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**DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS SPECIFIC TO  
MARKETING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE  
CONSOLIDATION OF THE DIGITAL ECONOMY**

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The PhD thesis and the abstract can be consulted at the Scientific Library of the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova, on the website of AESM (<https://irek.ase.md/xmlui/>) and on the website of ANACEC (<https://www.anacec.md/>)

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE RESEARCH CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK .....	4
THESIS CONTENT .....	9
1. THE DIGITAL ECONOMY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE EVOLUTION OF MARKETING (Chapter 1 content).....	9
2. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MARKETING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE DIGITAL ECONOMY .....	12
(Chapter 2 content) .....	12
3. DIGITAL MARKETING TECHNOLOGIES AND PROCESSES IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL ECONOMY DEVELOPMENT (Chapter 3 content) .....	15
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	22
REFERENCES .....	27
LISTA PUBLICAȚIILOR LA TEMA TEZEI.....	29
ADNOTARE .....	30
АННОТАЦИЯ .....	31
SUMMARY.....	32

## THE RESEARCH CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

**The actuality and the importance of the research topic.** The digital economy opens up vast opportunities for all areas of economic activity, including the entrepreneurial sector, improving the quality of communication with customers and creating conditions for enhancing the competitiveness and efficiency of product and service promotion actions. Among the fundamental characteristics of the digital economy are: high speed of development; transformation of business processes; implementation of digital technologies; creation and development of new business models; demand for new professions and skills, the constant need to update knowledge; the spread of innovations and their integration into various spheres of the economy and society; and the development of electronic payment systems.

The penetration of advanced digital technologies into entrepreneurial activities is of great importance for the development of any country's economy, including an emerging economy like that of the Republic of Moldova (World Bank, 2024). The implementation of modern technologies contributes to the profound transformation of business processes and amplifies the influence of digital solutions on the evolution and optimization of business structures, which in turn stimulates economic growth and increases the competitiveness of enterprises. The new generation of internet applications has significantly expanded the possibilities for marketing, allowing companies to implement innovative, more targeted, and measurable forms of communication compared to traditional marketing methods. The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated digital transformation and highlighted how important it is for businesses to be flexible and adapt to changes in the external environment, while digital marketing provided the necessary tools to quickly handle crisis situations (Ding & Li, 2021; Wardhani & Romas, 2022).

The new generation of internet users is becoming increasingly mobile, demanding quick responses and immediate results to their requests. Digital platforms are so popular that people, having unlimited access to information at any time and place, want to interact with companies and brands that use personalized and relevant communications tailored to their needs and preferences. Specialized applications collect information about users' interests and instantly generate lists of offers based on consumer/user interests (Kozlova et al., 2019). At the same time, it is important to manage consumers' emotions through all channels and touchpoints, and the value proposition of products/services must be based on understanding both the consumers and market perspectives. A company's success has always depended on effective marketing. A business could not exist without the ability to find customers and convince them to buy the product or service offered (Bolos et al., 2016), and the main value of a business in the digital economy is the customer, who becomes the central figure in the economic activity process (Kokorev A.S., 2019).

Just as businesses must adapt to the modern reality, digital marketing is also undergoing transformations. The main trend in marketing is a comprehensive approach, which means that you need to make yourself known and promote your product/service wherever it is effective for the business, adapting the content format to the characteristics of the platforms: video, post, article, etc. The same theme should be presented in different formats, with links to the platforms where the company is present, in order to increase audience reach, enhance brand recognition, and get closer to the customer by responding to their requests and needs (Saura et al., 2023).

In recent years, the Republic of Moldova has paid special attention to the development and extensive use of the potential of information technologies in all areas of state, private, business, and everyday life of citizens. One of the main objectives of the Digital Transformation Strategy 2023-2030 is the formation, by 2030, of an advanced information society, where the use of information and communication technologies, expanded access to modern IT infrastructure, the

digitalization of businesses, increased labor productivity, and economic efficiency will lead to increased economic competitiveness, effective governance, and, thus, improved population well-being. Analyzing the impact of digital transformation on the competitiveness of the Republic of Moldova, researchers highlight the main barriers the country faces in transitioning to a digital economy: lack of infrastructure, low digital literacy, limited investments, and weak integration of digital solutions in small and medium-sized enterprises (Bickauske et al., 2022).

The National Program for Entrepreneurship Promotion and Competitiveness Growth for 2023-2027 generally aims to create a more favorable environment for entrepreneurship, increase access to financing, and improve entrepreneurial culture and skills. At the same time, in the long term, market requirements, strengthening the competitive capacities of small and medium-sized enterprises, and integration into the European space, including through the effective use of digital marketing tools, are priorities.

Given the limited resources and competition in a small market, well-planned and efficiently implemented digital marketing strategies can provide significant advantages. However, the share of enterprises using innovative marketing methods is extremely small. Together with enterprises implementing organizational and marketing innovations, their share constitutes approximately 4.6% of the total number of enterprises surveyed (NBS, 2021-2022).

These factors make the research on the evolution of marketing in the context of strengthening the digital economy in the Republic of Moldova not only timely but also extremely important for maintaining and developing the country's economy in the face of modern challenges.

**Literature review.** In recent years, numerous scientific works have been published that continue to develop and deepen the understanding of the digital economy and digital marketing (Williams, 2021; Pineda, 2024; Xia, 2024). Given that the digital economy encompasses all types of economic activities that use information technologies, it has become a key factor in economic development and increasing competitiveness (OECD, 2024). Digital marketing is an important element in this chain, allowing companies to expand their audience and compete both locally and internationally.

Existing research highlights the advantages of digital marketing for entrepreneurship, including for SMEs (Trivedi & Malik, 2022; Saura et al., 2023). It has been demonstrated that the shift of businesses to the online environment has a direct impact on the financial indicators of companies and on organizational innovations, contributing to the digitalization of business processes (Hategan et al., 2021). Researchers emphasize the importance of integrating various digital marketing strategies, such as SEO (Drivas et al., 2020), social networks (Appel et al., 2020), and content marketing (Ho et al., 2020), for creating a coherent and effective online presence (Saura et al., 2023). By developing the concept of digital marketing based on traditional principles (Kotler et al., 2017; Kotler et al., 2018), modern organizational tactics for interaction with potential clients through websites, social networks, and online marketplaces are promoted (Becker & Schmid, 2020; Caliskan et al., 2021).

Research highlights the importance of integrating data, automating processes, and personalization, as well as the need to use data and analytics to measure the effectiveness of marketing strategies and optimize them based on the results obtained (Melović et al., 2020; Aljumah et al., 2021; Saeed et al., 2023). Companies are encouraged to experiment with new tools and approaches in digital marketing, such as AI and blockchain, to ensure innovation and improve results (Drivas et al., 2020; Saura et al., 2023). It is predicted that in the near future, AI applications will become the foundation of digital marketing (Nguyen et al., 2021), with brands

anticipating buyers' needs and offering them a personalized experience, with customer data being the key to this level of personalization.

Dave Chaffey made a significant contribution to the development of digital marketing, proposing detailed approaches for the development, implementation, and evaluation of digital marketing strategies and creating models and frameworks, such as the RACE framework, which help marketers structure and optimize their digital marketing campaigns (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Chaffey, 2023).

Researchers note that the digitalization of business processes and the need for the efficient use of digital marketing tools necessitate the improvement of professional training in the fields of entrepreneurship and marketing (Carlisle, Ivanov, and Dijkmans, 2023). Emphasis is placed on the importance of using best practices to bridge the gap in the preparation of professionals capable of working in digital marketing (Slavova, 2018), noting that there is a discrepancy between what is taught in universities and the knowledge required in practice (Bierhold, 2020).

In the Republic of Moldova, researchers analyze the main advantages of using digital marketing in entrepreneurship, its impact on brand/company awareness, expanded opportunities in marketing research (Belostecinic & Jomir, 2023). Digital ecosystems forming around SMEs are also examined, as well as how digitalization and the implementation of technologies are changing the business environment and company strategies (Coceban et al., 2022).

Despite the existence of a vast body of literature, there is a need to expand research for a better understanding of the transformation of technologies and digital marketing processes in the context of the strengthening digital economy, as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of digital marketing use by businesses. This will not only allow the identification of successful practices and challenges faced by companies but will also contribute to the development of marketing approaches and technologies tailored to the needs of the national market. The relevance, theoretical and practical importance, and insufficient development of this issue in business management and marketing activities, as well as the importance and necessity of using modern marketing methods, including digital marketing, determined the choice of the topic for this doctoral research.

**The object of the research:** the evolution of marketing in the context of the digital economy, the transformation of traditional marketing approaches, and the influence of digital technologies on the development and implementation of modern marketing strategies.

**The subject of the research:** marketing strategies in entrepreneurship, analysis of approaches in selecting marketing tools based on the size of the business, the specifics of the product, the target audience, and market conditions.

**The purpose of the research:** Exploring the main trends in the development of marketing in the context of the strengthening digital economy in the Republic of Moldova, highlighting the specifics of using digital marketing in entrepreneurship, and developing practical recommendations to increase the efficiency of digital marketing tools usage.

**Research objectives:**

- Defining the essence and main characteristics of the digital economy, as well as its influence on the formation and development of the modern marketing concept;
- Studying the main directions of marketing tool transformation in the context of the digital economy, identifying key trends and issues;
- Exploring the level of business process digitalization in enterprises in the Republic of Moldova;

- Analyzing entrepreneurial practices regarding the implementation of digital marketing based on quantitative and qualitative research;
- Classifying enterprises based on their size, type of marketing strategies, and level of advancement in digital marketing;
- Investigating the influence of market specifics on the marketing strategy model in B2C and B2B segments;
- Determining the main directions for improving the training of marketing professionals based on the expectations and practices of entrepreneurs;
- Developing practical recommendations for improving the marketing activities of enterprises in the Republic of Moldova in the context of the digital economy's development.

**The main hypothesis of the research.** The process of digitalizing marketing in the Republic of Moldova is determined by the general trends in the development of the digital economy, the level of digitalization of business processes, as well as the availability of financial, technological, and human resources of companies/firms.

*To confirm the main hypothesis, the following working hypotheses were developed:*

- The development of the digital economy drives the development of marketing tools. As the economy becomes more digitalized, companies increasingly adopt modern digital technologies and platforms for more efficient interaction with their target audience and for optimizing their marketing strategies.

- The level of digitalization of a company's business processes is determined by a set of factors such as the availability of financial and technological resources, the level of employees' digital skills, and the management's willingness to implement innovative solutions.

- The level of digitalization of a company's business processes is directly proportional to the effectiveness of implementing digital marketing. The higher the level of digitalization of a company's internal processes, the more successful the implementation of digital marketing tools.

- The size of the enterprise directly influences the level of marketing digitalization: large companies typically have greater resources and capabilities to implement complex digital strategies, while small and medium-sized enterprises are limited in their digital initiatives due to financial and technological constraints.

- The characteristics of the product/service, including consumption frequency, significantly impact the choice of marketing tools and approaches: depending on the nature of the product, the target audience, and the price segment, companies choose specific communication channels and promotion strategies to achieve maximum efficiency.

- The specifics of B2C and B2B segments, as well as customers' preference for offline purchases, influence the choice of marketing tools and approaches, such as mass communication targeting a broad audience or personalized solutions.

**The research methodology.** The methodological and scientific-theoretical foundation of the work is based on scientific studies regarding the theory of marketing, management, and the analysis of entrepreneurial activity. The dissertation research was conducted using the works of renowned researchers in the field of marketing, such as F. Kotler, K. Keller, M. Chaffey, and others. General scientific methods were used in the work: the systemic approach, analysis and synthesis, historical and logical approaches, and critical analysis of materials.

In the research process, a comprehensive approach was used in collecting empirical data, including both quantitative and qualitative methods. The author conducted a study among 131 enterprises (in 2023), as well as three qualitative studies through interviews with entrepreneurs

and case studies, which allowed for the development of a typology of enterprises based on the level of digital marketing usage, as well as a detailed analysis of issues related to the use of digital marketing tools and the digitalization of the entire marketing activity cycle. Various statistical analysis methods were used during the research, ensuring a high level of credibility of the results obtained.

The research is interdisciplinary in nature, as methods and theoretical foundations from various scientific fields were used, such as economic theory, management, specific marketing theories, and sociological methods. This approach contributed to a comprehensive study of digital marketing in the context of strengthening the digital economy, providing a complete picture of its development and promotion, particularly in entrepreneurial activities.

**Scientific novelty and originality of the research** consist in conducting a comprehensive study on the evolution of marketing within the context of the consolidation of the digital economy in the Republic of Moldova; in developing a typology of enterprises based on their size and marketing strategies; determining the influence of business specifics on the use of digital marketing tools; and in designing and testing comprehensive approaches for managing customer relationships amidst constant market changes, the integration of various technological systems, and the improvement of data-driven decision-making processes. The research results can be used in the educational process, in business practices, for the development of policies to support entrepreneurship.

**The research problem solved** consists in the scientific and practical substantiation of the influence of company size on the level of digital marketing implementation, as well as the development of a cluster-based approach for analyzing the digital maturity of companies. This has enabled the establishment of a correlation between company size and the level of digitalization of business processes, thus contributing to a better understanding of the barriers and opportunities for an effective digital transformation of marketing strategies.

**Theoretical significance of the research:** the obtained results complement existing approaches regarding the content of marketing activities, expand the understanding of the differences in the use of digital marketing by enterprises of different sizes, and contribute to enriching the theory of strategic management by identifying how companies in the Republic of Moldova adapt to technological changes and how these changes influence their strategic positioning and competitive advantages. Understanding the influence of digital marketing on businesses contributes to the development of policies aimed at stimulating economic growth and technological development in the country, as well as forming broader theoretical approaches to economic modernization.

**Practical significance of the research** results lies in the possibility of their use by management authorities as a scientific and analytical basis for developing regional and municipal programs to promote elements of the digital economy and foster entrepreneurship, including SMEs. Entrepreneurs can use the research results in the process of designing, implementing, and increasing the efficiency of digital marketing for the integrated promotion of their products and services. The dissertation materials can also be used in training personnel for specializations such as "Marketing and Logistics," "Business Administration," as well as in the development of continuous training programs for business managers and marketing specialists.

**The main theses proposed for the defense:**

1. The size of the enterprise has a significant influence on the level of digital marketing implementation. Four clusters of companies were identified: 1) companies that are the least advanced in digital marketing, representing 35% of the sample; 2) companies with a complex marketing structure and limited resources – 36%; 3) companies that use both traditional and



- digital marketing channels – 16%; 4) companies that are the most advanced in digital marketing – 13%.
2. The majority of enterprises (71%) belong to clusters that have either not made significant progress in digital marketing or are facing resource limitations and challenges in marketing processes. This indicates that the vast majority of companies are still in the early or intermediate stages of digital transformation in their marketing strategies.
  3. A correlation was established between the size of the enterprise and the level of digitalization of its business processes. Larger companies have a higher level of digitalization, including in the areas of marketing and sales.
  4. None of the companies that participated in the case study have a fully digitized marketing cycle that allows continuous tracking of the customer journey at all stages of interaction — from the first contact to the final purchase of the product or service. In the B2C segment, there is more active use of digital marketing tools and analytics due to the need for close interaction with end consumers. At the same time, companies in the B2B segment rely more often on traditional methods, which is explained by the specific nature of their client base and more complex sales processes.
  5. The main obstacles to implementing new tools for customer data analysis and identification across all companies are: the lack of necessary skills, the difficulty of integration, and the high cost of implementation and maintenance of these technologies.

**Implementation of the research results:** The research results have been validated and are being used in the marketing activities of SMEs in Chişinău.

**Approval of the research results:** The main ideas and results of the research were approved at international scientific and practical conferences: "Between the digital economy and the need for a paradigm shift towards nature", May 14-15, Bucharest, 2020; International Scientific Symposium of Doctoral Students "Modern Development Trends: Perspectives of Young Researchers" 2021, Chişinău; International Scientific and Practical Conference "Economic Growth in the Context of Globalization"; Chişinău, 2019-2023; International Scientific Conference of Students "Challenges of Accounting in the Vision of Young Researchers," 2022; International Scientific Conference "Development through Research and Innovation," Chişinău, 2022. The study results were discussed during the scientific and practical seminar of AESM "Marketing in the Digital Era: Trends, Issues, Opportunities," in 2021 and 2022; they were tested and used in the marketing activities of SMEs in Chişinău.

**Publications:** The main theses of the doctoral research are presented in 10 scientific publications, with a total volume of 6.92 author sheets.

**The structure and volume of the thesis** correspond to the subject, purpose, objectives, and logic of the research. The thesis includes: an introduction, three chapters of the main part, a list of references with 230 titles, and 15 pages of annexes. The main content of the work is presented over 137 pages, including 34 tables and 6 figures.

**Keywords:** digital economy, digital marketing, digitalization of business processes, marketing strategies, entrepreneurship.

## THESIS CONTENT

### 1. THE DIGITAL ECONOMY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE EVOLUTION OF MARKETING (Chapter 1 content)

**Chapter 1. The digital economy and its influence on the evolution of marketing** is dedicated to analyzing the essence and characteristics of the digital economy, determining its influence on the development of the modern marketing concept and the transformation of marketing tools. **In**

**paragraph 1.1, "The Essence of the Digital Economy and its Development Prospects,"** the main approaches to defining the digital economy are analyzed, identifying its key elements and development trends.

The development of the digital economy and the penetration of digital (information) technologies into various sectors of the economy have significantly impacted the definition of the term "digital economy." Initially, the digital economy was considered an activity related to information technologies (Tapscott, 1996; Negroponte, 1995), the internet, and e-commerce, but later the digital economy began to be defined as an economy based on digital technologies. Increasing attention is being paid to the transformative influence of digital technologies on business models, markets, and daily activities (UNCTAD, 2006). Over time, the prevailing opinion has emerged that the digital economy is increasingly intertwined with the traditional economy (UNCTAD, 2019). The deep integration of digital technologies into all aspects of the economy is emphasized, reflecting their pervasive influence and indicating the growing recognition of the complexity of the digital economy and its crucial role in shaping modern economic landscapes.

The key elements of the digital economy include big data, cloud computing, the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, blockchain, digital marketing, e-commerce, social networks, and cybersecurity, all playing a crucial role in increasing productivity, stimulating innovation, and ensuring sustainable economic growth.

The digital economy and digital marketing are closely linked, as both are the result of the rapid development of digital technologies and the internet. The digital economy encompasses all forms of e-commerce and e-business, as well as changes in organizations, markets, and society, related to the use of information and communication technologies (O'Brien & Marakas, 2011). Digital marketing is a tool of the digital economy, having a significant impact on businesses' commercial activities, promoting products and services at the national and international levels, contributing to providing the highest quality services to customers, establishing long-term partnership relationships with them, and ensuring maximum management flexibility.

Government regulation of the digitalization process of the Moldovan economy is carried out through the implementation of the "Digital Moldova 2030" strategy, which defines the main directions for using key digital technologies and establishes performance indicators. The active implementation of digitalization in the entrepreneurial environment is planned, which should contribute to changing business models, increasing productivity, and improving the efficiency of enterprises.

The latest OECD report (OECD, 2024) emphasizes the need to adapt policies to manage rapid changes in the digital sphere, highlighting the importance of new technologies such as big data, machine learning, and artificial intelligence, which play a crucial role in the development of the digital economy, enabling the analysis of massive data volumes and improving decision-making processes across various sectors.

**In paragraph 1.2, "The Influence of the Digital Economy on the Formation and Development of the Modern Marketing Concept,"** approaches to defining digital marketing and the main stages of its evolution are analyzed. The digital economy has a significant influence on the formation and development of the modern marketing concept, transforming traditional methods and creating new opportunities for interacting with consumers. The concept of digital marketing emerged based on traditional marketing principles, but over time it began to include modern organizational tactics and the use of marketing methods to interact with potential customers through websites, social networks, and online marketplaces (Bolos et al., 2016). The structure of digital marketing is derived from the structure of traditional marketing; at the same

time, it simplifies the most costly part of traditional marketing, amplifies the marketing process's effect, and shortens the sales cycle.

The digital economy has caused changes in traditional marketing models, such as the 4P model. However, many specialists and researchers, including F. Kotler, K. L. Keller, and D. Chaffey, argue for maintaining the 4Ps (Product, Price, Place, Promotion) in the digital context, as digital technologies do not alter the fundamental principles of marketing, and the traditional 4P concept remains relevant. Nevertheless, for its successful application, it is necessary to consider new tools and communication channels, such as social networks, search engines, email, and mobile apps, to effectively reach the target audience.

Digital marketing is defined in different ways by various authors, reflecting the complexity of this concept and its evolution. Different terms are often used interchangeably, such as e-marketing, digital marketing, internet marketing, online marketing, and social media marketing. Each definition emphasizes different aspects and elements of digital marketing, but the existing definitions converge on the idea that digital marketing represents a set of strategies and tactics focused on using digital technologies and online platforms to promote products and services, attract and retain customers, and achieve business objectives.

According to recent data, the growth rate of digital marketing for the period 2020–2026 is estimated at 9%. The growth of digital displays will average 15.5%, while search growth will be 12.2%. Searches account for 40.9% of the global digital advertising and marketing market. 63% of companies have already increased their digital marketing budgets in recent years. Additionally, 94% of small businesses plan to increase their marketing expenses in 2024. In the period 2023–2024, the growth rate of budget spending on digital marketing among companies was 10% (Marino, 2024).

**Paragraph 1.3. The Main Directions of the Transformation of Marketing Tools in the Context of the Digital Economy** is dedicated to the analysis of digital marketing tools. The digital economy significantly transforms modern marketing concepts, making them more data-driven, personalized, and efficient. Today, digital marketing involves managing and utilizing "the 5Ds of the digital economy" (digital devices, digital platforms, digital technologies, digital media, digital data), which define both the consumers' ability to interact with brands and the capacity of businesses to reach and learn about their audience through various methods (Chaffey, 2020).

The main tools of digital marketing include: search engine optimization (SEO), SMS marketing, email marketing, content marketing, social media, PPC (pay-per-click), affiliate and referral marketing, video marketing, mobile marketing, and push notifications. A key element of a successful marketing strategy is the integration of all these tools to create a coherent and efficient online presence (Drivas et al., 2020; Saura et al., 2023). Digital marketing now also extends to non-internet channels that provide digital media, such as mobile phones (SMS and MMS), personalized calls, etc.

However, traditional marketing has not lost its relevance. F. Kotler argues that both forms of marketing can coexist and complement each other (Kotler et al., 2017). Traditional marketing plays an important role in raising awareness and interest among consumers for new products and services, as well as for information technologies. Based on advertising strategies such as direct sales, television, radio, mail, and print media, traditional marketing more easily reaches a local audience than other forms of marketing, which is why the use of traditional marketing, which people are accustomed to, remains high (Gelashvili, 2021). Traditional marketing remains effective for reaching certain population groups that are less active online. As interaction expands, customers communicate more closely with companies, and the need for digital marketing grows. The task of modern marketing is to get as close as possible to the consumer through marketing

strategies tailored to the specifics of the business and to make a timely transition from traditional marketing tools to digital ones.

## 2. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MARKETING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

### (Chapter 2 content)

**Chapter 2. Theoretical and methodological foundations of marketing in the context of the consolidation of the digital economy** presents the theoretical aspects and empirical basis of the doctoral research. In paragraph 2.1, Methodology and Empirical Basis of the Doctoral Research, the theoretical concepts and approaches used as the theoretical-explanatory model are presented. Porter's model of competitive forces (Porter, 1980) is analyzed, as well as the theory of entrepreneurship (Schumpeter J., Knight F., Drucker P.); the theoretical concept of resources and the theory of dynamic capabilities (Wernerfelt, 1984); the theory of dynamic capabilities in marketing (Kwon, 2021; Kim & Lim, 2022); the technological acceptance model theory (F. D. Davis, 1989); and the resource dependence theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003).

The theory of entrepreneurship emphasizes the role of innovations and new market opportunities, while the resource-based approach and the theory of dynamic capabilities focus on the unique resources and adaptive capabilities of companies necessary to maintain competitive advantage. The integration and coordination of these theoretical frameworks provided a comprehensive analysis and helped adapt digital marketing strategies to the specifics of the Moldovan market, which is essential for the development of long-term strategies and maintaining competitiveness.

Table 2.1 presents the research conducted by the author in accordance with the purpose and objectives of the dissertation.

**Table 2.1. The characteristics of the empirical studies carried out by the author**

No	Name of the study	Type of the study	Sample size	the time of the research
1.	Marketing of SMEs	Qualitative	20 entrepreneurs (Chisinau)	2019, 2024
2.	ERP implementation within the SMEs	Qualitative (Case study)	5 SMEs (Chisinau)	2022
3.	Marketing activities of companies	Quantitative	131 enterprises from various cities/regions	May-June 2023
4.	The influence of the specifics of the business on the marketing activities of firms/companies	Qualitative (case study)	7 firms/companies	December 2023

The study is descriptive in nature, determined by the need to obtain empirical data that provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon studied and its structural elements, which is important for obtaining a complete and objective picture of the situation in the Republic of Moldova. To achieve the proposed goal, a mixed approach was used in the research organization. Thus, quantitative research (entrepreneurs' survey) served to determine statistically significant relationships between two or more variables characterizing marketing practices. Case studies were used to analyze specific real-life situations.

The research based on case studies includes in-depth interviews with entrepreneurs - business owners and marketing specialists, representatives of enterprises of various sizes, operating in both B2B and B2C segments.

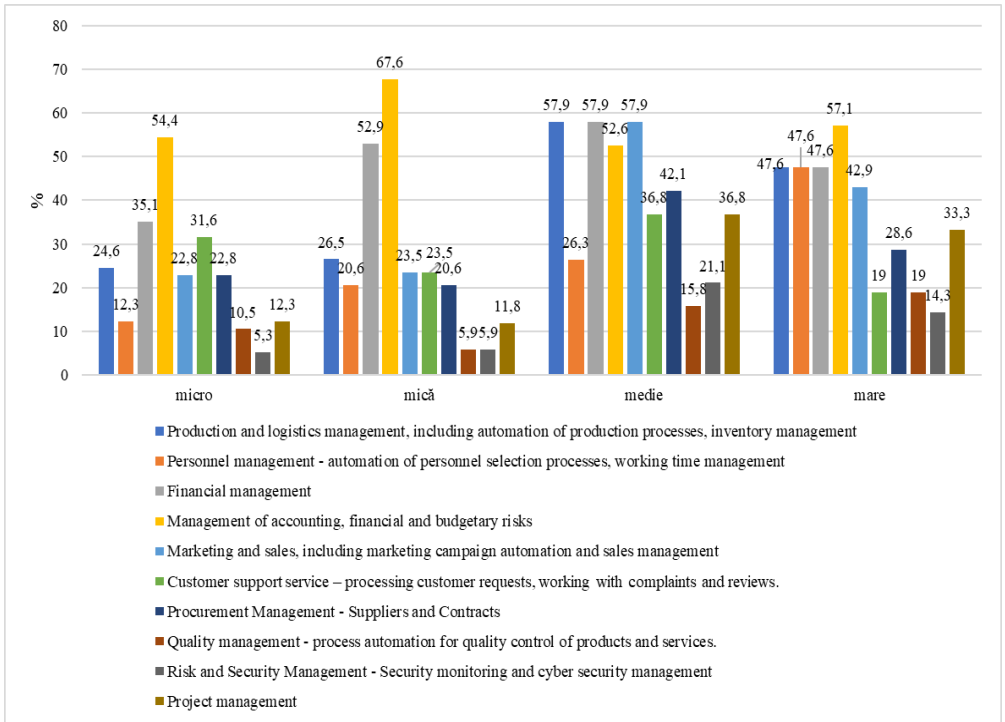
Table 2.2 **Characteristics of case studies**

<b>Company name</b>	<b>Type of company</b>	<b>The field of activity</b>	<b>Age of the enterprise</b>
<b>B2C segment</b>			
Automall	large	importer of auto parts	16 years
GBS	large	importer of auto parts and cars	29 years
Medpark	medium	trade in medical services	13 years
BravoMotors	micro	car repairs and sale of spare parts	14 years
Energy Fitness	medium	trade in sports services	14 years
<b>B2B segment</b>			
Comsales Grup	large	design and production services for complex industrial structures	18 years
RoofArt	large	importer of roofing materials.	15 years
MCF Engros	large	importer of construction materials and finishes	27 years
Jaac Digital	medium	trade in software and digital products	13 years

**Data analysis methods:** statistical analysis, cluster analysis using MCA, qualitative interview analysis, and systematization. Software used: R and SPSS.

**In paragraph 2.2, "Digital Transformation of Enterprises as a Factor in the Implementation of Digital Marketing,"** the digitalization of business processes in enterprises in the Republic of Moldova is analyzed.

The digitalization of business processes has a significant impact on the marketing activities of enterprises, creating new opportunities and optimizing methods of interaction with customers. Nearly half of all enterprises have digitalized their finance and accounting processes; almost a quarter have digitalized their customer support services and deliveries; and approximately 10% have implemented digitalization in quality control and cybersecurity practices (*Figure 2.1*). Micro and small enterprises have similar percentages of digitalization implementation in the areas of marketing and sales (22.8% and 23.5%, respectively). This may indicate that for these categories of enterprises, the implementation of digital technologies in these business processes may be less of a priority or more challenging. The percentage of medium-sized enterprises that have implemented digitalization in marketing and sales was 57.9%, indicating a higher level of interest or more successful implementation of digital technologies in this area. In large enterprises, the percentage of digitalized processes decreases compared to medium-sized enterprises but remains at a relatively high level (42.9%).



**Figure. 2.1. Enterprises with implemented digitization by size, %.**

*Source:* author's research, 2023

Case studies show that entrepreneurs recognize the importance of digitalizing business processes, emphasizing that in modern business, marketing cannot function efficiently without digitalization, as digital technologies enable the management, measurement, and collection of necessary data for decision-making. Digitalization of marketing is not just a trend but an essential element of business success.

Companies use various approaches to integrate and utilize information technologies in management, which influences their ability to analyze and optimize business processes. Most companies have a separation between their website and ERP or CRM systems. This separation creates obstacles to complete data analysis and full integration across various platforms, limiting the ability to analyze and optimize business processes and reducing the efficiency of processing customer data.

A comparative qualitative study from 2019-2024 showed that companies are gradually realizing the importance of digitalizing business processes as a key factor in improving quality and efficiency. There is a noticeable shift in both understanding the issue and the outcomes of the measures taken to implement changes. Companies have demonstrated positive dynamics in the digitalization of accounting and customer relationship management. The approach to marketing activities has shifted towards attracting external specialists and marketing companies. Internal labor resources are being redistributed, with a focus on structural improvements and the gradual digitalization of internal processes.

**In paragraph 2.3, "The Role of ERP Implementation in the Digitalization of Business Processes and Marketing Strategies,"** the efficiency of using ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) systems for business automation and creating a unified informational environment within the organization is analyzed. An ERP system can collect detailed product information. A deep understanding of one's product, data on demand, sales, and inventory enables successful marketing without creating unproductive stock.

Based on the example of the ERP "Symphony" implementation in SMEs (Gagauz, 2022) specialized in selling auto parts and vehicle repair, it is demonstrated that using this system improves financial outcomes, reduces costs, and optimizes human resources. The "Symphony" system includes numerous components such as internal process management (BPM), customer relationships (CRM), inventory management (EWM), and performance monitoring (KPI).

The ERP system, through the CRM module, allows for the evaluation of the entire customer journey, from the initial interest in the company or product to purchase, repeat purchases, or recommending the company or services to other potential clients. With just a few clicks, one can see what customers are purchasing, which offers motivate them, when they shop, and much more. Adding additional products to their online shopping cart; scheduling sales calls, synchronized with their order cycle. ERP makes it easy to view best-selling products across different channels and adjust the approach accordingly.

Companies that implemented the ERP "Symphony" have, over more than ten years of using this software solution, significantly improved financial results, reduced costs, and optimized the use of human resources within the enterprise. Data exchange with the accounting system has been automated, significantly speeding up the management of the product catalog, partners, and primary documentation (Gagauz, 2022).

Thanks to integration with the CRM module, the ERP system has helped companies better track and manage customer interactions, leading to increased satisfaction levels and repeat purchases; it allowed them to personalize offers based on past purchase data, which increased the efficiency of marketing campaigns. The ERP system enabled forecasting future sales based on data about the technical regulations of auto services and purchase history, helping companies plan their budgets and purchases more accurately, reduce costs, and minimize the risks of stock shortages or surpluses. Additionally, it helped analyze the efficiency of marketing efforts, improve targeting, and optimize pricing strategies.

### **3. DIGITAL MARKETING TECHNOLOGIES AND PROCESSES IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITAL ECONOMY DEVELOPMENT (Chapter 3 content)**

**Chapter 3. Digital marketing technologies and processes in the context of digital economy development** includes the results of empirical research, particularly the typology of enterprises based on size and marketing strategies used; it analyzes the influence of the market on marketing strategy models in the B2C and B2B segments, as well as the issue of developing digital marketing skills as a factor in increasing competitiveness in the context of digital transformation.

**In paragraph 3.1, "The Influence of Enterprise Size on Marketing Strategy Models,"** the results of clustering enterprises based on size and the use of digital marketing are presented.

The research results show that large enterprises use a wider range of marketing channels and rely more on costlier methods, such as television and radio advertising, while micro and small enterprises more frequently use more affordable channels, such as social networks and leaflets. The most popular channel for all groups of enterprises is social media – ranging from 77% for micro-enterprises to 95% for large enterprises. Email marketing and mobile marketing are used less frequently, especially by micro-enterprises (14% and 12%). Video marketing, content

marketing, and affiliate marketing are more often applied by large enterprises (71%, 57%, and 57%); advertising through messaging apps and forums is used less but more frequently by large enterprises (33%). Advertising on e-commerce platforms and classified ad websites, such as 999.md, is more popular among micro-enterprises (54%) than among large enterprises (38%). Traditional marketing methods, such as television and radio advertising and billboard advertising, are used more frequently by large enterprises, while SMEs limit themselves to leaflets and business cards.

Table 3.1. **Marketing channels used**

Answer option	P-value, Chi-Squared	P-value, Fisher	Responses distribution by enterprise size, %			
			micro	small	medium	large
Platform 999.md	0.26	0.267	54	41	32	38
Leaflets, business cards	0.004	0.004	26	41	47	71
TV advertising	<0.001	<0.001	9	18	21	62
Radio advertising	<0.001	<0.001	12	24	32	57
Advertising on street signs	0.004	0.007	19	18	32	57
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)	0.082	0.084	26	38	42	57
Search advertising (PPC)	<0.001	<0.001	19	24	42	71
Social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn)	0.334	0.308	77	79	79	95
Email marketing	0.067	0.058	14	24	37	38
Mobile Marketing (Mobile Apps, SMS Sends)	0.352	0.341	12	15	21	29
Video marketing (YouTube, Vimeo, etc.)	<0.001	<0.001	23	26	42	71
Content Marketing (blogs, articles, infographics)	0.002	0.003	18	18	37	57
Affiliate marketing (collaboration with partners)	0.006	0.007	19	21	37	57
Advertising via instant messaging (WhatsApp, Viber, Telegram, etc.)	0.028	0.036	9	18	5	33
Advertising on forums and communities	0.063	0.064	9	15	21	33
None	0.336	0.462	5	9	0	0

Source: author's research, 2023

Following the author's research, four clusters (Figure 3.1) were identified according to the size of the company and the marketing strategies used (Gagauz, Gagauz, 2023).



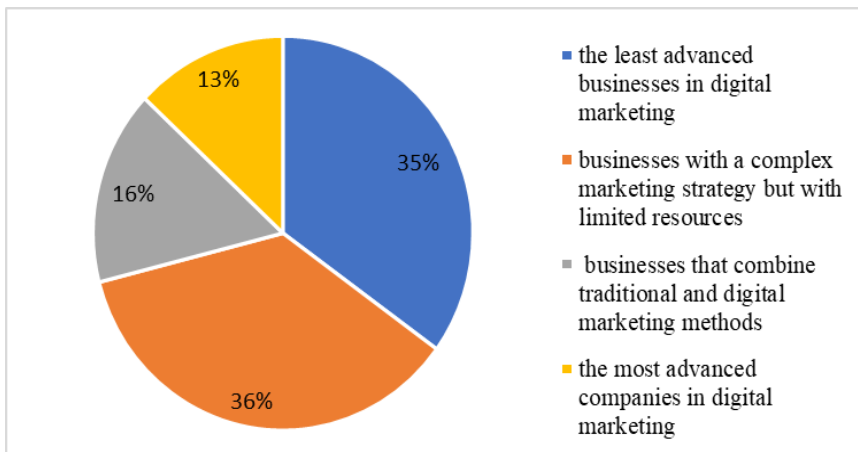


Figure 3.1. Share of companies in clusters, %

Source: author's research, 2023

**Cluster 1 includes the least advanced enterprises in digital marketing, comprising 46 enterprises (35% of the sample).** In these firms, the position of marketing specialist is rarely encountered, often being filled by the owner or not existing at all (this cluster includes nearly all enterprises where no one is responsible for marketing). Thus, only 20% of the representatives in this cluster have used the services of marketing firms. In this cluster, expectations from marketing activities are low or unclear, and all marketing channels listed are used less frequently than in other clusters; technological modernization is almost nonexistent (57% do not use any modern technology, compared to 0-24% in other clusters). The most popular marketing channel is social media (59%), followed by advertising on classified websites (43%), such as 999.md in Moldova. The next popular channel is leaflets, used by one-fifth of the firms. Only in this cluster are there firms that do not use any marketing channels. Representatives of firms in this cluster frequently complain about a lack of budget (43%), lack of knowledge (35%), and lack of qualified personnel (35%).

**Cluster 2 includes enterprises with a complex marketing strategy but limited resources, comprising 47 enterprises (36% of the sample).** This cluster is dominated by SMEs but also includes a few large firms. This cluster lacks the resources typical of clusters 3 and 4, but unlike cluster 1, marketing is present and, in some aspects, is more complex than in cluster 3. In this cluster, marketing is managed by the business owner in 47% of cases, but much more frequently than in cluster 1, the company hires an internal (32%) or external (17%) specialist. Like in cluster 1, this cluster faces budget constraints and lack of knowledge – less so than clusters 3 and 4 (approximately 40% for the first two compared to 20% for the others). One respondent wrote: “I don’t have time for everything. I’m the manager, and I handle organizing and overseeing all activities.”

**Cluster 3 includes enterprises that combine traditional and digital marketing methods, comprising 21 enterprises (16% of the sample).** In this cluster, more than half of the firms are large, but it also includes representatives of SMEs. In these firms, marketing is managed by someone other than the owner in 72% of cases, more frequently than in the first two clusters.

However, they more often report that the owner sets the development direction (100%) and oversees the results (57%). Although more is expected from marketing specialists, representatives of this cluster are more satisfied with marketing results than those in clusters 2 or 4. This cluster includes most of the large enterprises that participated in the survey (with 250 or more employees), recognized in both domestic and international markets, and whose commercial brands are quite well-known.

This cluster more frequently uses classic and expensive marketing channels: video marketing (81%), TV advertising (76%), radio (67%), and billboards (62%), but they are not limited to these, also using social media (95%), leaflets (71%), partnerships (57%), etc. Some firms in cluster 3 use complex online channels: SEO (43%), PPC (43%), email marketing (37%) – however, even though they have resources, they are slow to adopt modern technologies, such as cloud services (43%) and neural networks (14%).

**Cluster 4 includes the most advanced enterprises in digital marketing, comprising 17 enterprises (13%).** These enterprises do not face budget problems (18%) or digital marketing knowledge gaps (18%), but they most frequently lack qualified personnel (88%). One respondent complained not only about internal specialists but also external ones: “The skills of outsourced specialists are minimal compared to internal staff.” Nevertheless, this cluster has more frequently used marketing firms. These firms have higher expectations than others, citing challenges such as a small audience, low conversion rates, and ineffective advertising campaigns. Compared to cluster 3, this cluster sets fewer objectives and evaluates marketing activity results less positively.

**Paragraph 3.2. "The Influence of Market Specifics on the Marketing Strategy Model", Subparagraph 3.2.1. "Marketing Strategy Model in the B2C Segment"** presents a case study analysis, focused on identifying the capacities and possibilities of companies to implement modern marketing technologies, establishing the relationship between the business specifics and marketing strategies, with an emphasis on integrating digital technologies.

Most companies in the B2C segment are oriented toward a broad audience, which requires large-scale marketing efforts to cover a wide customer base. This imposes certain requirements on marketing strategies, especially in the context of creating a personalized experience and increasing customer loyalty. However, the nature of product and service consumption varies depending on the business specifics, requiring adjustments to marketing approaches. For example, companies like Automall, BravoMotors, and Energy Fitness are characterized by periodic consumption of goods and services, leading to cyclical marketing campaigns focused on customer retention and repeat sales. In these cases, the success of marketing strategies often depends on seasonal factors, customer feedback, and price competitiveness. For example, at Automall and BravoMotors, quick purchases and fierce price competition highlight the importance of promptly responding to customer needs and maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction.

Companies like GBS and Medpark face one-time purchases where each buying decision carries high importance. Therefore, marketing efforts are focused on building trust, strengthening the brand, and emphasizing the quality of products and services. The differences in consumption patterns are also reflected in marketing communication approaches. For companies with periodic consumption, the focus is on building long-term relationships with customers and maintaining their engagement through regular updates and special offers. Meanwhile, companies with major one-time sales, such as GBS, need to concentrate on a "targeted marketing" strategy, where key elements are brand trust, superior quality, and the emotional component of the decision.

Moreover, the maturity level of marketing strategies varies considerably depending on the type of business and consumption nature. For companies with a high consumption frequency, such as Automall and BravoMotors, managing mass marketing flows and customer feedback is essential. In contrast, for Medpark and GBS, the personalization elements, project management, and service quality become critical, as each interaction can significantly influence brand perception. Active use of social networks stands out as a common element in the strategies of all companies, demonstrating the importance of these platforms for interacting with customers and increasing their engagement. Additionally, besides attracting new customers, companies also focus on retaining existing ones, as evidenced by the use of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems. Implementing CRM indicates a strategic approach to long-term customer relationships and supporting repeat sales.

Special attention is given to branding, considered an important tool for building trust and increasing loyalty. For example, companies like Automall, Energy Fitness, and MedPark are actively working on strengthening their brands through PR and influencer marketing, which helps solidify their market positioning.

Although most companies try to use data to personalize offers, the frequency and depth of customer interaction vary. Energy Fitness and Medpark appear to be more active in this aspect, demonstrating constant attention to customer feedback, which is essential for improving services and customer experience. Some companies, like BravoMotors, actively use CRM to encourage service renewals and transitions to new products, contributing to increased customer loyalty.

Analyzing the websites of different companies allows drawing conclusions about their approaches to digitalization and the use of web technologies. Companies like Automall, which have integrated their digital platforms with ERP, CRM, and other management systems, benefit from automation, improved analytics, and resource optimization. In contrast, companies with independent CMS systems face certain data and analysis limitations, reducing their ability to manage customer interactions efficiently and optimize marketing efforts.

Although online platforms exist, most customers still prefer to complete purchases or make important decisions offline, emphasizing the need to integrate online and offline approaches to increase the overall conversion rate and improve the customer experience.

The companies analyzed (case study) differ significantly in terms of the degree of implementation and use of integrated analytics. For example, Automall and GBS have configured analytics systems through Google Analytics and call tracking, allowing them to track the customer journey with a high level of attribution accuracy. Conversely, BravoMotors and Energy Fitness do not have access to such detailed customer attribution, limiting their ability to accurately evaluate the effectiveness of marketing efforts.

Some companies, such as Energy Fitness and MedPark, face issues with data integration between online and offline segments, preventing the formation of a complete picture of customer interaction with the company. Most companies have mentioned the lack of skills, difficulty of integration, and high cost of implementing and maintaining complete analytics.

To achieve maximum efficiency in marketing strategies and a deep understanding of consumer behavior, a key element is the existence of a fully digitalized marketing cycle that allows tracking the customer journey at all stages — from the first interaction to the final purchase of the product or service (Kannan & Li, 2017). However, research has shown that none of the B2C companies involved in the analysis have a fully integrated system, indicating significant gaps in digital transformation.

**Subparagraph 3.2.2. "Marketing Strategy Model in the B2B Segment"** presents the analysis of marketing activities' characteristics in the B2B segment.

Key features include a long sales cycle due to the complexity and importance of decisions made, the need to coordinate with multiple stakeholders, and the high cost of products or services (De Jong et al., 2021). Personal relationships between the seller and buyer play an important role, and building trust and professional connections can significantly influence purchasing decisions. In B2B marketing, an individualized approach is often required for each client, which may include the personalization of products, services, and marketing messages, based on the specific needs and business objectives of the client. Thus, purchasing decisions in B2B are usually made based on logical arguments, risk analysis, and the potential return on investment (ROI). Marketing must clearly demonstrate the advantages of the product or service from the perspective of improving the client's business. These features require B2B marketing specialists to have a deep understanding of the industry, detailed customer needs analysis, and the development of complex strategies tailored to customer requirements.

The case study analysis showed that all companies actively collect and use customer feedback to improve their products and services, helping them adapt to market needs and improve customer satisfaction. Companies apply different CRM and marketing strategies based on their specific objectives and market conditions. The observed diversity in strategies, especially in the use of promotional marketing and advertising campaigns, shows that companies adapt their marketing efforts according to their business specifics and target audience. For example, RoofArt and Comsales Group use promotions and advertising more actively to boost sales, while MCF Engros and Jaac Digital focus on deeper relationships and partnerships. Jaac Digital pays less attention to mass marketing and promotions, instead focusing more on collaboration with corporate clients.

Based on the data regarding the main marketing objectives of the four B2B companies, it was found that lead generation, similar to companies in the B2C segment, is a key marketing goal, highlighting the common strategy of B2B companies to actively attract new potential clients in order to maintain and grow the business amid fierce competition and long sales cycles.

SMM is actively used by Comsales Group, MCF Engros, and RoofArt. RoofArt and Jaac Systems integrate customer relationship management (CRM) into their marketing strategies, thus emphasizing customer retention and the development of deep relationships. In the B2B sector, where the cost of acquiring a new client is significantly higher than the cost of retaining an existing client, retention strategies play a key role in maintaining business stability.

All companies use independent content management systems (CMS) that are not integrated with their enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems. This means that data collected through websites is not automatically connected with other business processes, hindering efficient data management and analysis. The websites of the four companies are described as "business cards" online, indicating their primary function of representing the company and informing potential clients. They can serve as the first point of contact between the company and clients. All websites provide the ability to collect feedback, a useful tool for improving services and products. However, the lack of integration with ERP and CRM systems limits the ability to conduct deep data analysis and use it in strategic planning. The unavailability of complete analysis reduces the ability to track the entire customer journey, from the first visit to the website to the purchase and subsequent interactions. This significantly decreases the potential of the website as a tool for optimizing marketing and sales.

B2C and B2B strategies have both common features and essential differences that influence marketing and sales approaches. Efficiency in each segment depends on the level of understanding of the target audience and the ability to adapt strategies to the specific conditions and requirements of the market. Integrating online and offline channels (omnichannel approach),

with a smooth transition between them, can significantly improve user experience and increase conversion rates in both B2C and B2B. This requires coordination of data and interactions across all channels. In B2C, increasing the level of personalization in online interactions can reduce barriers to online purchases. In B2B, a deep understanding of a particular business's needs and adapting communication and offers can improve interaction outcomes.

In B2C, where reluctance to make online purchases is observed, strengthening trust through feedback, quality guarantees, process transparency, and high levels of service can contribute to increasing online sales. In B2B, demonstrating expertise and reliability through feedback and professional articles plays a key role. Creating valuable, targeted content that responds to inquiries and solves potential clients' problems can improve engagement and lead to higher conversions in both segments. For B2C, digital channels are often the primary tool for sales and interaction, while in B2B, they serve more for initial contact, information, and supporting relationships.

**Paragraph 3.3. "Growth of Competitiveness in the Context of Digital Transformation"** analyzes the requirements for marketing activities and the preparation of marketing specialists, based on the research of entrepreneurs' opinions and experiences.

Considering the complexity of digital marketing, particularly regarding data analysis and management, research highlights the importance of continuous training and skill development to stay up-to-date with the latest trends and best practices (Saura et al., 2023). It also emphasizes the need for training in entrepreneurial marketing, which is one of the most important issues for SMEs, affecting their ability to survive and grow (Amjad et al., 2020). The digitalization of business processes and the need for the effective use of digital marketing tools require improvements in professional training in the fields of entrepreneurship and marketing (Cingi, 2023; Carlisle, Ivanov, and Dijkmans, 2023).

According to the research conducted by the author, the main expectations of entrepreneurs regarding marketing activities are related to attracting new clients and increasing sales. A significant portion of respondents (89%)—representatives of both SMEs and large businesses—mentioned this aspect. Following in importance are increasing brand awareness (66%), customer loyalty (59%), and improving the company's image (57%). Marketing activities are also associated with increasing profit (53.7%), expanding the market through the launch of new products and services (50.0%), and increasing market share (36.8%). The aspect of increasing conversions on the website or online store, most closely related to the digitalization of marketing and entrepreneurial activities, was mentioned by only 30.0% of respondents. This may be due to the fact that not all companies recognize the potential of a digital marketing strategy.

According to the data obtained, entrepreneurs, whether representing SMEs or large businesses, believe that marketing specialists must fulfill multiple tasks, with a priority on using modern marketing technologies (76.6%), confirming the understanding of rapid changes in marketing and the need to implement new tools. The next task is adjusting the company's marketing strategy in response to changes in external factors (71.2%), constantly monitoring changes in demand, supply, the appearance of similar products and services, and tracking competition (68.4%). Additionally, significant emphasis is placed on the need for customer interaction, collecting information about their preferences and feedback (64.2%). Among the tasks for marketing specialists, respondents also include collaborating with advertising agencies for placing ads (52%). Besides the tasks mentioned, marketers, according to the opinion of entrepreneurs, should know how to create a marketing budget and control expenses (48.7%).

Some companies (35.1%) have used the services of specialized marketing companies in the past year. The most requested services were website creation and promotion (65.8%), social media

promotion (52.5%), which includes social media account management, content plan development, audience interaction, and results analysis; SEO optimization (42.1%), which helps websites or content become more visible in search engine results, attracting more organic traffic. About a third of companies ordered services for branding and visual identity creation, marketing research, marketing strategy efficiency analysis, CRM implementation, and online store creation. For developing a marketing strategy, 23.3% of the companies that used marketing services turned to them. It should be noted that 10.5% of the requested services refer to the development and implementation of loyalty and bonus programs.

A portion of companies, despite needing marketing services, did not turn to specialized marketing companies due to high costs (24%), lack of funds (21%), difficulty in evaluating the performance of marketing companies (26%), previous unsatisfactory results (18.8%), and lack of trust in these companies (12.5%). Generally, SME representatives face a lack of resources, and their owners handle marketing personally.

Among the difficulties encountered by entrepreneurs in marketing activities, the following were mentioned: lack of qualified employees (53%), lack of knowledge in digital marketing (29%), and the insufficient number of effective marketing companies (19%).

The digitalization of business processes and the use of digital marketing tools require special preparation not only for marketers but also for other specialists. Supporting and encouraging a culture of continuous learning within the company, as seen at Energy Fitness, and motivating employees for self-training and professional growth, along with task distribution according to employee competencies (MedPark), contribute to the constant improvement of work in the digital environment.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The results obtained from the doctoral research have contributed to new data regarding the implementation of digital marketing tools in the entrepreneurial activities of enterprises in the Republic of Moldova. The novelty of the research lies in the interdisciplinary approach to the evolution of marketing in the context of the consolidation of the digital economy, the use of various theoretical-methodological approaches, and empirical data collection methods, especially the use of clustering to identify the level of digitalization, types of marketing strategies, and their main characteristics.

The goal of the study was achieved by examining the main trends in the development of the digital economy and its influence on the evolution of the digital marketing concept and its tools; identifying the characteristics of business process digitalization and the implementation of digital marketing in entrepreneurship, using the Republic of Moldova as an example.

The research results demonstrate the relevance of the formulated objectives and tasks and confirm the proposed research hypotheses. From an applied point of view, the results contribute to solving one of the key problems of entrepreneurship development in the Republic of Moldova: providing the necessary information for the development of policies that support the growth of entrepreneurship, including SMEs, in the digitalization of business processes and the implementation of digital marketing.

### ***Principal new results obtained from the research:***

The level of business process digitalization in enterprises in the Republic of Moldova was determined as a necessary foundation for digital marketing. It was established that enterprise size is an important factor determining the level of business process digitalization. The highest level of digitalization is seen in finance and accounting across all companies, regardless of size.

A typology of enterprises was developed based on their size and marketing strategies. Four clusters were identified: 1) less advanced enterprises in digital marketing – 35% of the total sample; 2) enterprises with complex marketing and limited resources – 36%; 3) enterprises that combine traditional and digital marketing channels – 16%; and 4) the most advanced enterprises in digital marketing – 13%. The results show that the influence of enterprise size on the level of advancement in digital marketing is only partially confirmed. While most SMEs were included in the cluster of less advanced companies, some SMEs were included in the "complex marketing with limited resources" cluster.

Common and specific characteristics were identified in the marketing strategies of companies operating in the B2C and B2B segments, as well as the influence of business specifics on the use of certain digital marketing tools, including analytical capabilities. Market specifics determine the level of digital marketing implementation and the combination of traditional and digital tools. In the B2C segment, there is more active use of digital marketing tools and analytics due to the need for close interaction with end consumers. At the same time, companies in the B2B segment more often rely on traditional methods, which is determined by the specific nature of their client base and more complex sales processes.

The research revealed that none of the companies that participated in the study have a fully digitalized marketing cycle that allows continuous tracking of the customer journey through all stages of interaction—from the first contact to the final purchase of the product or service—despite significant efforts made in this area. This highlights the complexity of the digital transformation process, which prevents companies from fully leveraging modern technologies to personalize offers, optimize customer experiences, and increase conversion rates.

Managers with marketing knowledge or specialized in marketing contribute more to the implementation of digital marketing tools and allocate significant resources to the digitalization of business and marketing. Their understanding of the importance of digital technologies and strategies allows them to integrate these tools more effectively into the company's overall business model. These managers better understand the potential of digital marketing to enhance competitiveness, improve customer interactions, and increase sales. Their knowledge in using digital marketing tools enables managers to develop and implement strategies that help the company stand out in the market. Marketing-savvy managers often invest in training their employees, thereby creating a competent team capable of achieving the company's strategic objectives in digital marketing.

Entrepreneurs' expectations regarding marketing activities are high and diverse, highlighting the need to adapt training programs for marketing professionals to digital innovations. It is essential that training includes practical skills in using modern digital tools and technologies, such as artificial intelligence and automation, to meet current market demands and enhance business competitiveness.

***The research results allowed the formulation of the following conclusions:***

There is significant diversity in the level of adoption and use of digital marketing technologies in entrepreneurship. This highlights the divide between those just beginning to explore digital marketing and those already actively utilizing its capabilities. For many enterprises, especially those in the "complex marketing with limited resources" cluster, the main obstacle is the lack of both financial and technical resources. This limits their ability to implement and use more advanced digital marketing tools. Enterprises in the cluster with a high level of development in digital marketing often express dissatisfaction with the results achieved, which may indicate problems in strategy selection or implementation. The cluster that combines traditional and

digital channels shows potential for creating balanced marketing strategies that can deliver more stable results through the combination of various methods and communication channels.

There is a well-developed informational infrastructure and access to modern, universal, and specialized systems, but such complex solutions are rarely applied in SMEs. This is due to the high qualification requirements for staff and management, as well as the high costs of software and hardware components necessary to implement such systems. Because of these limitations, complex software solutions are available only to large companies with sufficient financial and human resources, while in SMEs, they are almost never used.

Despite the opportunities offered by digital marketing, managers, business owners, and marketers face challenges in implementing general marketing methods and procedures in business operations. All companies know the importance and effectiveness of digital marketing tools, investing significant resources in them and employing labor resources. Most enterprises have their own websites, enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, customer relationship management (CRM) systems, IP telephony, and other technologies. However, in many cases, marketing efforts focus on social media (SMM) and lead generation.

Effective digital marketing requires a comprehensive approach that includes big data analysis, marketing automation, offer personalization, and user experience optimization. Marketing automation, for example, can significantly improve campaign efficiency through precise targeting and timely communication with clients. Personalizing offers increases customer loyalty and contributes to higher conversion rates, while in-depth data analysis helps anticipate consumer behavior and optimize marketing strategies. Additionally, many companies do not fully utilize the possibilities offered by integrating various systems and platforms.

Marketing, as a whole, is not given significant attention. From a theoretical perspective, organizing the collection and analysis of marketing activity data does not present major difficulties and is described in the literature. However, problems related to integration, the complexity of constantly evolving systems, high qualification requirements for system integration specialists, along with a significant shortage of qualified personnel, make solving this issue extremely difficult even for large companies with considerable financial resources.

In addition to the fact that external tools for collecting customer journey data are complex and often unintegrated, in many companies, even large ones, entire segments of marketing activity are not digitalized and cannot be quantitatively evaluated. Conceptually, marketing efforts are unified into strategies and marketing plans, but in practice, implementation is done in various software products that are not connected to each other. As a result, when calculating ROI, company specialists are forced to rely on general data on expenses, sales, and profits.

SMEs face systemic difficulties in using digital marketing, determined by both objective and subjective factors. Even though most entrepreneurs recognize the importance of having a digital presence, they do not fully understand the potential of modern communication technologies and their business applications, and they lack the resources to fully and effectively utilize their digital presence. In this context, the case study demonstrated that simply having a digital presence is not enough; promoting a marketing strategy must be based on analytical activities, identifying the specifics of the local market, etc. From this, it can be concluded that the organic growth of SMEs' digital presence represents an important task of entrepreneurial activity, offering a new opportunity for business optimization.

The lack of qualified personnel slows progress in digital marketing. This issue is more frequently mentioned by representatives of large companies, who also critically assess the services provided by specialized marketing companies. These firms do not face difficulties in budgeting for marketing activities and are advanced in digital marketing, being able to finance research and



marketing campaigns. However, they often face the problem of a lack of qualified personnel, having high-quality standards and strict employee requirements. These companies encounter issues such as a small audience and low conversion rates, which indicate that they set high goals but face real challenges in achieving them.

The research results confirm the main hypotheses of the theoretical-explanatory model used in the study. Enterprises adapt their marketing strategies in response to changes in the digital economy, the ever-changing market demands, and consumer behavior (Porter's competitive forces model, entrepreneurship theory). The perceived usefulness and ease of use of digital tools are key factors for their successful implementation (technology acceptance model theory). Enterprises with significant financial, technological, and human resources are more successful in advancing the digitalization of marketing activities (resource-based theory, resource dependence theory). At the same time, dynamic capabilities are an important factor in the successful application of digital marketing. Companies with a high degree of flexibility and the ability to integrate and reconfigure their resources adapt better to changes in the digital economy, ensuring resilience and a long-term competitive advantage (dynamic capabilities theory).

Overall, this research highlights the need for greater support for businesses, especially SMEs, in the implementation of digital marketing, which could be part of a broader strategy to promote the digital transformation of entrepreneurship. Attention should be given to improving staff training in marketing and entrepreneurship, offering accessible and high-quality educational programs, and providing consultations in digital marketing.

### **Recommendations for state bodies**

To successfully promote digital marketing and strengthen the positions of Moldovan companies in the international market, it is important to ensure government support for business digitalization by creating a favorable regulatory environment, simplifying procedures for implementing digital technologies, and promoting digital initiatives at the national level. This will also contribute to aligning with EU requirements and standards. Developing measures to support businesses, education, and infrastructure development, contributing to the harmonization with European standards and best practices in digital marketing, will enhance the competitiveness of the national economy, adapt businesses to the rules of the European single digital market, and strengthen ties with the EU.

The development of public or public-private digital platforms that bring together businesses, service providers, consultants, and educational institutions can provide access to the information, tools, and services necessary for the successful digitalization of businesses, as well as contribute to creating digital ecosystems that support innovation and development.

Creating programs to support startups and innovative projects in the field of digital marketing and technologies is essential. This may include offering grants, tax incentives, access to venture capital, and other forms of financing, which will accelerate the development of innovative solutions and their implementation in business processes.

Within ODA, it would be beneficial to create a technological support center for SMEs that could provide the necessary technologies, solutions, and resources for proper digital promotion free of charge. Offering grants or subsidies for implementing marketing projects, particularly for using innovative digital channels, would also contribute to more effective digitalization of businesses and marketing.

Special emphasis should be placed on educational programs and initiatives aimed at increasing the knowledge and skills of entrepreneurs in digital marketing. The effective implementation of this recommendation requires a comprehensive approach and close cooperation between public authorities, educational institutions, and the private sector.

### **Recommendations for businesses, including SMEs**

The integration of digital tools and technologies into customer relationship management and the optimization of internal processes is necessary for all the companies analyzed. Special attention should be given to the use of data and analytics to improve customer experience, increase the efficiency of marketing campaigns, and optimize operational activities, considering the diverse needs and expectations of customers in each segment.

To optimize marketing strategies and improve business efficiency, both in the B2C and B2B segments, companies need to focus on achieving the complete digitalization of the marketing cycle, which would allow comprehensive tracking of the customer journey. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to integrate websites with ERP and CRM systems, enabling companies to offer a more personalized approach for customers, improve data collection and analysis, and increase sales efficiency (in the B2C segment), as well as enhance supply chain management and interaction with partners and corporate clients (in the B2B segment).

The implementation of multichannel marketing strategies is crucial. In the B2C segment, these strategies should include social media, mobile marketing, and content marketing to increase engagement and loyalty among end consumers. In the B2B segment, the focus should be on content marketing and email marketing campaigns to maintain strong business relationships and improve client interactions. The integration of various marketing channels will contribute to creating a unified and coherent promotional strategy.

The development of personalized marketing campaigns is also essential. In the B2C segment, these campaigns should be tailored to the needs and preferences of end consumers to increase conversion rates and improve customer experience, while in the B2B segment, personalization should be focused on creating targeted offers for different corporate client groups, which will help strengthen business relationships and increase sales volume.

Investing in employee training is vital to improving skills in using social media, analytics, and personalization tools, especially in the B2C segment. Additionally, training in analysis methods, content marketing, and customer relationship management is needed to better serve corporate clients and improve marketing performance in the B2B segment.

### **Recommendations for higher education institutions**

The continuous improvement of methods and study programs in the training of specialists, the rapid adaptation of curricula to the changing needs of the market, and the involvement of practicing professionals in teaching are essential. Study programs should include aspects such as: developing deep understanding competencies in digital marketing, including SEO, content marketing, and mobile marketing; data and metrics analysis for informed decision-making; applying artificial intelligence and machine learning in marketing; using marketing automation tools and web analytics; analyzing demand, supply, and the competitive environment for developing successful strategies; competencies in collecting and analyzing customer information, managing customer relationships, and collaborating with advertising agencies; creating a marketing budget and managing expenses for efficient resource use; practical experience through cases and internships with real companies; developing analytical skills and technical expertise to succeed in the digital marketing environment.

Creating partnerships with companies to provide students with real cases and tasks will help them better understand market needs and apply theoretical knowledge in practice. Regularly organizing seminars, webinars, and workshops with the participation of industry experts will continuously update knowledge on the latest trends and technologies in digital marketing.

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## LISTA PUBLICAȚILOR LA TEMA TEZEI

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## ADNOTARE

**GAGAUZ Valeri. "Evoluții și tendințe specifice marketingului în condițiile consolidării economiei digitale".**

**Teza de doctor. Specialitatea: 521.04 Marketing și logistica (Științe sociale și economice). Chișinău, 2024**

**Structura tezei:** introducere, trei capitole cu 34 tabele și 6 figuri, concluzii generale și recomandări, 232 surse bibliografice, text de bază - 137 pagini și anexe - 15 pagini.

**Numărul de publicații la tema tezei:** 10 articole științifice, cu volum de 6,92 c.a.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** economie digitală, marketing digital, digitalizarea proceselor de afaceri, strategii de marketing, antreprenoriat.

**Domeniu de studiu:** economie.

**Scopul studiului:** studierea principalelor tendințe în dezvoltarea marketingului în contextul consolidării economiei digitale în Republica Moldova, evidențierea specificului utilizării marketingului digital în antreprenoriat și elaborarea recomandărilor practice pentru creșterea eficienței utilizării instrumentelor marketingului digital.

**Obiectivele cercetării:** determinarea esenței și a principalelor caracteristici ale economiei digitale, influenței acesteia asupra formării și dezvoltării conceptului modern de marketing; cercetarea principalelor direcții de transformare a instrumentelor de marketing în economia digitală, identificarea principalelor tendințe și probleme; explorarea nivelului de digitalizare a proceselor de afaceri la întreprinderile din Republica Moldova; analiza practicilor de afaceri în implementarea marketingului digital pe baza cercetărilor sociologice cantitative și calitative; tipologia întreprinderilor în funcție de tipul strategiilor de marketing și nivelul de avansare în domeniul marketingului digital; evidențierea influenței specificului pieței asupra modelului strategiilor de marketing în segmentele B2C și B2B; elaborarea recomandărilor practice pentru îmbunătățirea activităților de marketing ale întreprinderilor din Republica Moldova în contextul consolidării economiei digitale.

**Noutatea și originalitatea științifică** consta în realizarea unui studiu comprehensiv al evoluției marketingului în contextul consolidării economiei digitale în Republica Moldova; în elaborarea unei tipologii a întreprinderilor în funcție de strategiile lor de marketing și determinarea influenței dimensiunii întreprinderii și a specificului afacerii asupra utilizării instrumentelor de marketing digital; în dezvoltarea unor abordări practice pentru înțelegerea și optimizarea relației dintre canalele online și offline în contextul creșterii conversiei generale și al îmbunătățirii experienței consumatorilor; în dezvoltarea și testarea abordărilor integrate pentru gestionarea relațiilor cu clienții în condițiile schimbărilor constante ale pieței, integrarea diferitelor sisteme tehnologice și îmbunătățirea proceselor de luare a deciziilor bazate pe date.

**Problema de cercetare rezolvată** constă în fundamentarea științifico-practică a influenței dimensiunii întreprinderii asupra nivelului de implementare a marketingului digital, precum și în elaborarea unei abordări de tip cluster pentru analiza maturității digitale a companiilor. Aceasta a permis stabilirea unei corelații între dimensiunea întreprinderii și nivelul de digitalizare a proceselor de afaceri, contribuind astfel la o mai bună înțelegere a barierelor și oportunităților pentru o transformare digitală eficientă a strategiilor de marketing.

**Semnificația teoretică.** Rezultatele studiului completează abordările existente ale conținutului activităților de marketing, extinzând înțelegerea diferențelor în utilizarea marketingului digital de către companii de diferite dimensiuni și contribuie la îmbogățirea teoriei managementului strategic. Studiul contribuie la dezvoltarea teoriei antreprenoriatului prin analizarea utilizării marketingului digital pentru promovarea produselor și serviciilor, precum și a factorilor care influențează acest proces; contribuie la formarea unor abordări teoretice mai largi ale modernizării economice.

**Valoarea aplicativă** constă în posibilitatea utilizării rezultatelor științifice de către organele de resort ca bază științifică și analitică în formarea programelor regionale și municipale de promovare a elementelor economiei digitale și de dezvoltare a antreprenoriatului, inclusiv a IMM-urilor. Rezultatele studiului pot fi utilizate de IMM-uri în procesul de dezvoltare, implementare și îmbunătățire a eficienței utilizării marketingului digital; pot fi utilizate în pregătirea cadrelor la specialitățile „Marketing și Logistică”, „Administrarea Afacerilor”, precum și în dezvoltarea programelor de formare avansată pentru managerii de afaceri și specialiștii în domeniul marketingului.

**Rezultatele cercetării au fost aprobate** în cadrul conferințelor științifice și practice internaționale: "Între economia digitală și nevoia unei paradigme de întoarcere la natură" 14-15 mai, București, 2020; Simpozion Științific Internațional al doctornzilor „Tendințe moderne de dezvoltare științifică: viziuni ale tinerilor cercetători” 2021, Chișinău; Conferința internațională științifico-practică „Creșterea economică în condiții de globalizare”; Chișinău, 2019-2023; Conferința științifică internațională a studenților „Provocările contabilității în viziunea tinerilor cercetători; 2022; Conferința științifică internațională „Dezvoltare prin cercetare și inovare”, Chișinău, 2022. Rezultatele studiului au fost discutate în cadrul seminarului științifico-practic al ASEM „Marketing în era digitală: tendințe, probleme, oportunități”, 2021-2022; au fost testate și utilizate în activitățile de marketing ale IMM-urilor din mun. Chișinău.

## АННОТАЦИЯ

ГАГАУЗ Валерий. "Эволюция и тенденции маркетинга в условиях консолидации цифровой экономики". Докторская диссертация. Специальность: 521.04 Маркетинг и логистика (Социально-экономические науки). Кишинэу, 2024 г.

**Структура диссертации:** введение, три главы с 33 таблицами и 7 рисунками, общие выводы и рекомендации, 230 библиографических источников, основной текст - 136 страниц и приложения - 15.

**Количество публикаций по теме диссертации:** 10 научных статей, объемом 6,92 а.л.

**Ключевые слова:** цифровая экономика, цифровой маркетинг, цифровизация бизнес-процессов, маркетинговые стратегии, предпринимательство.

**Область исследования:** экономика.

**Цель исследования:** изучить основные тенденции развития маркетинга в условиях консолидации цифровой экономики в Республике Молдова, выделить специфику использования цифрового маркетинга в предпринимательстве и разработать практические рекомендации по повышению эффективности использования инструментов цифрового маркетинга.

**Задачи исследования:** определение сущности и основных характеристик цифровой экономики, ее влияния на формирование и развитие современной концепции маркетинга; исследование основных направлений трансформации инструментов маркетинга в условиях цифровой экономики, выявление основных тенденций и проблем; исследование уровня цифровизации бизнес-процессов на предприятиях; анализ бизнес-практики внедрения цифрового маркетинга на основе количественных и качественных социологических исследований; типология бизнеса по типу маркетинговой стратегии и уровню продвижения в сфере цифрового маркетинга; исследование влияния специфики рынка на модели маркетинговых стратегий в сегментах B2C и B2B; разработка практических рекомендаций по совершенствованию маркетинга предприятий в условиях становления цифровой экономики.

**Научная новизна и оригинальность исследования** заключается в проведении комплексного исследования эволюции маркетинга в условиях консолидации цифровой экономики в Республике Молдова; в разработке типологии предприятий в зависимости от их размера и маркетинговых стратегий; в определении влияния специфики бизнеса на использование инструментов цифрового маркетинга; в разработке комплексных подходов к управлению взаимоотношениями с клиентами в условиях интеграции различных технологических систем и совершенствования процессов принятия решений.

**Важная научная задача, решаемая в диссертации,** заключается в научно-практическом обосновании влияния размера предприятия на уровень внедрения цифрового маркетинга, а также в разработке кластерного подхода для анализа цифровой зрелости компаний. Это позволило установить корреляцию между размером предприятия и уровнем цифровизации бизнес-процессов, что внесло вклад в понимание барьеров и возможностей для эффективной цифровой трансформации маркетинговых стратегий.

**Теоретическая значимость.** Результаты исследования дополняют существующие подходы к содержанию маркетинговой деятельности, расширяя понимание различий в использовании цифрового маркетинга компаниями разного размера и способствуют обогащению теории стратегического управления. Исследование вносит вклад в развитие теории предпринимательства, анализируя использование цифрового маркетинга для продвижения продуктов и услуг, а также факторов, влияющих на данный процесс; способствует формированию более широких теоретических подходов к экономической модернизации.

**Прикладная значимость:** возможность использования результатов исследования органами управления в качестве научно-аналитической базы при формировании программ продвижения элементов цифровой экономики и развития предпринимательства, в том числе МСП; в предпринимательстве в процессе разработки, внедрения и повышения эффективности цифрового маркетинга; при подготовке кадров по специальностям «Маркетинг и логистика», «Бизнес-администрирование», при разработке программ повышения квалификации бизнес-менеджеров и специалистов по маркетингу.

**Результаты исследования были апробированы** на международных научно-практических конференциях: «Между цифровой экономикой и необходимостью возврата к природной парадигме» 14-15 мая, Бухарест, 2020 г.; «Современные тенденции развития науки: видение молодых ученых» 2021 г., Кишинев; «Экономический рост в условиях глобализации»; Кишинев, 2019-2023 гг.; «Проблемы бухгалтерского учета глазами молодых исследователей»; 2022 г.; «Развитие через исследования и инновации», Кишинев, 2022 г.; на научно-практическом семинаре МЭА «Маркетинг в эпоху цифровых технологий: тенденции, проблемы, возможности», в 2021 и 2022 гг.; были протестированы и использованы в маркетинговой деятельности МСП муниципия Кишинэу.

## SUMMARY

**GAGAUZ Valeri.** Developments and trends specific to marketing in the context of the consolidation of the digital economy. Doctoral thesis, specialty 521.04 Marketing and logistics. Chisinau, 2024

**Structure of the thesis:** introduction, three chapters with 22 tables and 28 figures, general conclusions and recommendations, 230 bibliographic sources, basic text - 130 pages and appendices - 9 pages.

**Number of publications on the topic of the thesis:** 11 scientific articles, with a volume of 8.5 c.a.

**Keywords:** digital economy, digital marketing, digitalization of business processes, marketing strategies, entrepreneurship.

**Field of study:** economics.

**The purpose of the study:** to study the main trends in the development of marketing within the digital economy's consolidation in the Republic of Moldova, with a focus on the specific use of digital marketing in entrepreneurship, and to develop practical recommendations for enhancing the efficiency of digital marketing tools.

**Research objectives:** Determining the essence and key characteristics of the digital economy and its influence on the formation and development of modern marketing concepts; researching the main directions of the transformation of marketing tools in the digital economy, identifying major trends and challenges; studying the level of digitization of business processes within enterprises in the Republic of Moldova; analyzing business practices in the implementation of digital marketing through quantitative and qualitative research; creating a typology of businesses based on their marketing strategies and levels of digital marketing promotion; studying the influence of market specifics on the marketing strategy models in the B2C and B2B segments; and developing practical recommendations for improving the marketing activities of enterprises in the Republic of Moldova in the context of the emerging digital economy.

**The scientific novelty and originality** lie in conducting a comprehensive study of the evolution of marketing in the context of the digital economy's consolidation in the Republic of Moldova; developing a typology of enterprises based on their marketing strategies and determining the influence of enterprise size and business specifics on the use of digital marketing tools; creating practical approaches to understanding and optimizing the relationship between online and offline channels to increase overall conversion rates and improve the consumer experience; and developing and testing integrated approaches for managing customer relationships amidst constant market changes, integrating various technological systems, and enhancing data-driven decision-making processes.

**The research problem solved** consists in the scientific and practical substantiation of the influence of company size on the level of digital marketing implementation, as well as the development of a cluster-based approach for analyzing the digital maturity of companies. This has enabled the establishment of a correlation between company size and the level of digitalization of business processes, thus contributing to a better understanding of the barriers and opportunities for an effective digital transformation of marketing strategies.

**Theoretical significance.** The results of the study complement existing approaches to the content of marketing activities, expanding the understanding of the differences in the use of digital marketing by companies of different sizes and contribute to the enrichment of the theory of strategic management. The study contributes to the development of entrepreneurship theory by analyzing the use of digital marketing to promote products and services, as well as the factors influencing this process; contributes to the formation of broader theoretical approaches to economic modernization.

**The applicative value** lies in the potential use of the study's findings by governing bodies as a scientific and analytical foundation for forming regional and municipal programs to promote digital economy elements and foster entrepreneurship, including SMEs. The study's results can assist SMEs in developing, implementing, and improving the efficiency of digital marketing strategies. Additionally, they can be used in the training of personnel in fields such as "Marketing and Logistics" and "Business Administration", as well as in the development of advanced training programs for business managers and marketing specialists.

**The research results were approved** within the international scientific and practical conferences: "Between the digital economy and the need for a return to nature paradigm" May 14-15, Bucharest, 2020; International Scientific Symposium of PhD students "Modern trends of scientific development: visions of young researchers" 2021, Chisinau; International scientific-practical conference "Economic growth in conditions of globalization"; Chisinau, 2019-2023; The international scientific conference of students "Accounting challenges in the view of young researchers; 2022; International scientific conference "Development through research and innovation", Chisinau, 2022. The results of the study were discussed within the AESM scientific and practical seminar "Marketing in the digital age: trends, problems, opportunities", in 2021 and 2022; were tested and used in the marketing activities of SMEs in the municipality of Chisinau.



**GAGAUZ VALERI**

**DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS SPECIFIC TO MARKETING IN  
THE CONTEXT OF THE CONSOLIDATION OF  
THE DIGITAL ECONOMY**

**Specialty 521.04 Marketing and logistics**

**SUMMARY**

doctoral thesis in economics

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