

# The Impact of the Digital Channels in Increasing the Marketing Capabilities and the Networking Potential between Companies during the COVID Period. The Case of Local Romanian SMEs

**Amalia GEORGESCU**

*Gheorghe Asachi Technical University of Iași  
29 Dimitrie Mangeron Blvd., Iași, Romania  
[amalia.georgescu@tuiasi.ro](mailto:amalia.georgescu@tuiasi.ro)*

**Sebastian BÂRZU**

*Gheorghe Asachi Technical University of Iași  
29 Dimitrie Mangeron Blvd., Iași, Romania*

## **Abstract**

*Digital technology is considered to be an important part of the industry, no matter the domain because it is permanently reshaping the world's economy. We show the digital marketing principles that the new period has brought to our attention and have changed the way of being, working, and making business. We aim to show how small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Romania, at a local level, have coped with the pandemic restrictions when reaching their clients, but at the same time have managed and met their financial and strategic objectives, using or implementing the existing or new digital tools and technologies available for free or at a cost range. The research showed that local companies have not been fully prepared for such a crisis. Lots of these SMEs were not using the online presence and the digital technologies at their true potential to optimize their managing or production processes, promote and communicate easier with their stakeholders or sell more products and services. We also investigate what are the characteristics and principles that a company must follow to use digital opportunities better. Also, through our research, we show the impact associative business structure can have in networking and helping companies cooperate, communicate better and promote the local businesses for the potential customers. We propose a simple framework for SMEs to follow when thinking of starting the digital journey. In this new dynamic technology-driven environment only constant digital optimization can help companies remain relevant on the market, reach new markets and financially survive in the long term in the global market. The digital transformation opens up new opportunities and boosts the development of new capabilities in an organization, but also the business ecosystem.*

## **Keywords**

*Digital marketing; digital entrepreneurship; digital transformation; pandemic entrepreneurship; local networking; associative structures.*

## **Introduction**

Digital channels play today an ever-increasing role within the marketing process from the organization's communication potential and customer's approach perspective. Digital marketing is an important sub-process of the strategic marketing plan and is an important step in the permanent evolution of marketing concepts and findings (Kotler & Armstrong, 2013). Therefore, digital marketing can be defined as a process in which

## Strategica. Shaping the Future of Business and Economy

organizations use the internet and digital technology to create value and products, as well as interchange them. This happens to reach new potential customers all over the world, through all suitable online communication channels or digital technology and to enhance value for the actual consumers (Visser, Sikkenga, & Berry, 2018; Birzu, 2021; Kotler et al., 2021).

The usage of different digital technologies has become part of the daily routine for most people and organizations. Also, digitization and digital transformation are very important for each type of organization in a dynamic technology-driven environment and in establishing new marketing requirements (Peter et al, 2020; Georgescu et. al, 2021).

Considering the world crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic in 2020-2021, organizations around the world faced a new challenge to adapt in real-time to the impact of COVID-19 in all domains. All companies, freelancers, and specialists were constrained to adjust the communication strategies and explore resources and channels they may not have previously prioritized, such as social media channels, for example. Since the number of Internet users has increased to 5,053 million at the end of 2020, as shown in Table 1, companies have had to change continuously the way they communicate and the way they implement their digital marketing strategy, not only on social media but on all digital channels (Koeze & Popper, 2020; Ion & Cismaru, 2020).

**Table 1. Internet usage growth statistics from 2018 until today**

Date	Number of users	% of world population
<b>December 2018</b>	4,313 million	55.6%
<b>December 2020</b>	5,053 million	64.2%
<b>March 2021</b>	5,168 million	65.6%

*Internet World Stats, 2021- summary made by authors*

Moreover, digital marketing is defined as the sum of technological tools that lead to meeting customer's needs, but also to achieve the highest degree of satisfaction when approaching different types of potential customers and creating value for them (Visser, Sikkenga, & Berry, 2018; Chaffey, 2019; Kotler et al., 2021). There is also a need for knowledge of online customer behavior to establish a digital marketing strategy (Hinterhuber, Vescovi, & Checchinato, 2021).

There is not only the need to know how digital marketing communication works. It is also important for organizations to make use of the internet or different types of digital technologies for multiple processes such as product creation, innovation, market research, advertising, networking, selling, and distribution. It is imperative to be open to co-working opportunities, associative business, or academic structures that could help the digital process implementation of a company to develop faster in the ever-changing business ecosystem.

## Research methodology

The questions generated to conduct this new research have been: *What was the impact of the digital channels' usage during the COVID-19 period for the local SMEs in Romania?*

*Did it help them raise their communication skills and selling capabilities or not? How did the companies use the digital networking potential and the associative potential in this period?*

The study used a mixed methodology, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. We have conducted online research on the academic database platforms Research Gate, Google Scholar, Web of Science, other specialized websites with online articles and book chapters readings. We have selected more than 35 relevant articles and publications based on the pre-defined keywords and their multi-dimensional approach: digital marketing, digital entrepreneurship, digital transformation, pandemic entrepreneurship, local networking, associative structures, SMEs digital transformation, and digital approach in SMEs.

The research problem was studied through theoretical and practical data analysis, focusing on information shared by business owners. Therefore, we have also analyzed recent market research done in Romania and we have conducted several interviews and focus groups with local Romanian entrepreneurs that have SMEs in the city of Iasi, Romania, as shown in Table 2. At the end of the article, we present some of these study cases and their digital marketing journey in 2020-2021.

**Table 2. Research interviews and case descriptions conducted by the authors**

Research	Time	Case description	Empirical Data
<b>Case 1: Local SMEs</b>	May 2020 -May 2021	This case focuses on the impact the COVID-19 period had on the local SMEs and the way they implemented new digital strategies to interact with their clients.	3 online focus-groups with 31 entrepreneurs and 2 face-to-face focus groups with 23 entrepreneurs
<b>Case 2: Research studies</b>	January-May 2021	SMEs digital transformation in the pandemic period	National or EU studies

We have also created a proposed framework for SMEs to understand the analyses and the steps needed to be done when they start their digital upgrade journey, to access better and faster their potential customers and new markets.

## Digital technologies and SMEs potential to become more competitive

Digital technology is considered to be an important part of the actual and future industry because it is permanently reshaping the world's economy (Zairis, 2020; European Commission, 2020).

The subject of digitalization in SMEs remains highly important for many researchers. Digital technologies enable businesses to gain a competitive advantage, improve their services and products and expand their markets. It opens up new opportunities and boosts the development of new technologies and capabilities in an organization. Its correct integration and use can enhance the performance of any type of SME and can

offer more opportunities to compete with larger competitors and connect better with the stakeholders (Cenamor et al., 2019; Peter et al., 2020).

Continuous innovation, the use of new digital technologies, and strategic usage of digital marketing tools are the keys to a company's survival and performance in today's competitive business environment (Kavoura & Andersson, 2016; Kavoura & Koziol, 2017; Makarona & Kavoura, 2019). Nevertheless, the newly available digital technologies tend to be unevenly financially accessible and depend on many factors such as the size of the SME, the turnover and financial support, the human resources and skills available or the country's level of economic development and other politics or regulations (Chakravorti et al., 2017). Therefore, it is easier for larger companies to adopt digital technologies as they have access to many more resources than traditional SMEs.

SMEs are known to be the main contributors to economic growth and tend to adopt digital technology according to their needs or depending on the customer wants and communication level or channel requested. Companies to be considered digital have implemented at least one of the following types of technologies such as Internet of Things, e-commerce platforms, drone or robots technology, Augmented and Virtual Reality, big data usage, data-driven computation, Artificial Intelligence, cloud computing Technology, 3D software creation, 3D printing and project simulation, cybersecurity, system integration, software and management platforms or many other digital marketing and on-line communication tools. These give access to data information, can easily optimize the work of employees and the quality of services, interconnect faster with different types of stakeholders, communicate easier on the marketing channels, increase innovation, research, and development process (Ulas, 2019; Zairis, 2020; Harkonen et al., 2021).

In Europe, larger corporations employed more IT specialists, use data-sharing infrastructure and cloud computing more often than smaller companies. Only a fifth of the companies in the EU-28 is highly digitized, but the situation across countries is varied: while 40% of companies in Denmark and the Netherlands are highly digitized, in Bulgaria and Romania it is 1 in 10. On the other side, almost half of European SMEs (44%) used in 2018 social media to promote their business, and in 2019 it raised to 52%. Regarding the use of mobile internet by SMEs, there has been an increase from 20% to 29% (2012-2016) and 36% in 2019, while it remains stable (64%) for the bigger firms (European Commission, 2018; 2020).

In 2019 and 2020, the digital transformation of European businesses was driven by a better performance of their main websites, fast broadband connections, social media, and mobile applications for e-commerce or other types of online platforms (European Commission, 2020).

### **Digital tools helping achieve strategic marketing or management objectives**

Digital tools are being used more and more at all levels in an organization. Companies and employees have considerably used their own or organizational devices and apps

and brought IT usage patterns from private life into their work during the Covid-19 period when organizations had to change the way work was conducted (Hult et al., 2021).

Romanian companies have adopted in the last decade some of the most important digital technologies considered essential in the digital transformation of an organization. This allowed managers to increase revenues, decrease in expenditure and optimize working hours, whether they used the working space capabilities or the personal ones from home (Gaß et al., 2015; Jarrahi et al., 2017; Deaconescu, Voicilă, & Sas, 2019; PwC Survey, 2019). This helped companies become an agile structure, to help identify problems immediately when they occur, focus on innovation development, and educate managers or employees to increase their digital capabilities (Abrihan, 2019).

The pandemic period showed that people became more involved in collaborative work and implementing work processes better through IT, no matter the distance. They had to adapt work using different types of new communication and meeting online platforms, improve their teamwork, project, and time management (Orlikowski & Scott, 2016; Mrass, 2017; Wang, 2018). To understand the implications, it is important to be aware of technological advancements, the pace of change in the digital landscape over the past years, especially in the COVID period, the continuous innovation in marketing or management processes, and the organizational responses to this change (Hult et al., 2021).

From this point of view, in 2020 companies and employees have started more and more to use different types of software to manage their projects and teams, forced by the COVID-19 market conditions. Some of the most used and considered best project management software, having in mind the workflow automation, flexibility, customizability, financial operations, team workflow, ease of use, and collaborative interfaces, were: ClickUp, MeisterTask, Asana, Basecamp, Nifty, Teamwork Projects, Hive, ProofHub, Zoho Projects, Wrike, Adobe Workfront, Smartsheet, Clarizen, Hubstaff, LiquidPlanner, TeamGantt, Plutio, UiPath, Task (Sescu, 2013; Haije, 2021; Aston, 2021; Duffy, 2021). According to *Forbes* and *Playtech* publications in 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic period, the UiPath software, for example, has been massively adopted by the retail, healthcare, and finance sectors to cope with the significant change in customers' demand.

### **Social media, events, and online video platform usage in the COVID-19 period**

Research on organizational social media shows the introduction of integrated internal platforms, including social and video media functionality that goes beyond existing technologies for work purposes like email, newsletters, official business chats, shared calendars, and document libraries. The new technologies allow not just to create and use corporate-level information, but to add and create content that any other employee or customer can see, depending on the communication strategy that the organization has (Leonardi et al., 2013; Leonardi & Vaast, 2017; Hult et al., 2021).

## **Strategica. Shaping the Future of Business and Economy**

---

The online and digital tools in social media communication, organizing online events, or marketing campaigns became more important in the last pandemic period, being one of the most important tools to communicate with the public. Nowadays, it is of extreme importance to integrate the online platforms in promoting and generating the events and having a digital marketing strategy. The use of social media in creating events of any type, in generating strategic marketing and public relations programs, helps organizations generate unique, memorable experiences and connect with their public easier and better, since in 2020, in Romania, for example, Facebook was the most used social media website, followed by Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube (Ion & Cismaru, 2020). This helped the company also to develop experiential marketing programs by engaging their potential and current customers at an emotional level. This becomes vital, from a marketing point of view, because if an organization knows what does its audience wants to do and needs to hear, then it is easier to plan what resources to use, what message to deliver, and how to engage with the public better. The organization becomes visible, easy to access, and can also motivate its followers to engage easier with the products or services (Hulubei & Avasilcai, 2020; Cohn, 2020).

In 2020, due to the pandemic crisis, people could no longer travel, attend meetings and events or meet face to face for business purposes. Forced by the increased number of consumers using social media sites, companies tried to counterbalance the shifted communication through a more active approach and take a series of measures that were not used before at its true capacity (Sinclair & Vogus, 2011). For example, the marketing and sales events, training or strategic meetings moved online, using specialized platforms for video conferences and webinars, such as Facebook live, Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, Skype, WhatsApp video calls or Facetime combined with lots of video tutorials, training or podcast interviews.

### **Local SMEs research study and the pandemic digital opportunities**

According to a recent research study made in Romania, analyzing the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic period for 357 Romanian companies, from which 50,7% were SMEs, it showed that digitization, teleworking and the digital marketing process improvement have been mentioned most frequently as a strength that companies developed more in 2020 and will rely furthermore in 2021. These aspects have been identified as the new market opportunities in the online environment since 72% of the companies said that digitalization improvement of their companies will be their main focus in 2021 (Nestian et al., 2021).

According to our research and the interviews with the 54 local entrepreneurs from the city of Iasi, 38 (70,37%) of them had small businesses with 1 to 10 employees, 13 had between 11 and 15 employees and only 3 had more than 15 employees. These entrepreneurs are part of a local network and associative business structure promoting the local manufacturers, products, and services, named "Fabricat în Iași" ["Made in Iasi" Association]. The turnover of our interviewed SMEs was between 25.000 and 150.000 Euro for 94,44% of the SMEs and only 3 of these companies had more than 1 million Euro € as a general turnover in 2020.

As for these local companies, the pandemic year meant that they had faced changes and worked in uncertain situations. The online presence was optimized for all the analyzed SMEs and the changes they had to do, showed that half of the companies lost clients in the first part of the pandemic year because they had no online shop (70% of the SMEs), the website was not optimized for the mobile usage (35%) or because they had not the supply and delivery channel well optimized (57%).

One of the companies is a local travel and renting agency that has very big losses and the business dropped in 2020 up to 85%, having in mind the comparison with 2019. The employees worked mainly from home. The sales department moved to help the marketing department, with customer relations and optimizing the online presence. The company invested a lot in raising the customers' satisfaction in the online environment, communicating and helping clients through all means possible during the COVID lockdown (on-line booking, website chat, emails, SMS, zoom meetings, phone calls, social media updates), and reinvented the offered services, focusing mainly on the rent-a-car services and secured holidays.

Another local company was manufacturing gifts and souvenirs and had only a small shop in the center of the city and a Facebook account, posting their products there. When the pandemic year started, the tourists stopped coming and there were no sales for almost two months. At that point, their digital transformation process has started. They have invested in multimedia equipment and started working on their online shop, video & photo promotional materials. Also, they have started to make videos tutorials on how to make decorations or how their products can be used to make surprises or be creative during the COVID lockdown. The same happened for a local manufacturer of lavender cosmetics, a food and catering distribution company, and a local craft beer producer, that had to find fast solutions to improve the online presence, online customer communication, and the shipping policy.

On the other side, a local IT company, that offers online courses and distance learning services, had to increase its capabilities, by hiring new IT engineers, but also by increasing the capacity of the servers to meet demand because of the online programs in schools and other business and academic institutions. The company had an increase of more than 300% of the turnover. The same happened to a local manufacturer of ultraviolet disinfection devices that had an increase of 500% of the turnover and had to double the number of their employees to respond to the customers' requests and delivers all over Europe.

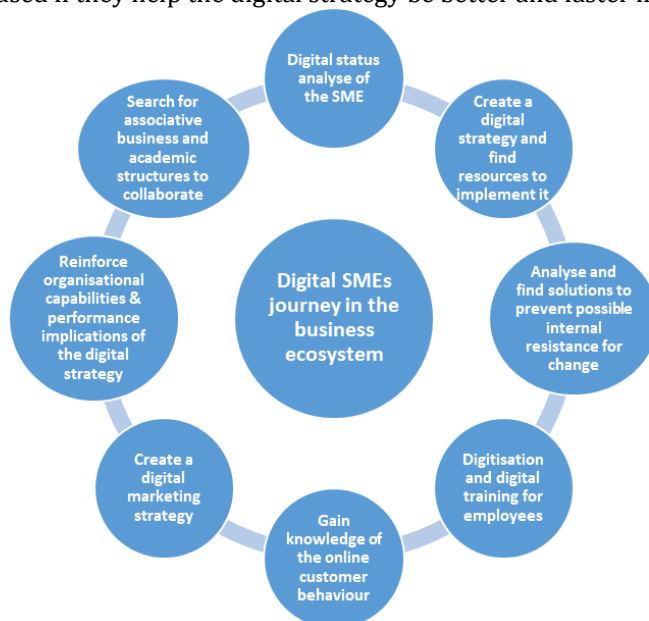
The COVID period was an exceptional one for the economy. No matter the effect this period had at an economic level, there have been several imperative and fast changes that had to be done. From our study, the interviewed SMEs explained that the fast changes were: teleworking and finding a way to work from home or with a special office schedule, digitization and digital marketing training with employees, development of a greater online presence, financial investments in digital marketing, focus and improve the communication capabilities with their clients, optimize the supply chain and delivery channels, innovate and reinvent the products and services offered to the market.

## Strategica. Shaping the Future of Business and Economy

An important aspect was that these companies were in constant networking and communication with the local associations, having online meetings periodically and trying to find solutions to cope with the COVID period. The associative business structures, in our case the “Fabricat in Iasi” association, proved to be of great to give specialized support to help SMEs understand what is happening, how to optimize economic and financial aspects, and how to internalize easier and faster the digital tools within the company. At the same time, the associative structure had special programs to promote and encourage the consumption of local products and services and organized at least five online events with the local SMEs. Reinventing, innovating, accessing the local networking capabilities, and developing more the economic potential, meant for these SMEs “not to waste a good crisis”, as one of the entrepreneurs said, analyzing the positive effects the investments and the online communication strategy had for his company.

Our research showed that entrepreneurs responded in varied but similar ways to challenges emerging from blending IT at work, integrating new digital marketing capabilities, and reconfiguration of the management processes. The analysis helped us synthesize and create a framework for SMEs to understand the steps needed to be done when they start their digital upgrade journey, to access better and faster their potential customers, as proposed in Figure 1, also following the Hinterhuber (2021) analyses.

After an initial audit of the SME status, there is necessary to establish a company’s digital transformation strategy with a new marketing plan and find solutions to implement it at all levels. At the same time, while working on the internal improvement, co-working and associative collaborative external opportunities must be analyzed and used if they help the digital strategy be better and faster implemented.



**Figure 1. The Digital SMEs journey in the business environment**  
(Proposed model by the authors, following Hinterhuber et al., 2021)



## Conclusions

The higher the degree of digitalization of a company, the higher the digital competencies of employees, and therefore managers who want to be successful must invest in improving employees in terms of digital skills and permanent investments in digital technology. Our study suggested that businesses should follow the proposed eight steps in their digital journey, as shown in Figure 1. Through our research, 54 entrepreneurs provided input about the way local companies changed their digital marketing approach and adopted new strategies to succeed in the continuous and uncertain business ecosystem. Digitization has led these local SMEs in a new direction, more accessible for customers and easier to operate for the companies, especially making it easier for potential customers to access local products and services easier and faster. SMEs must think strategically about their digital journey and consider the digital opportunities as mandatory to be implemented in the company even from the start-up level and think as a global company, not as a small and local one.

## Limitations

Some of the limitations of our current study can be mentioned. A first limitation is the relatively small number of local entrepreneurs that answered our questions. Another aspect is that the study focused on offering an overview of the way local SMEs faced the challenges caused by the COVID crisis, but from a subjective point of view, as each entrepreneur told us its business experience.

This study showed the different types of challenges local businesses encountered and this could be another limitation of our study, having in mind that a larger survey could give new insights and information at regional or national analyses. This could be the subject of a future research study to analyze the impact of digital channels from a marketing and associative point of view during and after the COVID period.

## References

- Abrihan, R. (2017). 6 pași importanți pentru a-ți transforma firma într-o companie digitală [6 important steps to turn your business into a digital company]. <https://www.startupcafe.ro/afaceri/firme-digitalizare-lider.htm>.
- Bîrzu, S. (2021). A current framework of the challenges of digital marketing. In *Proceedings of the Annual Sessions of Scientific Papers* (vol.19, pp. 272-276), University of Oradea Publishing House. <https://doi.org/10.15660/AUOFMTE.2020-2.3554>
- Cenamor, J., Paridab, V., & Wincent, J. (2019). How entrepreneurial SMEs compete through digital platforms: The roles of digital platform capability, network capability and ambidexterity. *Journal of Business Research*, 100, 196–206. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.03.035>
- Chaffey, D., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2019). *Digital Marketing*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, Pearson Publishing.
- Chakravorti, B., Bhalla, A., & Chaturvedi, R. S. (2017, July 12). 60 Countries' Digital Competitiveness, Indexed. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2017/07/60-countries-digital-competitiveness-indexed>

- Cohn, M. (2020). Giving your audience what they want. <https://www.compukol.com/giving-your-audience-what-they-want/>
- Deaconescu, F., Voicilă, G., & Sas, I. (2019, October 30). Transformarea digitală: companiile și angajații la răscruce de drumuri. Sunteți pregătiți? [Digital transformation: companies and employees at crossroads. Are you ready?], *Ziarul Financiar*. <https://www.zf.ro/companii/transformarea-digitala-companiile-si-angajatii-la-rascruce-de-drumuri-sunteți-pregătiți-18512927>
- European Commission (2017). Integration of Digital Technology in the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI). [https://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/newsroom/image/document/2018-20/4\\_desi\\_report\\_integration\\_of\\_digital\\_technology\\_B61BEB6B-F21D-9DD7-72F1FAA836E36515\\_52243.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/image/document/2018-20/4_desi_report_integration_of_digital_technology_B61BEB6B-F21D-9DD7-72F1FAA836E36515_52243.pdf)
- European Commission (2020). *Integration of Digital Technology by Enterprises* in the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI). <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/desi-integration-technology-enterprises>
- Forbes (2021, February 2). UiPath, primul unicorn românesc, a anunțat că a obținut 750 de milioane de dolari într-o nouă rundă de finanțare [UiPath, the first Romanian unicorn, announced that it has obtained 750 million dollars in a new round of financing], *Forbes.ro*. <https://www.forbes.ro/ui-path-primul-unicorn-romanesc-anuntat-ca-obtinut-750-de-milioane-de-dolari-intr-o-noua-runda-de-finantare-201844>
- Gaß, O., Ortbach, K., Kretzer, M., Maedche, A., & Niehaves, B. (2015). Conceptualizing individualization in information systems: A Literature Review. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, 37, 64-88. <https://doi.org/10.17705/1CAIS.03703>
- Georgescu, A., Avasilcai, S., & Peter, M. K. (2021). Digital Innovation Hubs—The Present Future of Collaborative Research, Business and Marketing Development Opportunities. In Rocha Á., Reis J.L., Peter M.K., Cayolla R., Loureiro S., Bogdanović Z. (Eds.), *Marketing and Smart Technologies. Smart Innovation, Systems and Technologies* (205, pp. 363-374), Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-33-4183-8\\_29](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-33-4183-8_29)
- Harkonen, J., Mustonen, E., Koskinen, J., & Hannila, H. (2021). Digitizing Company Analytics – Digitalization Concept for Valuable Insights. In *2020 IEEE International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Engineering Management (IEEM)*, Singapore. <https://doi.org/10.1109/IEEM45057.2020.9309799>
- Hinterhuber, A., Vescovi, T., & Checchinato, F. (Eds.). (2021). *Managing Digital Transformation: Understanding the Strategic Process* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003008637>
- Hult, H. V., Isind A. S., & Norström, L. (2021). Reconfiguring professionalism in digital work, *Systems, Signs & Actions: An International Journal on Information Technology, Action, Communication and Workpractices*, 12, 1–17.
- Hulubei (Georgescu) A., & Avasilcai S. (2020). Event-Based Marketing: A Trendy and Emotional Way to Engage with the Public. In Á. Rocha, J. Reis, M. Peter, & Z. Bogdanović (Eds.), *Marketing and Smart Technologies. Smart Innovation, Systems and Technologies* (167, pp. 156-165), Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-1564-4\\_16](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-1564-4_16)
- Ion, M., & Cismaru, M. (2020). How Organizations Adapt to Global Crisis: Shifting the Social Media Communication Approach. In C. Brătianu, A. Zbucea, F. Anghel, & B. Hrib (Eds.), *Strategica: Preparing for Tomorrow, Today* (8, pp. 350- 361), Tritonic.
- Internetworldstats.com (2020). History and Growth of the Internet from 1995 till Today. <https://www.internetworldstats.com/emarketing.htm>
- Jarrahi, M. H., Crowston, K., Bondar, K., & Katzy, B. (2017). A pragmatic approach to managing enterprise IT infrastructures in the era of consumerization and individualization of IT. *International Journal of Information Management*, 37(6), 566-575. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2017.05.016>

- Kavoura A., & Andersson T. (2016). Applying Delphi method for strategic design of social entrepreneurship. *Library Review*, 65(3), 185–205. <https://doi.org/10.1108/LR-06-2015-0062>
- Kavoura N., & Koziol L. (2017). Polish Firms' Innovation Capability for Competitiveness via Information Technologies and Social Media Implementation. In A. Vlachvei, O. Notta, K. Karantininis, & N. Tsountas (Eds.), *Factors Affecting Firm Competitiveness and Performance in the Modern Business World* (pp. 191–222), IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-5643-5.ch085>
- Koeze, E., & Popper, N. (2020, April 7). He Virus Changed the Way We Internet. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/04/07/technology/coronavirus-internet-use.html>
- Kotler, P., & Armstrong, G. (2013). *Principle of Marketing*. (15th ed.), Prentice Hall.
- Kotler, P., Kartajaya, H., & Setiawan, I. (2021). *Marketing 5.0: Technology for humanity*, Wiley.
- Leonardi, P. M., Huysman, M., & Steinfield, C. (2013). Enterprise social media: Definition, history, and prospects for the study of social technologies in organizations. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 19(1), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12029>
- Leonardi, P. M., & Vaast, E. (2017). Social media and their affordances for organizing: A review and agenda for research. *Academy of Management Annals*, 11(1), 150-188. <https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2015.0144>
- Makarona E., & Kavoura A. (2019). Redesigning the Ivory Tower: Academic entrepreneurship as a new calling supporting economic growth. *The Malopolska School of Economics in Tarnow Research Papers Collection*, 42, 15–26.
- Mrass, V., Li, M. M., & Peters, C. (2017). Towards a taxonomy of digital work. In *Proceedings of the 25th European Conference on Information Systems (ECIS)*, Guimarães, Portugal.
- Orlikowski, W. J., & Scott, S. V. (2016). Digital work: A research agenda. In *A research agenda for management and organization studies* (pp. 88-96), Barbara Czarniawska - Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Peter, M. K., Kraft, C., & Lindeque, J. (2020). *Strategic action fields of digital transformation. An exploration of the strategic action fields of Swiss SMEs and large enterprises*. *Journal of Strategic Management*, 13(1), 160–180. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSMA-05-2019-0070>
- Playtech.ro (2021). UiPath, primul unicorn românesc, se pregătește de o performanță uriașă. Iar miza e 1 miliard de dolari [UiPath, the first Romanian unicorn, is preparing for a huge performance. And the stake is of \$ 1 billion]. <https://playtech.ro/2021/performanta-uriasa-pentru-primul-unicorn-romanesc-miza-uipath-in-valoare-de-1-miliard-de-dolari/>
- PwC (2019). Central and Eastern Europe Private Business Survey. [www.pwc.ro/ceosurvey2019](http://www.pwc.ro/ceosurvey2019)
- Sescu, M. (2013). Asana, probabil cel mai bun soft gratuit pentru project management [Asana, probably the best free software for project management]. <https://mariusescu.ro/project-management-software-free-asana/>
- Ulas, D. (2019). Digital Transformation Process and SMEs. *Procedia Computer Science*, 158, 662–671. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2019.09.101>
- Visser, M., Sikkenga, B., & Berry M. (2018). *Digital Marketing Fundamentals from Strategy to ROI*, 1st Edition, Noordhoff Uitgevers Groningen/Utrecht.
- Wang, B., Schlagwein, D., Cecez-Kecmanovic, D., & Cahalane, M. C. (2018). Digital work and high-tech wanderers: Three theoretical framings and a research agenda for digital nomadism. In *Proceedings of the Australian Conference on Information Systems (ACIS)*, Sydney, Australia, 55, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.5130/acis2018.bl>
- Zairis, A. G. (2020). The Effective Use of Digital Technology by SMEs. In A. Masouras, G. Maris, & A. Kavoura (Eds.), *Entrepreneurial Development and Innovation in Family Businesses and SMEs* (pp. 244-255), IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-3648-3.ch014>