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DOCTORAL THESIS

Abstract

LATERAL EXCHANGE MARKETS: IMPLICATIONS OF COLLABORATIVE PLATFORMS IN DIGITAL MARKETING

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Keywords: *digital marketing, lateral exchange marketplaces, collaborative economy, collaborative digital platforms, digital marketing strategies, digitalization, performance of collaborative platforms*

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

Digital development and technological innovations are creating multiple opportunities for young entrepreneurs to enter the business world more easily. Romanians use collaborative economy applications and websites, but the level of use is low compared to the average in the European Union. Collaborative platforms are not yet exploited to their full potential, for various reasons, such as the population is still reluctant to the idea of sharing an asset that it is not fully used, showing a strong sense of ownership or not being aware of the benefits of practicing the collaborative economy.

This PhD thesis addresses the implications of collaborative platforms and digital marketing in the development of lateral exchange markets and aims to identify young people's perceptions on the performance of collaborative platforms from a digital marketing perspective. The theoretical part of the PhD thesis covers the current state of understanding the level of digital marketing development in Romania and the use of collaborative platforms, the impact of the use of social media networks on business promotion, the concept of collaborative economy applied in the Romanian entrepreneurial ecosystem and the current situation of the use of collaborative platforms compared to the European Union average with references to studies conducted by other researchers in the context of globalization and digitalization.

The applied part of the PhD thesis includes the research methodology based on several working hypotheses, aiming at the young students' perception on the performance of collaborative platforms from a digital marketing perspective. The analysis tools used are: questionnaire, SPSS software for qualitative analysis of students' perception of collaborative platforms performance from digital marketing perspective, SmartPLS 3 software for analysis of correlations between digital marketing strategies and precursors of collaborative platforms performance at the national level through structural equations and fsQCA software for configurational study on digital marketing strategies that affect collaborative platforms performance.

Lateral exchange markets or peer-to-peer exchange platforms are based on the collaborative economy and are more dynamic, flexible and sustainability-oriented markets. Collaborative platforms represent a business model that involves two types of users: the service providers and the beneficiaries of the services provided, as well as the platform that intermediates the exchange between the parties involved. Lateral exchange markets report a continuous upward trend, however both state involvement and public awareness are needed.

The specialized literature deals comprehensively with the subject of digital marketing, looking at how digitalization can be applied to organizations through appropriate strategies, the effects of its use on marketing activity and the impact on the emergence of new business models through digital platforms. Based on these considerations, by conducting this research I would like to highlight the characteristics of collaborative platforms in the context of digital marketing development and the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Romania.

The objectives of this research are represented by: the valorization of digital marketing strategies, the diagnostic analysis of collaborative platforms in Romania, the identification of students' perceptions towards the performance of collaborative platforms from a digital marketing perspective, the impact of digitalization on the collaborative economy and the development of lateral exchange markets through collaborative platforms.

Lateral exchange markets are still not used to their full potential in Romania, since in the absence of a promotion strategy it is difficult to accept them as new business models among the population. Without digitalization and marketing in the online environment there are no lateral

exchange markets mediated through specific platforms, which is the starting point for the PhD thesis.

CHAPTER 1. CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS SPECIFIC TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF DIGITAL MARKETING AND COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY

1.1. Current state of research in digital marketing

Digitalization is an intensively studied phenomenon in the specialized literature. Digital marketing ensures direct communication between the company and the target audience, informs existing and/or potential customers more efficiently and sells products and services much faster than offline. Digitalization is about changes produced in society as a whole because digital transformation requires both technology and people.

Digital marketing has transformed the way companies manage and communicate with society and their customers around the world (Diez-Martin, Blanco-Gonzalez & Prado-Roman, 2019). The Internet brings a considerable advantage to the companies that operate online by creating a corporate image and involving consumers in this process. In the context of accelerated digitalization, the role of online marketing in a company strategy is expanding significantly, as evidenced by the increasing number of investments in e-commerce activities (Micu, Micu, Geru, Căpățină & Muntean, 2021).

Marketing activities have changed thanks to the use of the internet, so there is the possibility of personalized offers, interaction between the company and the customer is much more efficient, and also the amount of information is increasing rapidly through the emergence of a large number of communication channels. According to the author Zhao (2019), in the internet era, more attention is paid to communication, which leads to an increase in the degree of information transparency delivered through the marketing department.

The views of marketing specialists outline the direct connection between the benefits of the internet and its proper use in marketing activities, thus, we discovered a variety of definitions for digital marketing directly related to the internet:

1. Internet marketing, referred to as online marketing or e-marketing, is any marketing activity that develops online through the use of internet-related technologies and tools (Jones, Malczyk & Beneke, 2011);
2. The goal of digital marketing is to reach both existing and potential customers faster (Redjeki & Affandi, 2021);
3. Digital marketing allows companies to target a wide audience regardless of location (Rosario & Cruz, 2019);
4. The emergence of digital marketing has changed the global economic paradigm and the consumer power has increased (Buttle & Maklan, 2019);
5. Digital marketing affects customer purchase intent by searching and time spent online (Donni, Dastane, Haba & Selvaraj, 2018);
6. Marketing does not imply only technology, it also involves people, as technology is interesting from a marketing perspective when it effectively connects people with other people (Ryan & Jones, 2009).

The digital transformation has changed the way we interact with the public and our purchasing behaviour. Digital marketing is the innovative approach widely used to communicate

and promote products and services without limitations of time, space and cost (Kim & Ko, 2012).

Online marketing can be achieved through: online marketing research, search engine marketing, integrated social media marketing communication, permission marketing, affiliate marketing, viral marketing or customer permission marketing. According to the author Chattopadhyay (2020), online marketing brings more awareness for a brand among the audience and develops in a much more interactive and effective way the image of the company than through traditional means.

1.2. Digital marketing mix

Through the concept of digital marketing, digital technologies (email, databases, blogs, social networks, chat, discussion groups or mobile apps) are used and in this way the digital marketing activity is supported through customer loyalty and the target audience is more easily reached.

Even if it concerns intangibility, multimedia elements can compensate for this by helping the customer to visualize the **product**. In the digital environment, product or service presentations are designed in detail, the information of interest to the target audience being displayed, the review system being available so that potential customers can view it, or explanations can be added in short films.

Price is the main competition in the online environment, so the company can establish a strategy that focuses on online payment options, discounts, the accumulation of a number of points on the purchase of the appropriate product and the use of points for certain discounts. The digital environment requires a personalized approach to customers, as it is easier to obtain information about browsing a website, the compiling statistics that outline a customer profile or provide useful information about their preferences, which will help the company formulate personalized e-mail offers.

Promoting the product online is much easier through direct marketing, sales promotion or branding. Internet advertising has become more attractive, creative and interactive than any other form of advertising in traditional marketing.

Well-organized logistics and fast front-office management attract the customer and then build customer loyalty, all these aspects are translated into **placement (distribution)**. The transmission of information from the back-office to the front-office must operate at the highest level of efficiency, and good management can be identified through: information on stocks, available or unavailable products, delivery time, availability for certain geographical areas or products that are not in stock but can be delivered on order.

In digital marketing, four more P's are added to **the mix of the four P's** of traditional marketing: **people, process, physical sample and partners** (Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, Mayer & Johnston, 2009).

Staff play an important role in achieving effective management in the relationship with the customer. The physical role is replaced by the virtual one, all the activities should be integrated online so that the customer gets useful information and does not miss it, thus online chat or webself service are effective options. In the online environment, the staff are specialized in marketing activity, the contact with the customer is individual, as they have to answer accurately to the questions asked, and the customer complaints about the company activity would be managed in real time.

The process is focused on the customer, research and development because the IT team ensures the real-time virtual connection of the customer with the company. The process is

orientated towards the organization of activity online, contributing to the success of the company if the following aspects are considered: the elements to be focused online, the media channels used, the organization of the marketing team, the distribution of the team's responsibilities online and how to conduct marketing research.

In the online environment, **physical sample** is replaced by other customers' experiences and stories about the utilization of the products or services purchased. In this sense, vlogs can be made in which the consumer's attitude about a product is expressed, the way in which it is used is presented and the appreciation or disappointment towards what has been purchased is shown.

Business partners in the online environment contribute to the success of the company, a good partnership can also be noticed in customer satisfaction. Suppliers who bring the goods within a fixed time frame, distributors who deliver the orders placed by the customer in due time, help to create a good image among customers. Partnerships can also be made with marketing and IT teams in order to help the company achieve favourable results in the digital environment.

1.3 The difference between traditional and digital marketing

In traditional marketing, it is difficult for small businesses to compete with large companies in the market because of the cost involved and the expertise in developing the strategy, whereas in online marketing, through a clear website, one can reach the target audience faster.

Table 1 shows the difference between traditional and digital marketing.

Table 1. The difference between traditional and digital marketing. Source: own processing

Classic marketing	Digital marketing
- promotion through classic media tools: radio, television, newspaper, magazine etc.;	▪ promotion through web pages, websites, online advertisements;
- limited amount of information delivered;	▪ delivery of a large amount of information and from various fields;
- limited availability of information;	▪ information is available 24/7;
- discussions usually take place at the company's/shop's premises;	▪ in-home discussions with the target company, anytime, anywhere;
- market research through surveys by mail, telephone, interview, focus group;	▪ market research through online questionnaires, video conferences;
- requires more time for the message to reach the target audience;	▪ messages reach the target audience immediately;
- monitoring the results is done through registers, paper analysis, checking competitors' results;	▪ results are monitored by special software tools;
- higher promotion costs (printed material, TV advertising, radio, billboards etc.)	▪ reduced promotion costs and higher impact, more attractive ads;
- low information coverage (information available in newspapers, magazines).	▪ very high information coverage, at local, national or global level.

The advantages of using digital marketing are various, including: expanding the market in which the company operates, increasing the customer base, reducing promotional expenses, identifying new ways of communicating with customers and additional marketing tools.

1.4 Marketing through digital platforms

One branch of digital marketing is content marketing in the form of social media posts, blogs, videos and suggestive images, aimed at gaining visibility and advantageous positioning in the marketplace. Social media is the fastest and most attractive way of promotion because the digital format is constantly growing. Social media is made up of: social communication networks, photo and video sharing, blogs, microblogs, discussion forums, live broadcasts or online publications.

The digital business platform differs from the digital social platform, the digital business platform is designed to enable commercial interactions, providing a high level of interaction for its users. Their purpose is to identify and create value, facilitating the exchange of goods, services or social value for all participants by performing exchanges based on clearly defined conditions and rules. The social digital platform is based on socializing, interacting, promoting and staying connected with a specific audience.

Author Rangaswamy (et al., 2020) determines three criteria to define a digital business platform: basic correspondence (connecting users in the platform), digital operation (conducting business operations and commercial transactions among its users) and independence (the platform users are independent parties who maintain their ownership rights).

The benefits of digital business platforms are diverse, including: creating value for all users, making pricing strategies easier to manage, exploring and facilitating user interactions, including those that generate psychological and social value. These platforms are based on finding offers for buyers as quickly as possible and not vice versa (finding buyers based on offers) as it happens in traditional marketing companies.

1.5 Social media marketing

Social media marketing builds and enhances a company's image, promotion is more useful, marketing researches are done more rapidly and customer relationships are strongly consolidated. Social media encompasses several websites: Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest etc. According to Schaefer (2016) the essential purpose of marketing is to reach the target audience when influences their purchasing behavior.

Social networks are considered ideal for this function because they represent a marketing tool to reach consumers directly at every stage of the buying process, from the comparing stage of the products to post-purchase. Social media marketing allows companies to promote their business in a more original way as it earns customer trust faster compared to other forms of paid advertising (Kemp, McDougal & Syrdal, 2018).

Social media marketing is a digital marketing tool used for both information and social media. The implications of digital marketing are multiple, among which are: attracting the target audience, branding, creating and strengthening relationships with the target market, communication and information exchange. Facebook was initially used only for communication, but companies have realized its real value and integrated it into their marketing strategy (Varma, Dhakane & Pawar, 2020).

The Instagram page brings visibility to the company, but it should be considered whether such a page fits the niche in which it operates. Video sharing websites such as YouTube offer

the opportunity to experiment and promote products, services or different resources (Cheng, Lam & Chiu, 2020). Original and qualitative digital content attracts audiences because creating and sharing valuable information helps both to optimize a website and influence the decision-making process of buyers.

Through Twitter companies can distribute information to the target audience only that the limit is 140 characters and at the moment in Romania it is not very popular. Pinterest is used more for personal purposes as individual projects are shared and users can draw inspiration from the content viewed. Social media platforms are becoming a new marketplace, a place to exchange information, photos, videos and personal events from one's life. Through LinkedIn, communication is professional, language is formal, and it is suitable for B2B, business-to-business. Social networks are used by companies for communication, marketing and sales, maintaining customer relationships, research and also competitive analysis.

1.6 Marketing through blogs

According to the authors Dobre and Milovan (2009), the word blog comes from the English expression "web log" which means internet log. The concept of "blog" was known in 1997, when John Berger named his own website "weblog". The blog proves itself to be very useful for the companies that want to communicate information of interest to existing and potential customers, publish research results or various recommendations.

A blog can have several objectives: educating the public, informing on a specific topic, popularizing a concept or presenting peculiarities. A blog does not directly promote products or services, but presents certain information by offering the products discussed as solutions. Blogs as a tool for digital marketing have a favourable impact on increasing sales revenue, especially for products for which customers can read reviews and write comments about personal experiences with those products. A company's blog has a distinct identity, which attracts the attention of the audience through the tone and style chosen, the frequency of updates and the way articles about the company are presented.

A blog that partners with social media is more likely to be accessed by readers using their Facebook account, making it easier to use the blog. Technology is changing the context and practice of marketing, marketing specialists have to operate in a complex and constantly changing environment where they no longer have full control over the mass media and message.

1.7 Marketing through online communities

The company that has a well-developed marketing and uses online communities to reach customers quickly earns the trust and sympathy of the public. From the desire to spend leisure time through relaxation, entertainment and games, in online communities the participant also satisfies his informational need, so he can search for information about a certain topic or product and if he is satisfied with the information found, the desire to buy is also expressed.

According to the authors Dobre and Milovan (2009), online communities form effective buying environments where members (participants) inform and influence each other. In online communities, users get useful information, get answers to questions about certain products, see another point of view for a certain product and learn new things.

In online communities, both economic (increasing sales of products or services for which recommendations or opinions are sought), social (customer and company relationships) and hedonic (relaxation and fun) functions are developed. Virtual communities have a visible impact on consumer behaviour because they help to increase human networking by keeping people in

touch. Satisfied customers increase the popularity of the brand and the image of the company stays in the consumer's mind by promoting it to others.

1.8 Current state of research in the field of collaborative economy

Sharing resources that are not fully utilized has been done since ancient times, but the official concept of the sharing economy was known in 1948 in Zurich when the idea of carsharing was launched and became very popular in northern Europe. However, the costs of transmitting information and promoting the new economy model were too high, so sharing economy initiatives remained at local level, connecting smaller communities.

The process of sharing goods and services has existed since the beginning of mankind and it is considered a fairly old concept, but the reason for the emergence as an economic model in which legal income can be earned through sharing has been identified in Western countries driven by lowering income levels of middle class (Hacker & Pierson, 2011).

With the development of digital technology and the internet, the costs of information transmission have decreased, online distribution of informative messages reaching an increasing number of people, thus it has become a business model. Peer-to-peer sharing activities have led to the creation of specialized platforms covering more and more business sectors such as transport, accommodation, office space rental, finance, coworking etc.

The term of collaborative economic platform is usually used to refer to a set of digital tools for social interactions in a marketplace that organize and structure economic and social activities. Szegedi (2019) identifies the most important characteristics of sharing-based activities as: the activity is mediated through a digital platform, app or website; the transaction is P2P; it provides temporary access to services without property title; and it makes use of under-exploited services, skills or resources.

Digital collaboration platforms connect the parties involved as they represent the digital tool needed for the process of sharing economy. The connection between the involved parties is achieved through digital collaboration platforms because they represent the digital tool necessary to acquire the sharing economy process. Underutilized resources indicate the starting point in the long-term collaborative economy activity, and the efficient sharing of these resources contributes to increasing economic sustainability.

The elements that characterize these platforms are intermediation and consociality (the level of socialization between network participants). Lateral exchange markets change the mindset of users in terms of their ownership desire because lateral exchange is aimed at a market created through the intermediation of a technological platform.

1.9 Types of lateral exchange markets

Lateral Exchange Markets (LEM) are based on the concept of the sharing economy and bring multiple opportunities such as: creating new markets, lowering transaction costs, increasing the level of socialization and encouraging the use of technology for economic purposes. Lateral exchange markets can be defined as socio-economic systems designed for the common use of sharing resources.

Firms operating under the LEM effect may have higher or lower intermediation. High intermediation manifests itself in the coordination, monitoring and regulation of elements within the exchange network. Interactions at the level of LEMs can be relatively direct and free, participants communicate, negotiate and coordinate, a matter of high consociality. Lateral exchange markets fall into four categories: **forums, enablers, matchmakers and hubs**.

The figure below shows the four types of lateral exchange marketplaces.

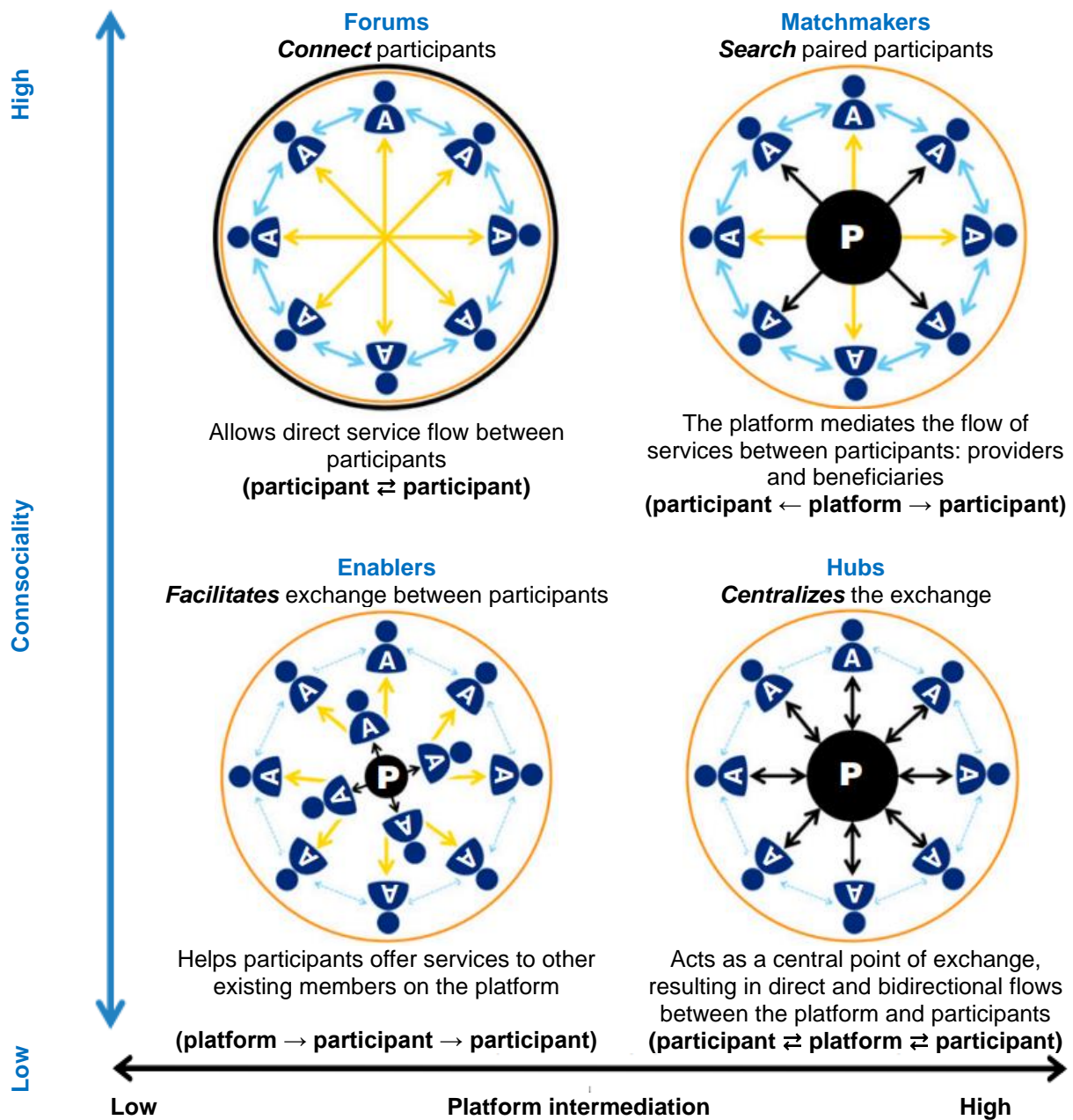


Figure 1. Types of LEM. Source: own processing after Rebeca Perren & Robert V. Kozinets, Lateral Exchange Markets

The basic principle of lateral exchange markets requires a more responsible use of resources that are available in the economy at a given point in time and which can be shared. Lateral exchange markets are technologically intermediated exchange websites between economic and social participants occupying equivalent positions in the network.

Lateral Exchange Markets (LEM) focus on two main axes: the extent of consocialization and intermediation platform. Sociality is a term used to refer to the universal tendency of people associate themselves with groups and cooperate with other people (Wittel, 2001). According to Hannerz (2016), consociality is defined by the co-presence of both or physical and virtual interaction.

These platforms act as intermediaries that contribute to the creation of values between market participants and provide clear benefits through the implementation of sociality and technology. Lateral exchange markets are not limited to collaborative consumption or simple sharing of underutilized goods but involve informational, financial and technological resources becoming a highly intermediated economic system based on the use of technology, social networks and the involvement of people interested in sustainability and economic growth.

The level of intermediation platform between participants and the degree of socialization distinguishes the four types of LEM, offering efficient solutions for the products sought. As intermediaries, LEMs have two specific features: they create the market and reduce transaction costs.

The most important aspect of the Lateral Exchange Markets concept is the opportunity it gives to individuals to monetize their assets that are not fully utilized. Lateral Exchange Markets influence the demand and consumption of goods and services, involve using the potential of digital technology, as well as combine social, cultural and technological participants. The information and technology-based economy leads to the creation of markets that are considered hybrid, for example LEMs can be considered the the economy of knowledge.

1.10 Patterns of consumer behaviour related to types of lateral exchange markets

LEM-type markets address active and subjective customers. The active customer is analytical, knows how to search for information about the desired product, he is not influenced by the exaggerated advertising, he is not attracted by the conventional, but he is always looking for economic, lasting and safe alternatives. They are active both in their relationship with the company or brand in question and with other consumers, often taking part in virtual customer communities, asking for opinions, seeking solutions and open to debate, and can become an advocate for the company.

In relation to the types of lateral exchange markets (forums, matchmakers, facilitators and hubs), four patterns of consumer behaviour can be applied, depending on the extent of consociality and intermediation platform:

1. Behaviour focused on assimilation of information and debate is adopted by people who are active on forums, intermediation on these platforms is low, but consociality is high. Thus, after discussions and debates take place on forums, the exchange or sharing of goods in the physical environment is established. This type of platform allows consumers to directly debate and agree on terms online, but the exchange is physical.

2. Compliance-focused behaviour is typical of consumers in the matchmaker area. Compliance-focused behaviour is identified by establishing a route: identified need - search for options on lateral exchange platforms - platform selection according to well-defined criteria - evaluation of the the platform by reviewing the product/service received. The best-known provider in this segment is Airbnb.

3. Behaviour focused on identification of the needs/satisfaction ratio is manifested by the buyers looking for educational or financing opportunities and assessing the degree and manner in which they could be achieved. An example would be the Startarium created at the initiative of Impact Hub and ING. By accessing the crowdfunding platform participants have access to business tools, online courses on entrepreneurship, debates and interviews with the best Romanian entrepreneurs, mentoring opportunities etc.

4. Diversity-focused behaviour is characteristic of consumers in the hub area, and it is manifested by people who choose to work alongside other entrepreneurs or freelancers. The

person with diversity-oriented behaviour abandon the idea of working in a regular office or at home and chooses a space specially designed for office work. Participants in a hub propose business ideas, check their efficiency and performance, refine them or offer different suggestions, but for a fee.

CHAPTER 2. CURRENT FRAMEWORK FOR THE USE OF COLLABORATIVE PLATFORMS IN ROMANIA

2.1 Dynamics and trends in the use of collaborative economy

The link between the collaborative economy, digitalization and lateral exchange markets is presented in the first chapter of this thesis, but briefly, lateral exchange markets were formed by the combination of digital platforms and the concept of sharing economy. In lateral exchange markets the economic process focuses on defining the activity, creating the benefits and providing the final value for the parties involved.

The degree of the collaborative economy development in the Romanian markets, but also in other EU member countries, was analyzed following the investigation based on the survey conducted for the European Commission in 2018. In Romania in 2016, 6254 jobs were created through the use of collaborative platforms, generating 87.8 million euros - Figure 2.

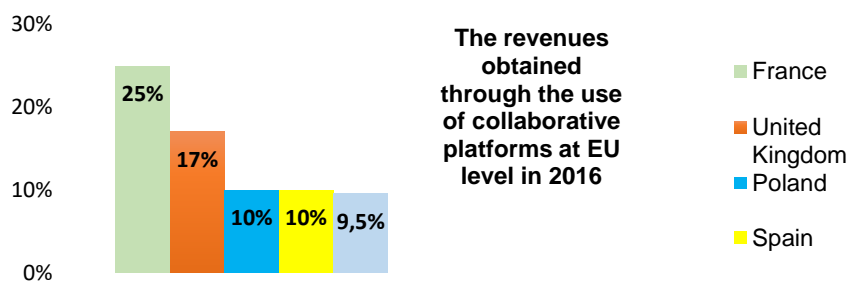


Figure 2. Top EU countries according to revenue generated by the use of collaborative platforms in 2016, source: processing after Publications Office of the European Union

In April 2018, the **Eurobarometer** on the use of the collaborative economy among consumers in the European Union was conducted. According to the Eurobarometer data, the main reason why Romanians did not use collaborative platforms was that they were not aware of their existence (46%), other reasons were: distrust of using collaborative platforms (11%), fear of misuse of personal data (11%) and poor access to the internet or internet-connected phones/devices (7%).

Following the survey, Romanians who used collaborative platforms identified as advantages: easy access to services (65%), checking the system of reviews posted by other consumers (50%), a wide range of services (49%) and, last but not least, services that can be obtained at a lower price (45%). Romanian consumers also consider the following aspects less important: interaction with other people (38%) and the possibility of making exchanges without payment (27%) - Figure 3.

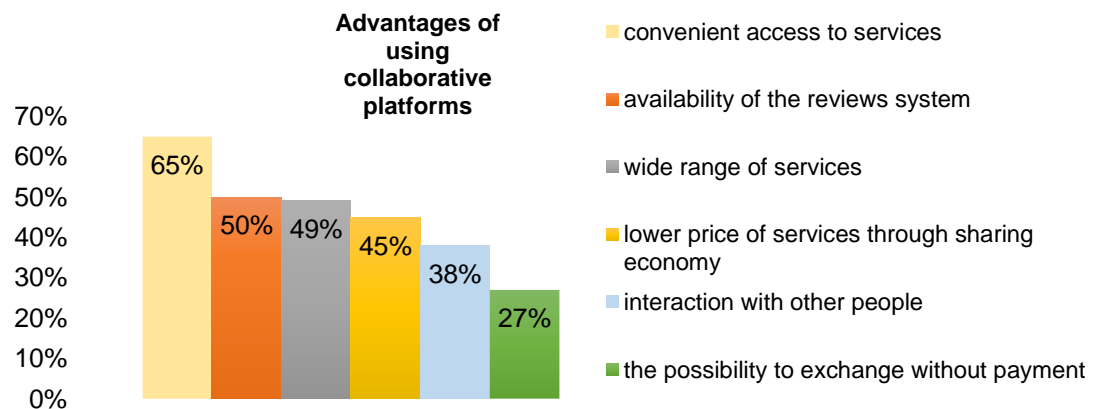


Figure 3. Advantages of using collaborative platforms among Romanian users in 2016, source: own processing after: Flash Eurobarometer 467. The use of the collaborative economy

Compared to Romania, the number of users of collaborative platforms in 2018 did not exceed 23%. The most used collaborative platforms in 2018 according to the study were those offering accommodation and transport services. Romania follows the European trends in the use of lateral exchange platforms, but without effective promotion among the public, favourable results cannot be achieved shortly. Romanians need to know both the benefits of using the collaborative economy and the challenges they bring. The economy at the level of lateral exchange markets can become a model that supports a sustainable lifestyle, beneficial for both the users directly involved and the society if the data related to the organization of the business and the responsibility of the parties involved are known.

2.2 Development of lateral exchange markets through collaborative platforms

Lateral exchange markets or peer-to-peer exchange platforms are based on the collaborative economy, these markets are structurally different from traditional markets. The structure of lateral exchange markets is triadic as opposed to traditional markets where the structure is dyadic. In the lateral exchange markets the role of the participants is essential as it manifests itself through interdependence and active involvement. Lateral exchange platforms form more dynamic, flexible and sustainability-oriented markets.

Collaborative platforms act as intermediaries between the person providing a product or service and the person using that service, being more dynamic and flexible than traditional markets, but less institutionalized. The relationship between the three parties involved: the intermediary platform, the provider and the user on the basis of the collaborative economy are shown in Figure 4.

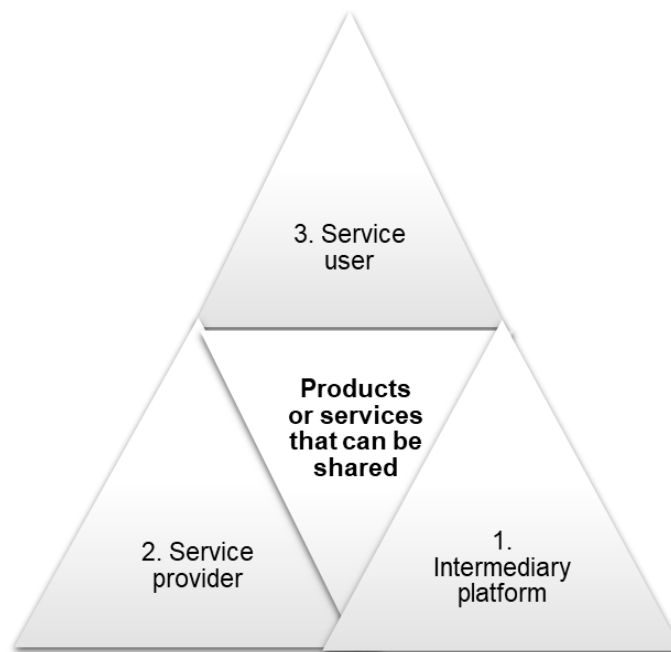


Figure 4. Sharing economy structure, source: own processing

This figure highlights the characteristics of the collaborative economy through digital platforms. The platform plays an intermediary role by ensuring contact between participants who have goods that are not used to their full potential and beneficiaries who want to use goods and services without holding the property title, all exchange activity being possible through electronic means. The triangular structure of the shared economy ensures that these transactions are carried out through complex intermediation because they do not involve B2C (business to consumer) contractual relationships, but P2P (peer to peer) where the business partners are on an equal footing by exercising direct relationships.

2.3 Implications of collaborative platforms on the Romanian entrepreneurial ecosystem

The sharing economy can be transformed into an economic model if collaborative platforms are intensively promoted and if their operation is properly regulated. Young people can be the first supporters of this type of economy as most of them are passionate about technology, use social media on a daily basis and adapt quickly to changes in the digital environment.

Involving young people in sharing activity leads to new jobs, economic stability, empowerment and increased willingness to start a business. Collaborative platforms have a positive impact on the growth of a sustainable, smart and participatory economy. The collaborative economy is based on information technology, underutilized resources and people willing to engage in intermediated exchange. The users of collaborative platforms are young people passionate about technology who have a high level of education which proves that they can run youth entrepreneurship programs. Digital development has created opportunities for young entrepreneurs to enter the business market and contribute to the growth of the global economy. The young entrepreneur in the digital age can set up a business taking into account the risks and uncertainty of the online environment with the ultimate aim of making a profit and meeting customer demands. Entrepreneurial behaviour among young people depends as much

on the level of entrepreneurial education, managerial and marketing skills as well as creativity and talent.

Digital entrepreneurship contributes to job creation, engaging tech-savvy people, developing social awareness, sharing underused assets and economic growth. Technology has developed at a rapid pace, and companies have realized that they need to adapt to the digital environment in order to compete. Business digitalization means both adapting to current trends and managing business processes more efficiently, responsibly and quickly.

2.4 Impact of digitalization on the development of collaborative platforms

Technological advances and digitalization through the many opportunities it offers have led to the emergence of new business models such as the collaborative economy platform. Knowing the benefits and importance of digital technology, the collaborative economy is growing faster and attracting more supporters among entrepreneurs.

Since 2014, the European Commission has been monitoring the progress of EU member countries in terms of digitalization and publishing annual reports for each country regarding Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI). The published reports help countries identify priority action areas and provide an analysis of the main sectors involving digital policy at the European Union level. The 2021 Digital Economy and Society Index report reflected two very important initiatives aimed at the digital transformation of the European Union in the coming years.

Thus, in 2020 only 33% of companies in Romania had at least a basic level of digital intensity, well below the European average of 60%. In 2019 the percentage of online sales among Romanian companies was 6% below the European average of 8%. Also, only 8% of Romanian companies used social media platforms, a very low level compared to the European average of 23%.

In terms of human capital specialization in the field of digitalization, Romania ranked 26th among EU Member States in 2021, with 33,1% below the European average of 47,1%. In 2019, only 35% of people aged 16-74 had basic digital skills in software, well below the European average of 58%. In 2020 the number of IT specialists increased compared to previous years, so in Romania there was a percentage of 2,4%, but below the European average of 4,3%. The number of female IT specialists is increasing, so in 2020 a percentage of 26% was recorded, well above the European average of 19%.

Collaborative platforms are directly influenced by the degree of innovation, digital technologies and how their use is presented to people. The public needs to know that the digital economy represents a new economic form with advantages for both sides: entrepreneur and user, the efficiency of the service provided is targeted and the inclusion of small entrepreneurs takes place in the national economy.

2.5 SWOT analysis for entrepreneurship at the level of collaborative platforms

SWOT analysis is an important managerial technique used to determine the strategic position of a business or business segment, and it is used as a guide because it identifies the current situation, the future potential, but also the impediments that may affect the targeted development. It works by analyzing and assessing the influential internal factors - strengths (S), weaknesses (W) and external - opportunities (O) and threats (T) of the environment under analysis.

Table 2. SWOT matrix for entrepreneurship applied to collaborative platforms. Source: own processing

<p>Strengths</p> <p>S1 - Young entrepreneurs have creativity, innovation and a desire to do business</p> <p>S2 - Young entrepreneurs have very good business ideas, commitment and willingness to work</p> <p>S3 - In the digital environment young entrepreneurs can showcase their talent, managerial, marketing and technological skills</p> <p>S4 - In the online environment entrepreneurs can showcase their talent and creativity more easily</p> <p>S5 - High interest of young entrepreneurs in: digital and entrepreneurial skills development programmes, sustainable economy, responsible consumption</p> <p>S6 - Consumers can interact with other consumers through social media, forums or blogs comparing consumption experiences</p>	<p>Weaknesses</p> <p>W1 - Weak public information campaign on the use of collaborative platforms</p> <p>W2 - Lack of educational programmes in schools on sharing goods and practising a sustainable economy.</p> <p>W3 - Lack of operating regulations of collaborative platforms needed for a smooth running in the digital environment</p> <p>W4 - A very strong desire of Romanians to hold a property title of the assets that are not fully utilized.</p> <p>W5 - Weak concern of the state towards the development of digital and entrepreneurial skills for young people interested in business</p>
<p>Opportunities</p> <p>O1 - Promotion of collaborative platforms (initiation of programmes under the patronage of national, international institutions/organizations)</p> <p>O2 - Existence of the information programmes on the concept of collaborative economy in schools</p> <p>O3 - Participation of young entrepreneurs in digital skills development programmes</p> <p>O4 - Increased interest in the concept of collaborative economy at national level</p> <p>O5 - Knowledge and application of accounting, fiscal, strategic and economic policies that have an influence on economic performance at the national level</p> <p>O6 - Establish a legal framework for the review system in collaborative platforms</p> <p>O7 - Establish operating regulations of collaborative platforms for the smooth running in the digital environment</p> <p>O8 - Development of related areas (ecology, sustainable economy, responsible consumption etc.)</p> <p>O9 - Encourage and motivate young entrepreneurs to start a business in the digital field</p>	<p>Threats</p> <p>T1 - Lack of studies on the development of the collaborative economy concept and collaborative platforms at national level</p> <p>T2 - Difficult access to national/international funding for start-ups (lack of information, poor financial education etc.)</p> <p>T3 - Behaviour of young entrepreneurs (lack of interest in business development, lack of involvement in digital marketing, a very strong desire for an asset ownership)</p> <p>T4 - Insufficient awareness among the population of the need for digital marketing and modern technologies</p> <p>T5 - Increasing public reluctance and scepticism towards novelty (digitalization of activities and asset sharing)</p>

Following the SWOT analysis, it was observed that there are multiple strengths and opportunities predominate, leading to the choice of an offensive growth strategy. Young entrepreneurs show a desire to develop digital businesses, they are creative and talented, possess managerial and marketing skills. It is therefore necessary for the state and the relevant institutions to get involved in motivating and supporting them in order to lay the foundations for business start-up projects and the development of entrepreneurial skills. Eliminating weaknesses and turning threats into opportunities is possible by: informing the public about the benefits of digital marketing and the collaborative economy, conducting financial and

entrepreneurial education classes in schools and colleges, organizing workshops and projects such as business incubators.

2.6 Combined SWOT-AHP analysis for entrepreneurship at the level of collaborative platforms

The purpose of this study is to analyse the relevant aspects related to the use of existing collaborative platforms in Romania at present. The study aims to substantiate the elements that can be used as benchmarks in developing strategies to increase the young people's interest to work on collaborative platforms contributing to the development of entrepreneurship in the collaborative economy.

The components identified in the SWOT analysis are assessed using the analytical hierarchy process (AHP) to proportion their strength (importance). The analytical hierarchy process allows complex decisions to be made using multiple criteria for managing key aspects of a hierarchically structured problem or solving unstructured problems (Coyle, 2004).

Through the integrated approach it is possible to identify a basis for developing strategic alternatives within which to promote a high-performance, efficient, responsible and sustainable entrepreneurial practice. Thus, the critical links between youth interest and digital marketing applied to collaborative platforms become targets for the creation of new business models.

The integrated model on entrepreneurship in the digital environment aims to: promote collaborative platforms, develop entrepreneurial skills among young people and develop programmes to support young entrepreneurs in their businesses. Thus, the possibility of analysing five strategic alternatives with the following structure is considered:

- **S1: monitoring strategy** which involves an investigation process of the resources involved (human, informational, financial, digital, material), potential and digital technologies, national economic-legislative framework;
- **S2: information strategy** aimed at accessing reliable sources of information regarding the ways and opportunities of financial support for young entrepreneurs, partnerships for entrepreneurship, digital skills development programmes, understanding of collaborative economy concept and the benefits obtained from practising the new business model;
- **S3: interaction strategy** focused on organization of processes based on the establishment of connections between interested parties, entrepreneurship projects, events with specific collaborative economy and digitalization themes;
- **S4: development strategy** aiming at implementing projects promoting the concept of collaborative economy, the use of collaborative platforms in Romania and strategies supporting the digitalization of activities;
- **S5: integration strategy** which aims at adopting programmes to develop digital and entrepreneurial skills and introduce the concept of collaborative economy, supporting the use of collaborative platforms with an effect on both environmental sustainability and collaborative economy outcomes.

By applying the calculation formula to quantify the impact of each strategic alternative, the S5 option aims at integration the development programmes of digital and entrepreneurial skills, information on the collaborative and sustainable economy concepts, and responsible consumption, being the most attractive to increase the interest of young entrepreneurs in accessing the collaborative platforms.

2.7 The AIDA model applied to collaborative platforms

The AIDA model was developed by E. St. Elmo Lewis and it describes the steps a potential customer goes through before deciding to purchase a good. AIDA is an acronym for attention, interest, desire and action (purchase) and is considered a technique that can ensure effectiveness in advertising.

The AIDA model at the level of lateral exchange markets is applied taking into account that the platform is the subject of the technique application and if implemented correctly the targeted objectives can be achieved faster.

Attention is drawn through objective advertising highlighting the benefits of using collaborative platforms. Consumer interest in collaborative platforms is captured by reviews from other customers, then information is sought on how to use and compare platforms.

Willingness to participate in lateral exchange platforms is characterized by joining as a participant of a digital platform for the use of a good or the provision of a service. The online purchase is completed through an online contract on the digital platform or an online order which can also be paid through that online platform.

The AIDA model in the online environment, at the level of collaborative platforms, is shown in Figure 5.

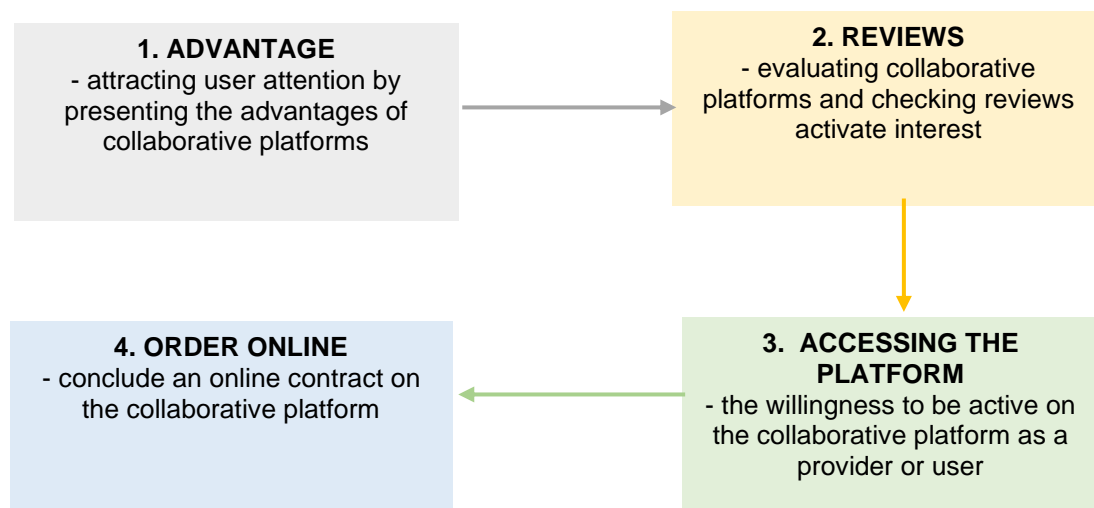


Figure 5. AIDA model applied to collaborative platforms, source: own processing

Thus, the AIDA model properly understood and applied at the level of collaborative platforms brings benefits for both the online provider (seller) and the user (consumer), but also for society as a whole, supporting environmental sustainability and economic efficiency.

The collaborative platform attracts attention through the design of the website owned, the credibility shown through reviews and comments from other users, and the interest arises after understanding the concept of collaborative economy and awareness of the benefits.

The desire to participate in the actions performed on collaborative platforms is expressed after discovering how to use the online application related to the platform, and finally the action of purchasing from the platform is done.

CHAPTER 3. EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL MARKETING CAMPAIGNS ON COLLABORATIVE PLATFORMS

3.1 Questionnaire-based study on the students' perception in the southeast region of Romania on the performance of collaborative platforms from a digital marketing perspective

In this research approach we conducted a quantitative analysis in order to identify the relevant elements regarding the respondents' perception on the performance of existing collaborative platforms in Romania from a digital marketing perspective. Thus, during the period 12.05.2022 - 22.06.2022, we conducted a pilot research in which the tool used to collect data was a questionnaire structured in three sections and 26 questions.

The questionnaire was shared online (<https://forms.gle/QUESUSstBYL9VDy6i6>) on the main social media groups. The sample was established according to representativeness criteria and it was composed of 242 respondents, students from the southeastern area of Romania. All data and information from the survey are confidential and kept as such and not published. The present research complies with the legal provisions concerning the rules of ethics and deontology in the institutions of the national education system.

Aim of the study: to identify students' perception of the performance of existing collaborative platforms in Romania from a digital marketing perspective

Objectives:

1. To determine the number of active students on different social networks, the average time spent daily on the internet and the purpose of internet use;
2. To analyse the impact of the use of social media tools in promoting collaborative platforms in the digital environment;
3. Analysis of how information shared online in social media influences students' behaviour favouring the decision to use collaborative platforms;
4. Analysis of the situation of digital marketing use to promote collaborative platforms in Romania;
5. Identification of students' attitude towards the practice of the collaborative economy concept.

In this survey 242 students from the southeastern area of Romania participated, but for 31 respondents the questionnaire stopped at the filter question regarding the knowledge of the sharing economy concept, and then moved on to questions identifying the respondent profile.

The survey continued for the 211 respondents who stated that they have knowledge of the concept of sharing economy. Analyzing the responses, it can be observed that respondents access the internet very often from their phone, but less often from their computer, and most of them are connected to the internet between two and five hours a day. They also appreciated the variety of benefits of using and integrating social media within a business, including promoting in a professional way and measuring the promotion results more quickly.

The majority of respondents believe that the impact of advertising campaigns on Facebook is conducive to increasing sales revenue, and that creating an online community on Instagram to keep the public updated with the company news is necessary to succeed in the market. However, there is a need to intensively promote the existing collaborative platforms in Romania, as the use of social media networks can increase awareness among the public for the benefits obtained by practicing this type of economy.

Respondents consider that at present in Romania there is not a high level of collaborative platforms promotion, the main reason being the lack of state involvement. It is necessary to establish a regulation for the operation of collaborative platforms, to apply specific rules and policies for the collaborative economy in order to ensure its smooth operation in the digital environment, and a broader public information campaign on the benefits of this type of economy.

Respondents believe that digital marketing should be used to promote collaborative platforms to the public in order to raise awareness of the benefits of accessing collaborative platforms as a provider or user. With the right digital marketing strategies applied, the message reaches the target audience faster, it is more effective and easily personalized. The digital environment is ideal for building and strengthening relationships with target audience.

Digital marketing strategies are applied according to the digital tools chosen, the target audience category and the objectives. The effectiveness of the strategies applied in digital marketing have a direct impact on the performance of collaborative platforms by raising awareness of their importance among the audience. Digital collaborative platforms can perform well if they are intensively promoted online, if their usefulness is known and if they are based on an effective and fair review system.

Respondents believe that the performance of collaborative platforms is influenced by online promotional campaigns presenting the benefits of their use, including: contribution to environmental sustainability, economic efficiency and support for national digitalization. The communication of beneficiaries to get the performance of the collaborative platforms at the national level is essential, so it is very important to organize programmes for young entrepreneurs to develop digital skills that can be applied at the level of collaborative platforms.

Encouraging young people to use collaborative platforms is important because a high interest was identified among respondents engaging in digital skills development programmes and with the idea of starting a business. Therefore, running educational projects in schools promoting the concept of sharing economy is essential. 123 male and 119 female respondents participated in this study, with the majority of respondents being in the 21-30 age group with a bachelor's degree.

3.2 Correlational study on assessing the impact of using the sharing economy concept on the performance of collaborative platforms by capitalizing on digital marketing strategies

The decision problem in this empirical research is to assess the impact of using the sharing economy on the performance of collaborative platforms by capitalizing on digital marketing strategies. Another point of interest for this research is the applicability of the collaborative economy concept and the practical aspects of sharing in other European countries to the Romanian economic context.

The decision problem aimed at formulating the objectives of the quantitative study that follow the ways in which marketing strategies in the digital environment popularize the concept of collaborative economy, the promotion of educational programs in schools on sustainability and the involvement of the state in the implementation of an environmentally responsible economic environment, actions that lead to the achievement of pre-set performance indicators.

The target group consists of students from the southeastern part of Romania. To this end, an online questionnaire was developed and administered, highlighting the use of digital marketing strategies to increase the performance of collaborative platforms. Five-step Likert

scales (Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree) and semantic differentials (Very Unimportant - Very Important) were used.

For the respondents' profile we used the following criteria: background and age, presented as independent variables. The questionnaire-based study was conducted from 12 May to 22 June 2022, with 211 responses validated, which formed the basis of further processing for statistical analysis using SPSS software, version 26.

The conceptual model, represented in Figure 6, shows the association and correlation relationships between the proposed independent and dependent variables.

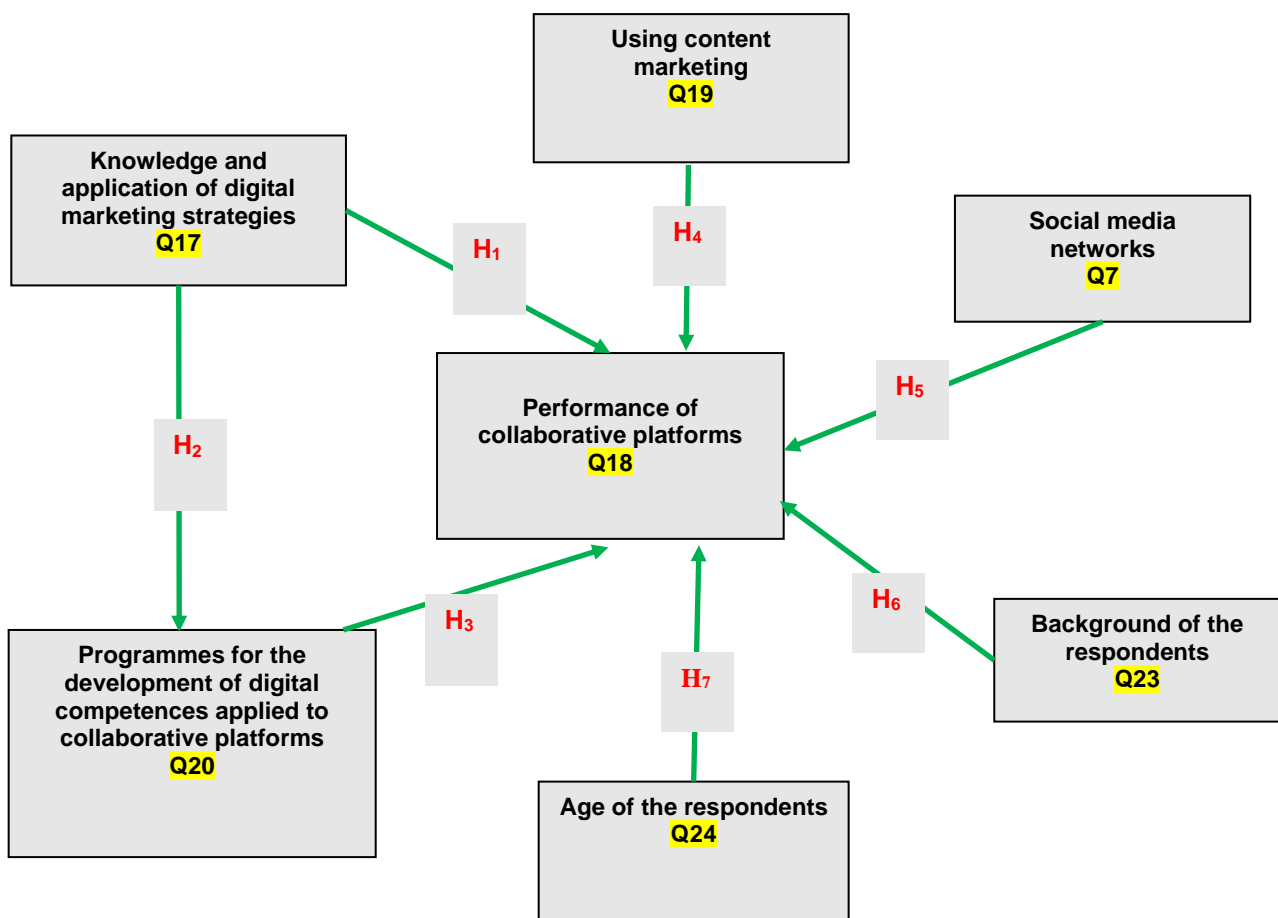


Figure 6. Conceptual model of correlational research, source: own processing

The conceptual model illustrates 7 research hypotheses:

H₁ - Knowledge and application of digital marketing strategies strongly influence the performance of collaborative platforms;

H₂ - The knowledge and application of digital marketing strategies has a strong influence on the organization of programmes for the development of digital skills applied to collaborative platforms;

H₃ - The organization of programmes for the development of digital skills applied to collaborative platforms has a strong influence on the performance of collaborative platforms;

H₄ - The use of content marketing to communicate the benefits of collaborative platforms to the public has a strong influence on the performance of collaborative platforms;

H₅ - The use of social networks as a tool to promote the concept of collaborative economy has a strong influence on the performance of collaborative platforms;

H₆ - The respondents' background has a strong influence on the perception of the collaborative platform performances;

H₇ - The age of the respondents strongly influences the perception of the collaborative platform performances.

In conclusion, the validation of six (H₁, H₂, H₃, H₄, H₅, H₆) of the seven hypotheses tested through SPSS software reveals significant correlations between: the need for knowledge and application of digital marketing strategies, the importance of organising educational programmes for the development of digital skills applied to collaborative platforms, the relevance of using content marketing to communicate the benefits of utilizing collaborative platforms, social networks used as a tool to promote the concept of collaborative economy and the performances of collaborative platforms.

CHAPTER 4. ANALYSIS OF CORRELATIONS BETWEEN DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES AND PRECURSORS OF COLLABORATIVE PLATFORM PERFORMANCE USING STRUCTURAL EQUATIONS (SEM-PLS)

4.1 Research methodology and hypotheses

The use of collaborative platforms at national level is influenced by a multitude of factors. The aim of this analysis is to identify the impact of variables such as: (1) the widespread use of digital marketing and the application of digital marketing strategies, (2) the interest of young users in developing digital skills applied in social media, (3) the quality of collaborative platforms, (4) the performance of collaborative platforms, (5) the outcomes of young users of collaborative platforms on the performance of the collaborative economy, and (6) the degree of involvement of relevant authorities in the collaborative economy process. The structural model developed is shown in Figure 7, illustrating the relationships between variables through the six hypotheses.

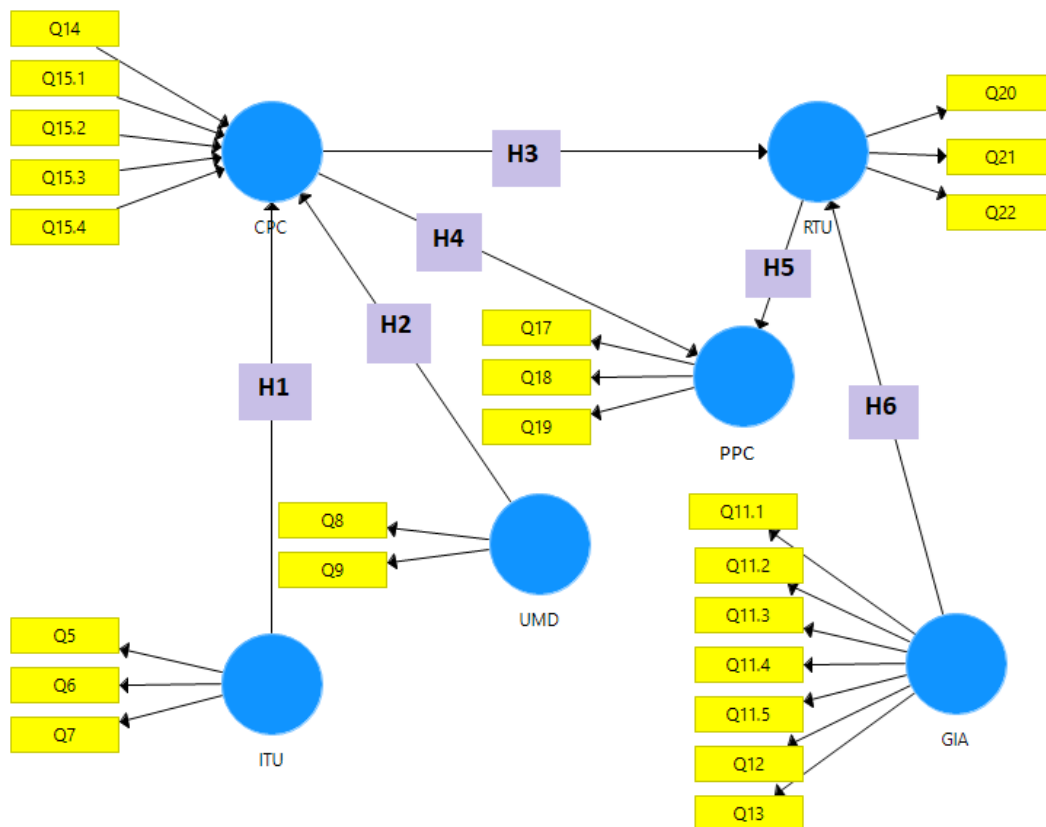


Figure 7. Conceptual model of research based on structural equation modelling, source: own processing

The selected research technique involves structural equation modelling using the Partial Least Squares method (SEM-PLS), thus for each variable mentioned above with a predictive role on collaborative performance we identified specific indicators that constitute it, represent it respectively.

To conduct this research we formulated six hypotheses that follow the effect that the identified variables have on the performance of collaborative platforms.

Hypothesis 1: Young people's interest in developing digital skills applied in social media (ITU) has a significant effect on the quality of collaborative platforms (CPC)

Hypothesis 2: Widespread use of digital marketing and application of digital marketing strategies (UMD) show a significant effect on the quality of collaborative platforms (CPC)

Hypothesis 3: The quality of collaborative platforms (CPC) has a significant effect on the outcomes of young users of collaborative platforms (RTU)

Hypothesis 4: The quality of collaborative platforms (CPC) has a significant effect on the performance of collaborative platforms (PPC)

Hypothesis 5: Outcomes of young users of collaborative platforms (RTU) have a significant effect on the performance of collaborative platforms (PPC)

Hypothesis 6: The degree of involvement of competent authorities (GIA) has a significant effect on the performance of young users of collaborative platforms (RTU)

Structural models are represented by diagrams displaying the hypotheses and relationships between the latent variables assessed. The structural model in Figure 7 shows six latent variables, represented as circles (CPC, ITU, UMD, RTU, PPC, GIA). The indicators are represented in the diagram as rectangles, and the relationships between variables, variables

and their associated indicators respectively, are represented as unidirectional arrows, evaluated as predictive relationships or causal relationships.

4.2 Analysis of research results based on structural equation modelling

Figure 8 illustrates the relationships between the latent variables included in the research model represented by arrows directed from the exogenous latent variable seen as a predictor to the dependent (endogenous) latent variable. Moreover, the diagram highlights variables that can be assessed through a (1) formative approach (quality of collaborative platforms - CPC, where arrows are directed from indicators to the variable) and variables that can be measured through a (2) reflective approach (young people's interest in developing digital skills applied in social media - ITU, widespread use of digital marketing and application of digital marketing strategies - UMD, performance of collaborative platforms - PPC, degree of involvement of competent authorities - GIA and young users' outcomes of collaborative platforms - RTU, where arrows are directed from variables to indicators).

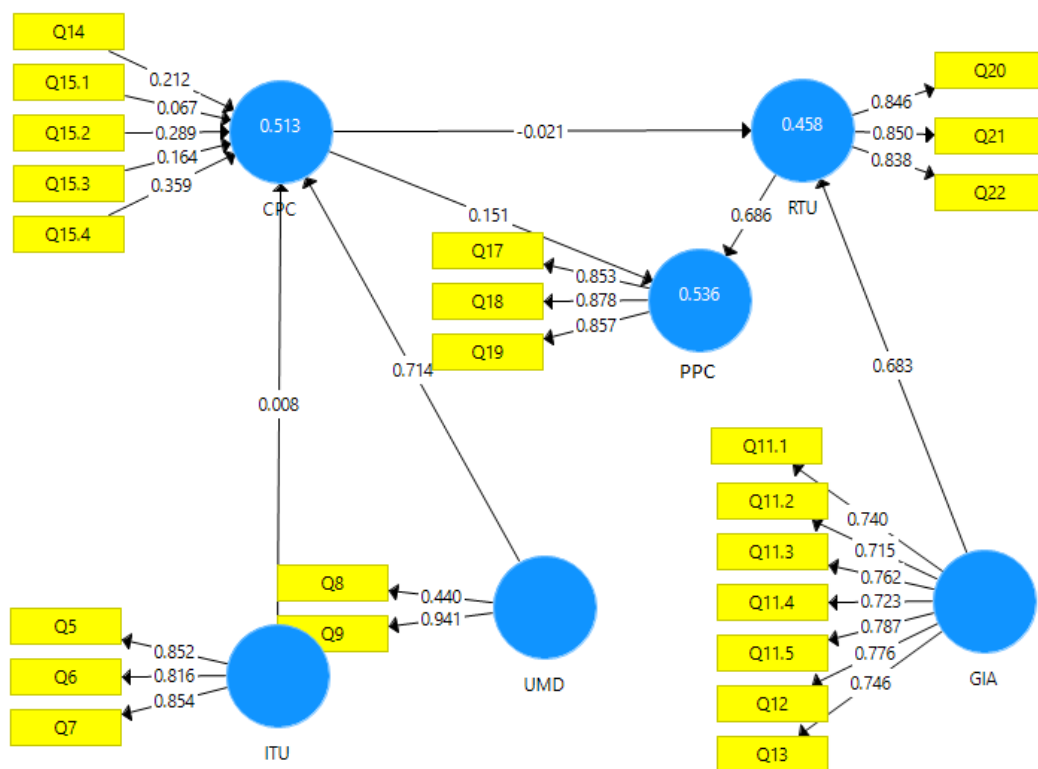


Figure 8. Determination of effect sizes, indicator contributions to reflective latent variables and indicator weights to formative latent variables, source: own processing after Smart PLS 3 software

The structural model explains that the outcomes of young users of collaborative platforms (RTU) have the strongest impact on the performance of collaborative platforms (PPC) included in the research sample (effect coefficient 0.686), and the quality of collaborative platforms (CPC) has a smaller effect on the performance of collaborative platforms (effect coefficient 0.151).

The quality of collaborative platforms (CPC) has a weak effect on the performance of young users of collaborative platforms (RTU), effect size -0.021, and the degree of involvement of competent authorities (GIA) has a high effect on the performance of young users of collaborative platforms (RTU), effect size 0.683.

Young people's interest in developing applied digital skills in social media (ITU) has a relatively weak effect on the quality of collaborative platforms (CPC), effect coefficient 0.008, while the effect of widespread use of digital marketing and application of digital marketing strategies (UMD) on the same latent variable (CPC) is strong, effect coefficient 0.714.

Cronbach's Alpha is a measure of internal consistency and reflects the correlation level of the variables within the structural model. The minimum accepted level for this indicator is 0.7. The values obtained for Cronbach Alpha are shown in Table 3, and are assigned only to the reflective variables (GIA, ITU, PPC, RTU and UMD), four of them exceeded 0.7 (GIA, ITU, PPC, RTU) and UMD was below this level.

Table 3. Assessment of internal consistency and convergent validity for the reflective measurement model. Source: own processing after Smart PLS 3 software

Matrice	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Nivel de încredere...	Varianța medie ext...	Copiați în memoria ten
	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Nivel de încredere compozit	Varianța medie extrasă (AVE)	
CPC		1.000			
GIA	0.871	0.872	0.900	0.563	
ITU	0.794	0.803	0.879	0.707	
PPC	0.829	0.831	0.897	0.745	
RTU	0.800	0.802	0.882	0.714	
UMD	0.200	0.315	0.675	0.540	

The data reflected in Table 4 are useful for validating/rejecting the assumptions in the structural model analyzed. Only four hypotheses out of six are validated, as for two of the hypotheses (H_1 and H_3) the P-values are above the maximum allowed significance threshold of 0.05, being invalidated. Thus, the quality of collaborative digital platforms does not have a significant effect on the outcomes of young users of digital platforms, nor does the interest of young users of collaborative platforms show a significant effect on the quality of collaborative platforms.

Table 4. Asymptotic P-significance and t-test values for the 6 hypotheses in the structural model. Source: own processing after Smart PLS 3 software

	Eșantion original (O)	Media eșantionului (M)	Deviația Standard (STDEV)	Statistica T (O/STDEV)	Valorile-P
CPC -> PPC	0.151	0.158	0.052	2.920	0.004
CPC -> RTU	-0.021	-0.011	0.058	0.363	0.717
GIA -> RTU	0.683	0.685	0.042	16.252	0.000
ITU -> CPC	0.008	0.024	0.063	0.129	0.898
RTU -> PPC	0.686	0.684	0.041	16.777	0.000
UMD -> CPC	0.714	0.711	0.048	14.976	0.000

The T-test also tells us the magnitude of the correlation between the latent variables in this structural model. Therefore, for the validated hypotheses the outcomes of young users of collaborative digital platforms (RTU) have the strongest effect on the performance of collaborative platforms (PPC) (T-test = 16.777, p-value is zero), while the quality of collaborative platforms (CPC) has the lowest impact on the performance of collaborative platforms (PPC) (T-test = 2.920, p-value = 0.004).

4.3 Variables used in the research

a) Quality of collaborative platforms (CPC)

Q14 - Information on existing collaborative platforms in Romania

Q15.1 - Reviews of other users about a specific product/service on the collaborative platform

Q15.2 - Reviews of other users about a collaborative platform

Q15.3 - Interaction between a user and a digital collaborative platform

Q15.4 - Using digital marketing to promote collaborative platforms to the public

Q16 - Structuring information on collaborative platform websites in Romania

b) Young people's interest in developing digital skills applied to social media (ITU)

Q5 - Impact of Facebook advertising campaigns on the target audience explained by increased sales revenue

Q6 - The need to create an online community on Instagram to keep the audience up to date with the news of a company operating online

Q7 - Promoting a sharing economy business on popular social networks in Romania (Facebook or Instagram) can increase awareness of the benefits of practicing the collaborative economy.

c) Widespread use of digital marketing and digital platforms (UMD)

Q8 - Digital marketing applied correctly can change customer interaction and purchasing behaviour

Q9 - The use of digital marketing ensures a high level of promotion of collaborative platforms in Romania

d) Performance of collaborative platforms (PPC)

Q17 - The performance of collaborative platforms is directly influenced by the knowledge and application of digital marketing strategies.

Q18 - The performance of collaborative platforms is directly influenced by the promotion of their utilization benefits online.

Q19 - Use of content marketing (blogs, social networks, webinars or videos) to communicate the benefits of collaborative platforms to the public

e) Outcomes of young users of collaborative platforms (RTU)

Q20 - Organize national programmes for young entrepreneurs to develop digital skills applied to collaborative platforms

Q21 - Promoting the concept of sharing economy in schools favours in the long term satisfactory business results through collaborative platforms.

Q22 - The participation of young entrepreneurs in digital skills development programmes leads to favourable long-term results for the national collaborative economy.

f) Degree of involvement of competent authorities (GIA)

Q11.1 - Asset sharing for a sustainable economy

Q11.2 - Education in schools on sustainable economy measures

Q11.3 - Participation in educational projects on building knowledge about the sharing economy

Q11.4 - Reference sites for collaborative platforms with up-to-date information

Q11.5 - Educational programmes in schools on sharing goods/services

Q12 - Establishment of operating regulations for collaborative platforms is necessary for their smooth running in the digital environment.

Q2 - Respondents' preferred device for connecting to the internet

Q26 - Respondent gender

CHAPTER 5. CONFIGURATIONAL STUDY ON DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF COLLABORATIVE PLATFORMS

5.1 Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) method

Qualitative Comparative Analysis represents a new and influential finding in the field of research in the social and economic sciences. On the basis of this method is the explanation that a combination of factors (antecedent conditions) influence a particular phenomenon. The result obtained is determined by a causal configuration of conditions analyzed at the same level of importance. The QCA comparative method is used in a wide variety of activity fields because the results obtained are efficient and the shortcomings of both quantitative and qualitative research are eliminated.

Performance appraisal of a collaborative platform can be subjective. In addition, some characteristics such as: the quality of a digital platform, the design and layout of the graphical elements of a digital platform, the involvement of authorities in promoting collaborative digital platforms or the attitude of young people towards digital competence development cannot be quantified in a direct way. Regardless of the level of subjectivity, it is necessary to explain the scores obtained in detail based on solid theoretical frameworks for providing interpretations.

This paper analyses to what extent antecedent conditions: the widespread use of digital marketing and the application of digital marketing strategies, the quality of collaborative platforms, the young users' outcomes of collaborative platforms, the young people's interest in developing digital skills applied in social media and the degree of involvement of competent authorities, influence the performance of collaborative platforms in Romania.

5.2 Research framework

The antecedent conditions used in this research involving the fsQCA method are represented by the five components of the collaborative platforms performance: the widespread use of digital marketing and the application of digital marketing strategies, the quality of collaborative platforms, the outcomes of young users of collaborative platforms, the young people's interest in developing digital skills applied in social media and the degree of involvement of competent authorities influence the outcome materialized in the performance of collaborative platforms in Romania - Figure 9.

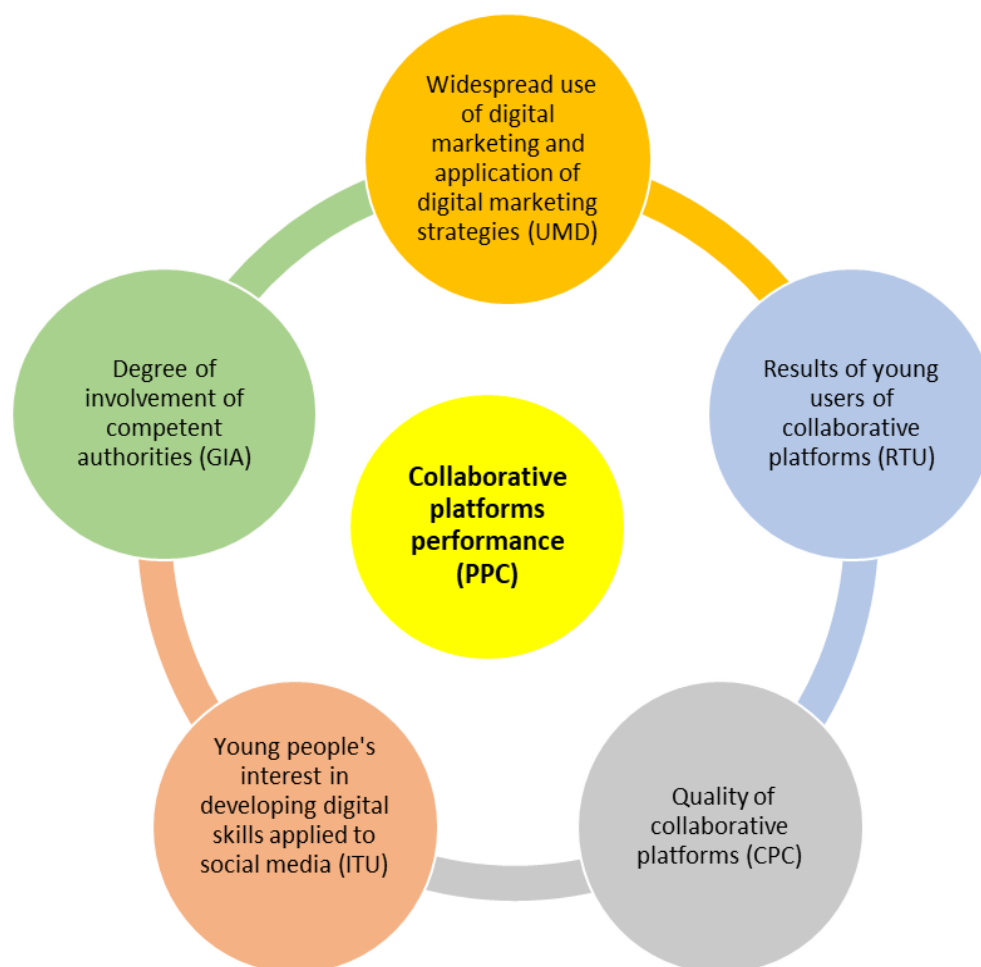


Figure 9. Configurational model, source: own processing

Research proposition: multiple causal configurations of antecedent conditions (CPC, RTU, UMD, ITU, GIA) influence the performance of collaborative platforms at a high level.

5.3 Analysis of the research results

The XoY plan establishes whether a particular condition is necessary to achieve the intended outcome specifying the level of consistency for the condition under analysis. The consistency score indicates that the combination of the five antecedent conditions (the widespread use of digital marketing and application of digital marketing strategies, quality of collaborative platforms, young users' outcomes of digital platforms, young people's interest in developing digital skills applied in social media, and degree of involvement of competent authorities in promoting collaborative platforms) is sufficient to achieve a high degree of performance of collaborative platforms.

The more cases in the oY plan, the more important X proves to be for Y. In the case of the collaborative platforms performances, it can be noticed that the most cases are in the OY plan. Out of 211 cases, 193 cases are in the oY plan, 9 cases are on the diagonal, and 9 cases are in the oX plan (Figure 10). Also, most of these cases show a membership of more than 0.8. Thus, it can be stated that the five antecedent conditions: the widespread use of digital marketing and application of digital marketing strategies, quality of collaborative platforms, young users' outcomes of collaborative platforms, young people's interest in developing digital skills applied in social media and the degree of involvement of competent authorities (UMD,

CPC, RTU, ITU and GIA) influence to a large extent the performance of collaborative platforms in Romania (PPC).

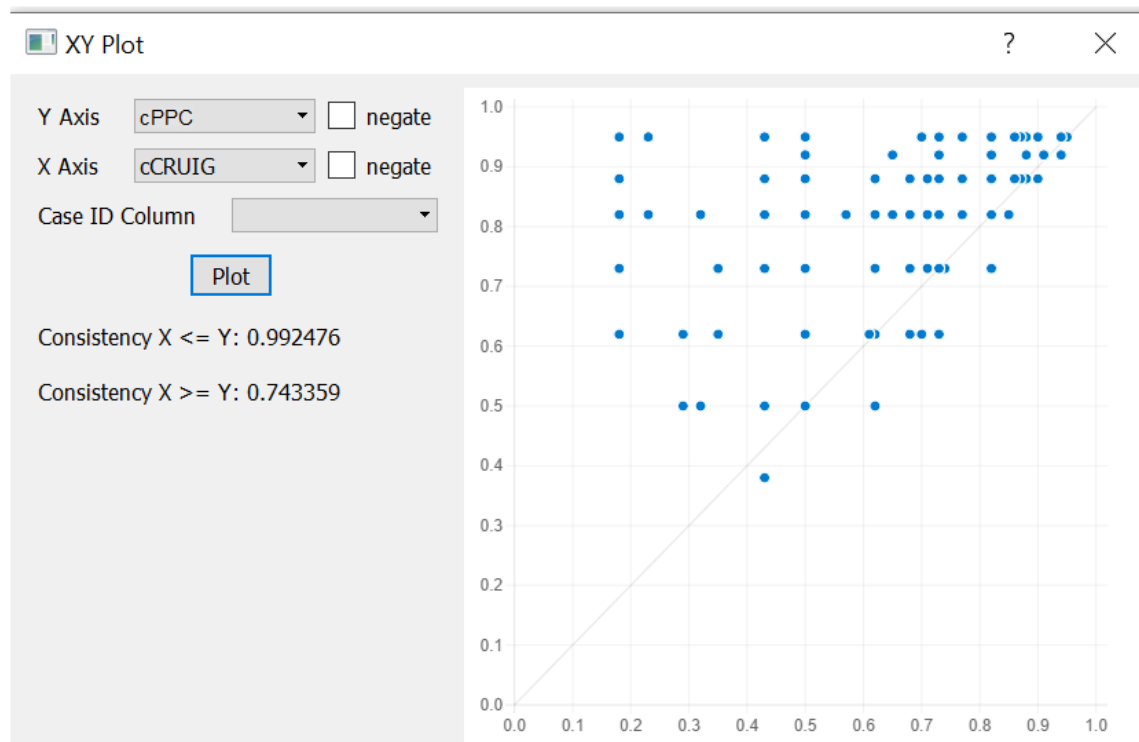


Figure 10. Distribution of cases in the XY plan graph for the performance of collaborative platforms in Romania, source: own processing after fsQCA software

The Quine-McCluskey algorithm determines complex solutions that reflect valuable information about the combinations of antecedent conditions influencing the outcome. The combinations of antecedent conditions are presented in Table 5 and represent successful methods for increasing the performance level of collaborative platforms in Romania.

Table 5. Complex solution offered by the Quine-McCluskey algorithm for Romanian collaborative platforms. Source: own processing after fsQCA software

Complex solution	Gross coverage	Single coverage	Consistency
$\sim cCPC * cRTU * cITU * cGIA$	0.374928	0.0383554	0.989979
$cRTU * cUMD * cITU * cGIA$	0.844222	0.507649	0.990955
The coating solution:0.882577			
The solution of consistency:0.987899			

The first solution provided by the Quine-McCluskey algorithm suggests a low level of quality of collaborative platforms combined with the outcomes of young users of collaborative platforms, young people's interest in developing digital skills applied in social media and the level of involvement of competent authorities in promoting collaborative platforms giving a consistency of 0.989979. CPC (quality of collaborative platforms) does not enter the causal recipe of the configurational model, but appears in the first condition.

The second solution proposed by the Quine-McCluskey algorithm is a combination of the high level of young users' outcomes of digital platforms, the widespread use of digital marketing and the correct application of digital marketing strategies to popularize collaborative platforms,

the increased interest of young people in developing digital skills applied in social media, and a high degree of involvement of competent authorities in promoting the collaborative economy concept. Thus, a consistency of 0.99095 was obtained for the second solution.

This solution suggests that without the correct knowledge and application of digital marketing strategies, lack of state involvement through competent authorities in promoting collaborative economy, low awareness of the population about the benefits of practicing the new model of economy and the usefulness of collaborative platforms cannot ensure the success of collaborative platforms.

The fsQCA method allows us to test some necessary conditions for achieving a certain result (Table 6). Therefore, four causal combinations were tested at the sample level, two of which resulted from the application of the Quine-McCluskey algorithm.

Table No.6. Conditions required to achieve the result. Source: own processing after fsQCA software

Conditions tested	Consistency	Coverage
cCPC+cRTU+cITU+cGIA	0.994422	0.920919
cRTU+cUMD+cCPC+cITU	0.993215	0.922158
cRTU+cITU+cGIA+cUMD	0.992352	0.921849
cITU+cCPC+cUMD+cGIA	0.990627	0.925785

The combination with the highest consistency (0.994422) is the combination of four causal conditions: the quality of collaborative platforms, the young users' outcomes of collaborative platforms, the young people's interest in developing digital skills applied in social media and the degree of involvement of authorities in supporting collaborative platforms (cCPC+cRTU+cITU+cGIA).

The combination with the second highest consistency (0.993215) is the combination of four causal conditions: quality of collaborative platforms, young users' outcomes of collaborative platforms, the widespread use of digital marketing and application of digital marketing strategies, and young people's interest in developing digital skills applied in social media (cCPC+cRTU+cUMD+cITU). Consequently, it should be noted that all four conditions tested are necessary for the performance of collaborative platforms.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS. PERSONAL CONTRIBUTIONS. DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

By capitalizing on digital marketing strategies at the level of lateral exchange markets, the following are possible: increasing the degree of digitalization at the national level, encouraging environmental sustainability and economic profitability.

One of the main contributions made in this research is the presentation of collaborative platforms by capitalizing on the digital marketing strategies. The highlighting approach for these collaborative platforms is based on: explaining the concept of lateral exchange markets, integrating digital marketing and specific strategies to promote the concept, presenting the effect of digitalization on the whole society, using social media as a way of popularization and involving the public in active participation in environmental sustainability.

Another contribution is reflected by presenting the impact of digital marketing campaigns on the performance of collaborative platforms. From the quantitative research, key ideas

emerge reflecting: the importance of digital marketing strategies applied to digital platforms, the need to apply content marketing to more effective promotion, the use of digital marketing tools to popularize the sharing economy concept and the level of respondents' involvement in developing digital skills that can be applied in lateral exchange markets.

The first chapter covers conceptual and methodological aspects specific to the development of digital marketing and the collaborative economy. Topics presented in this chapter include: the current state of research in the digital marketing field, the digital marketing mix, the difference between traditional and digital marketing, marketing through: digital platforms, social media, blogs and online communities, the current state of research in the collaborative economy field, lateral exchange markets, types of lateral exchange markets and consumer behaviour patterns related to types of lateral exchange markets.

The second chapter presents the current framework of the use of collaborative platforms in Romania. The topics covered are: dynamics and trends of collaborative economy use, collaborative platforms within the system of lateral exchange markets, the Romanian entrepreneurial ecosystem related to collaborative platforms, the impact of digitalization on the development of collaborative platforms, SWOT analysis for entrepreneurship applied to collaborative platforms and the AIDA model at the level of collaborative platforms.

The third chapter covers the evaluation of the impact of digital marketing campaigns on collaborative platforms. Data were collected using an online questionnaire and subsequently processed using SPSS software. The results of this research reflect the idea that the performance of collaborative platforms is influenced by: the knowledge and application of digital marketing strategies, the practice of content marketing, the existence of a relevant economic-legislative framework regulated in the long term, the establishment of a correct and efficient system of reviewing collaborative platforms, the involvement of competent authorities in promoting the concept of collaborative economy in schools and the popularization of collaborative platforms as new business models. The hypotheses outlined in the qualitative research tested through SPSS software present the correlations between dependent and independent variables.

Chapter four illustrates a conceptual model of the correlation between digital marketing strategies and the precursors of collaborative platform performance using SEM-PLS software. This study reflects a personal contribution because through structural equation modelling using the least squares method I have set up and estimated complex relationships between several dependent and independent variables such as: the widespread use of digital marketing and application of digital marketing strategies, young users' interest in developing digital skills applied in social media, the quality of collaborative platforms, performance of collaborative platforms at the national level, young users' outcomes of collaborative platforms on performance of collaborative economy and the degree of involvement of competent authorities in the process of collaborative economy.

The fifth chapter reports a configurational study on digital marketing strategies affecting the performance of collaborative platforms using the fsQCA method. This chapter completes the qualitative study by reflecting the personal contribution both in terms of the topic addressed and through determination of correlations between multiple configurations of antecedent conditions. Moreover, the topic of collaborative platforms as part of lateral exchange markets has not been integrated in other qualitative-comparative research in the field of digital marketing.

The study reflects how antecedent conditions: the widespread use of digital marketing and the application of digital marketing strategies, the young users' interest in developing digital skills applied in social media, the quality of collaborative platforms, the young users' outcomes

of collaborative platforms and the degree of involvement of competent authorities in the process of collaborative economy influence the performance of collaborative platforms. The results of this study show that a combination of the five antecedent conditions is sufficient for a high level of collaborative platform performances.

The aim of the research conducted is not only to obtain generalized information in the field of digital marketing and collaborative platforms, but to capture and understand the effects of applying digital marketing strategies that can lead to the emergence of new business models, explain the effects on lateral exchange markets, the attitudes of the target audience and last but not least to present certain behaviours and motivations considered relevant to the group studied.

The main limitation of the present research is the impossibility to present general conclusions valid for the whole region because only the responses from students were analyzed. Moreover, the quantitative research covered only the southeastern area of Romania, so the sample can be considered representative for a specific geographical area. Other limitations of the research were: the interest in completing the questionnaire was relatively low because participation in this study was anonymous and participation in the study was conditioned by Internet access, additionally, basic digital skills are needed to make the completion of the questionnaire possible.

In the future, in order to increase the relevance and accuracy of the results obtained in the view of the studied phenomenon, it is indicated to capture the research responses at the national level, especially in the cities where the level of digitalization is stronger. Future research directions can be summarized as follows:

- the extension of the qualitative study at the national level on the perception of Romanians towards the use of digital marketing for the promotion of lateral exchange markets as a new business model aiming at the integration of digital and entrepreneurial skills development programmes;

- quantitative research involving the identification of students' perceptions in the southeastern region of Romania towards the performance of collaborative platforms from a digital marketing perspective can be the basis for an extended study that includes the impact of the application of digital marketing strategies on youth entrepreneurship applied to lateral exchange markets.

The results of the PhD research contribute to the theoretical level by deepening the digital marketing concepts and digital marketing strategies, the performance of collaborative platforms and lateral exchange markets in order to develop new research directions. On a practical level, the implications of digital marketing for lateral exchange markets identified through analyses. The application of digital marketing strategies is a challenge faced by both marketers and the public due to the new elements generated in the digital economy.

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

1.1 Papers published in Conference Proceedings Citation volumes with ISI Proceedings

1. Cristache, N., **Pricopoaia, O.**, Bușilă, A. V. (2022), The Impact Of Digitalization On Startups In The South-East Region Of Romania, In *Proceedings of the INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE* (Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 67-75). Faculty of Management, Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania.
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1.2 Papers published in peer-reviewed journals indexed in BDI

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2. Participation and presentation of papers at national/international conferences in the field

1. Cristache, N., **Pricopoaia, O.**, Buşilă, A. V. (2022). The Impact Of Digitalization On Startups In The South-East Region Of Romania - THE 16th INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE "Management and Resilience Strategies for a Post-Pandemic Future" IMC 2022, Programme:
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