evident between both early and later career cohorts. While mixed opinions were evident within the later career cohort, all early career marketers identified digital knowledge as the most important knowledge needed within modern marketing. This supports previous findings that suggest that while later career marketers appear cognisant of the importance of digital technologies within marketing, not all members of this cohort have adapted or have embraced these technologies and appear to have one foot in the past which may hinder them, and their company or brand, in terms marketing effectiveness. In fact, they may be closed to incorporating new practices or technologies which may negate marketing effectiveness while also resulting in them falling behind. This could also cause conflict in team-based setting where other team members may be more technologically inclined. No such variance in opinion was evident with the early career cohort as all respondents indicated that digital knowledge and skills are the most important aspect of modern marketing. However, this emphasis placed on digital knowledge may also further enhance their focus on digital and farther remove them from the core marketing principles.

While most respondents identified digital knowledge as being important for modern marketers, the CONSTANT CHANGE evident within the marketing environment was noted as being problematic. The constantly changing nature of marketing makes it hard to keep pace in terms of having the requisite skills and knowledge needed for modern practice.

_There is a new platform every week. Marketing is constantly evolving._ (Gabby)

_Marketing is transforming all the time, and as an industry it is going to change more than most over the next few years._ (Edward)

While the constantly evolving nature of marketing was clearly identified by later career respondents, it was also noted that this situation is perpetual. This suggests that marketers are under pressure to keep up with the constant changes in their profession. This appears especially through for those who may not have adapted or embraced digital technologies. The constant change would suggest that anyone who is not keeping pace will struggle due to the persistently evolving nature of marketing where new technologies are continuously emerging. If a marketer does not embrace these changes, and subsequently stay abreast of them, they may fall behind and become lost. The perpetual nature of marketing evolution indicates that marketers are at a
The constant risk of losing touch with marketing if they are not continually matching the pace of change. Accordingly, if they do fall behind they may find themselves outdate very quickly. This could then lead to certain technologies being considered unimportant or unnecessary by marketers because they do not understand them or have the associated skills or knowledge to use them. Therefore, marketers who previously indicated that digital tools and platforms are unimportant may have done so because they lack the requisite knowledge and skills where it is easier to disregard these tools and say they are not needed. Similarly, the lack of knowledge may have resulted in these marketers simply not realising the potential and importance of these new technologies which also may result in them being considered as unimportant.

The CONSTANT CHANGE in marketing was also identified by early career marketers. Respondents indicated that the evolving nature of marketing in a digital world has caused challenges and the fast pace of change means marketers must constantly adapt and keep up, and this can be difficult.

*What worked a couple of years ago doesn't necessarily work now. Everything changes and marketing changes more than anything else. It is difficult, something that happened yesterday is already old news. (Rita)*

Similar to that of their later career counterparts the pace at which marketing changes was noted as an obstacle by early career marketers where they are under pressure to match the pace of change. This appears especially true in terms of SOCIAL MEDIA which was identified as an area which evolves more than most, consequently, keeping up with social media is extremely hard.

*Social media is a whole curriculum in itself. I think that marketing is changing at such a rapid pace now, it is constantly changing. Marketers are constantly having to keep up with these new tools, rules, trends etc. You learn how to do one thing and almost a month or two later there is a new way of doing it or a better way of doing it and you are constantly having to keep up. (Pam)*

*Facebook changed their algorithm last week, YouTube this week, Snapchat is constantly changing, Twitter too. As a marketer trying to understand all these things and staying relevant*
is very hard. You have big discrepancies between the realities of digital and how quickly people are keeping up. (Quinton)

These quotes provide further insight into how quickly marketing is changing and further emphasises the necessity to keep up with the changes within the marketing profession. Not only are the tools changing, but also the rules, trends and algorithms which suggests that the changes in marketing are extensive and across the board. However, discrepancies were also noted in terms of how quickly marketers are responding to these changes which points to marketers not matching the pace of change, which was noted as being difficult. The CONSTANT CHANGE also suggests that if a marketer does fall behind it may be difficult to catch up due to the fast pace of change. Therefore, it appears that early career marketers also appear to be under pressure due to the evolving nature of marketing. This cohort exhibit a digital focus and clearly identified the importance of digital technologies, however, if they are struggling to keep up it would suggest that later career marketers, who place their focus elsewhere, are more at risk of falling behind and being left behind as marketing evolves.

While both cohorts identified the pressures they are under in terms of working in such a dynamic industry, this may be especially true for the later career marketers who appear to have not embraced digital fully. Early career marketers champion digital technologies and identify digital marketing as number one. Accordingly, they appear most likely to acquire the requisite skills as they clearly illustrated how much value they place in digital technologies. However, the same cannot be said for all later career marketers where varying opinions were evident. Those who do not place an emphasis on the importance of digital technologies may be less likely to go and learn such skills which may further detach them from modern marketing practices.

Furthermore, the CONSTANT CHANGE evident within marketing also means that marketers NEED TO UPSKILL to stay abreast with the changes. Later career marketers identified the NEED TO UPSKILL in marketing, with the below quote being representative of the feelings of those within this cohort.

Other industries always upskill. Most professions keep upskilling, you have to, marketers especially because the world we are living in, the landscape is always changing. (Ian)
The importance of upskilling was clearly established by later career marketers. In fact, due to the fast pace of change marketers are under more of an obligation to learn new skills and knowledge than other less dynamic industries. Similarly, early career respondents also identified the NEED TO UPSKILL due to the changes in the marketing environment.

*As a marketer you have to constantly learn. Younger and older people have to upskill. When you are in digital you have to upskill the whole time and it is very hard. If you aren't upskilling, you are going to be left well behind.* (Quinton)

*You have to stay one step ahead, you nearly have to predict the trends at this stage.* (Rita)

Early career respondents shared the same sentiments as their later career counterparts where both the necessity, and difficulty, of keeping up with marketing was identified. It was also noted the dangers of not matching the pace of change where individuals will be left well behind. In fact, it was noted that marketers actually need to predict the trends and stay ahead of the changes. While this may be the case, this appears extremely difficult which further highlights the pressures modern marketers are under.

Moreover, and in spite of the importance placed on keeping pace with marketing, early career respondents indicated that, due to the CONSTANT CHANGE, it is impossible to actually keep up with the changes in marketing.

*Digital marketing moves at such a fast pace and with new developments on a near daily basis it's impossible to keep on top of it completely.* (Yasmin)

*I feel outdated compared to a teenager. There is a load of stuff that they are using, stuff I have never even heard of. I am already thinking how do I stay relevant to them? It goes back to the fact things change so fast.* (Quinton)

Early career respondents noted how it is impossible to truly keep up with all the changes due to the dynamism of the industry. In fact, one respondent discussed that he feels outdated compared to teenagers as they are using technologies he has never heard of. This points to a further issue where this problem could be aggravated for later career marketers who may be farther removed from these newer technologies than their younger customers. This has the
potential to exacerbate the gap between the changes in marketing and marketers actually keeping up with these changes. Furthermore, early career marketers may be increasing the pressure they are under due to their focus on digital. While later career respondents indicated the importance of only utilising new technologies which are RELEVANT TO THE CUSTOMER, the digital focus of early career marketers may have resulted in them trying to keep abreast of all the digital changes rather than just the ones which are relevant to them. This may play a role in their difficulty in keeping pace, especially if they are trying to keep up with all the digital changes in marketing, which were noted as a lot.

The NEED TO UPSKILL, coupled with the fast pace of change, also appears to have impacted upskilling endeavours. The CONSTANT CHANGE in marketing may have also created a hesitancy in the minds of early career marketers in terms of gaining new skills and knowledge. three respondents stated that they are reluctant to pick courses as they are worried that the course will soon be outdated and no longer relevant. It was also noted that early career marketers may not always be upskilling in the right areas.

*I am looking to do a master’s in digital marketing, the course has already been set but marketing will be completely different in a years’ time when I am almost finished.* (Pam)

*I did my postgrad in digital marketing a few years back and the module on mobile marketing was brand new but one year later the module was outdated. It changed that quickly.* (Quinton)

*We are great at finding out what the newest and up and coming thing is but whether it is worth wasting our time looking at them is another thing. Are we actually keeping up with the right changes?* (Will)

The dynamism of the marketing industry appears to have impacted early career marketers in terms of keeping pace with the changes within their profession and gaining the knowledge and skills they previously identified as vital. Any reluctance to undertake upskilling endeavours, due to a fear they will be soon outdated, may result in marketers falling behind, especially if they are continuously putting off upskilling undertakings. This may also have long term implications if this scenario continues and marketers become detached from the changes within their field where they are unable to market effectively. The fast pace in marketing suggests that if a marketer does fall behind it may be very difficult to catch up. Accordingly, marketers who
do not embrace the changes in marketing, may find themselves lost and out of date in terms of marketing practice. Furthermore, while a hesitancy was noted, the areas in which early career marketers do upskill in, and the pertinence of related content, was also queried. This suggests that early career marketers may also be upskilling in certain areas which are aligned to their focus rather than the areas where they actually need skills or knowledge. The importance of upskilling was noted; however, the apparent digital focus of early career marketers may result in them solely concentrating on areas which are located within the canon of digital technologies. Therefore, they may not be upskilling in the right areas, which may also further increase their focus on digital, especially if they ignore or are unaware of the core marketing principles, for example.

The focus on solely learning digital technologies may also be exacerbated as early career marketers feel that they are under more pressure to upskill due to EDUCATION ADEQUACY. Early career marketers highlighted that they feel the current educational offerings are not suitable and do not prepare them with the skills for marketing in the real world. Five respondents within the early career cohort identified an issue in terms of EDUCATION ADEQUACY where current courses and programmes on offer are not adequate.

*It is like you graduate from college and then you start from scratch. However, your company doesn't expect you to be starting from scratch. It should be that we have these digital skills.* (Pam)

Furthermore, early career marketers also identified a disconnect between COLLEGE AND REAL LIFE as they felt that college did not prepare them for working in the world.

*What you learn in college is not as applicable in real life. I felt like I came out of college knowing nothing and when I started working I realised exactly how much I didn't know. A lot of my friends from college are finding it difficult as well.* (Pam)

*There are no real principles from what I did in college. What you learn in college is different to real life. I am going into a past lecturer for a talk and I don't want to show him up, but I just want to show them what we are doing, and it isn’t what I was doing in college.* (Zayed)
The data indicates that early career marketers do not feel prepared for industry based on their marketing education where a gap between college and real life was also noted. This lack of preparation may result in more emphasis being placed on gaining the skills they do not have. Accordingly, this may also enhance their focus on digital as they are solely focused on gaining skills and knowledge within the realm of digital technologies. This might also result in little emphasis being placed on the non-digital aspects of marketing as they instead centre their attention solely on acquiring digital skills. However, while a disconnect was noted between education and industry, the changing marketing environment may play a part in terms of EDUCATION ADEQUACY. The dynamism of the marketing industry may result in educational programmes playing catch up in terms of the latest skills considered most important in practice. Therefore, in terms of a disconnect between education and industry needs, while a chasm may be evident, it may not be possible to fully close any gap due to the constantly evolving nature of marketing where the most important skills and knowledge are also continuously changing. Consequently, marketing education may always be a step behind.

The issue where current marketing education is not considered adequate for the challenges within practice was further probed within the online focus groups which yielded further insight into the area. While the fast pace of change was further discussed, where a disconnect between marketing education and industry was also noted, another issue also became evident. Later career respondents indicated that early career marketers do not enter industry with a sufficient knowledge of B2B tactics or strategies as education is instead focused on B2C approaches. This suggests a further disconnect between education and industry, with a lack of marketing skills aimed at B2B industries also appearing to be an issue.

*I would question the academic side of things. Education isn’t keeping up with the pace of change in digital and we all know how quickly things change. It evolves rapidly.* (Quinton)

*A lot of course material for marketers in college these days is B2C and it is very hard for them to adapt to a B2B model. I actually interviewed some students from CIT as part of our intern programme and they were really focused on some of the shiny toys without putting themselves in the shoes of the customer. I also did a digital marketing course recently and there were only a handful of B2B examples, the majority were B2C.* (Erica)
Courses have completely changed to incorporate digital and as a result I don’t think there is time to cover all of the other stuff. I think there is a lack of interest in the other stuff too, specifically in terms of branding, segmentation and positioning etc. I think it goes over their heads as they love the shiny stuff on Instagram. From a B2B point of view it is just left there because that is not where their friends are. So, they want to use the cool stuff and the other stuff is forgotten about. (Ian)

Respondents indicated that within current marketing curricula there seems to be a lack of emphasis placed on the skills specifically needed within B2B industries. In fact, all respondents who had B2B backgrounds or currently worked in B2B industries agreed on this matter. This suggests a potential gap in the skills needed for B2B industries, especially if marketing education is prioritising B2C content. This could limit a marketer’s ability to switch from B2C to B2B industries as they will lack the necessary skills. Ian also adds further insight when he believes that due to courses being updated to incorporate digital, there is less emphasis or time to cover to fundamental aspects of marketing. He further states that there is also a lack of interest in such marketing content as students are more interested in the digital aspects of marketing. This appears similar to previous findings which suggest that early career marketers have a digital focus where they may overuse digital tools and platforms as result. In fact, the lack of preparedness noted by early career marketers, due to EDUCATION ADAQUACY, may also further augment any digital focus. Early career marketers indicated that they feel ill-equipped for industry and therefore prioritise learning digital skills. This may be further exacerbated if they are being pigeonholed into the digital side of marketing where they do not practice any other elements of marketing. Moreover, if courses are being altered to incorporate more digital content, at the expense of other non-digital areas, this may also be increasing the digital focus of early career marketers while also providing them without a grounding in the core marketing principles. Therefore, EDUCATION ADAQUACY may also play a role in terms of early career marketers disregarding or not knowing the core marketing principles.

Early career marketers also identified a further issue. While they noted a lack of preparedness having left education, they also indicated that once they enter the job they are EXPECTED TO HAVE all these digital skills. However, they don’t. Respondents indicated that they feel under increasing pressure to have all the skills deemed pertinent to modern marketing, especially as their employers expect them to have a wide variety of skills. However, they highlighted this is not the case.
We are straight into the job and we are expected to be like digital marketing wizards. But we are not. (Pam)

For someone in digital it is very hard. You are expected to have everything. It’s frustrating. I feel companies want you to have it all and if you don’t have everything they don’t want you. (Quinton)

The high expectations of those within the early stages of their career was further discussed in both focus groups and the below quote captures the feelings of all focus group respondents quite well.

Early career marketers are expected to know all aspects of digital and as a result they are given digital tasks. However, I definitely don’t think that they actually have the digital skills or knowledge that they are expected to have. (Jennifer)

The high expectations placed on early career marketers may in fact further augment any digital focus because it appears that they are under pressure to have the requisite skills. However, they do not because they feel that marketing education does not prepare them for industry. Therefore, their focus on digital may be increased as they concentrate on acquiring the skills they are expected to already possess. It was previously established that the evolving nature of marketing makes it hard to keep pace with the changes and this suggests that marketers may have their work cut out for them in terms of gaining the skills they are already expected to have, while also keeping abreast with the current changes. Accordingly, there may not be time for anything else other than digital which may further distance them from the non-digital aspects of marketing. This also further highlights the potential role of later career marketers in terms of augmenting the digital focus of their early career counterparts as the increased expectations appear to put added emphasis on attaining digital skills for early career marketers where they may become so focused on digital skills that other, non-digital skills, are disregarded or deemed unnecessary.

However, while EDUCATION ADEQUACY and EXPECTED TO HAVE were noted by early career marketers, the changing nature of marketing, and difficulty in keeping up with such changes, was also well established in this study. Therefore, this may indicate that the current
state of marketing education may not be the core issue, instead, the expectations of employers or senior marketing personnel may not be realistic and may be unreasonable. In fact, they may have too high expectations of early career marketers when they enter the job. Accordingly, while marketing education may need to be continuously updated, the expectations of employers may also need to be altered to be more practical in terms of the skills and knowledge that early career marketers are expected to have. This may reduce any chasm between education and industry if they are not expected to be fully proficient across the board and instead are expected to only have the skills and knowledge gained by completing their marketing course.

Nonetheless, a current gap is evident and a requisite for learning new knowledge became evident within this study. Those within the early career cohort indicated that they are forced to LEARN ON THE JOB as COLLEGE ADEQUACY did not prepare them for their current job and they need to be constantly learning to match the expectations of their employers. It also became evident that a lot of what they are currently doing in terms of their jobs is based on things which they learned themselves due to the aforementioned EDUCATION ADEQUACY. However, this may also be due to the fact that employers have unrealistic expectations and they are forced to learn those skills.

90% of the things I do now is stuff I have just learnt from watching YouTube channels or the WordPress website. (Tina)

Everything I am doing at the moment I learned from Google. (Pam)

The gap in education and high expectations placed upon early career marketers has resulted in them being forced to learn on the job. However, these quotes further suggest that there may be too much expected of early career marketers. Respondents stated that most, if not all, of the activities that they are doing have been self-taught or learned using Google or WordPress site. This suggests that the vast majority of tasks that they are doing were not covered in terms of their marketing education and they had to learn them once they entered the job. While a gap in education has been noted, the data points to too much being expected of early career marketers as they appear to be gaining completely new skills and knowledge rather than supplementing their marketing education with additional skills. Therefore, this further suggests that while a gap in education appears to be evident, it does not seem to be the core issue. Instead, too much may be expected of early career marketers and altering these expectations may also be a way
to close the gap between education and practice. This could also reduce the focus, and pressure, in terms of learning new skills and knowledge, specifically within the realm of digital, by those within the early career cohort. This issue could potentially negate the importance of having a marketing degree if everything needed for the job is being learnt via Google or other websites which may further dilute the level of fundamental marketing knowledge within the marketing arena.

Recent advances in technology have affected nearly every facet of marketing, however, less is known about the degree to which marketing education has responded to shifting capabilities and practices (Langan et al., 2019). Marketing courses have struggled to maintain pace with the changes influencing the practice of marketing (Rohm et al., 2019). A disconnect between the current marketing curricula and employer’s needs is evident (Heckman et al., 2018) as academia and industry vary in their understanding of the important skills required for succeeding in digital or social media marketing roles (Sizhu & Shah, 2017). Royle and Laing (2014) also found that a failure to address the issues of digital marketing skills in the classroom is detrimental to graduates, negatively impacting their marketing ability. To exacerbate the issue there is a lack of research addressing this knowledge gap (Sizhu & Shah, 2017).

As highlighted, a similar disconnect emerged within this study as early career marketers indicated that they feel ill prepared for industry after leaving third level education. While a comparable detachment is noted in literature, this study provides more insight into the area and highlights the associated behaviours of marketers, specifically those within the early stages of their career. Hence, while literature identifies a disconnect between education and industry, study findings identify the consequent behaviours of early career marketers due to this disconnect. The lack of preparedness noted by early career marketers has resulted in an increased emphasis being placed on learning the digital skills which they are expected to already possess on entering the job. To gain this knowledge they have to learn on the job which seems to magnify their digital focus as they appear to be solely learning digitally based knowledge and skills. However, as stated, findings provide more insight into this issue and suggest that the expectations of later career marketers, in terms of their early career counterparts, may be too high. The fast pace of change within marketing was noted within this study and it may be impossible for colleges and universities to keep courses updated to provide students with the cutting-edge knowledge and skills needed within industry. Therefore, although this study does note a disconnect between education and industry, findings also
suggest a further issue where too much is expected of early career marketers on entering the job. Accordingly, this indicates that education may not be the sole cause of the issue as later career marketers may have unrealistic expectations in terms of the capabilities of early career marketers. Findings also highlight the associated behaviours of early career marketers. The lack of educational effectiveness and high expectations appear to impact early career marketers as they focus on gaining the requisite digital skills at the expense of other areas of marketing. This situation may continue and worsen over time as marketing education plays catch up with the advances in practice, especially if the expectations of what early career marketers can do keeps increasing. The researcher calls for a better alignment within industry between the skills attained via marketing courses and what is expected of early career marketers.

Furthermore, a lack of knowledge was also noted by those within the later career cohort. Later career marketers previously highlighted the importance of having DIGITAL KNOWLEDGE and THE NEED TO UPSKILL, however, a lack of digital skills and knowledge was identified within modern marketing. The data points to EXTINCT MARKETER as marketers do not seem to have the requisite digital knowledge. The code EXTINCT MARKETER represents marketers who have not adapted to the DIGITAL EVOLUTION and who lack key digital marketing skills.

*When I talk to some people about digital they don't seem to know what is going on, they seem lost. (Ian)*

*Some people aren't keeping up with marketing, we outsource some marketing activities and I changed marketing agencies because we weren't getting what I wanted. (Frank)*

It also emerged that marketers are being LEFT BEHIND as they are not keeping pace with marketing. The code LEFT BEHIND represents marketers who are not keeping up with the changes in marketing and are being left behind as marketing moves on.

*If you are not aware of emerging trends in the environment, not even current but emerging, you can get left behind and you can lose any competitive position you may have. (Harry)*

*I think there are a lot of traditional marketers that haven't copped on that digital is a key area, they believe social media to be a fad and not here to stay, which just isn’t true. (Edward)*
The CONSTANT CHANGE emerged as an issue again as it was noted that modern marketers must be aware of emerging trends in order to stay relevant. However, this was also identified as very difficult due to the fast pace of change within the marketing sphere. In fact, it was stated that staying abreast of current trends was not sufficient to keep up with marketing. Therefore, this appears to solidify the pressures marketers are under where it may be very difficult to actually match the pace of change within marketing. Traditional marketers were also identified as those who are at risk of being left behind as they have not adapted to digital. This also appears linked to previous findings where marketers were identified as not embracing digital which may result in a lack of skills where digital technologies are considered as unnecessary. Consequently, these marketers are at risk of being LEFT BEHIND and these where they may eventually become an EXTINCT MARKETER due to the constantly changing environment. In fact, later career marketers were singled out as the ones who are most likely to be LEFT BEHIND and become an EXTINCT MARKETER.

*The evolution of the digital world is catching a lot of marketers out. It is moving at such a fast pace that marketers, particularly the older generation, are struggling to keep up. (Oliver)*

*A lot of people aged 50 years and over don't get the digital world. They still think to market a campaign you need to be in the print. (Ian)*

Later career marketers appear most at risk of not possessing the requisite digital knowledge and this appears aligned to previous findings which suggest that certain marketers within this cohort have not embraced digital technologies and therefore do not value them. This seems to have resulted in a lack of digital knowledge as they instead focus on the non-digital elements of marketing such as the CORE MARKETING PRINCIPLES and TRADITIONAL MARKETING techniques. This gap in digital ability and knowledge will only become more apparent as marketing changes and those who have not embraced digital fall further behind. It also appears likely that they will continue to dismiss the importance of digital technologies as they do not have the skills needed to utilise such technologies. In fact, some later career marketers identified themselves as not having the necessary skills, while also exhibiting a WILLINGNESS BARRIER in terms of learning those skills. This lack of willingness, where later career marketers display a hesitancy or resistance to change and are most comfortable sticking with what they know, will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. The below
quotes highlight the lack of digital skills within the later career cohort as respondents indicated that they themselves lack key knowledge.

*There are things out there digitally that I am certainly not all over, like snapchat, I don’t have a notion about snapchat.* (Ken)

*There is an awful lot of stuff that I don’t have a clue about, if somebody said for me to go off and actually use it, I’d be forget it, I’m not going to do it.* (Brenda)

The data suggests that, although digital knowledge was identified as important with the NEED TO UPSKILL also evident, there appears to be a disconnect between awareness and behaviour within the later career cohort as a lack of digital knowledge emerged. Eleven respondents within the later career cohort indicated that digital knowledge and skills are key to modern marketing, yet later career marketers do not appear to possess these important skills. This is also linked to later career marketers being identified as those most likely to be an EXTINCT MARKETER as they are LEFT BEHIND. However, the data suggests that being aware of the issue is not sufficient to change behaviour, therefore, the non-digital focus of later career marketers appears to be further emphasised as they are concentrating on the aspects of marketing situated within their purview. The Likert scale data, evident within figure 4.15, is supportive the finding where later career marketers are not as digitally savvy as they should be. Figure 4.16 looks at marketing in smaller stratifications where the highest agreement with this statement being in the 21+ group where just under 8% of respondents disagreed with this finding. In fact, 73% of those within this stratification indicated that senior or later career marketers are not as digitally savvy as they should be.
A similar issue was also noted by those within the early career cohort. Early career marketers indicated that a lack of digital knowledge is evident in modern marketing, with later career marketers being identified as the ones who lack such knowledge and skills. All respondents within the early career cohort indicated that later career marketers are not digitally adept and are deemed to be an EXTINCT MARKETER. The following quotes are particularly
representative of the overall consensus of this cohort and highlight the lack of knowledge evident within the later career cohort.

*I genuinely think that the older generation of marketers are fairly clueless. In my opinion a course wouldn't go astray for some of them. There is a senior person in my work and they don't have a clue about things like google analytics or AdWords.* (Sinead)

*Later career marketers unfortunately lived up to the stigma that they don’t know about new digital technologies. They are probably struggling with new technologies because they haven't grown up with them like the newer generation of marketers.* (Pam)

*From experience, later career marketers are quite unaware of how to effectively use online marketing tools, if how to use them at all. There have been regular occasions where I have educated older marketers on how to use email software, social media platforms and editing website pages.* (Yasmin)

Furthermore, later career marketers were also identified as the ones who are being LEFT BEHIND in marketing. Early career respondents highlighted that their later career counterparts can be stuck in their ways, while not being open to new marketing approaches, specifically in terms of digital technologies. It was further indicated that some later career marketers have not embraced digital technologies and as they are sceptical about them while others appear to completely disregard them. As previously mentioned, this behaviour appears parallel to previous data which points to a lack of digital knowledge as later career marketers appear to be LEFT BEHIND. In fact, these quotes indicate that later career marketers may actually dismiss or disregard these technologies which further indicates that not all of those within the later career cohort have adapted to, and subsequently embraced, digital marketing technologies.

*A lot of the older generation are stuck in a sceptical train of thought where they do not trust advancements in digital marketing.* (Yasmin)

*I left a company last year, before I left I was told by a later career marketer that I don't need any of that social media “shite”.* (Quinton)
Later career marketers don’t just lack digital marketing skills, it’s also the simple things in terms of digital technologies. I think computer skills are needed for the older generation. (Sinead)

It appears that later career marketers are not as digitally proficient as they need to be and are closed to embracing the advances in digital marketing. Contrastingly, the importance of having the requisite digital knowledge was highlighted by those within the later career cohort previously, yet respondents indicated that they do not have the skills they previously identified as important. The importance of having the requisite digital knowledge is further emphasised by the Likert scale data, evident in figure 4.17, where results highlight that later career marketers cannot perform effectively without digital marketing knowledge. Figure 4.18 looks at marketing in smaller classifications where strong support was also evident across all groups. However, the highest level of agreement with this finding is evident within the group of marketers with 21+ years of experience where 93% of respondents agreed that later career marketers cannot perform effectively without digital marketing knowledge. Therefore, the importance of having digital knowledge appears to be evident and marketers who lack such knowledge may not be able to effectively market which points to a lack of marketing efficacy without these skills.

Senior or later career marketers cannot perform effectively without digital marketing knowledge

![Likert Scale Survey Results](Figure 4.17)
Digital skills gaps have been highlighted within literature (Crush, 2011; Hege, 2020; Mgiba, 2019; Quinn et al., 2016; Royle & Laing, 2014; Wood, 2011), however, findings indicate that this issue is not ubiquitous throughout the marketing sphere. In fact, later career marketers were identified as those who lack digital knowledge and skills. Therefore, the digital transformation of marketing appears to have impacted the experiences of marketers differently based on their stage of career. While skills gaps are identified in literature, this study indicates that they are not equally prevalent within marketing and instead vary based on a marketer’s career stage, with those at the later stage of their career being identified as not possessing the requisite digital skills. While early career marketers indicated they feel ill prepared for industry and do not always possess the digital skills they are expected to have, they displayed an increased desire to gain any missing digital knowledge, something which also seems to play a part in their increased focus on digital. They appear to be naturally proficient with digital technologies and have an inherent savviness with technology as they grew up in an era of digitalisation. However, this inherent savviness has also led to issues, such as digital tools and platforms being used as a default.

The researcher argues, based on previous findings, that the marketing profession should not be viewed as a homogenous group. Variations became evident in areas such as skills gaps, both
in terms of digital and the core marketing principles, and an overuse of digital tools where the role of career stage is accentuated. Therefore, while literature looks at marketing as a single group and suggests that certain issues are pervasive throughout the marketing sphere, the findings of this study provide a more nuanced insight into the research area and suggest otherwise. Findings indicate that the previously mentioned issues are not ubiquitous throughout the marketing sphere, but rather are more prevalent in either early or later career marketers. Hence, findings provide further insight into the specific needs of marketers which appear to vary based on career stage. Accordingly, the researcher argues that upskilling programmes should not be standardised for all marketers, but instead, should be tailored to the specific needs, which are highlighted within this study, of participants.

Furthermore, while the data suggests that later career marketers lack digital knowledge and cannot perform effectively without such knowledge they were identified as having LATER EXPERIENCE. Early career respondents indicated that their later career counterparts, although digitally weak, still have value in marketing based on their LATER EXPERIENCE. This code represents the knowledge and experience that later career marketers possess. However, in terms of this code, the experience offered by later career marketers was always discussed in terms of offline marketing techniques and behaviours.

Later career marketers are really good at bringing it back to looking at the vision of the company. We are extremely caught up in the new tools and what is coming up next, we don’t actually take time to look at the traditional view of marketing. I think the older marketers are very good at bringing us back. I am currently working with an old school marketer, amazingly old school. She doesn’t have any interest in the newer tools but the knowledge that she can bring is different class. (Will)

However, early career respondents highlighted LATER EXPERIENCE solely in terms of offline or the non-digital aspects of marketing. This further suggests that later career marketers are not as digitally savvy as they should be. Instead, they exhibit a non-digital focus as it seems that they excel in the areas that they previously championed. It appears that their focus and strengths lie outside the realm of digital as, in terms of digital marketing and digital knowledge, members of the early career cohort identified their later career counterparts as not being proficient with digital technologies. This finding is parallel to previous data where later career marketers indicated that they themselves lacked key digital knowledge and were not willing to
acquire it. Moreover, not all early career respondents had positive experiences with later career marketers. Three early career marketers also shared some negative experiences with later career marketers.

*I was working with a later career marketer and it was just sell, sell, sell. It wasn't about an experience, it wasn't about storytelling. There was nothing like that which I think is more important now. Things have completely changed. The older generation aren’t up to date with storytelling for example. I was trying to explain it to them and they were saying what good is that? (Rita)*

*The person before me at this role was very focused on paper advertising. He would do the exact same advert. I don't see the point in having the exact same advert in the exact same place every week saying the exact same thing. (Tina)*

This suggests that while some later career marketers may not have embraced digital technologies, some may also have not embraced newer marketing practices, such as storytelling, which have become popular in recent times. Therefore, a lack of modern marketing approaches may also be evident which may also reduce their ability to effectively market. This suggests that some marketers may be closed to learning new skills or knowledge, not necessarily just digital knowledge. Although three early career marketers shared negative experiences with later career marketers, eight respondents within the early career cohort highlighted that later career marketers, although lacking digital skills and knowledge, have valuable experience in an offline setting.

Furthermore, while later career marketers were identified as lacking the digital knowledge that was previously identified as being important, a WILLINGNESS BARRIER also emerged, which will be discussed in the next section. The code WILLINGNESS BARRIER represents a lack of willingness to gain the skills considered pertinent to contemporary marketing.

**4.6 Willingness to Learn and Learning Methods**

Later career marketers were identified as not having the requisite digital skills and knowledge needed for modern marketing. Within this finding a willingness barrier also emerged. The below quote was previously presented to highlight a lack of digital knowledge where later
career respondents self-identified as lacking digital knowledge and skills. However, the quote also suggests a WILLINGNESS BARRIER and is therefore presented again.

*There is an awful lot of stuff that I don’t have a clue about, if somebody said for me to go off and actually use it, I’d be forget it, I’m not going to do it. (Brenda)*

The WILLINGNESS BARRIER further suggests a disconnect between awareness and behaviour as later career marketers identified DIGITAL KNOWLEDGE as being very important, yet they do not possess such knowledge. In fact, they appear closed to acquiring the requisite knowledge. Any lack of willingness in terms of keeping up with the changes in marketing may compound the issue where marketers are being LEFT BEHIND and becoming an EXTINCT MARKETER. The WILLINGNESS BARRIER also further indicates that later career marketers may be unwilling to embrace new technologies even though they have been identified as important and, as previously highlighted, it appears that later career marketers cannot perform effectively without digital marketing knowledge. Therefore, this WILLINGNESS BARRIER appears to be detrimental to their marketing ability. Instead, later career marketers appear most comfortable sticking with what they know, specifically within non-digital areas of marketing where they seem to centre their attention. Moreover, it was noted that digital knowledge and skills are easy to learn, however, the marketers need the will to go and actually learn such skills. It was also highlighted that the while the changing environment makes learning new skills a necessity, some marketers need massive help which further points to a WILLINGNESS BARRIER. However, while the below quote indicates that it is easy to learn new skills, this may be an over simplification as it was previously well established, across both cohorts, that it is in fact difficult to match the pace of change within marketing and acquire the requisite skills. Nonetheless, the below quote do further point to a willingness barrier.

*It is quite easy to learn the skills if the will is there, however there is a willingness barrier. (Alice)*

*You have to put your hand up. Some people are open but there are those who need massive help. With the pace of change you really have to embrace it and live in that world (Oliver)*
The Likert scale survey provided mixed results. While figure 4.19 indicates that 45% of all those surveyed agreed that later career marketers are less willing to learn new digital skills compared to their early career counterparts, 20% of respondents remained neutral. Findings also vary based on respondents’ level of marketing experiences which are evident within figure 4.20, especially within the 11-20-year group where almost half of respondents disagreed with this finding while 26% agreed. Conversely, 62% of those within the 21+ group agreed that later
career marketers are less willing to learn new digital skills or knowledge compared to their early career counterparts. This indicates varying opinions across the smaller classifications. Moreover, almost a quarter of those within the 1-5, 6-10, and 11-20 stratifications remained neutral for this question which may be as a result of them being unaware of the willingness of later career respondents to acquire digital knowledge.

While later career marketers were identified as lacking a willingness to gain the necessary digital knowledge and skills, the importance of being willing to gain these skills was identified within the focus groups. All respondents agreed that marketers must showcase a willingness to stay up to date with marketing and acquire the necessary skills. The below quotes capture the feelings of respondents well.

*I don’t think you could be in marketing without the willingness to keep up to date without marketing because digital changes every two weeks. Algorithms, new features etc. You have to be prepared and interested in learning more.* (Jennifer)

*I think technology is definitely going to come to the fore more now. Due to Covid-19 we honestly had to innovate so quickly, and we now have to communicate differently. I think it is about being adaptable and feeling comfortable that you have to educate yourself as you go along.* (Roger)

The focus group data suggests the importance of being open and willing to gain new skills, especially due to the CONSTANT CHANGE in marketing. It was also discussed how COVID-19 has increased the rate of change and marketers must be more adaptable in these uncertain times. Accordingly, this further highlights the necessity of having a willingness to keep pace with marketing and gain the requisite skills. However, later career marketers do not appear to be as willing as they should be. This is also emphasised in previous findings where some later career marketers have not embraced digital technologies and are being LEFT BEHIND and are at risk of becoming an EXTINCT MARKETER. Therefore, the lack of digital skills noted within the later career cohort may be linked to a WILLINGNESS BARRIER which points to consequences for both marketers and modern marketing if important skills and knowledge are missing.
It also emerged that later career marketers appear to believe that they don’t need to know all aspects of digital and this may be aggravating the aforementioned WILLINGNESS BARRIER. Although digital skills and knowledge were identified as important, those within the later career cohort seem to rationalise not having the requisite digital knowledge as it isn’t their job. Later career marketers indicated that marketing is a YOUNG PERSON INDUSTRY and that their job is more BIG PICTURE MARKETING where DIGITAL KNOWLEDGE may not be as necessary. The code BIG PICTURE MARKETING represents an approach to marketing where marketers are focused on the big picture, or long-term strategies, rather than the day to day operations. The below quotes highlight how later career marketers appear to indicate that they do not need to know all aspects of digital as it isn’t their job, which may result in a lack of key knowledge in the long run.

You don’t need to know the ins and outs of digital. (Alice)

I allow significant time for bigger picture and try to do just that. If we have fifty people working here, forty-nine people can do the rest. (Martin)

These quotes suggest that later career marketers shift the responsibility for being digitally proficient to other marketers so that they do not have to possess such knowledge themselves. Instead, the tactical side of marketing is carried out by other individuals. This appears similar to previous findings where later career marketers may be enhancing the focus of their early career counterparts by “pigeonholing” them into the digital side of marketing. Notwithstanding, digital knowledge was previously identified as important and a subsequent lack of this knowledge was also evident within the later career cohort. Therefore, a belief that they do not need such knowledge may play a part in terms of them not having the requisite digital knowledge, and their lack of willingness to acquire it. If they believe that they do not need it, as it isn’t their job, then this may exacerbate any lack of key digital knowledge where they are consequently falling behind within marketing.

The concept of BIG PICTURE MARKETING was further explored within the online focus groups to gain more insight. Firstly, the focus group probed what exactly big picture marketing is with the below quotes highlighting the various outlooks which became evident.
Big picture is the strategic approach of long-term planning for your brand or whatever brand you are working on in an agency – it is much more strategic to tactical. The strategic skillsets come into play in terms of planning, setting goals, understanding the business challenges and seeing the role that marketing can play. (Frances)

I think big picture is about the brand and its positioning. If we were to position the brand in the marketplace what would people say about us? (Ian)

I have been working with later career marketers who consider themselves big picture and they are the people who build the media plan and they say we need social media, email marketing, google AdWords etc. They are very much this is what we need in terms of statements but in terms of the actual nitty gritty or the tactics, they wouldn’t dive that deep. So, bigger picture is literally top level, we need social media, we need this, we need that, but when you ask them to be specific in terms of the tactics or specific channels, that’s where they delegate. (Maura)

I would say the big picture marketing that I bring to the table is a more strategic business view. When I was studying my own marketing degree, marketing is the business and you need a fundamental understanding of marketing but these days you also a strategic viewpoint of what the business is trying to achieve, what the business goals are and how the marketing discipline will contribute to the achievement of these business goals. The other elements can almost be tactics to get there (Kyle)

While the focus group data provided varying views in terms of what BIG PICTURE MARKETING is, respondents agreed that big picture marketing is the strategic side of marketing which entails long term planning and the overall goals of the company. Therefore, it is top level marketing rather than the day to day or tactical side of marketing. Maura also provided more insight and discussed how later career or big picture marketers detail what needs to be done, however, in terms of the specifics regarding channels or tactics they delegate this. Based on previous findings this may be as a result of them not having enough knowledge of these tools or platforms to provide specific instructions. This also appears aligned to their views where they do not need to possess such knowledge as their job is BIG PICTURE MARKETING. While this may be the case, digital knowledge was identified as key and not being aware of the tactical side of marketing may in fact limit their effectiveness in terms of strategic planning if they are not aware of what is necessary, or what the affordances offered
by newer technologies actually are. This further points to issue in terms of not possessing digital knowledge and skills where they may be left behind.

The online focus groups further explored the finding where later career marketers don’t need to know all aspects of digital and can instead focus on BIG PICTURE MARKETING. Herein, the effectiveness and suitability of solely taking a big picture approach in modern marketing was probed. The mixed opinions of respondents are evident within the below quotes.

*I think it’s more of a balance of just having an overview like you would for any channel mix or channel strategy. That you would have a very clear sense of what each channel is delivering and what the role of it is. You don’t necessarily need to know the ins and outs of every google ads, metrics etc, or how to set up an analytics campaign at all. You don’t need to know that detail. A good overview of what it is delivering in terms of the role of the channel is important. Any new developments or innovations you should keep abreast of I suppose but no more than you would if radio was doing something new or TV.* (Frances)

*The people with the big picture view don’t necessarily need to be the foot soldiers doing the doing. I think the big picture marketers can be highly effective, they don’t necessarily need to be getting their finger nails dirty on every detail.* (Kyle)

*I think you need big picture as you can’t get stuck into all the different tactics. You need a strategy or an overall goal or objective for your campaign. You need somebody looking at the brand and achieving the goals that have been set. However, solely looking at the big picture is not effective marketing, you need to either learn the tactics to influence, or you need to delegate it and work with a team because solely taking a big picture approach doesn’t do the job anymore because marketing is so intricate, especially with digital.* (Maura)

Within the focus groups, the later career respondents shared a similar opinion where marketers do not need to know all the ins and outs of digital, instead, an overview knowledge of marketing is appropriate. However, during interviews eleven respondents within the later career cohort indicated that marketers must be fully aware of digital technologies with Ken, in particular, stating that marketers need to be as digitally aware and digitally savvy as the people on the digital team doing the social media. Therefore, this focus group finding is not necessarily aligned to previous data obtained from the in-depth interviews. While the interview data
indicates that marketers must possess knowledge of digital, during the focus groups later career respondents appeared to believe that they themselves do not need such knowledge as it isn’t their job. Instead, they view themselves as big picture marketing and don’t need such an in-depth knowledge of digital tools or platforms. Nonetheless, nuances emerged within the overall data which further points to a WILLINGNESS BARRIER where later career marketers identify the need for everyone else to have the necessary digital knowledge, however, in terms of themselves, they appear to rationalise not having such knowledge as it isn’t their job. This further suggests a disconnect between awareness and behaviour. They appear to be aware of the importance and necessity of other marketers having digital knowledge but when it comes to themselves they appear to be exempt as they believe that it is not their job. Yet again, this has implications for marketing as a lack of marketing knowledge may reduce marketing efficacy, while also increasing the likelihood of later career marketers being LEFT BEHIND as marketing evolves.

Moreover, the early career respondents within the focus groups shared a dissimilar belief to their later career counterparts and while the importance of big picture marketing was noted, it was also stated that solely taking a big picture approach is not suitable within modern practice. Respondents indicated that to be effective big picture marketers must learn the tactics so that they can influence or else if they delegate these tasks they must be part of the team. Respondents indicated that because of the fast pace of change solely taking a big picture is no longer effective. This suggests that exclusively taking a big picture approach may no longer be appropriate and marketers who do so may be at risk of eventually becoming an EXTINCT MARKETER as they do not have the skills needed. Accordingly, marketing efficacy may be diminished if they do not keep pace with the changes in marketing, especially if they are unable to effectively guide or critique subordinates due to a lack of awareness in terms of the affordances offered by new tools and platforms. Therefore, the focus group data indicates that a BIG PICTURE MARKETING approach may be counterproductive, however, later career marketers do not appear to see such an approach as inappropriate and this may further augment any lack of digital skills and knowledge in the long run.

Further data was collected in terms of BIG PICTURE MARKETING and, within focus group 2, the size of the business emerged as an important indicator of whether a marketer can solely take a big picture approach to marketing.
For me I think you need to separate the whole big picture thing by small and large businesses. If you are in a company with 100 employees you can easily delegate. I’m in a small team, for me I need to be big picture to ensure my time is not wasted on anything I am doing. I am working on what is the best strategy for me to get the greatest return on investment for my time and spend. I have to look at it from a strategic point of view – which platform will give me the greatest return on investment and how long will I have to spend on that tool to get that return. If you are in a bigger company, it’s much easier to have one marketer looking at the bigger picture and delegating to people they can bring in compared to a small business like here. I have to do everything here. (Quinton)

The focus group data suggests that the concept of exclusively taking a big picture approach to marketing may not be suitable for all companies, especially smaller ones as they do not have the ability to hire individuals to simply look after the big picture. The implications of this issue may impact marketers, specifically those who may be moving companies. Marketers within smaller companies were identified as having to do all parts of marketing, and this suggests that they have a more rounded skillset. However, marketers within bigger companies who only look after the bigger picture may be limited in terms of their skills, especially if they have not kept pace with marketing. This appears especially through as it previously emerged that big picture marketers do not need to know all aspects of digital as it is not their job. Accordingly, this means that their career mobility may be negatively impacted if they fall behind in terms of current knowledge which may limit their ability to change positions or go from a big company to a smaller one as they may lack the knowledge needed in the new position. It also suggests that those within larger companies may be at more risk of being LEFT BEHIND.

Furthermore, later career respondents also highlighted that marketing is a YOUNG PERSON INDUSTRY and they appeared to further justify why they don’t necessarily need to be fully aware of digital technologies as early career marketers can look after digital aspects of marketing. All those within the later career cohort indicated that marketing is a young person’s industry.

You very rarely see anyone in marketing over the age of forty, it is very much a younger person’s industry. (Brenda)
Accordingly, the ability to HIRE and DELEGATE digital tasks to younger people emerged as tactics being used by later career marketers in terms of digital marketing. These tactics appear to support or enable later career marketers to remain focused on BIG PICTURE MARKETING while their early career counterparts look after the digital tasks. However, this may also result in later career marketers being LEFT BEHIND and eventually becoming an EXTINCT MARKETER if they continually use delegation or hiring tactics for digital tasks, especially as the importance of possessing the requisite digital knowledge has been well established in this chapter. The digital focus of early career marketers may also be increased, especially if they are delegated digital tasks or if they are specifically hired for digital marketing duties. This further indicates that the actions of later career marketers may increase the digital focus of their early career counterparts.

*I hire lots of young people. They can keep me up to date with what is happening even if they don’t know the core marketing principles, they know what is happening with digital.* (Martin)

*I don't want to do Instagram. I can get someone else to do that for me.* (Lisa)

However, these tactics may be detrimental in the long run as later career marketers may prioritise delegating and hiring tactics rather than keeping pace with marketing and eventually find themselves LEFT BEHIND or worse. These tactics may also increase as later career marketers fall further behind and the less they know the more they will have to delegate which will only exacerbate the situation. Therefore, the applicability of these tactics may not be suitable in the long run, especially if marketers are using these tactics to avoid acquiring the necessary skills themselves.

The use of hiring or delegation tactics was further probed within both focus groups where respondents discussed how later career marketers are utilising these tactics to avoid using digital tools or platforms themselves. The data from both focus groups supports initial interview findings, with Kyle providing further insight based on his personal experience.

*Later career marketers avoid digital by hiring, definitely. That’s how I do my job, they hire me to do their digital marketing. They do traditional and they hire me in to do the digital side of it as they mightn’t feel comfortable with the channels. They didn’t do it in college and they don’t*
use them in their personal life, so they feel more comfortable with someone else taking over the control of it. (Jennifer)

I would agree with Jennifer, absolutely. I would also add that as people move on they become increasingly afraid of digital. (Roger)

I work with big picture marketers on strategy or tactics and they are the people who do outsource, they bring in the younger people. They ask me what the hell does the cloud mean or what does that mean? They say that they don’t use TikTok or Snapchat, but they know they need to be on it. (Maura)

I realised I didn’t have the necessary skillsets. So, in a sporting analogy, I was a very good first division manager but then I realised we had gone into the premiership, so I needed to get in a few new players that know this game much better than I do. By hiring a couple of really smart graduates with three or four years under their belt I can put them out on the pitch. I am not blowing my own trumpet here, but I can see the success of doing that strategy. They have taught me a whole lot in the last few years. (Kyle)

The focus group data also suggests that later career marketers utilise hiring or outsourcing tactics in terms of avoiding digital as they do not possess the requisite skills. However, as stated, these strategies are potentially dangerous and may result in later career marketers failing to keep up with the changes in marketing. Roger also adds that as time progresses people become more afraid of digital. This further supports the previous argument regarding the perceptual and the long-term dangers of using hiring and delegating tactics. If a marketer does fall behind they may be unable to catch up due to the constantly evolving nature of marketing, instead, they may disregard such technologies and identify them as unnecessary. However, Kyle also shares his personal experience of utilising such strategies which suggests that they can also be used successfully. Notwithstanding, long term dangers do appear to be evident if marketers overuse such strategies or if they fail to also keep abreast of changes in marketing. Without an awareness or knowledge of what is possible, specifically in terms of new tools or platforms, their overall effectiveness may be negatively impacted. The argument that later career marketers are BIG PICTURE MARKETING appears short-sighted as a knowledge of what tools or platform offer appears necessary before an individual can effectively advise or set strategies.
Furthermore, it also emerged that later career marketers rely on their early career counterparts to learn. Later career respondents indicated that they LEARN FROM YOUTH, specifically early career marketers, in terms of keeping up to date with marketing advancements. However, it was also noted that this tactic may not be suitable. In fact, the quote by Lisa suggests that there may be an overreliance on younger people to bring other marketers up to speed. This may negate their own motivation to upskill, especially if they instead rely on younger marketers to keep them up to speed. This may also be problematic as early career marketers previously noted that they do not feel prepared for industry having left education and are themselves under pressure to stay abreast with all the changes in marketing. Therefore, they may not be in a position to inform their later career counterparts if they do not possess the knowledge themselves.

*Older marketers seem lost, they rely on the younger person to tell them about digital and I am not sure is that the right move from a strategic point. (Ian)*

*New people coming in have an appreciation for digital and their skills will bring us all up to speed. (Lisa)*

Those within the early career cohort also indicated that marketing is a young person’s industry where later career marketers listen and learn from their younger career counterparts. However, it was also noted that some may be threatened by younger marketers and their digital knowledge.

*The later career marketers I worked with didn't know much about the digital side of things, but I helped them. They definitely learned stuff from me. (Rita)*

*Older marketers are sometimes almost threatened by younger people coming in, but they are trying to listen as well. Digital is the one area where younger people know as much as older people. (Quinton)*

It appears common that later career marketers learn from their younger counterparts. However, while this may offer benefits, the fast pace of change in marketing suggests that this tactic should not replace other methods of upskilling or knowledge acquisition, especially as the early
career marketers, who they are learning from, have previously noted how difficult it is in terms of keeping up with the changes in marketing. Therefore, this tactic may not be suitable to keep later career marketers fully up to date and may be best suited as a supplementary measure.

In terms of keeping up to date with the changes in marketing, members of the later career cohort also spoke about the more traditional methods they use to gain knowledge. However, these methods of learning fall within the canon of traditional upskilling methods, where they seem to be averse to more progressive techniques such as SOCIAL MEDIA KNOWLEDGE GAINS which is utilising social media platforms for learning. In fact, a further WILLINGNESS BARRIER in the form of SOCIAL MEDIA KNOWLEDGE GAINS appears to be evident. As previously mentioned, later career marketers identified the NEED TO UPSKILL, however, later career respondents indicated that they do not use social media as a learning tool, which may relate to the lack of DIGITAL KNOWLEDGE which emerged previously within this cohort. A lack of digital savviness may limit later career marketers in terms of non-traditional upskilling endeavours such as SOCIAL MEDIA KNOWLEDGE GAINS, especially if they have lost touch with the affordances offered by these technologies due to utilising hiring and delegation tactics. The below quotes are particularly representative of those within the later career cohort.

*I would never use social media for learning.* (Oliver)

*The only social media I have is LinkedIn and I go on it twice a year and click yes to all the requests.* (Martin)

The lack of digital knowledge and skills may have impacted later career marketers and they may not have the ability to utilise social media for learning purposes. In fact, respondents also indicated that they do not regularly use social media platforms themselves which further suggests a lack of knowledge in terms of these skills. Accordingly, they may not be able to embrace the affordances offered by newer technologies for learning which may also further remove them from the frontlines of digital. This outlook also appears aligned to their non-digital focus, especially as awareness and behaviour appear to be disconnected in terms of the importance of digital marketing skills. Instead, later career marketers identified traditional and formal methods of learning where numerous approaches to upskilling are being utilised. The
following statements are particularly representative of this cohort and highlight the varied approaches being taken by later career marketers.

*I did a digital diploma in digital marketing a few years back and I go to conferences. (Ken)*

*I am signed up to a number of different emails and get information from the marketing institute also. (Brenda)*

*I find boards.ie very useful, it keeps my fingers on the pulse and I see what people are talking about. I also go to the marketing institute events. (Frank)*

*I read a huge amount of news - The Guardian, Irish Times, and all the marketing and media news in Ireland. (Gabby)*

While the internet was identified as a tool that they may potentially use, it was basic internet searches rather than social media, and generally conferences and formal education were identified as the main methods of upskilling and knowledge acquisition. The Likert scale data, evidenced in figure 4.21, also shows support for this finding, with only 18% disagreeing. However, almost a quarter of respondents remained neutral which suggests that some marketers may not be aware of how later career marketers learn. While figure 4.22 provides a more in-depth insight, where the data is supportive of this finding across all stratifications, it seems that those who are most unsure of how later career marketers upskill are within the 1-5- and 11-20-year cohort. In fact, more respondents remained neutral than disagreed with this finding across the first three stratifications.
Early career marketers, on the other hand, and aligned to their digital focus, indicated that they regularly utilise SOCIAL MEDIA KNOWLEDGE GAINS. In fact, all those within the early career cohort championed the use of social media for learning. The use of social media for
learning appears aligned to the previously mentioned issues, specifically EDUCATION ADEQUACY and EXPECTED TO HAVE, where early career marketers indicated that they are under pressure to acquire the requisite digital skills. Subsequently, they have to constantly LEARN ON THE JOB and social media appears to support this, especially as it is situated within the scope of their digital focus.

*I am constantly using social media for learning. If I am unsure of something I am straight onto Facebook, Instagram or Google etc. I am constantly learning on the job.* (Sinead)

*People are so into blogs and sharing their knowledge on social media platforms. It does help. It’s just about seeing what other people are doing and then using the internet to find out how to do it.* (Tina)

![Junior or early career marketers are more likely to utilise social media as a learning tool compared to their senior or later career counterparts](image)

**Likert Scale Survey Results**

![Figure 4.23](image)
The Likert scale data shows strong support for this finding with figure 4.23 highlighting that less than 10% of all respondents disagree. Similarly, figure 4.24 further supports this finding across all stratifications. However, the DOMINANT ROLE OF DIGITAL and the digital focus which emerged within this study may be influencing early career marketers to stay abreast of the changes which fall within their purview, or focus. As previously highlighted, in terms of the CONSTANT CHANGE in marketing, Will mentioned that early career marketers may not be keeping up with the right things.

We are great at finding out what the newest and up and coming thing is but whether it is worth wasting our time looking at them is another thing. Are we actually keeping up with the right changes? (Will)

This quote further suggests that while early career marketers appear motivated to learn new knowledge and skills they may not be acquiring the skills and knowledge that they actually need. Instead, previous data suggests that they may be over focused on gaining digital skills and knowledge while other areas such as the core marketing principles are forgotten or ignored. Accordingly, there may be a risk where early career marketers are utilising social media as a learning tool to exclusively learn digitally based skills and knowledge. This points to marketers
learning within a certain scope, where anything not within their specific focus may be neglected or disregarded. This may also increase the likelihood of early career marketers being TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED and TOOL OR PLATFORM LED while they are also considered to LACK FUNDAMENTAL KNOWLEDGE.

The use of technology for learning (Buzzard et al., 2011; Crittenden et al., 2019; Payne et al., 2011; Uncles, 2018), specifically social media (Al-Sharqi et al., 2016; Granitz & Pitt, 2011; Moghavvemi et al., 2018), is well documented within literature and study findings provide a more nuanced insight into this area. Findings suggest that the uptake of utilising such technologies, specifically social media, is not ubiquitous within the marketing sphere. Instead, this study indicates that early career marketers are the ones who are utilising such technologies for learning. This appears aligned to their digital focus and the importance they place on learning digital technologies, especially as they do not feel prepared for industry. The affordances offered by social media appear to enable them to learn on the job. Later career marketers stated that they do not use social media as a learning tool, in fact, they identified a wide variety of upskilling methods. These methods are predominantly offline which also appears parallel to their non-digital focus. The lack of digitally based upskilling methods may be associated with the lack of knowledge noted within this cohort. Accordingly, this lack of knowledge may limit them in terms of their upskilling options as they may not possesses the necessary digital skills or knowledge to enable them to benefit from the affordances offered by technologies such as social media.

However, the findings of this study also suggest potential issues with the educational behaviours of each cohort. The digital focus of early career marketers may be further enhanced due to predominantly learning digital knowledge and skills. They appear to be using digital platforms to learn digital skills and may be learning within a limited scope where certain elements of marketing are not covered. This has the potential to further remove them from the non-digital aspects of marketing such as the core marketing principles, which they appear to view as irrelevant and unnecessary in the digital era, and increase their focus on digital technologies in marketing. Later career marketers may also be impacted as those who do not use such technologies for learning may be missing out on new and upcoming developments, which may further widen the gap in terms of digital knowledge and may further remove them from the frontlines of digital. Therefore, study findings indicate that not all marketers are utilising social media as a learning tool while also identifying the potential consequences, for
both cohorts, associated with utilising or ignoring such an approach to learning. The dichotomy between early and later career marketers may be exacerbated over time based on the behaviours identified within this study.

Moreover, the digital focus of early career marketers suggests that they centre their attention on digital technologies and therefore their strength lies within this area. Conversely, later career marketers exhibit a non-digital focus which points to them being strongest in the non-digital aspects of marketing. Both cohorts also identified weaknesses in the areas which were situated outside of their focus. Findings from the Likert scale survey, evident within figure 4.25 and figure 4.26, show strong support for the aforementioned issue as both early and later career marketers appear to have distinct strengths which are aligned to their marketing outlook and focus.

Generally speaking, early career or junior marketers are stronger digitally while later career or senior marketers are stronger with the core marketing principles

![Likert Scale Survey Results](image)

**Figure 4.25**
Likert Scale Survey Results

The data suggests that early and later career marketers do not share a similar marketing outlook as they appear to focus on the elements of marketing which are situated within their specific purview. Those within the early career cohort exhibit a digital inclination. They champion digital technologies where their digital focus has resulted in the non-digital elements of marketing being disregarded or identified as irrelevant. A different outlook emerged within the later career cohort. Respondents exhibited a non-digital focus where they champion traditional marketing and the core marketing principles. This focus appears to have resulted in a lack of digital marketing knowledge. Moreover, awareness of something outside of their purview does not seem to affect behaviour as each cohort seems to revert to their default outlook. It appears that early and later career marketers view marketing through a distinct lens which is filtered by their past and learned experiences. These past or learned experiences influence their outlook on marketing as they concentrate on things which fall within their specific focus, or mindset. The data indicates that early and later career marketers do not share a similar lens, in fact, they view marketing through divergent lenses and their focus can be traced back to their mindset. The data suggests a mindset issue which emerged within this study. Mindset, along with focal point, digital impact, and learning will be further discussed in the next section.
4.7 Mindset

A mindset issue emerged within this study. A dichotomy became evident as early and later career marketers centre their attention different elements of marketing. The data suggests a mindset issue as each cohort appears to view marketing through a distinct lens where they focus on the specific elements of marketing which are aligned to their mindset. A different default setting became evident within both cohorts as divergent foci were noted. Both groups of marketers seem to revert to their default setting in terms of marketing outlook and behaviours. Moreover, awareness of something which lies outside of the scope of their mindset does not appear to affect their marketing comportment as their focus seems fixed.

Early career marketers who grew up in the digital era were identified as having a digital mindset where their focal point is digital marketing. This cohort grew up with technology and the data indicates that they view marketing through a digital lens. A debate was evident regarding traditional marketing techniques and the core marketing principles, however, while some indicated their relevance, the default setting appeared to revert to digital technologies as they were identified as most important. The non-digital elements of marketing were disregarded or deemed irrelevant in a digital world. In fact, their digital mindset, and subsequent focus, seems to have resulted in a scenario where they are TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED and TOOL OR PLATFORM LED. This issue of overly focusing or relying on digital technologies was also identified by individuals within the early career cohort, however, while awareness of this issue was evident, early career marketers still maintained their digital focus and reverted to utilising digital technologies, often as a default. They seem not to see anything which falls outside of their digital focus which supports the digital mindset finding as the non-digital elements of marketing, which are situated outside of their digital mindset, such as the core marketing principles, are disregarded or neglected.

Later career marketers grew up in a different time, prior to the growth of digital technologies, and exhibit a non-digital mindset where their focus is fixed on the non-digital elements of marketing. The later career cohort champion both the core marketing principles and traditional marketing techniques while also indicating the importance of possessing digital knowledge. Nevertheless, awareness of the need to possess digital knowledge does not seem to be reflected in their behaviour as they are at risk of being LEFT BEHIND or becoming an EXTINCT MARKETER due to a lack of digital marketing knowledge. Members of the later career cohort indicated that they do not need to be proficient with the tools of digital as they are BIG
PICTURE MARKETING and can DELEGATE or HIRE digital tasks. However, this appears problematic, especially in the long term. Moreover, they showcased a WILLINGNESS BARRIER in terms of acquiring the requisite digital knowledge. It became evident that the later career marketers think that marketing has become too focused on digital technologies where the core marketing principles are being forgotten or disregarded, specifically by their early career counterparts. This belief further suggests that they view marketing through a non-digital lens as certain later career marketers may not have embraced digital technologies and are unaware of the role they play in contemporary practice.

While mindset directs a marketer’s focal point, both digital impact and learning are also influenced. Based on their mindset, marketers are impacted divergently by digital technologies. The data indicates that later career marketers lack digital knowledge and focus on the non-digital elements of marketing. They DELEGATE or HIRE specifically for digital tasks which seems to remove them from the frontlines of digital, where they consequently are at risk of being LEFT BEHIND or becoming an EXTINCT MARKETER. It emerged that they have LATER EXPERIENCE, however, this is solely based in an offline setting as their level of digital knowledge was noted as being inadequate. The digital impact for this cohort has resulted in a lack of digital knowledge even though such knowledge was identified as being important. Awareness does not seem to affect behaviour which further suggests a mindset issue as their actions seem to be aligned to the non-digital lens through which they view marketing where they cannot see anything outside of their purview. Furthermore, they view marketing as a YOUNG PERSONS INDUSTRY where they LEARN FROM YOUTH. They also disregard SOCIAL MEDIA KNOWLEDGE GAINS which would lie outside the scope of their non-digital focus which further points to mindset.

The digital impact of early career marketers is dissimilar as the data suggests that they lack knowledge of the non-digital areas of marketing and instead focus on the digital elements of marketing. In fact, they are considered to be TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED and TOOL OR PLATFORM LED. The constantly evolving nature of marketing has resulted in the NEED TO UPSKILL. The digital focus of early career marketers seems to be compounded by the fact that they are EXPECTED TO HAVE all the requisite skills. This issue seems to be aggravated as a divide between COLLEGE AND REAL LIFE became evident as the data indicates that EDUCATION ADEQUACY does not provide early career marketers with the skills needed for industry. Therefore, the do not possess the skills they are expected to already possess.
Consequently, they have to LEARN ON THE JOB and utilise SOCIAL MEDIA KNOWLEDGE GAINS for learning. This method of learning is aligned to their digital focus which further points to mindset as utilising social media for gaining new knowledge is situated within their digital purview. While they concentrate on gaining digital skills areas such as the core marketing principles are unknown or disregarded. As mentioned, members of both cohorts indicated that marketing has become too focused on digital and early career marketers identified that they themselves overuse digital technologies. However, while an awareness of this issue emerged, early career marketers still reverted back to using digital technologies as their default. Yet again, awareness does not seem to affect behaviour which further points to mindset as their actions seem to be aligned to the digital lens through which they view marketing, where anything not aligned to their mindset appears to be disregarded.

While a dichotomy emerged within this study due to divergent foci, a relationship between both cohorts also appears to be evident. The digital mindset of early career marketers seems to facilitate the non-digital mindset of the later career group. Later career marketers indicated that marketing is a YOUNG PERSONS INDUSTRY and they HIRE and DELEGATE digital tasks accordingly. This appears to negate the need for the later career cohort to keep pace with marketing and allows them to maintain their non-digital focus where a lack of digital knowledge is evident. Accordingly, the digital focus of early career marketers seems to be magnified as they appear engrossed in digital, both in terms of marketing practice and learning, especially as they feel ill-prepared for industry due to inadequate educational practices. In fact, the emphasis placed on digital by later career marketers, via delegation and hiring for digital tasks, may be increasing the digital focus of the early career marketers further to the point where they are TOO DIGITALLY FOCUSED and TOOL OR PLATFORM LED.

As mentioned, the findings of this study identify an underlying mindset issue within marketing. While skills gaps are evident within literature (Crush, 2011; Day, 2011; Durkin, 2013; Hege, 2020; Mgiba, 2019; Quinn et al., 2016; Royle & Laing, 2014; Wood, 2011) the findings of this study indicate that skills gaps may not be the principal issue. The concept of mindset is observable within marketing literature, as discussed in section 2.10, however, the underlying mindset issue identified within this study is different and is not currently evident within extant marketing literature. Subsequently, findings identify a misdiagnosis of the problem which shifts the focus from skills gaps to mindset. In fact, skills gaps appear symptomatic of mindset. Skills gaps seem to imply that a marketer does not have specific skills or knowledge regarding
a particular topic. However, the mindset issue diagnosed within this study suggests that marketers appear to believe that they may not need specific skills or knowledge in the first place, perhaps because they view them as unnecessary or unwarranted. Therefore, while a skills gap may be evident, marketers may oppose gaining missing skills because they are considered irrelevant. While a skills gap can potentially be closed by gaining the missing skill, if the marketer is averse to, and does not see the pertinence of gaining the knowledge in the first instance, which is suggested by the mindset issue, the problem may continue and could deteriorate, possibly causing further skills related issues. Furthermore, while marketers may be closed to gaining certain skills, findings also suggest they may be overly focused on certain upskilling or knowledge acquisition endeavours. Subsequently, it appears that they may favour upskilling and knowledge acquisition ventures which fall within the scope of their mindset, therefore, potentially increasing any gaps in skills as they overly focus on specific elements of marketing. This may limit their effectiveness as other areas, where they actually need to gain new skills, appear to be neglected. Accordingly, findings suggest that mindset appears to play a foundational role in terms of marketing skills gaps. In fact, mindset may be the foundation on which skills gaps occur.

Findings also note the limiting power of mindsets within marketing where marketers may be unable to “reframe” as they are focused on the elements of marketing which are situated within their mindset. Accordingly, if marketers are overly focused on specific aspects of marketing, while dismissing others, they may not be able to adapt to changes within marketing practice. In fact, they may dismiss certain skills because they view them as unnecessary or obsolescent, even though they may be pertinent within the modern era. This may result in certain skills being lost over time as individuals only acquire the skills and knowledge in the areas situated within the scope of their mindset while other areas are disregarded. This may also reduce the effectiveness of marketers, and marketing teams, as practitioners may not possess a rounded skillset as they are limited by their mindset. This has the potential to create a chasm within marketing where individuals may struggle in terms of adapting to new opportunities or ways of thinking.

Accordingly, the researcher argues that mindset is the fundamental issue and therefore calls for more emphasis to be placed on mindset development, rather than on skills development, within marketing. Although this issue where mindset development is considered more important than skillset development is not evident within marketing literature, it can be found within other
literary fields, specifically the literature on mindset. Here, scholars have called for a shift in paradigm and argue for individuals to focus on transforming mindsets over skillsets as the need to concentrate on mindset trumps that of building skills (Kennedy et al., 2013; Kramer, 2016; Marshak & Grant, 2008). The researcher similarly highlights the need for mindset development rather than the development of skills in marketing, especially as Mulhern (2009) previously identified how marketers lack the mindset to effectively tackle the challenge of adapting to digital technologies.

The development of mindsets also appears pertinent for marketers due to the fast pace of change within their profession, especially as Jabado and Jallouli (2021) note how the changing marketing environment calls for a re-evaluation of the knowledge and capabilities needed within practice. Accordingly, and yet again, the ability to “reframe” appears important in fast paced industries. However, this study identifies an issue where marketers appear to focus on the elements of marketing which are situated within the scope of their mindset, while disregarding or neglecting the aspects which are not aligned to their mindset. In fact, anything outside of their worldview may not be considered. Therefore, marketers may be unable to “reframe” as marketing evolves which may result in outdated or inappropriate marketing practices where marketers fail to keep up to date with the changes in their profession.

Moreover, within the mindset issue identified within this study, mental models also play an important role. Although mental models may make people more efficient (Kramer, 2016) the researcher argues that this claim may not be ubiquitous in all industries, typically industries which are constantly evolving like marketing. Marketing has witnessed a technologically driven paradigm shift (Durkin, 2013) and findings indicate that not all marketers have adapted to the latest paradigm and their mindset may be aligned to the previous paradigm. In fact, marketers may be re-using past “habits”, outdated assumptions, or relying on past practices which may now be unsuitable or inappropriate for the task at hand due to the dynamism of the marketing industry. The findings of this study point to the limiting power of mindsets within marketing. This appears exacerbated as marketers were noted as being overly focused on the aspects of marketing aligned to their mindset where they may not be aware of better suited options. Consequently, it appears that mindset may also reduce effectiveness, specifically within fast paced industries. Therefore, without a change in mindset, marketers will continue to view marketing through the same lens and their marketing outlook, and subsequent behaviours and actions, will remain the same as the marketing industry continues to evolve.
The inability to see situations in a new light does not seem suited to dynamic industries like marketing. Hence, the findings of this study also highlight the important role, and necessity, of mindset development within marketing where marketers may be limited by their mindset if they lack the ability to “reframe” as marketing evolves. Consequently, skills gaps may become evident.

4.7.1 Mindset over Skillset
The findings of this study point to an underlying mindset issue where skills gaps may not be the problem, but rather, a symptom of mindset. Arguably, a skills gaps can be closed by learning a missing skill, however, if that skill is not considered important or necessary in the first instance then it will not be acquired. Marketers focus on the elements of marketing which are aligned to their mindset where anything outside of their scope, including knowledge acquisition, seems to be disregarded. The underlying mindset issue is further emphasised as varying skills gaps are noted within both cohorts. The skills gaps are aligned to their focus, or mindset, and subsequent lens through which they view marketing. Therefore, skills gaps appear symptomatic of mindset as marketers appear to lack skills in the areas which are situated outside the scope of their mindset. Moreover, the disassociation between awareness and behaviour further points to skills gaps being underpinned by mindset. Marketers indicated that while certain aspects of marketing were identified as being important, they did not have the requisite knowledge or skills. This suggests that awareness of something being important does not seem to affect their behaviour. This concept, where mindset underlies skills gaps, is illustrated within the descriptive model which was presented to two online focus groups. However, prior to these findings being presented, the descriptive model will firstly be introduced. This is to contextualise the focus group findings which are specifically related to the mindset issue and descriptive model.

4.8 Descriptive Model
The findings of this study suggest an underlying mindset issue. This mindset issue, which is currently not diagnosed within marketing literature, is illustrated in the form of a descriptive model. This model also describes the experiences of modern marketers where behaviour and outlook appear to vary based on career stage. In fact, aligned to their mindset, later career marketers appear to concentrate on the “why” which is related to strategy and the overall application of marketing. Conversely, early career marketers focus on the “how” which is related to the tactical side of marketing where tools and platforms are being utilised. The model
illustrates the key findings which were previously presented, and discussed, within this chapter. The iceberg graphic was used to represent the mindset issue. On the surface skills gaps are evident and seen, however, as mentioned, this study suggests a fundamental mindset issue which is under the surface and not necessarily witnessed. This study shifts focus away from skills gaps, instead pointing to mindset as the pertinent issue. When viewing the model, the reader should begin at the base of the iceberg, specifically where mindset is located, and read upwards towards the tip of the iceberg where skills gaps are placed. The iceberg model, illustrated in figure 4.27, is presented on the next page.
The Iceberg Model

Any focus on digital may be further enhanced. The unbridled use of digital technologies and a lack of knowledge regarding the core marketing principles is a possible outcome.

A lower focus on digital appears to be rationalised. Any lack of digital knowledge may be aggravated by the ability to hire and delegate. A lack of digital proficiency is a potential outcome.

Default Focus: Digital
- Social media as a learning tool
- Requisite to master new digital skills
- Intensive/unbridled digital usage
- Delegated digital tasks
- Expected to know all digital (but don't)
- Marketing practice - predominantly digital

Digital Orientation - The "How"

Default Focus: Non-Digital
- Learn via traditional methods/young people
- Negative effect on career or task mobility
- Less willing to learn new digital skills
- Resistant to change/stick to what they know
- Young person industry - delegate/hire
- Big picture marketing - don't need to know all aspects/tools of digital

Non - Digital Orientation - The “Why”

EARLY CAREER MINDSET — LATER CAREER MINDSET

MINDSET ISSUE

Figure 4.27
4.9 Focus Group Findings on the Descriptive Model

As highlighted in section 3.6.3, two online focus groups took place. The online focus groups were employed to further explore key findings and to also present the descriptive model, and mindset theory, to a group of marketers at varying career stages. The rationale for utilising the online focus group to present the descriptive model and mindset theory was to gain feedback and to explore if the model is representative of the experiences of focus group respondents. Focus groups can also increase the credibility and trustworthiness of studies. As previously stated, the descriptive model is based on the findings of this study, specifically the data which was collected during in-depth interviews. Therefore, the online focus group allowed the researcher to probe the mindset issue and also allowed for an exploration of what the potential challenges and implications may be as a result of the behaviours and experiences illustrated within the model.

The descriptive model was presented to respondents where it was advocated by both focus groups as it was deemed representative of their marketing experiences. Respondents also indicated that the model is relatable based on their familiarity and insight of contemporary marketing. The below quotes emphasise the high level of agreement in terms of the representative nature of the descriptive model.

*I agree with the model, it's definitely the case. I think what you shared is definitely true. (Ian)*

*When I saw the model, I thought yes, that makes complete sense, and that is exactly how it is in marketing from my experience. (Maura)*

*I agree with the model, and I can absolutely relate to it, even when I think of my own team, and not just in marketing, but also in the sales piece. I can absolutely see it; the model is spot on in that context. (Roger)*

*I can definitely relate to the model, definitely. Even from the agencies we link in with, the early career marketers present the digital ideas. (Frances)*

*Within the model, I can see a lot of myself in terms of delegating digital activities and also in terms of recruiting those digital skillsets. There is a necessity, especially in recent years, to surround myself with people with that digital mindset and skillset. (Kyle)*
The descriptive model was supported across both focus groups where respondents agreed that it is indicative of their experiences in marketing. Respondents also highlighted that they have witnessed the behaviours evident within the model themselves, subsequently indicating that the model is relatable. Therefore, this suggests that the model captures the experiences of modern marketers and, accordingly, has descriptive power as respondents agreed that it describes their experiences of modern marketing. Hence, the model appears to provide a much-needed insight into the experiences of modern marketers, especially as this area has been neglected by literature in recent times. Herein, the model draws attention to certain behaviours and actions which were noted as inappropriate which may help improve marketing efficacy in the long run if marketers are aware of the dangers of utilising such tactics or behaviours.

Moreover, while Roger discussed that he can absolutely relate to the model, he states that he sees these actions within both marketing and the sales element of the business. This suggests that this mindset issue may not solely be confined to marketing and may be evident in other areas also. Kyle also provides more insight into the area as he highlights that he sees a lot of his behaviour in the model specifically in terms of delegating and hiring. This indicates that there are benefits to such tactics, however, the long terms dangers associated with such practices, which were previously discussed, may result in later career marketers losing touch with modern practices where they are risk of becoming redundant due to a lack of digital knowledge. Accordingly, while short term success may be evident, it appears that such strategies may not be appropriate in the long run.

The focus groups also allowed for the mindset element of the model to be further explored. The interview data suggests that mindset underlies skills gaps, where skills gaps appear to be a symptom of mindset. This was probed within each focus group where the mindset issue gained consensus. The underlying mindset issue was supported across both focus groups where respondents were in agreement that the issue is mindset related.

I would have said up to an hour ago that it was a skills gap in marketing. Your model got me thinking. Trying to internalise from my own experience I think what you see at the outset is the obvious skills deficit, but I think you are right, there is an underlying mindset issue at play and the obvious manifestation of it is what you see initially, which is the skills gap. (Kyle)
There is definitely an element of a mindset challenge. The skills gap piece is obvious but it’s the mindset piece underneath which isn’t as obvious. It is probably more important and needs to be delved into. (Roger)

I think it is a mindset issue rather than skills gaps. If you really want a skill you learn it and if you are missing a skill you have to learn it. It is very much mindset. (Quinton)

I definitely think that mindset is a huge part of it whether you are early or later career. (Maura)

The underlying mindset issue was advocated in both focus groups. Moreover, one respondent, in particular, indicated that they originally believed that the issue revolved around skills gaps, however, the descriptive model made them re-evaluate their viewpoint and, combined with their own personal experience of marketing, they believe the issue is actually mindset related. In fact, Kyle indicated that skills gaps are evident, however, he believes that they are the manifestation of a mindset issue, which is aligned to the findings of this study. This suggests that marketers may be unaware of the role of their mindset and that the model may provoke marketers to look at the issue from a different viewpoint. Accordingly, they may be able to see similarities, based on their own experiences, and re-evaluate their approach or view to marketing and what they may need to work on. Roger also stated that while skills gaps are obvious the mindset issue is not and needs further investigating. This suggests that the mindset issue may be undiagnosed within practice where marketers are not aware of the issue. Instead they may be concentrating on skills gaps, and therefore, may be focused on the symptom rather than the underlying issue. This suggests a lack of efficacy in terms of upskilling endeavours. In fact, this issue may be intensified if marketers are overly focused on solely upskilling within a limited scope. The model may be able to highlight the underlying issue and create awareness of the role of mindset within marketing.

The feedback obtained during both focus groups supports the keys findings of this study. Respondents agreed that the descriptive model is representative of their experiences in marketing and has descriptive power. The underlying mindset issue also fostered agreement and was advocated by both focus groups. Accordingly, the findings of this study have potential challenges and implications for marketing, and these became evident within both online focus groups. Respondents indicated that the current scenario has implications throughout the
marketing sphere, specifically businesses and marketing teams who do not have rounded skillsets in terms of their marketing capabilities.

*I think there is a massive implication for the business if they don’t have a well-rounded marketing team in terms of ensuring that there is a full holistic approach to building the brand and going long term. There needs to be equal skillsets across the whole marketing team I think.*

(Frances)

*The older people will eventually retire and leave, and if the younger marketers are only looking after digital then it’s not a fully rounded team. They’ll lose focus and they’ll lose the traditional aspect of it. It is important that every member of the marketing team gets a go at everything, whether it be search engine optimisation (SEO) or analytics, so everyone knows how to do something and so that later career marketers pass on their knowledge. A lot will learn on the job and it is important that they do get involved in it.*

(Jennifer)

*I think the way your model is, I think it is going to continue, it’s not going to work for anybody because there is a complete disconnect between the early and the later career marketers. We have all experienced this, where the younger people think the older people are out of touch, out of date, bossy, ignorant, and the older people think that the younger people are entitled and too big for their boots. I think the only way around it is communication within the company. I think you need to marry the two groups and bring them together.*

(Maura)

Focus groups respondents identified potential implications and challenges for both marketers and the practice of marketing. The importance of companies and marketing teams having a balanced set of skillsets was identified, where any imbalance, in terms of skills, will reduce the firm’s ability to practise holistic marketing. The digital focus in marketing which was identified previously within this chapter suggests that there may be an overemphasis being placed on digital skills within companies and teams where other marketing aspects are being ignored which may lead to a lack of rounded marketing skills. This may be exacerbated by later career marketers who retire and take their knowledge of traditional marketing and the core marketing principles with them, leaving only digital competencies within the firm or team. This may have long term implications for marketing practice. The importance of later career marketers being able to pass on their knowledge to their early career counterparts was clearly highlighted. However, if early career marketers continue to focus on digital marketing technologies, while
ignoring or discounting the non-digital elements of marketing, there is a danger that things such as traditional marketing techniques and the core marketing principles may be forgotten and lost, especially as it was noted that these topics are being replaced by digital content within marketing courses. This could compound issues further; specifically where social media is seen as marketing which may also result in an increase in non-marketing educated people working within the marketing sphere. This has its own implications such as potentially diminishing marketing knowledge and the practice of marketing in the long term. Accordingly, marketing may become a solely digital profession where the fundamental marketing underpinnings are lost.

Furthermore, the disconnect between early and later career marketers was also discussed where the issues illustrated within the model were deemed likely to continue. Communication between early and later career marketers emerged as a potential method to reduce the disengagement between both cohorts. However, this could prove difficult based on divergent mindsets, and marketing outlooks, which became evident throughout this study. This may impact the effectiveness of utilising communication to close any chasm as marketers may not view marketing through the same lens, accordingly, having varying outlooks and opinions on best practice and marketing approaches. This may also be exacerbated if marketers are closed to, or disregard, the elements of marketing which are situated outside of their mindset, especially if their colleagues champion such practices. Therefore, further conflict due to divergent marketing ideologies may be a potential risk. The importance of closing the gap or dichotomy highlighted within the model appears especially important as all focus groups respondents identified the current scenario as being problematic. Respondents from both online focus groups indicated that if the current situation continues long term marketing efficacy may be impacted.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter details the findings of this study and also presents a discussion on these findings in terms of current literature. A mixed method approach to research provided rich insights into modern marketers. Within the data, a particular focus, which appears to vary based on career stage, emerged as marketers seem to concentrate on certain aspects of marketing while disregarding others. Herein, a mindset issue became evident within this study as early and later career marketers exhibit divergent mindsets. Later career marketers appear focused on the non-digital elements of marketing while their early career counterparts centre their attention on the
digital elements of marketing. Accordingly, the facets of marketing which fall outside of the scope of their mindset appear to be disregarded or deemed irrelevant while a lack of knowledge in these areas was also noted. The mindset issue is further emphasised as marketers appear to revert to their default setting where awareness and behaviour appear disconnected. Therefore, awareness of being too focused on digital technologies or the importance of having the requisite digital knowledge does not appear to impact behaviour. Instead, their actions and behaviours seem to be firmly situated within the scope of their mindset.

In fact, study findings identify a misdiagnosis of the issue. While skills gaps are noted within literature and practice, the findings of this study indicate an underlying mindset issue where skills gaps are not the core issue, but rather, a symptom of mindset. This novel finding is not identified within current marketing literature, therefore, study findings shift focus towards mindset, while also identifying this as an area for future research. Moreover, the importance of mindset development is highlighted within this study. While mindset development isn’t evident within marketing literature, scholars within the field of mindset have called for more emphasis to be placed on mindset development rather than on skillset development (Kennedy et al., 2013; Kramer, 2016). The researcher makes a similar argument within the field of marketing as marketers may be limited by their mindset if they are unable to reframe to match the fast pace of change. Accordingly, the importance of mindset within marketing is emphasised within this chapter.

Key study findings are illustrated in the form of a descriptive model which also describes the experiences of modern marketers. The model also identifies a relationship between both early and later career marketers in terms of their respective mindset. The actions of later career marketers appear to increase the digital focus of their early career counterparts. Similarly, early career marketers appear to support the non-digital focus of later career marketers. Accordingly, findings identify the dangers associated with such actions as hiring and delegating digital tasks where both early and later career marketers appear to be impacted. The descriptive model was supported during two online focus groups where respondents indicated that the model is representative of their experiences of modern marketing, in fact, focus group respondents stated that the model has descriptive power as, based on their experiences of marketing, the model is relatable. Therefore, both focus groups were supportive of the findings of this study. The final chapter discusses the conclusions of this study.
Chapter 5: Conclusions
5.0 Chapter Overview
This final chapter details the conclusions of this study. The findings of this study are presented in chapter four and based on these findings the contributions to knowledge are highlighted within this chapter. The limitations of this current study are also discussed. The chapter then progresses and provides a detailed presentation of the implications and recommendations of this study. These are based on study findings and specifically discuss areas such as practice, government policy, professional marketing bodies, learning, and research. Moreover, recommendations for future research will also be made. Finally, the chapter provides a conclusion to the overall study. Firstly, as stated, the contributions to knowledge will be detailed.

5.1 Contribution to Knowledge
As previously highlighted, few studies have focused on the experiences of modern marketers (Leeflang et al., 2014; Quinn et al., 2016). This study, however, is situated within this under-researched and under-theorised domain and the first major contribution of this study is the descriptive model which provides a much-needed insight into the experiences of modern marketing practitioners. Accordingly, study findings also note that the experiences and behaviours of marketers vary based on their career stage. This indicates that marketers who are at different stages of their career also have different needs and requirements. Therefore, standardised or generic initiatives targeted at the general marketing population do not appear to be suitable within contemporary marketing. Instead, findings describe the specific experiences and behaviours of both early and later career marketers which provide insight into their distinct needs and requirements, specifically in terms of upskilling. Hence, the findings of this study identify the necessity for a tailored approach in areas such as upskilling which categorically focus on the explicit needs of each cohort rather than generically targeting the general marketing population.

Furthermore, study findings make a second major contribution to knowledge by identifying an underlying mindset issue within marketing and by adding theory, in the form of mindset, to the under-researched and under-theorised area around marketing skills gaps. This mindset issue is also illustrated within the descriptive model. Although skills gaps have been noted in literature (Crush, 2011; Durkin, 2013; Hege, 2020; Quinn et al., 2016; Royle & Laing, 2014; Wood, 2011), skills gaps do not seem to be the fundamental concern, instead they appear to be an indication of another problem. In fact, study findings suggest that skills gaps are a
manifestation of a mindset issue. Accordingly, while industry and scholarly literature appear to focus on skills gaps, the findings of this study identify a misdiagnosis of the problem and identify mindset, rather than skills gaps, as the issue. This underlying mindset issue is not evident within extant marketing literature; therefore, this novel finding shifts the focus from skills gaps towards mindset. While skills gaps appear to imply that a marketer does not possess a specific skill, the mindset issue suggests that the marketer appears to believe that they may not need that specific skill or piece of knowledge, perhaps because they view it as unnecessary or irrelevant. If the marketer is averse to, and does not see the pertinence of gaining the knowledge in the first instance, which is suggested by the mindset issue, the problem may continue and could deteriorate, possibly causing further skills related issues. Accordingly, this mindset finding suggests that endeavours, specifically in the field of upskilling, which are aimed at the “symptom”, may lack efficacy if the underlying issue, mindset, is ignored. Therefore, findings not only shift focus from skills gaps to mindset, they also highlight the importance of mindset development within marketing.

This study also refines current marketing literature by accentuating the role of career stage. Findings provide a more in-depth insight into modern marketing where variations based on a marketer’s stage of career became evident. The challenges or issues evidenced in literature seem to be prevalent throughout the marketing arena, however, findings identify that certain issues are not pervasive throughout marketing, instead, they are most likely to be witnessed within either the early or later career cohort of marketers. Accordingly, findings identify the specific needs and requirements of early and later career marketers while also further noting the importance of a tailored approach to upskilling. This new approach should specifically focus on the individual needs of both early and later career marketers, which are highlighted within this study. This study also makes a contribution to knowledge by providing foundation and framework, specifically in the form of mindset, for future research.

5.2 Relevance and Importance

The underlying mindset issue indicates that early and later career marketers do not seem to share a common mindset which suggests that they view marketing through different lenses. This has the potential to affect their marketing actions, behaviours and decisions where they may place a focus on the specific elements of marketing which are aligned to their mindset, while being closed to anything which is not situated within their subsequent purview. Accordingly, if this issue is ignored marketing practice may be negatively impacted. This may
result in unsuitable or inappropriate marketing actions being utilised as they may not see anything which lies outside the scope of their mindset. There may also be an issue where marketers are over using certain tools or marketing behaviours as a default without actively considering other options which may be appropriate. This focus could result in particular channels or platforms being used in an unbridled manner, or being completely disregarded. This may affect marketing effectiveness as certain tools or platforms may be overused because they are aligned to a marketer’s specific focus, even if they are not pertinent to the task at hand. This could also affect overall marketing practice as marketers may not be utilising all the tools at their disposal if they are closed to certain marketing techniques.

Moreover, findings highlight a misdiagnosis where marketers, firms and literature may be focused on the wrong issue. If they are focused on skills gaps, rather than mindset, they may augment the situation. There may be a risk that marketers may focus their attention on skills gaps where they undertake upskilling endeavours which are not suitable to their specific needs, and in fact, could magnify the focus they appear to have on the elements of marketing which are aligned to their mindset. The findings of this study suggest that mindset awareness should play a role in upskilling activities. Learning new skills or knowledge without the requisite mindset awareness may negate the effectiveness of upskilling endeavours, especially if marketers are only acquiring similar skills to those which they already possess while disregarding skills they may in fact require. Accordingly, study findings situate mindset ahead of skills gaps and identify the important role of mindset within marketing. The next section highlights the limitations of this study. The chapter then progresses and the implications of this study are discussed.

5.3 Limitations

This study investigates how the lived experiences of modern marketers provide an insight into the interplay between skills gaps and the digital transformation of marketing practice. While all relevant measures were taken to ensure this study was carried out to the highest standards, certain unavoidable limitations must be noted. Firstly, this study took a mixed method approach to data collection, utilising both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. While numerous scholars have lauded a mixed method approach to research (Schreier, 2001; Eisner 1991) specifically when combined with a grounded theory methodology (Guetterman et al., 2019; Johnson et al., 2010) some scholars believe they are incompatible (Sukamolson, 2007) as the basic assumptions associated with both research styles are divergent which may be a
limitation of this study. Similarly, analytical approaches used in mixed-methods studies can prove challenging due to the different types of data collected which may have affected the findings of this study. Furthermore, another point to be noted is the fact that quantitative research tends to be positivist, where an objective reality exists. However, this study was grounded in constructivism, where the notion of an objective reality is denied. While the qualitative in-depth interview and focus group are aligned to the philosophical stance of this study, the quantitative Likert scale survey is not, and a conflict may have been present.

Secondly, as this was predominantly a qualitative research study, where the primary research method used was the in-depth interview, it must be highlighted that the researcher played an active part within the study and could not be fully removed. The researcher’s role in qualitative research is critical as they collect data and implement analysis, therefore, my role in this study was that of an observer-as-participant. I was the primary instrument of data collection and analysis who collected, coded, and analysed the data to uncover the emerging concepts and patterns. Therefore, there is the potential for researcher bias to have occurred which could have impacted the outcome of this study. The act of remaining objective and non-judgmental in terms of my thoughts, observations, and actions is a challenging balancing act, and potential areas of bias possibly arising from my experience with marketing and by lecturing marketing related subjects in a third level setting. However, as highlighted in section 3.12, the researcher utilised reflexive strategies to limit any potential bias. Notwithstanding, my past experience may have also aided me in terms of data collection, inductive analysis, and the understanding of the process and phenomena being studied, as it is something that may need to be experienced before having the ability to clearly write about. Nonetheless, significant effort was made to ensure groundness and to limit any potential researcher bias, specifically via reflexive techniques. A similar issue which possibly could have occurred is participant bias. Marketers may not have been truly open about their experiences, instead altering the facts to try and portray themselves, or their fellow marketers, in a better light. However, this seems unlikely due to the consistency of data collected.

Thirdly, the purpose of most qualitative research has been directed towards providing in-depth explanations and meanings about an issue or phenomenon within a specific population rather than generalizing findings, hence generalizability of qualitative research findings is usually not an expected attribute. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to the wider marketing population, and do not claim to be. However, according to Smith (2018)
qualitative research does lack generalizability when it is viewed through one particular version of generalizability, that is, statistical-probabilistic generalizability. Ali and Yusof (2011) point to numerous forms of qualitative generalization. One type of generalization for consideration is naturalistic generalizability (Stake, 1978, 1995), also referred to as representational generalization (Lewis, 2014). Here, generalizability is reached on the basis of recognition of similarities and differences to the results with which the reader is familiar. That is, naturalistic generalizability happens when the research resonates with the reader’s personal engagement in life’s affairs or vicarious, often tacit, experiences. This study seems to have naturalistic generalization within marketing as focus group members identified with the descriptive model, identifying it as representative of their experiences in modern marketing.

Fourthly, the focus groups were initially to be run in the traditional format, where all respondents were in the same room. However, this was not possible due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and subsequent government guidelines, which made moving the focus group to an online setting the only option. The recruitment for the online focus group also proved difficult. The ideal number of respondents for the online focus group was originally identified as being six, however, this number was not achieved in either focus group. Although the level of marketers who took part were of the highest calibre, it must be noted that the original number of six participants was not achieved. Similarly, regarding recruitment of early career interviewees, the researcher had originally planned on interviewing fifteen early career marketers, similar to that of the later career cohort. However, this did not materialise as the early career cohort proved difficult in terms of recruiting marketers of the requisite experience and suitability. While eleven high quality interviews took place, the original aim of fifteen was not achieved. Notwithstanding, a key component of grounded theory methodologies, known as data saturation or theoretical saturation, was achieved. This suggests that the researcher has reached a point in their analysis of data where sampling more data will not lead to more information related to their research questions. Accordingly, this suggests that eleven early career respondents was appropriate. Finally, as previously highlighted, this study is situated within an area where there is a lack of research. Therefore, it was not always possible to compare the findings of this study to current literature. The next section progresses onto the implications and recommendations of this study.
5.4. Implications and Recommendations

This section details the implications and recommendations of this study. Firstly, the area of marketing practice will be discussed where the implications, and recommendations, regarding the findings of this study are considered. A similar format is followed throughout this section and the researcher also details policy, specifically in terms of government policy and professional marketing bodies, learning, which is discussed in terms of formal, in-formal and non-formal, and finally, research, where the researcher details his recommendations for future research within this domain.

5.4.1 Marketing Practice

Digital marketing practices are well established within contemporary marketing; however, study findings suggest threats to the overall effectiveness of marketing practice. The underlying mindset issue identified within this study indicates that marketers view marketing through a specific lens. This lens is filtered by their mindset which can affect their marketing outlook and their subsequent behaviours. Therefore, the actions, behaviours and decisions of marketers may be limited to the specific elements of marketing which are aligned to their mindset. This focus could potentially lead to unbridled or default use of certain tools or platforms which fall within a marketer’s purview. However, these choices or tools may not be pertinent to the task at hand and may in fact be unsuitable. Similarly, this focus could lead to an issue where marketers are closed to certain areas of marketing, specifically those which may fall outside of their current purview. The potential limiting power of mindset is also highlighted within this study and this could negatively impact marketing practice. This appears especially true if marketers are so focused on certain parts of marketing that they are unable to reframe as marketing evolves. Consequently, marketers may not be marketing to their fullest capability if they are closed to embracing new technologies or marketing techniques, and are instead focused on outdated or inappropriate practices.

The mindset issue has the potential to cause conflict in departments or teams, especially those composed of marketers at varying career stages. The divergent mindsets of early and later career marketers suggest that they do not view marketing through the same lens. This has the potential to impact marketing efficacy if marketers, who are at different career stages, share dissimilar marketing outlooks where they subsequently centre their focus on different aspects of marketing. This could also lead to a scenario where they may dismiss or discount their counterparts’ point of view, with a potential for a “tug of war” scenario over best practice which
could affect the overall effectiveness of marketing. In fact, the most appropriate marketing practices may not always be chosen, especially if later career marketers are not aware of the affordances offered by newer technologies. Marketing practice may also be negatively impacted due to a lack of accountability. While early career marketers appear to be digitally led, later career marketers do not appear to have the requisite digital knowledge, therefore, this could potentially result in a scenario where later career marketers may be unable to critique or advise best practice due to a lack of digital knowledge. Instead, early career marketers may be free to use whatever tools and platforms they wish without any guidance.

Furthermore, the emphasis organisations appear to place on digital in terms of strategy seems to have increased the digital focus evident within marketing. There may be an issue where organisations are not objectively evaluating digital strategy, instead, potentially utilising a blanket approach. This may be driven by later career marketers who hold senior positions and appear to lack digital savviness and who might not be best suited to oversee the digital strategy of the firm. Strategy may be set without full awareness of what is truly capable. It seems it may be left to early career marketers, who appear to lack knowledge of the core marketing principles, to then implement the strategy. This potential disconnect between strategy and tactics is something which could possibly impact marketing practice. The findings may also have further implications in terms of the selection and recruitment of new employees. The suggested digital mindset of early career marketers, coupled with a potential absence of knowledge relating to the core marketing principles, is something organisations could use to better identify and recruit staff. Focusing on digital abilities, at the expense of marketing knowledge, may not result in the desired outcome. This may affect the overall marketing function. Similarly, organisations may be intensifying the focus of early career marketers by hiring them solely for digital projects. This could place an increased emphasis on the areas around digital, possibly resulting in a scenario where they become disassociated with the non-digital elements of marketing.

The effectiveness of marketing practice could potentially be improved by highlighting the role of mindset and the possible associated issues. As stated, marketers appear to view marketing through a lens where they appear to focus on specific elements of marketing practice. The potential of marketers being limited by their mindset, and the importance of reframing as marketing evolves, should be highlighted. This appears especially important as marketers do not appear to be aware of how their mindset may impact their marketing actions and decisions.
Hence, marketers may not be aware that they are overly focusing on certain aspects of marketing which could result in certain tools or tactics being used as a default while other areas of marketing are discounted or ignored. Accordingly, an awareness of the role of mindset and how it may affect marketing outlook may be needed. Therefore, the researcher recommends that more emphasis is placed on mindset where marketers are made aware of how their mindset may be impacting them in terms of marketing outlook and behaviours. Firms of companies can provide training on this matter for their marketing staff or teams. This could result in better informed decisions being made as marketers become cognisant that they may have a tendency to act in certain ways.

Furthermore, the ability to critically question a decision or planned strategy could potentially result in an improvement in overall marketing effectiveness as it might help ensure that the most suitable marketing practices are being used. Similarly, in terms of strategy, the decision makers often fall within the later career stratification and this study points to a lack of digital skills within this cohort. Companies should ensure that the decision makers, in terms of strategic choices, have the requisite digital skills needed to effectively set strategy and to meet the goals of their specific organisation as a one size fits all approach may not be suitable. Organisations should also try and limit the possible disconnect between the digitally focused early career marketers and their later career counterparts who appear to exhibit a lack of digital savviness. This disconnect between strategy and tactics may affect the overall marketing function potentially resulting in a divergence between goals and results.

Mindset awareness also has the potential to improve marketing teams or departments, especially where a spectrum of career stage is evident. While conflict within team or departmental settings is a potential issue, mindset awareness could possibly bridge the gap between early and later career marketers. Both early and later career marketers may be focused on different areas of marketing and may not be open to their counterparts’ ideas or suggestions. Mindset awareness has the potential to highlight that marketers may be overly focused on particular methods of marketing while, within a team setting, they may also be discounting other team members suggestions. A broadened outlook may be required. The hiring process can also potentially be improved. This may be achieved by reducing the emphasis placed on digital skills during the recruitment and selection stage, while increasing the focus on the candidates overall marketing capabilities rather than solely focusing on digital proficiency. Organisations may decide to prioritise marketing educated candidates with the requisite digital
knowledge over candidates who only have digital skills. There may be a risk where non-
marketing people, who are digitally adept, are hired for marketing roles. However, as these
individuals may not be marketing educated they could lack the fundamental marketing
knowledge needed to successfully underpin digital marketing activities. It is also recommended
that companies have realistic expectations of new entrants and do not expect them to be fully
proficient on taking up the job. Instead, they align their expectations to the skills and knowledge
afforded to students on completion of their marketing degree.

Finally, the overall practice of marketing could possibly be improved by creating an
accountability culture. The most suitable marketing practices should be chosen based on
audience or objectives. This can help ensure that only relevant marketing behaviours or actions
occur. Moreover, this could help reduce any possible default or unbridled marketing behaviour
based on what is aligned to an individual’s mindset. Potentially, this may have the ability to
improve relations between the company and the end customer by refining communication
methods and by providing valued content via means or platforms aligned to the needs and
wants of the end customer. This may help build stronger relationships between the company
and the customer.

5.4.2 Government Policy
This study has implications regarding government policy. Currently, Ireland is in the midst of
a global pandemic which has impacted businesses, employees and the general public. As a
response the government has announced numerous initiatives aimed at helping employees
further their skills and knowledge in a digital age. Accordingly, and to contextualise the scale
of investment, the government have made over €200 million available, providing over 80,000
additional places, for those who find themselves unemployed so that they can upskill, reskill,
retrain and gain additional experience. Furthermore, the funding package for the higher and
further education sector amounts to €100 million and will fund over 35,500 places while an
additional and 45,500 new employment support places are being created (Gov.ie, 2020).
Similarly, enterprise Ireland has announced numerous supports for businesses in the form of
grants, advice, online learning, mentoring, skills advancement and training programmes with
over 70 distinct Skillnet networks working with businesses in specific sectors, developing
bespoke, state subsidised solutions to meet existing and emerging skills needs (Miranda, 2020).
The Government has reacted to the job losses and business closures associated with Covid-19
by increasing funding to state sponsored schemes aimed at upskilling, reskilling, retraining and
providing experience (Gov.ie, 2020). However, this study points to a mindset issue which seems to underlie skills gaps and focusing on skills gaps may not be effectual if the suggested foundational mindset issue is not covered.

The underlying mindset issue has implications for government policy as findings shift focus from skills gaps to mindset. In fact, study findings indicate that more emphasis should be placed on mindset rather than on skills development. Therefore, government policy may be focusing on the wrong area. While courses offering reskilling or upskilling are necessary, solely focusing on these areas may be misguided. The findings of this study may be able to inform, and refine, government policy within these areas by advising the potential impact of mindset in marketing, and possibly further afield. Findings suggest that individuals may potentially be overly focused on certain areas of upskilling or reskilling while being closed to other areas. Therefore, individuals of state sponsored schemes may not value certain opportunities if they are situated outside the scope of their mindset. Instead, they may focus on the skills which are situated within their purview while being closed to the skills they actually need. The findings of this study have further implications for government policy and advise that standardised or generic schemes or courses may be unsuitable as different cohorts appear to have different needs. Hence, courses should be tailored, where possible, to the specific needs of those who are undertaking them. This may help improve the effectiveness of government initiatives focused on future proofing the knowledge and skills needed for future Ireland, while also, helping to ensure Ireland, as a nation, is viewed as being well equipped in terms of pertinent skills and knowledge by multinational corporations to help ensure continued foreign investment.

Similarly, creating an awareness of how an individual’s mindset may impact them in terms of how they act, view situations, or their default behaviours may increase the effectiveness of government initiatives. This could be achieved by highlighting that people may be inclined to act in a specific way, such as disregarding certain skills or knowledge acquisition because they are not seen as pertinent, or, because they feel that they do not need them. An increased emphasis may be needed to antecede the launch of schemes or programmes which would firstly identify the importance of the specific skills which will be obtained through participation of the government scheme. This would need to be communicated to particular cohorts who, based on their mindset, may not initially view these programmes as necessary or relevant. Potentially, this may have the ability to increase participation by informing the public of the importance
and benefits associated with the government programme, especially if it comprised of elements which may not be widely appreciated by the public.

5.4.3 Professional Marketing Bodies
The fast pace of change within marketing has resulted in skills gaps and marketers are turning to professional marketing bodies for guidance, and to upskill. Accordingly, the findings of this study have implications in terms of these professional marketing bodies, which have significant reach and influence in Ireland. To emphasise this reach and influence – The Marketing Institute of Ireland (MII) currently has over 2,500 members, more than twenty continuous learning initiatives and over thirty learn and connect events (MII, 2020). The Marketing Society of Ireland has been in operation since the 1970’s running numerous events each year coupled with a mentoring programme (The Marketing Society of Ireland, 2020). Moreover, the Digital Marketing Institute has over 100,000 members worldwide with over €25 million in funding per annum and offers numerous accredited digital marketing courses (Digital Marketing Institute, 2020). The findings of this study point to a mindset issue and this has policy implications across the varying marketing bodies who offer courses, mentoring and events. While professional marketing bodies appear focused on closing the skills gaps in marketing through the multitude of courses and programmes they offer, study findings suggest that skills gaps may not be the pertinent issue and instead identify an underlying mindset issue in marketing. Therefore, marketing bodies may be focused on skills gaps which may not be the pertinent issue. Accordingly, the findings of this study advise that more emphasis needs to be placed on mindset within marketing while findings also provide further insight into the specific behaviours and actions of both early and later career marketers. Accordingly, this insight can inform policy decisions by identifying the key needs of both early and later career marketers as generic courses, aimed at the general marketing population, do not appear to be appropriate.

The professional marketing bodies in Ireland are ideally positioned to highlight the important role of mindset within marketing while also creating awareness of how mindset may be impacting marketers in terms of their behaviours and marketing outlook. Marketers may also need to be made aware of how their mindset may influence them in terms of upskilling endeavours where they may be only acquiring knowledge and skills which lie within the scope of their mindset, while ignoring the areas where they actually need new skills. They may need to consciously choose to gain new knowledge in the areas which were previously disregarded or considered unnecessary. These professional bodies also have scope to highlight how
marketer’s may be limited by their mindset if they are overly focused on certain aspects of marketing while being closed to others. In fact, certain tools may be used as a default even if they are not suitable for the task at hand. If marketers are closed to certain aspects of marketing they may not be able to reframe as marketing evolves and may be using past habits which are no longer suitable or relevant in the current marketing climate. Therefore, the importance of mindset development within marketing is noted within this study and these professional bodies have significant scope to communicate this issue to modern marketers. In fact, these professional marketing bodies are ideally situated to highlight the underlying mindset issue to a mainstream audience. This may be achieved by incorporating mindset awareness into courses, best practice, and mentoring programmes. Furthermore, the mindset issue can be further highlighted via official communications such as weekly email updates or newsletters. Similarly, there is scope to incorporate this novel finding into events where a guest speaker or keynote speaker can add value to attendees by providing an insight into how a marketer’s mindset may be impacting them, which is something many marketers may not be aware of. These professional associations have access to a large audience of marketers and it is recommended that they use their influence to highlight the potential impact of mindset and that skills gaps may not be the key issue.

5.4.4 Formal Learning

While this study identifies the important role of mindset within marketing, formal marketing education does not appear to incorporate the concept of mindset into the current curricula. Due to Covid-19 there has been an increased emphasis on both higher and further education with over 35,500 additional places being made available (Gov.ie, 2020). Herein, some of these places will undoubtedly be made available for students who wish to gain a marketing qualification. This study provides a contemporary insight into the experiences and challenges of modern practitioners and study findings shift the focus away from skills gaps. Therefore, the findings of this study could potentially play an important role in terms of marketing education. Firstly, study findings advise that mindset should be part of the marketing curriculum while also highlighting the importance of mindset awareness for marketers. Accordingly, this study can be used to guide content for marketing curricula. The role and impact of mindset on the marketing practitioner should be recognised. Skills gaps have been noted in literature and utilising formal learning initiatives to limit skills gaps may not be effectual if the foundational issue is ignored. As stated, trying to “cure” what seems to be the “symptom” of an underlying issue may not be successful, however, the findings of this study may be able to inform future
upskilling and educational initiatives, while improving current programmes through the inclusion of mindset awareness.

It is proposed that mindset be incorporated into formal learning programmes. Mindset awareness and the potential influence it plays in terms of marketing can be incorporated into marketing curricula both at undergraduate and postgraduate level. This includes continuous professional development (CPD). Similarly, this study points to marketers seemingly focusing on elements of marketing which fall within their purview and this could also affect formal learning endeavours. Marketers may be drawn to the educational initiatives which are aligned with their mindset, possibly disregarding elements which fall outside of it. However, if mindset awareness is taught early in a marketer’s career, ideally in a third level setting, they could potentially become aware of how their mindset may affect them. As they progress in their careers they may be conscious that they are at risk of viewing marketing through a specific lens which could impact default actions, behaviours and learning. Moreover, this may also make them aware of the potential limiting power of their mindset. Awareness that they may be drawn to the areas of marketing which are aligned to their mindset in terms of formal learning may help them make more informed decisions in the areas where they need improvement which may help them in terms of reframing to match the changes in marketing. Mindset awareness should also be incorporated into upskilling courses and initiatives to reach current marketers who are in practice.

Secondly, this study provides an insight into both the experiences and related behaviours of marketers. Accordingly, findings highlight that the needs of marketers appear to vary based on their stage of career which can inform marketing education in terms of content and ensuring that the courses they offer are best suited to the needs of those who partake. In fact, findings indicate that generic standardised course may not be best suited while also providing an insight into the specific needs of both early and later career marketers. This may potentially inform and improve the current approaches to marketing education and upskilling. Additionally, while this study does note a disconnect between marketing education and industry needs, findings also highlight that there may be too much expected of recent graduates and early career marketers. Therefore, findings advise that the disassociation between education and industry may be, in part, due to unrealistic expectations of employers or firms where. It is recommended that a better alignment between education and industry is required. This may help limit the chasm which emerged within this study. However, this will not close the gap completely and
more is needed than simply having a better alignment between the skills early career marketers are expected to have compared to the skills they actually possess. In fact, it is recommended that education should be taking a proactive approach to ensure that the marketing curricula is evolving to meet the changing needs of marketing practice. Notwithstanding, fundamental marketing knowledge should not be sacrificed to allow for more digitally based content within marketing courses.

Moreover, organisations that offer or support formal learning should also be aware of the effects of mindset on a marketer in terms of initiatives they show an interest in attending. There may be a danger that the organisation may exacerbate the issue by supporting formal learning attempts which are solely situated within the areas aligned to their mindset. This may increase their specific focus in that domain, while possibly disconnecting them from anything which is not aligned to their mindset. Instead, a varied approach should be taken where marketers are encouraged to gain new skills or knowledge across numerous areas within the domain of marketing. A variety of initiatives incorporating both online and offline techniques, covering a range of topics, would be recommended. The data suggests marketers, based on career stage, have different needs in terms of skills and knowledge which potentially means generic initiatives will not suit all individuals. Furthermore, different initiatives could be adjusted based on a marketer’s career stage. Specific and tailored upskilling courses could be provided based on needs of those who are partaking in such programmes. The findings of this study suggest that digital courses grounded in the core marketing principles could be provided to early career marketers, while courses for later career marketers should incorporate knowledge and experience in digital tools and platforms. This is to help ensure that they can have the ability to critique and advise their subordinates on digital matters, something the data points to possibly being an issue. It is recommended that mindset awareness should underpin all of the above. The findings of this study may also be able to guide firms in terms of the courses or programmes they should be either offering employees or encouraging them to attend. As stated both early and later career marketers appear to lack knowledge in distinct areas, therefore, firms may need to emphasise the importance of having the requisite skills in the areas where they lack knowledge.

5.4.5 Non-formal Learning
This study also has implications for non-formal learning events such as seminars or conferences. Once again, the role of mindset can be incorporated into non-formal events to
inform marketers how their mindset may affect them. Seminars, conferences and other non-formal learning events are not bound by the restrictions or standards of formal education and have the scope to create awareness of the role of mindset in a more relaxed learning environment. This may result in marketers being more open to take part, learn or gain knowledge. Mindset awareness can be highlighted through numerous mediums at conferences, events or workshops. It is recommended that non-formal learning functions should incorporate mindset into their programmes to take advantage of the scope afforded to them. Non-formal learning initiatives have more flexibility in terms of formal education and therefore have the ability to highlight mindset awareness in a variety of ways including discussions, keynote speakers or workshops. This study suggests that skills gaps may be a manifestation of a mindset issue and non-formal learning can help spread awareness in colloquial terms. The scope afforded by initiatives which fall within the canon of non-formal learning techniques appear to be well placed to help highlight the mindset issue identified within this study to a mainstream audience.

5.4.6 Informal Learning

The underlying mindset issue suggested by this study also has implications in the area of informal learning, especially in terms of self-directed learning, networking, coaching, and mentoring. This may be particularly relevant in terms of self-directed learning where an individual is fully in control of the topics they learn. Marketers may be seeking out learning activities which could be unsuitable to their specific needs. The identification of an underlying mindset issue within this study may improve self-directed learning initiatives if marketers are aware of the role of their mindset and how it may impact them. This would help limit any potential bias where marketers may focus on specific areas of marketing at the expense of the areas where they may actually need improvement. Similarly, they may be limited in their approach to networking where their contacts may be firmly situated within specific areas of marketing. Accordingly, their networks may be composed of a certain pedigree of marketer who has specific skills or a certain outlook. This may also increase their focus in that area while disassociating them with other areas of marketing. By creating awareness of mindset, marketers may become cognisant that they may have a closed outlook in terms of marketing where they need to make a conscious effort to be more open to other areas which are not necessarily aligned to their mindset. This may also help them re-evaluate their decisions or actions in terms of informal learning.
Moreover, implications in terms of coaching and mentoring may be evident, specifically those which include both early and later career marketers. Marketers who act as mentor or a coach, or, who are the recipient of such practices, may not be gaining the true benefits associated with such schemes if a mindset issue is evident. This could potentially create a divide between parties who do not view marketing in the same light and negate any benefits associated with such initiatives as potential conflicts may arise. An awareness of mindset could possibly increase the effectiveness of these initiatives. Marketers need to be conscious that they may have a tendency to focus on specific marketing activities while disregarding or dismissing other marketing elements and that they may need to be open to their counterparts’ views rather than being dismissive of them. Awareness of this may encourage them to evaluate other options, and possibly increase their ability to take on board advice which may not be aligned to their personal marketing outlook. Findings may also help improve to mentorships by identifying possible areas of conflict which could arise based on varying marketing outlooks and behaviours. The coach or mentor may also be able to gain a greater insight into the person under their tutelage. This may help them communicate better, while they may also become mindful of how their own mindset may be an obstacle in terms of their own view of marketing.

5.4.7 Research
The mindset issue identified within this study is novel, and is not currently evident within extant literature. Hence, study findings have implications for both current and future research with findings offering a foundation for future research studies to build upon. While literature appears to focus on skills gaps, this area of research has been neglected in recent times. Studies which identify skills gaps as the problem may be dated, and therefore misguided, as the findings of this current study identify a misdiagnosis of the problem within literature. Herein, current findings shift the focus from skills gaps towards mindset and also add to the body of knowledge around marketing skills gaps. In fact, findings add theory to an under-theorised area and highlight the potential role of mindset within modern marketing. While scholars have called for more research to be conducted within the field of marketing skills gaps, predominantly, due to the lack of scholarly articles in the research area, (Raghuraman, 2017; Royle & Laing, 2014; Quinn et al., 2016) the findings of this study indicate otherwise and suggest that the emphasis should be placed elsewhere, specifically on mindset. Accordingly, the researcher calls for future research within this domain to focus on mindset. This study also provides a more nuanced insight into modern marketing which accentuates the role of career stage with findings noting variations between cohorts. Subsequently, this suggests that studies should not view the
marketing profession as a single group, therefore, future studies should look at marketers in smaller classifications rather than viewing them as homogenous group.

Furthermore, the data obtained as part of this study allowed for a rich, in-depth insight into modern marketers. Accordingly, this study being of an exploratory and interpretive nature raises a number of opportunities for future research, both in terms of theory development and concept validation. More research will in fact be necessary to refine and further elaborate novel findings. This study has reconceptualised the current theory in literature and provides ample research opportunities for further exploration via future research studies. Quantitative research methods should be employed to quantify the findings of this study. Future research should also include a longitudinal study looking at possible effects associated with the highlighted mindset issue within this study. Moreover, future studies should include the potential effects on both marketing and the marketing practitioner. As this study focused on both early and later career marketers, future research should investigate marketers who are “mid-career”. A final area of future research should look at other sectors. Interestingly, during the piloting of the focus group five individuals across the industries of finance, banking, engineering and education identified, within their respective industries, with the mindset issue suggested by this study. This supports an argument for future research in other sectors as the underlying mindset issue may not be confined solely to the marketing profession. The final section provides a conclusion to this study.

5.5 Study Conclusion
This study investigates how the lived experiences of modern marketers provide an insight into the interplay between skills gaps and the digital transformation of marketing practice. To achieve this a mixed method approach to research was used. Study findings identify a misdiagnosis within literature, and practice. While skills gaps are focused on, this study diagnoses a fundamental mindset issue within marketing. Mindset is a term evident within marketing literature, however, the mindset issue identified within this study is different and is not apparent within extant marketing literature. Therefore, this study adds theory in the form of mindset, to the under-researched and under-theorised area around marketing skills gaps.

The mindset issue identified within this study appears to underlie skills gaps, where skills gaps may be symptomatic of the mindset issue. Arguably, a skills gap could be closed or limited by gaining the absent skill. However, if a marketer is averse to, and does not see the pertinence of
gaining certain skills or knowledge in the first instance, which is suggested by the mindset issue, the problem may continue and could deteriorate, possibly causing further issues. Therefore, they may not see the value in acquiring certain skills which they may in fact require. Subsequently, endeavours, specifically in the field of upskilling, which are aimed at the symptom may lack efficacy as the underlying issue may be ignored. Study findings contribute to the body of knowledge around marketing skills gaps by identifying mindset as the pertinent area.

Within this mindset finding, it also became evident that both early and later career marketers exhibit divergent mindsets where they view marketing through dissimilar lenses. Accordingly, marketers at different career stage do not share the same outlook. In fact, they place their focus on different aspects of marketing while appearing to disregard or discount other elements. This indicates that their marketing behaviours and actions vary and that there is not a uniform approach in terms of best practice. This has the potential to impact marketing practice as varying outlooks and approaches may reduce the efficacy of marketing if inappropriate tools or platforms are chosen. In fact, findings suggest that marketers use the tools and platforms which are aligned to their mindset, as a default, rather than the ones which may be best suited to the task at hand. Therefore, the optimal marketing techniques may not always be chosen. Furthermore, it was also noted within this study that mindset may be diminishing the effectiveness of marketers, especially if they are closed to practices outside of their focus. Instead, they may be overly focused on the areas of marketing situated within their mindset where they are unable to reframe as marketing evolves. Accordingly, they may be re-using past habits or actions which may no longer be pertinent.

Moreover, while the descriptive model illustrates the mindset issue, the experiences of modern marketing are also highlighted. Literature has neglected this area in recent times and findings provide much needed insight into the behaviours of both early and later career marketers. Herein, the relationship between early and later career marketers in terms of their mindset, is also detailed. While later career marketers appear to lack a knowledge of digital technologies, they also appear to be augmenting the digital focus of their early career counterparts. Similarly, early career marketers appear to enable later career marketers in terms of not possessing the requisite digital knowledge. These behaviours have numerous potential consequences where both early and later career marketers may be losing key marketing skills and knowledge while the dichotomy between both cohorts may also be at risk of becoming more evident. The model,
which is considered to have descriptive power while also being representative of the experiences of modern marketers, also highlights the pressure early career marketers are under in terms of possessing all the digital knowledge. However, a disconnect between education and industry, coupled with unrealistic expectations, has resulted in their attention being placed firmly on acquiring the digital skills they are already expected to have. Accordingly, the non-digital aspects of marketing appear to be disregarded and are being lost within the early career cohort. Later career marketers are also impacted as they rationalise not needing digital knowledge and skills as they believe they do not need them as it is not their job. This seems to distance them from the frontlines of digital and increase the likelihood of them being left behind as marketing evolves. These behaviours further highlight potential threats to overall marketing efficacy, specifically in the long term.

While this study identifies an underlying mindset issue as the pertinent issue, a lack of key skills were also noted. Herein, study findings provide a more nuanced insight into this area and into current literature. While certain issues are identified as being prevalent throughout the marketing sphere, this study suggests otherwise. Findings advise that certain issues are not ubiquitous and are most likely to be witnessed within either the early or later career cohort of marketers. The data indicates that looking at the marketing profession as a single group is unsuitable, and may be misguided, as variations based on career stage emerged within this study. Therefore, the skills gaps in marketing appear to vary based on the stage of career of the marketer with early career marketers lacking non-digital skills, while later career marketers were identified as lacking key digital knowledge.

The findings of this study provide new theory in the form of a fundamental mindset issue which shifts the focus from skills gaps to mindset. Notwithstanding, this study does not claim to be all encompassing. Instead, this study contributes to knowledge and provides a foundation, and framework, for future research to be built upon. This novel mindset finding will undoubtedly need further research. Similarly, the descriptive model also provides avenues for future researchers to further investigate. Finally, the researcher calls for more emphasis to be placed on mindset awareness in both marketing practice and marketing literature and suggests that mindset be incorporated into marketing courses and continuous professional development programmes. Accordingly, the researcher advocates mindset as the focus of any imminent future research in the area of marketing skills gaps.
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Appendices

Interview Guide – Later Career Marketers
1. What are the 3 key things that have changed in the marketing profession from when you first started to present day?
2. What would you view as the most important skills and knowledge needed in marketing today?
3. Does a lack of knowledge regarding the digital environment affect a marketing professional’s ability to effectively market today?
4. Are marketing professionals keeping up with the evolving nature of the marketing?
5. What do you or your colleagues do with regard to keeping up to date with the marketing profession?
6. What challenges do you or your colleagues encounter when trying to acquire new skills or knowledge within your profession?
7. Do you use social media as a means of learning new skills or knowledge within your profession?

Interview Guide – Early Career Marketers
1. What do you view as the most important skills and knowledge needed in marketing today?
2. What would you view as marketing fundamentals today?
3. What is your train of thought after receiving a marketing brief or marketing assignment?
4. From your experience, would you feel that there is an issue in marketing whereby marketers can be too digitally focused or led by digital tools?
5. How do you view the older generation of marketers?
6. Is there a lack of core marketing principles in marketing today? If yes, do they affect a marketer’s ability to effectively market today?
7. Are marketers keeping up with the changes in marketing? How? Barriers?
8. Do you use social media as a means of learning new skills or knowledge within your profession?
9. How would you view a proposed “two-way learning” model whereby early and later career marketers would interact?

Likert Scale Survey Statements
1. Modern marketing has become too focused on digital platforms.
2. Marketers tend to be led or overly influenced by digital platforms.
3. Junior or early career marketers are more likely to focus too much on digital.
4. The core marketing principles are being forgotten or overlooked.
5. The core marketing principles are being forgotten or overlooked due to the dominant role of digital.
6. Junior or early career marketers are more likely to overlook the core marketing principles
7. Senior or later career marketers are not as digitally savvy as they should be.
8. Senior or later career marketers are less willing to learn new digital skills or knowledge compared to their junior or early career counterparts.
9. Junior or early career marketers are more likely to utilise social media as a learning tool compared to their senior or later career counterparts.
10. Senior or later career marketers are more likely to learn via traditional methods of upskilling.
11. Junior or early career marketers cannot perform effectively without knowledge of the core marketing principles
12. Senior or later career marketers cannot perform effectively without digital marketing knowledge.
13. Generally speaking, early career or junior marketers are stronger digitally while later career or senior marketers are stronger with the core marketing principles.

**Online Focus Group Questions**
1. What do you think marketers view as “big picture” marketing?
2. Can marketers who solely take a “big picture” approach to marketing be truly effective?
3. Has it been your experience that later career marketers can avoid digital, and if so, how do they do so?
4. Some suggest a disconnect between early career marketers and the core marketing principles. Is this something you believe exists, and if so, how does it manifest?
5. There are suggestions that early career marketers are too focused on digital. Is this an issue you have experienced and if so, how does it manifest?
6. Do you think that there is more of a mindset issue than a skills gap issue?
7. Does this model reflect your experiences?
8. What impact or challenges might this issue have on the development of marketers, marketing teams and effective organisations in the long run? How to overcome?