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EXPLORING THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT'S VISION OF DIGITAL MEDIA SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Abstract. The rapid digitalization of economic and social processes has reshaped labour market demands, making digital media skills essential across sectors. This study examines the business environment's perception of digital media competencies in the Republic of Moldova, drawing on survey data from 56 companies collected within Deliverable 4.1 of the ERASMUS+ MEDIA-Project (Project No. 101082889). The exploratory quantitative analysis assessed employers' views on graduates' skills, the use of digital media tools in business operations, and expectations for university–industry collaboration. Findings reveal a significant gap between graduates' basic content creation abilities and the advanced, strategic skills required by companies, particularly in social media campaign planning, content management, digital marketing strategy, data analytics, and communication. Employers also highlight the need for applied training, internships, and practitioner involvement in education. The results emphasize the importance of flexible, practice-oriented learning programmes aligned with real market needs and provide evidence to support the development of the digital media micro-credential programme under the MEDIA-Project. Strengthening these competencies is essential for enhancing workforce readiness and advancing Moldova's digital transformation.

Keywords: *analytics, communication skills, competencies, content creation, digital marketing, labour market, non-formal education, skill development, social media, workforce readiness.*

JEL code: *I23, M15.*

Introduction

The accelerated digitalization of economic and social systems has significantly transformed the competencies demanded by contemporary labour markets. Digital media skills – ranging from online communication and content production to data-driven marketing and multimedia design – have become indispensable assets for businesses seeking to remain competitive and innovative. As organizations evolve within this dynamic landscape, higher education institutions are increasingly expected to anticipate and respond to the shifting skill requirements of the business community. Ensuring this alignment is critical not only for enhancing graduate employability but also for supporting national digital transformation processes.

In the Republic of Moldova, the demand for relevant digital media competencies has grown in parallel with the expansion of digital services, online industries, and technology-driven business models. Understanding how the Moldovan business environment perceives digital media skills and identifying the competencies considered most relevant represent essential steps for designing responsive educational programmes. This need has become even more pronounced in the context of broader European efforts to optimize online learning, strengthen digital capacity, and promote innovative approaches to non-formal and interdisciplinary education.

The research presented in this article was conducted within the framework of the Project no.101082889 – MEDIA „Strengthening the quality of online education in HEIs in Moldova and Armenia, funded by Erasmus+ Program, CBHE. Specifically, it draws upon data and materials produced for Deliverable 4.1: Report on Multi-disciplinary Non-formal Educational Programmes on Digital Media, under Work Package 4: Deployment and Authorization of the Multi-disciplinary Non-

formal Programme on Digital Media. This project context provided both methodological orientation and direct access to key stakeholders from the business sector, enabling a grounded analysis of market expectations.

The main purpose of this article is to explore the business environment's vision regarding digital media skills development in the Republic of Moldova, identify the competencies deemed essential by employers, and assess how these insights can inform the design and improvement of educational programmes, particularly within the non-formal digital media curriculum developed under WP4. By adopting a case study approach, the article contributes to a deeper understanding of the evolving demands placed on the workforce and the opportunities for strengthening collaboration between academia and industry.

In doing so, the study aims to enrich the discourse on digital skill development in Moldova and support the advancement of educational practices that are better aligned with real market needs, ultimately contributing to the country's digital transformation and its integration into European educational and economic ecosystems.

Literature review

Over the past two decades, the rapid digitalisation of economic processes has become a key driver of business environment transformation, reshaping the structure of competition, value creation models, and requirements for human capital. The deployment of end-to-end digital technologies (cloud computing, big data and analytics, platform solutions, social media, and mobile applications) has generated new business model architectures built on network effects, data, and intangible assets. Synthesised empirical evidence across various industries shows that firms which invest intensively in digitalisation demonstrate higher revenue growth, profitability, and market share than their "analog" competitors, and that this effect is persistent rather than one-off [3-5, 8, 11-12].

At the micro level, digitalisation is often analysed through the lens of the resource-based view and the theory of dynamic capabilities: digital technologies not only expand access to information but also create new configurations of resources: digital platforms, algorithms, databases, and customer interaction interfaces. A series of applied studies indicates that digitalisation in knowledge-intensive business services (KIBS) enhances innovation activity, accelerates time-to-market for new products, and boosts productivity by reducing transaction costs and increasing process transparency [3, 5, 11]. Systematic literature reviews emphasise that the impact of digitalisation on financial outcomes operates through a set of mechanisms, including improved quality of data-driven managerial decision-making, the ability to scale operations without a proportional increase in costs, greater personalisation of offerings, and the development of more resilient customer relationships [4, 5,12].

At the macro level, research based on representative enterprise surveys confirms that "digital" firms have exhibited greater resilience to shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic, and have been more likely to treat crises as windows of opportunity to accelerate digital transformation, expand capacity, and develop new products and services [8]. In particular, European Investment Bank reports show that, among small and medium-sized enterprises, a higher level of digitalisation correlates with more active investment strategies and better adaptation to structural shifts in demand [8]. This directly links digital transformation to business competitiveness and sustainable growth.

However, technology adoption alone is not sufficient: human capital with relevant digital skills is the critical enabling factor. Contemporary concepts of "digital capabilities" define a firm's digital capabilities as a combination of technical infrastructure, organisational processes, and employee competences that together enable the extraction of economic value from digital solutions [4]. According to the systematic review by Samsuden et al., it is precisely well-developed digital capabilities that are consistently associated with improved business performance across the dimensions of the balanced scorecard - financial results, customer outcomes, internal processes, and learning and growth [4].

In the European policy discourse, digital skills are recognised as a key precondition for innovation, growth, and competitiveness. The European Commission stresses that without addressing the deficit of basic and advanced digital competences (both among citizens and among workers in the

business sector) the potential of the digital economy cannot be realised [9]. Analyses by the European Parliament further highlight that digital skills are viewed not only as a factor of employability and social inclusion, but also as a critical resource for enhancing productivity and resilience of the European economy under conditions of accelerating digital and green transitions [10]. Recent empirical studies drawing on DESI data confirm that countries with higher levels of digital skills among the population and the workforce demonstrate more advanced digital transformation of businesses and more favourable dynamics of economic development [7].

At the intersection of the technological and human dimensions of digital transformation, skills related to the use of digital media have acquired particular importance. In the contemporary literature, these competences are increasingly discussed within the framework of digital marketing and digital media capabilities, understood as a firm's ability to systematically employ digital channels (social networks, online platforms, content marketing) to create and deliver value to customers [4, 6]. Empirical research shows that well-developed digital marketing capabilities make a significant incremental contribution to firm profitability over and above the effect of traditional marketing competences, reinforcing organisational adaptability to environmental change and enabling more precise and personalised communication strategies [6].

Systematic reviews of the impact of digitalisation on firms' financial performance further clarify that the strongest effects are observed in those business models where digital technologies are tightly integrated with human capital development and the enhancement of digital skills. Indicators of profitability, sales growth, and market share are higher in companies whose digital initiatives are accompanied by targeted development of employee competences, including digital media and data-analytic skills [5]. In this context, digital media skills are not merely an auxiliary promotional tool but rather a core component of dynamic capabilities that allow the firm to reconfigure its interaction with the market, build platform-based relationships with customers and partners, and generate new sources of competitive advantage.

For small open economies such as the Republic of Moldova, digitalisation of the business environment has an additional dimension, linked to the possibility of compensating for the limited size of the domestic market and resource constraints by accessing global digital platforms and employing hybrid business models. Recent studies based on Moldovan empirical material show that digitalisation contributes not only to improved entrepreneurial performance: higher turnover, expanded sales markets, and greater internal efficiency, but also to the emergence of new business models aligned with the logic of the circular economy, in which digital tools enable the tracking of resource flows, optimisation of product life cycles, and the construction of more sustainable value chains [1, 2, 11]. At the same time, the authors emphasise that a critical condition for successful digitalisation in the Moldovan entrepreneurial sector is that business owners and managers possess not only basic ICT competences but also well-developed skills in working with digital media [1, 2].

Finally, the latest pan-European initiatives aimed at closing the digital divide and reducing the digital skills gap increasingly place the business community at the centre as a key stakeholder. Programmes and platforms such as the Digital Skills and Jobs Platform are building an ecosystem in which firms act not only as consumers, but also as co-creators of educational pathways and standardised profiles of digital competences [9, 10]. Under these conditions, understanding how representatives of the business environment perceive the key elements of digital skills – and digital media skills in particular – becomes crucial both for the design of educational programmes and for shaping human capital development policies at the firm and country levels. By focusing on the business environment's vision of digital media skills development in the Republic of Moldova, the present study is situated within this broader theoretical and policy context and seeks to address the gap identified in the literature between macro-level strategies and micro-level employer expectations.

Research methodology

The methodological design of the study was driven by the objective of empirically capturing and analysing the business environment's perceptions of the development of digital and media skills in the economic context of the Republic of Moldova. The study is designed as a cross-sectional quantitative survey conducted at a single point in time. It is predominantly exploratory in nature:

rather than formally testing a narrow set of hypotheses, it seeks to identify structured patterns in how businesses perceive the role of digital media competences and the forms of interaction with universities, that is, to provide a snapshot of opinions and practices at a specific moment in time.

The target population comprised enterprises and organizations operating in the Republic of Moldova and potentially interested in the use of digital and media tools. Since no comprehensive sampling frame for such entities is available in the public domain, purposive sampling was employed. Two overlapping sets of contacts served as the operational sampling frame: first, the list of partners of the Technical University of Moldova with which active cooperation agreements are in place (companies already involved in joint educational, research, and practice-oriented initiatives), and second, enterprises employing second-cycle students of the Faculty of Economic Engineering and Business. This approach made it possible to focus on business entities that effectively face a demand for digital competences among their staff and have experience of interaction with the academic environment.

Data collection was carried out by means of a standardized online questionnaire developed in Google Forms. A unique link to the questionnaire was distributed to corporate e-mail addresses of companies included in the above-mentioned databases, accompanied by a brief cover message explaining the purpose of the study, its connection to the MEDIA project, and the approximate completion time. Respondents were given a two-week window to complete the survey, and filling in the questionnaire took approximately 10 minutes. According to the project’s methodological documentation, the lower bound for the sample size was set at a minimum of 40 completed questionnaires as the smallest acceptable volume of empirical information for basic statistical analysis. In practice, 56 fully completed questionnaires that met the inclusion criteria (responding on behalf of a company; the respondent’s position and work experience being relevant for assessing digital competences) were obtained. This ensured a sufficient volume of data for an exploratory study, while maintaining awareness of the limitations in terms of representativeness.

The majority of questions were closed-ended with predefined answer options, including ordinal Likert-type scales used to assess perceived importance, agreement, or satisfaction. This design enabled subsequent quantitative comparison of respondents’ positions. In addition, several open-ended and semi-open questions were included, allowing respondents to go beyond fixed categories and formulate specific expectations, suggestions, and critical remarks in their own words. When designing the questionnaire, each item was linked to one of the key analytical constructs of the study (level of digitalization, assessment of competences, development priorities, formats of interaction). This ensured substantive coherence between the measurement instrument and the analytical framework of the research and minimized redundancy and duplication of indicators.

The initial processing of the data was performed by exporting responses from Google Forms into a spreadsheet format (Excel). At the data preparation stage, checks were carried out for completeness and integrity of responses, technically incomplete questionnaires were excluded, and the logical consistency of individual variables was verified (for example, the alignment of industry, company size, and respondent’s position). The subsequent analytical strategy relied on a combination of descriptive statistics, grouping by key characteristics, and graphical analysis. To visualise the results, pie charts and bar charts were constructed. Responses to open-ended questions were subjected to qualitative thematic grouping: statements with similar meanings were combined into substantive categories, after which the frequency of mentions within each category was compared with the quantitative indicators from the corresponding blocks of the questionnaire. This procedure helped refine and interpret the quantitative findings by linking them to the concrete expectations and critical assessments articulated by the business environment.

The adopted methodological approach entails a number of limitations that are important to acknowledge when interpreting the results. The cross-sectional nature of the study captures the situation at a specific point in time and does not allow for tracing the dynamics of changing practices and expectations in the area of digital media competences. A substantial share of the key indicators is based on respondents’ self-reports, which is inherently associated with the risk of subjective response biases. Despite these limitations, the described design is considered appropriate for the

stated aims of the study, as it makes it possible to systematise and quantitatively describe how the business environment views the development of digital media skills in the Republic of Moldova and to provide an empirically grounded basis for subsequent discussion of the substantive and institutional parameters of university-industry interaction in this field.

Context of the republic of Moldova's business environment

The digital economy of the Republic of Moldova has experienced significant expansion over the recent decade, driven by the rapid adoption of online services, increased internet penetration, and accelerated integration of digital tools in both public administration and the private sector. National digitalization efforts-fostered through e-Governance platforms, online public services, and investments in ICT infrastructure – have created favorable conditions for businesses to transition toward digital operating models. Moldovan enterprises increasingly rely on digital communication channels, online marketing, cloud-based solutions, and automation tools to maintain competitiveness in regional and international markets.

Higher education institutions have also undergone major digital modernization. According to the UTM research and institutional experience, universities are integrating digital competencies across curricula in response to the demands of a digitalized labour market and in alignment with European frameworks such as DigComp, DigCompEdu, and EN 16234 (e-CF)

This systemic modernization has strengthened the link between the educational environment and the broader digital transformation of the economy.

Key economic sectors in the Republic of Moldova increasingly require advanced digital media competencies. The ICT industry seeks specialists able to combine technical knowledge with multimedia communication, UI/UX design, and online branding. Marketing, advertising, and creative industries demand strong abilities in content creation, video production, digital storytelling, analytics, and cross-platform communication. E-commerce and retail rely heavily on digital media to enhance customer engagement and product visibility in online marketplaces. The financial and banking sector, undergoing rapid digitalization, needs professionals capable of managing online communication, digital content, and data-based interaction with clients. Additionally, the public sector and education systems require staff who can operate digital communication platforms, create institutional content, and support transparent, accessible online services.

Collectively, these sectors demonstrate that digital media competencies have become essential across the Moldovan economy, shaping a labour market where such skills are fundamental rather than optional.

The strategic orientation of Moldova toward digitalization is articulated through several national initiatives, policies, and sectoral development programmes. Among these, the digital transformation strategies of the Ministry of Education and Research emphasize the integration of digital competencies into all educational levels, aligning with EU frameworks mentioned earlier. The implementation of DigCompEdu in the university system underscores the need to enhance digital skills across academic staff, contributing indirectly to raising the skill level of future employees.

Moreover, Moldova's IT sector development policies and investment strategies – supported by international partnerships and EU programs – encourage the adoption of advanced digital tools in business operations. These policies push companies to require stronger digital media competences, such as the ability to manage online presence, interact with customers through digital channels, and generate multimedia content that reflects organizational identity.

Together, these sectors illustrate that digital media competencies have become critical, cross-sectoral skills in Moldova's evolving economy. While high-tech and creative industries lead this demand, SMEs across all domains increasingly require professionals capable of producing, managing, and strategically using digital content. The gap between intention and digital adoption, as shown by recent national research, further intensifies the need for structured, practice-oriented digital media training aligned with business expectations [11].

Additionally, the transformation of universities shows strong alignment between national priorities and higher education modernization. The adoption of hybrid learning, microlearning, digital

laboratories, and AI-integrated curricula has increased the relevance of digital media skills in preparing future specialists.

Findings: business vision on digital media skills

The survey conducted within the MEDIA-Project, involving 56 companies from diverse sectors in the Republic of Moldova, provides a detailed picture of how the business environment perceives, utilizes, and prioritizes digital media skills. These results directly complement the contextual analysis presented earlier – particularly the fragmented digital transformation of Moldovan enterprises, the uneven adoption of digital tools, and the critical skills gaps identified in national research on SMEs [11].

Overall, the findings reveal a labour market that recognizes the importance of digital media competencies but continues to face challenges in applying these skills strategically and consistently. They also confirm the misalignment between educational preparation and industry expectations, reinforcing the need for non-formal and practice-oriented learning interventions, as targeted in Deliverable 4.1 of the MEDIA-Project.

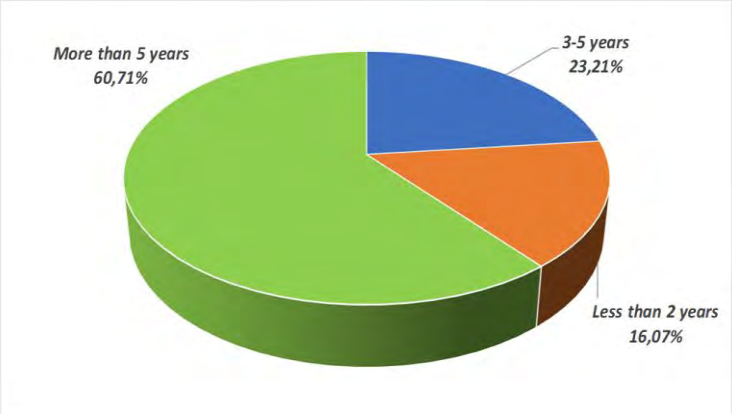


Figure 1. Structure of respondents by working experience in industry

The pie chart presented in figure 1, depicts the distribution of respondents' work experience within a given industry. A significant portion of the respondents, 60.71%, have more than 5 years of experience, indicating a survey population with substantial industry knowledge and expertise. Those with 3 to 5 years of experience make up 23.21%, suggesting that nearly a quarter of the participants have a moderate level of experience, enough to provide informed insights while still relatively early in their careers. The chart also shows that 16.07% of respondents have less than 2 years of experience, pointing to the inclusion of newer industry members who may offer fresh perspectives, though they are the smallest group represented. Overall, the survey appears to have a strong foundation of experienced respondents, which could lend credibility and depth to its findings.

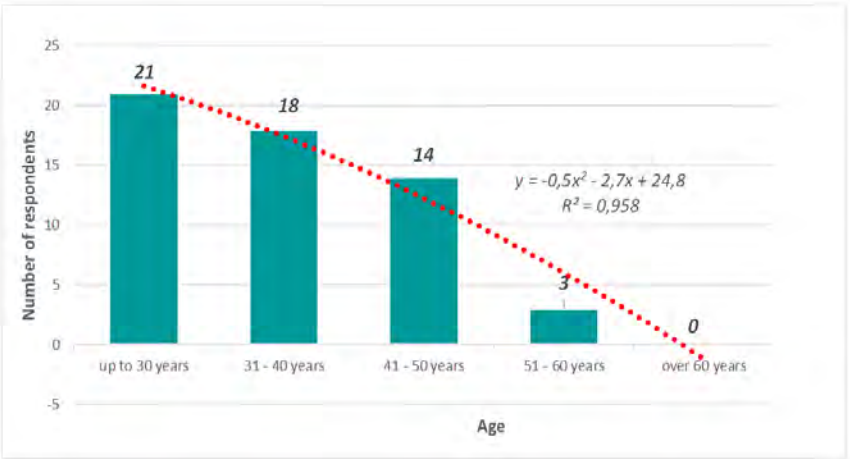


Figure 2. Distribution of respondents by age

The provided bar chart, in figure 2 illustrates the number of respondents within various age groups. The data shows a descending trend in the number of respondents as age increases. The group

“up to 30 years” has the highest number of respondents, totaling 21. This number decreases slightly to 18 for the “31 - 40 years” age group. A more noticeable drop occurs in the “41 - 50 years” category, which has 14 respondents. There's a sharp decline to just 3 respondents in the “51 - 60 years” group, and no respondents are recorded in the “over 60 years” category.

The chart includes a trend line with the equation y = -0.52x - 2.7x + 24.8, which appears to fit the data well, as indicated by the R-squared value of 0.958. This high R-squared value suggests that the linear trend line accurately represents the relationship between age and the number of respondents, with the number of respondents decreasing as age increases. The trend line forecasts a continuation of this decrease, which might be relevant for predicting future participation or for understanding the current demographics of the industry’s workforce.

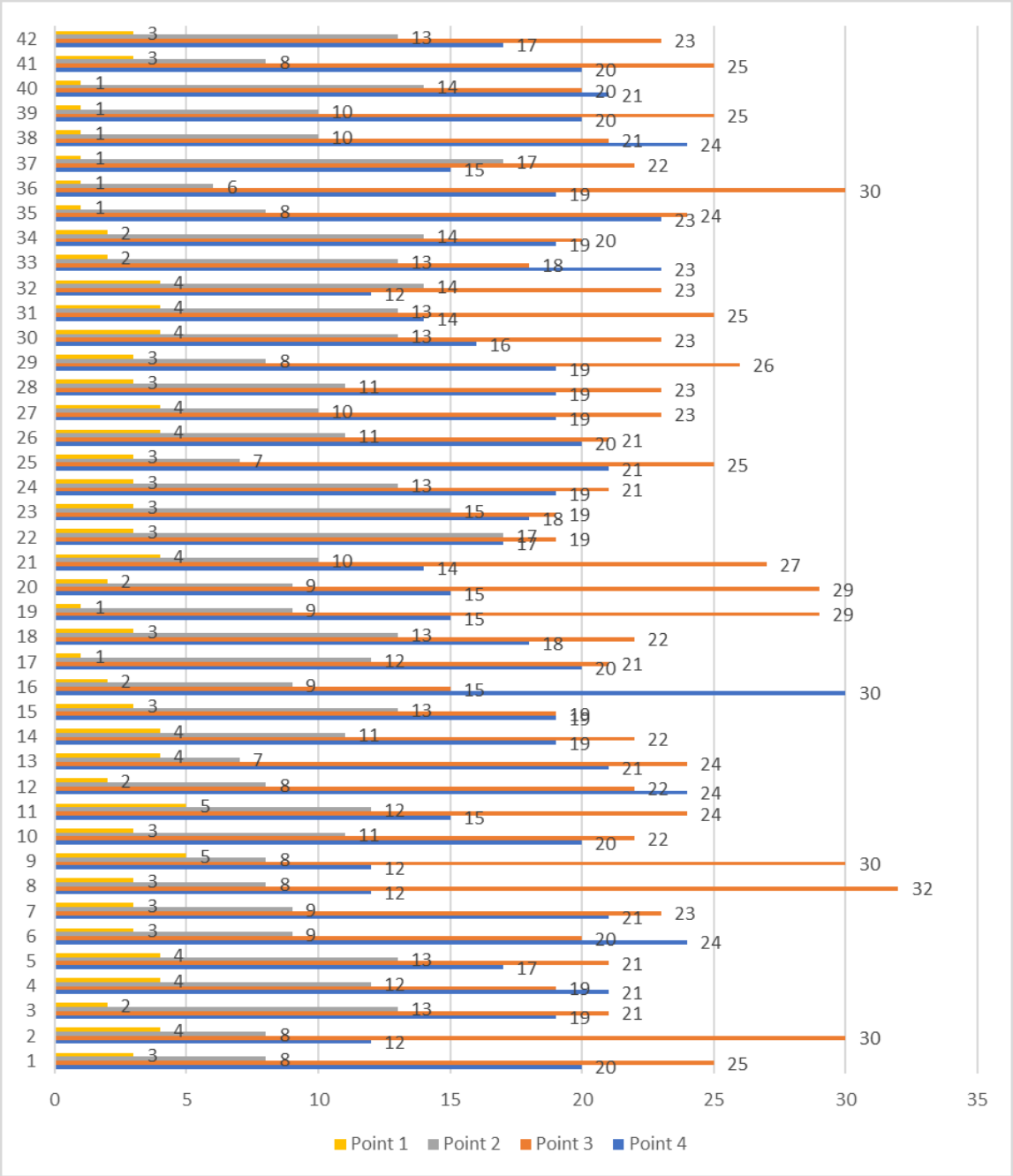


Figure 3. Average qualification level of graduates who work in companies

Representatives of the labor market and companies assessed the average level of qualifications of graduates working in their companies as follows. The highest scores (3 and 4 points) were given to the most developed skills among the employees. Among these skills, the following were noted: creating texts for videos; creating texts for podcasts; research and collect information for content;

ability to optimize content for search engines; ability to choose keywords for SEO; ability to take photographs with a phone; attention to detail; storytelling skills; project management skills; creating visually attractive content; skills to collaborate with videographers and photographers; ability to analyze data and metrics to measure campaign success; and communication skills with clients.

The emphasis on these skills implies recognition of the importance of creating, managing, and communicating content in today's professional environment. However, the study also identifies areas where graduates may require further development.

The most poorly developed skills were:

- ability to analyze social media indicators and user engagement;
- ability to manage and curate content on social networks;
- ability to take photographs with your own camera;
- ability to create designs, etc.;
- ability to create compelling and engaging written content for social media;
- ability to create marketing texts for various platforms.

This indicates a potential knowledge gap that could be addressed through targeted training or educational initiatives to better prepare graduates for the demands of the modern workplace, particularly in the field of digital marketing and social media management.

Overall, the findings underscore the changing nature of skill requirements in the workforce and the importance of continuous learning and adaptation to meet these evolving needs. Efforts to address the identified skill gaps may lead to the emergence of more prepared graduates capable of thriving in a competitive professional environment.

Among the most in-demand skills for employees to perform their jobs in companies, respondents cited the following:

- Planning and executing advertising campaigns on social media: skills in planning and launching advertising campaigns on social media platforms.
- Responding to customer queries and comments on social media: ability to promptly respond to customer queries and comments.
- Developing and executing campaigns on social media: ability to develop and execute marketing campaigns on social media platforms.
- Managing and curating content on social media: skills in managing and curating content on social media platforms.
- Customer communication skills: skills in communicating with customers and meeting their needs.
- Communication skills with colleagues: skills in effective communication with colleagues.
- Data analysis and metrics for measuring campaign success: skills in analyzing data and metrics to evaluate the success of marketing campaigns.
- Developing and implementing digital marketing strategies: ability to develop and implement digital marketing strategies.
- Project deadline adherence: skills in managing project deadlines.
- Creating visually appealing content: ability to create visually appealing content.
- Editing and enhancing photos and videos: skills in editing and enhancing photos and videos.
- Project management: skills in project planning and management.
- Choosing keywords for SEO: skills in selecting and using keywords and phrases for content optimization in search engines.
- Editing and proofreading content: skills in editing and proofreading textual materials to improve their quality and readability.
- Researching and gathering information for content: ability to research topics, gather information, and conduct analysis for creating informational materials.
- Creating engaging written content for social media: ability to write texts for social media that capture attention and engage the audience.

The selection of these skills as important for work reflects the evolving landscape of professional demands, particularly in fields related to marketing, communication, and digital media.

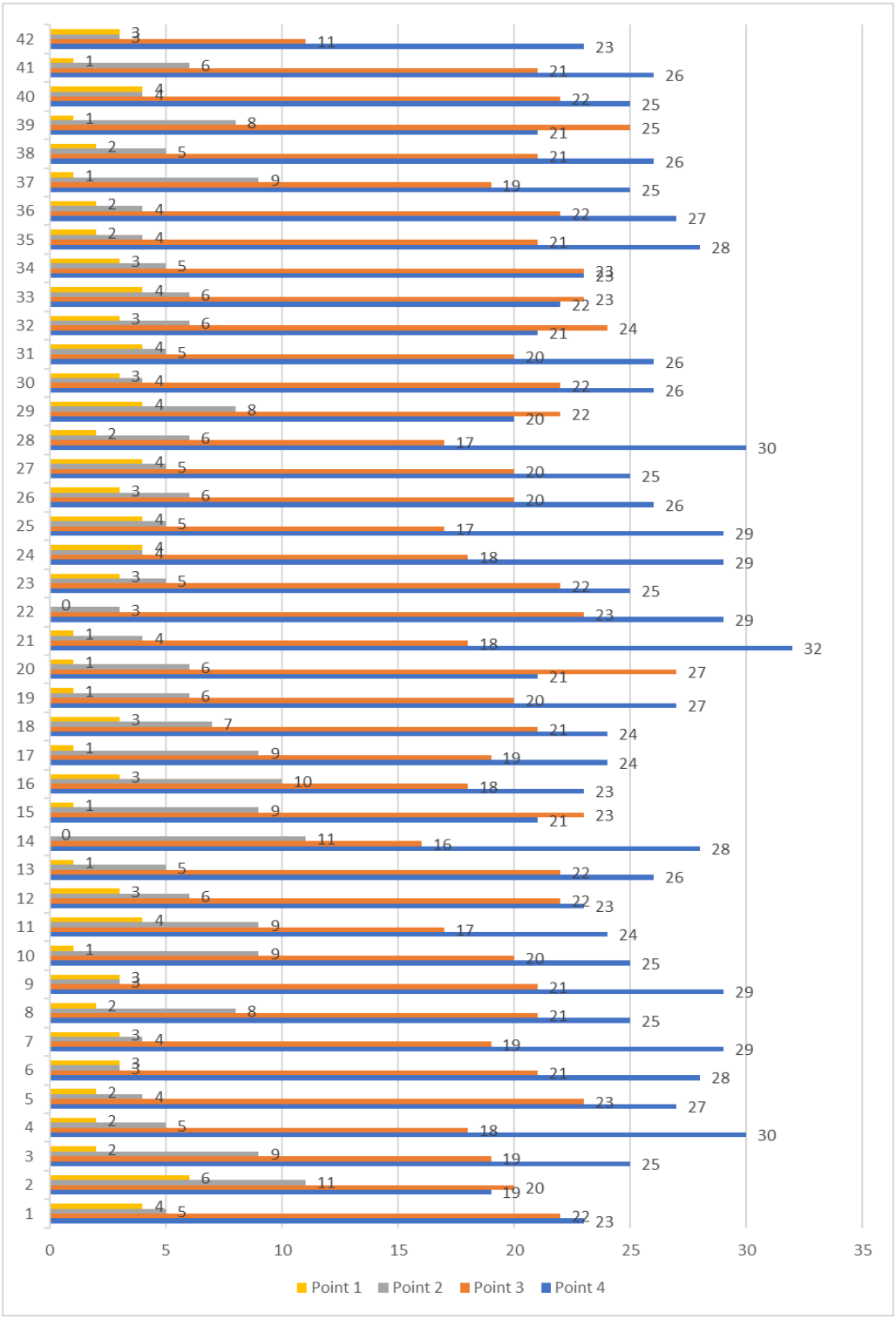


Figure 4. The most in-demand skills for employees to do their jobs in companies

Overall, the choice of these skills underscores the need for employees to possess a diverse set of competencies that blend creativity, technical proficiency, and strategic thinking to effectively navigate and succeed in the contemporary professional landscape. Organizations that prioritize and invest in developing these skills among their employees are likely to remain competitive and adaptive in an increasingly digital and interconnected world.

To a lesser extent, among the in-demand skills for employees to perform their jobs in companies, respondents cited the following:

- Mobile phone photography: skills in taking photos using a mobile phone.

- Shooting and editing videos on a mobile phone: skills in shooting and editing videos using a mobile phone.
- Creating texts for podcasts: ability to write texts suitable for audio formats and engaging listeners.
- Public speaking skills: ability to conduct public presentations and project pitches.
- Analysis of indicators and user engagement on social networks: skills in analyzing indicators and user engagement on social networks.

This indicates that these skills are essential and non-specific to the majority of positions held.

In response to the question about additional directions for study within the courses, beyond those listed in the questionnaire, respondents stated that a comprehensive list had been provided.

However, according to the respondents, representatives from companies suggested some directions that are of interest and relevant today: proper and effective content planning in social networks, accurate reporting, summarizing the activities carried out in social networks for clients.

This indicates that the interaction between educational programs and company representatives plays a significant role in ensuring the relevance of education. Suggestions from company representatives highlight specific market needs and help courses stay abreast of the latest trends and practices. This also underscores the importance of the flexibility and up-to-dateness of educational programs so they can quickly respond to changes in the field of social networks and digital marketing.

Such collaboration contributes to more effective preparation of students for the real challenges and tasks they will face in their professional careers.

In response to the question about “any additional comments or suggestions for improving the university’s connection with the industry and enhancing the employability of our graduates,” company representatives expressed their desire to introduce:

- as many internships as possible in companies in the industry (during the years of study);
- master classes by industry specialists in universities;
- communication with professors (company experts) to teach lessons in new areas and who can impart practical knowledge to students.

Also important were the disciplinary aspects that respondents noted: the university is obliged to control the student’s presence in practice through the director of the company; the student must gain practical knowledge in order to immediately apply it on the job.

The survey reveals a clear conclusion: Moldovan companies recognize the importance of digital media skills but face a persistent skills gap among employees and recent graduates. The business environment requires hybrid competencies that combine creativity, communication, analytics, and technical proficiency. The results also highlight the need for closer collaboration between educational institutions and industry, more practical training opportunities, and flexible programmes aligned with rapidly evolving digital trends.

These findings form a solid empirical foundation for developing and authorizing the multidisciplinary non-formal digital media programme under Work Package 4 of the MEDIA-Project.

Conclusions

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of how the business environment in the Republic of Moldova perceives and prioritizes digital media skills in the context of ongoing digital transformation. The results highlight that digital media competencies are no longer optional but represent core, cross-sectoral abilities essential for marketing, communication, and organizational visibility.

The findings from the survey of 56 companies reveal a strong demand for strategic and applied skills – such as planning and managing social media campaigns, content curation, data analysis, digital marketing strategies, and effective communication with clients. While graduates demonstrate solid foundational competencies in content creation, storytelling, basic SEO, and mobile photography, companies consistently identify weaknesses in analytical, managerial, and design-related skills. This mismatch confirms the broader national trend, previously documented in studies on SME digitalization, where businesses express high motivation to digitalize but face significant barriers due to limited skills, lack of strategic planning, and uneven digital adoption.

The conclusions also underscore that the development of digital media skills plays a pivotal role in advancing Moldova's economic modernization. Key sectors – including ICT, marketing, e-commerce, finance, and public services – rely increasingly on employees capable of producing and managing digital content, measuring campaign performance, and engaging effectively with online audiences. However, the current workforce often lacks the applied competencies needed to fully support strategic digital transformation initiatives.

These findings carry important implications for higher education and non-formal learning. Companies emphasize the necessity of practice-oriented training, stronger collaboration between universities and industry, and greater involvement of practitioners through internships, masterclasses, and expert-led teaching. Educational programmes must remain flexible, continuously updated, and aligned with current market realities.

In this context, the MEDIA-Project's multidisciplinary micro-credential educational programme on digital media (WP4) responds directly to the identified gaps. The programme can serve as a relevant model for delivering applied digital competencies, enhancing graduates' employability, and supporting businesses in navigating the challenges of digital transformation.

Overall, this research demonstrates that strengthening digital media skills is important not only for workforce preparedness but also for the broader digital development of the Republic of Moldova. By aligning educational initiatives with real market needs and fostering closer cooperation between academia and the business sector, Republic of Moldova can accelerate its transition toward a more innovative, competitive, and digitally capable economy.

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