

The Degree of Digitalization of Enterprises in Romania. A Descriptive Approach

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Abstract

This paper investigates the evolution and intensity of digitalization among Romanian enterprises during the period 2009-2024, with a particular focus on the relationship between digital infrastructure development and the effective adoption of advanced digital technologies. The research employs a descriptive and longitudinal methodology based on secondary statistical data provided by the National Institute of Statistics. Five key indicators related to internet connectivity, enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, customer relationship management (CRM) solutions, and websites are analyzed in order to capture both the infrastructural and operational dimensions of enterprise digitalization. The findings reveal a significant asymmetry in the digital transformation of Romanian enterprises. Although connectivity indicators improved substantially throughout the analyzed period, the adoption of advanced digital solutions remained comparatively limited. This suggests the existence of a persistent structural gap between access to digital infrastructure and the effective integration of digital technologies into organizational processes. The originality of the paper lies in its longitudinal perspective and in its integrated analysis of infrastructure and digital adoption dynamics over a fifteen-year period. The paper highlights the need for strategic interventions focused on managerial education, the adoption of cloud-based solutions and the integration of complex digital processes, in order to enhance productivity and support sustainable digital transformation in the Romanian business environment.

Keywords

entrepreneurship, digitalization, Romania, SMEs

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Introduction

The rapid development of technologies and the internet has led to the emergence of an interconnected world in which distances seem to fade and information circulates at an unprecedented speed. Within this context, entrepreneurs had to adapt to maintain their relevance and remain competitive on the market. The modern business environment has shifted from the use of traditional and physical processes to digital solutions, which are constantly evolving, making digital transformation no longer just a strategic option, but a necessary element in the survival and evolution of a business. Entrepreneurship and digitalization are interconnected and interdependent (Francu et al., 2025; Grosu et al., 2025), becoming two key elements that merge, complement each other and shape the future of the global economy. Within this context, one of the main objective of societies worldwide is to support entrepreneurship in digital transformation. Thus, the European Union (EU), and implicitly Romania, have developed several initiatives for the development of local businesses. The most important EU program is the Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL) that provides financial support and strategic guidance in areas where digitalization is needed, supports small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), as well as public administration in digital transformation through a

network of European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIH) (European Commission, 2025). In Romania, a transition economy (Dragusin et al., 2010) characterized by regional disparities (Constantin et al., 2013; Davidescu et al., 2018), several European-funded projects support the digitalization of the business environment, such as grants through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) or the PoCIDIF program (Smart Growth, Digitalization and Financial Instruments, 2021-2027) (Ministerul Investițiilor și Proiectelor Europene, 2021, 2023). In such a context, the present paper aims to analyze the degree and dynamics of digitalization of Romanian enterprises between 2009 and 2024, focusing on the relationship between digital infrastructure and the effective adoption of advanced technologies. To this end, the paper is structured into three sections. The first one reflects a brief literature review of the approached topic, the second one describes the employed research methodology, while the third one is dedicated to the presentation of the research results. The paper ends with a conclusions section.

1. Literature review

Entrepreneurship represents the process of identifying and capitalizing on opportunities through the launch and development of new businesses, generating value for the individual or group of partners (Ardichvili et al., 2003). Over time, numerous and varied definitions of this phenomenon have been formulated, outlining its complexity and multidimensional character. The evolution of these definitions has illustrated the trajectory of the concept from a simplified approach, centered on the traits of the entrepreneur, to a broader and more complex perspective that emphasizes the processes and activities of identifying opportunities and needs within the economic, social, cultural, and educational environment. The contributions of theorists Joseph Schumpeter and Howard Stevenson have played an essential role in shaping the understanding of the concept of entrepreneurship, outlining it as a type of behavior characterized by initiative, the reorganization of socio-economic structures, and the assumption of risk and the possibility of failure (Drăgușin et al., 2019).

The digitalization – approached as “the process of transforming data into a digital form that can be easily read and processed by a computer” (Oxford, 2026) – of enterprises has become a central topic in contemporary economic and management research, particularly in the context of the EU’s transition toward a knowledge-based and data-driven economy. Recent studies emphasize that digital transformation enhances firms’ competitiveness, operational resilience, innovation capacity and market adaptability, especially among SMEs (Skare et al., 2023). In Romania, empirical research reveals a structural fragmentation within the business ecosystem, where a high general awareness of technological disruption rarely translates into cohesive operational strategies for long-term competitiveness (Toanca, 2016). A significant stream of research examines the determinants of digital adoption in Romanian SMEs. Dincă et al. (2019) identify cloud computing adoption as a key indicator of enterprise digital maturity, influenced by factors such as technological readiness, managerial support, perceived security, and organizational culture. Similarly, recent empirical analyses reveal that government support policies, research and development (R&D) investments, and employee digital competences significantly affect the digitalization degree of Romanian firms (Lupșa-Tătaru et al., 2025). Moreover, the literature underlines that digitalization is not limited to technological implementation but also involves managerial transformation, data-driven decision-making and the integration of digital business models (Francu et al., 2026). Research on Romanian enterprises demonstrates that firms adopting advanced digital tools, including cloud services, customer relationship management (CRM) systems and e-commerce platforms, report improvements in efficiency, customer interaction and organizational performance (Mihu et al., 2024). However, sustained technological expansion remains strictly dependent on the digital readiness of human capital, targeted European funding and a systemic alignment between macro-policy benchmarks and firm-level capabilities (Onea et al., 2025).

2. Research methodology

The paper aimed at analyzing the degree and dynamics of digitalization of Romanian enterprises between 2009 and 2024, focusing on the relationship between digital infrastructure and the effective adoption of advanced technologies. Data regarding the degree of digitalization of companies in Romania, were collected from the statistical database provided by the National Institute of Statistics (2025). Data were extracted from the “ICT Usage” category, sub-category “Main indicators regarding the use of ICT products in enterprises with 10 or more employed persons”. All 47 indicators were selected, for all economic sectors (as total), for the entire available period, respectively 2009-2024. All the indicators became subject to the descriptive analysis; data were exported and processed in an Excel spreadsheet. However, only the most representative five indicators were selected to be outlined in the present paper. These indicators were

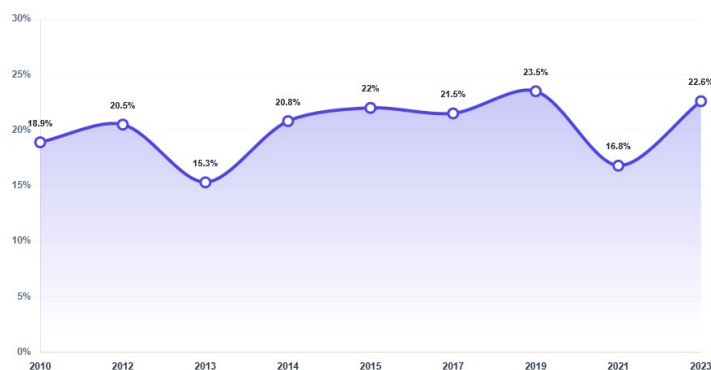
selected based on their strong performance within Romania's digital environment and their strategic relevance to the digitalization of Romanian enterprises. Their inclusion in the analysis is justified by the significant results they demonstrate – compared to the other indicators – reflecting not merely the adoption of digital technologies, but also the broader structural and strategic transformation taking place within the Romanian business sector. This transformation highlights companies' growing efforts to enhance operational efficiency, strengthen competitiveness and improve relationships with end consumers.

3. Results

3.1. Share of enterprises that have ERP software package to share information between different functional areas

In 2010, a value of 18.9% is observed, followed by an increase in 2012 up to 20.5% (Figure no. 1). However, in 2013, a drastic decrease occurs, of almost five percentage points, with the indicator falling to 15.3%. In the following year, 2014, there is an increase of over five percentage points, reaching 20.8%, and this growth continues in 2015, reaching 22%. In 2017, the indicator records a slight decrease of only a few hundredths, reaching a value of 21.5%, but it recovers in 2019, with a significant increase to 23.5%, which is also the highest value recorded. However, in 2021, a major decrease occurs, of almost seven percentage points, dropping to 16.8%, representing the lowest value for this indicator. It recovers again in 2023, with a considerable increase, reaching 22.6%. The indicator shows a volatile trend, with alternations between increases and sharp decreases. Although there are periods of high usage, the sudden declines indicate a lack of long-term stability. In an economy such as Romania's, where a large part of the business environment is composed of SMEs (Grosu, 2015a,b), which do not have sufficient financial resources to implement ERP systems, these require support. The indicator increases when digitalization funding programs are available and decreases when firms cannot sustain maintenance costs or when licenses expire. However, it is worth mentioning that no data were recorded for this indicator for the years 2009, 2011, 2016, 2018, 2020, 2022, and 2024. During the pandemic period, when digitalization accelerated, ERP usage recorded the lowest level (16.8%). Thus, the sharp decline in 2021, followed by the recovery in 2023, indicates a reconfiguration of investments and priorities in this area. Companies replaced rigid and outdated systems with more flexible and innovative solutions.

Figure no. 1. Share of enterprises that have ERP software package to share information between different functional areas



Source: developed with Gemini (Google, 2026), based on data from National Institute of Statistics (2025)

3.2. Share of enterprises that have CRM

Regarding this indicator, it can be observed that its trend is inconsistent and unstable, as the years for which data are not available are scattered and not grouped in longer periods, as in the case of other indicator. Thus, the years for which no data were recorded are: 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2022. In 2010, a percentage of 19.5% is recorded, but this decreases in 2014 by two percentage points, reaching 17.8%. In 2015, the indicator experiences a significant increase, up to 20.3%, but it decreases again in 2017 by almost three percentage points, reaching 17.6% (Figure no. 2). In 2019, there are signs of recovery, with an increase of slightly over two percentage points, reaching 19.7%, but in 2021 another significant decrease occurs, of almost three percentage points, down to 16.8%. In 2023, the lowest value of this indicator is recorded, namely only 10.1%. The trend of this indicator is downward in the long term, characterized by fluctuations and repeated decreases. The minimum value reached in 2023 indicates a significant decline in

the share of businesses that have CRM systems. This negative trend suggests a difficulty of the Romanian business environment in adapting to digital customer management tools. The instability and decline may be caused by companies' preference for alternative solutions, such as social media platforms, but these effects may also be generated by implementation and maintenance costs, together with the complexity of operating such systems, which lead to resistance from entrepreneurs. Thus, CRM in Romania appears to be oriented more towards direct communication channels, to the detriment of integrated systems.

Figure no. 2. Share of enterprises that have CRM

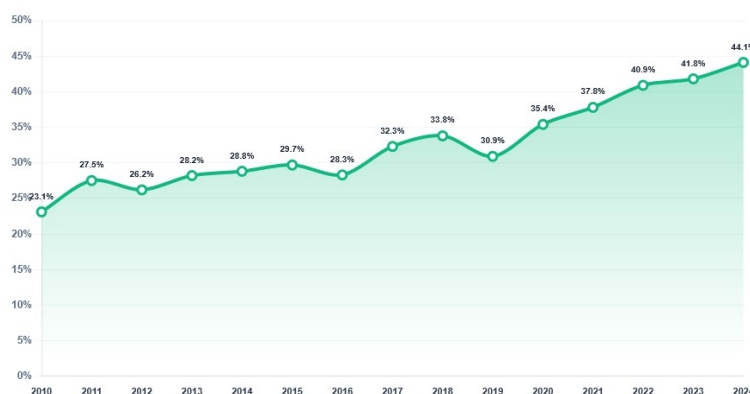


Source: developed with Gemini (Google, 2026), based on data from National Institute of Statistics (2025)

3.3. Share of persons employed that have access to the internet for business purpose

For this indicator, the only year with missing data was 2009. In 2010, a relatively high percentage is identified, compared to the previous indicators, namely 23.1% (Figure no. 3). This is followed by a significant increase in 2011, up to 27.5%, but in 2012 the indicator records a slight decrease, to 26.2%. However, in 2013 it returns to an upward trend, reaching a value of 28.2%. In 2014, the increase continues moderately, up to 28.8%, and in 2015 the percentage reaches 29.7%, indicating a gradual expansion of internet access in the professional environment. In 2016, a small decrease is observed, to 28.3%, without affecting the overall trend. In 2017 and 2018, there is an accelerated increase, with values of 32.3% and 33.8%, respectively, reflecting a broader use of the internet in professional activities. In 2019, the indicator temporarily decreases to 30.9%, but in 2020 a significant increase is recorded, up to 35.4%. In 2021 and 2022, the upward trend consolidates, with the indicator reaching 37.8% and 40.9%, respectively. This increase continues in 2023, when the value reaches 41.8%, while in 2024 the highest percentage of the analyzed period is recorded, namely 44.1%, indicating an increasingly important role of internet access in carrying out professional activities. This indicator shows a constant and linear upward trend, its positive evolution illustrating a Romanian labor market that is maturing and characterized by a rapid transition to the digital economy. The significant increase after 2020 confirms that hybrid work and the need for constant connectivity have become mandatory in operational processes and in people's work, transforming the internet into a critical support tool for carrying out professional activities.

Figure no. 3. Share of persons employed that have access to the internet for business purpose



Source: developed with Gemini (Google, 2026), based on data from National Institute of Statistics (2025)

3.4. Share of enterprises where some persons employed have access to the internet for business purposes

In 2012, the indicator reaches a very high level of 79.3%, highlighting an already significant penetration of internet access at the enterprise level (Figure no. 4); no data were recorded for the period 2009-2011 for this indicator. In 2013, a notable increase is observed, up to 83.4%, followed by a further rise in 2014 to 84.6%. In 2015, the upward trend continues, with the percentage reaching 85.4%, reflecting the consolidation of digital infrastructure in the business environment. In 2016, a visible decrease occurs, down to 81.7%, suggesting a temporary adjustment. In 2017 and 2018, the indicator recovers, increasing to 85% and 85.5%, respectively. However, in 2019, a slight decrease is observed, down to 81.8%, followed by a relatively stable situation in 2020 at 81.4%. Starting with 2021, a very sharp increase occurs, with the indicator rising to 90.8%, and in 2022 it reaches an almost maximum level of 98.9%. In 2023, the maximum value is recorded, namely 100%, indicating universal access to the internet for professional purposes among enterprises. In 2024, a very slight decrease is observed, down to 99.1%, without affecting the extremely high level of this indicator. Similarly to the previous indicator, it is again evident that the internet has become a fundamental element for existence and relevance in the market, as well as for maintaining competitiveness among enterprises. The evolution during the period 2021-2023, which reflects the efficiency of the digitalization process, has made the business environment adopt connectivity as a standard requirement, not just as a competitive advantage.

Figure no. 4. Share of enterprises where some persons employed have access to the internet for business purposes

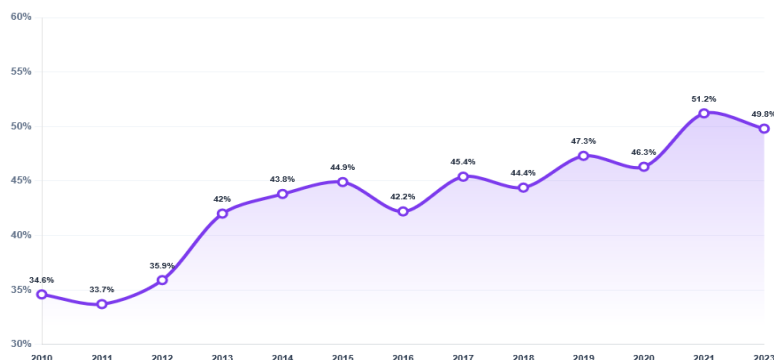


Source: developed with Gemini (Google, 2026), based on data from National Institute of Statistics (2025)

3.5. Share of enterprises owning a website

In 2010, a relatively high percentage of 34.6% is recorded, and in 2011 a slight decrease is observed to 33.7%, followed by an increase in 2012 up to 35.9% (Figure no. 5); no data were recorded for this indicator in 2009, 2022 and 2024. In 2013, the indicator increases significantly, by several percentage points, reaching 42%, reflecting the online presence of companies. In 2014, the increase continues to 43.8%, and in 2015 it reaches 44.9%, indicating a consolidation trend. In 2016, a slight decrease is observed to 42.2%, but in 2017 the level rises to 45.4%, followed by another decrease in 2018 to 44.4%. In 2019, an increase occurs to 47.3%, and in 2020 it slightly decreases to 46.3%, while still maintaining a relatively high level. In 2021, the highest value of this indicator is recorded, namely 51.2%, and in 2023 the value slightly decreases to 49.8%, but remains high, without affecting the overall trend. This reflects a gradual transition towards digital maturity. However, a particular phenomenon can be observed in relation to the previous indicator. Although internet connectivity has reached almost maximum levels, the share of enterprises owning a website appears to have stagnated around 50%. This suggests that a significant proportion of enterprises use their website mainly for informational purposes, as a digital catalog and less for direct sales, which reduces the potential for economic growth and the conversion of visits into final orders.

Figure no. 5. Share of enterprises owning a website



Source: developed with Gemini (Google, 2026), based on data from National Institute of Statistics (2025)

Conclusions

The descriptive analysis outlined in this paper highlights the fact that Romania is undergoing a transition process towards digitalization in business, but there are still many aspects that need to be developed and improved. However, connectivity represents the country's strong point, and its impact on the business environment is significant. The internet and connectivity have ceased to be merely competitive advantages, becoming essential elements in modern society, eliminating technical barriers and stagnation. At the same time, employees' access to the internet has transformed the way work is carried out, making it more flexible and increasing the level of connectivity of employees. Moreover, it has been observed that most of the data recorded a major and rapid increase after 2020, characterized by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for digitalization. Thus, in that context, the survival of companies was based on rapid but forced digitalization, which proved difficult to sustain for many of them, explaining the unstable trend in recent years. As for the lack of continuity in the analyzed data, this instability suggests either inconsistent reporting at the national level or periodic changes in data collection methods. This aspect makes it difficult to build an accurate long-term picture of the digitalization situation in the country.

Therefore, despite the lack of continuity of the data, the low results and the unstable and fluctuating trends of certain indicators, the overall image that emerges regarding Romania's level of digitalization in the business environment is one of evolution, of a desire for growth and adaptation within this context. At least in recent years, there has been an increase in interest in digital innovation, flexibility and adaptation to the modern market, an aspect that helps Romania maintain a high potential for the future, remaining relevant and competitive in the field of entrepreneurship at the national level. In Romania, a positive dynamic is emerging in the adoption of digital solutions in business, highlighting a continuous effort for development, adaptation, and implementation of innovative technologies in the domestic business environment. The path has been difficult and full of challenges, but in recent years a constant improvement can be observed, suggesting that Romanian entrepreneurship has considerable potential for digital growth and for capitalizing on the opportunities offered by digital transformation.

Romania appears to have an uneven and asymmetrical digital maturity and evolution, possessing top-level hardware infrastructure in terms of speed and internet access, being even among the European leaders in this regard, but achieving less favorable results in the use of advanced digital business tools (ERP and CRM). Ultimately, the complete digital transformation of the Romanian business environment will depend, in the coming years, on managerial planning and education, necessary to convert internet access into increased efficiency and revenues from online orders.

In order to increase productivity and improve indicator performance, Romanian entrepreneurship should follow several recommendations and formulate effective proposals to support business digitalization. A first recommendation would be the reallocation of budgets towards advanced productivity programs, such as the implementation of simple CRM and ERP solutions based on monthly subscriptions, which help organize customer databases. Furthermore, a large proportion of employees use mobile devices, and enterprises should provide them with appropriate devices and work tools tailored to their tasks. It is recommended to use mobile applications for inventory and task management. With a connected employee and an efficient application, data can be introduced directly into the company's system, and employees can communicate more easily. At the same time, given the current context in Romania, the use of cloud systems

represents the best solution for cost reduction, namely transferring documents and data into a cloud environment, which is secure and allows for much more efficient collaboration between employees.

The results support the idea that digital transformation should not be understood solely as a question of access to technology, but rather as a multi-layered process that involves effective integration into organizational practices. In this sense, the Romanian case illustrates a persistent gap between availability of digital infrastructure and its strategic exploitation within firms. This observation is consistent with existing theoretical perspectives in the literature, particularly those emphasizing that technological adoption does not automatically translate into performance gains unless it is accompanied by organizational adaptation, managerial capability, and user competence. From this perspective, the diffusion of digital technologies within enterprises appears to follow an uneven trajectory, in which basic connectivity reaches maturity significantly faster than the adoption of advanced digital systems. This reinforces the distinction, frequently emphasized in specialized studies, between simple digitization processes and deeper digitalization, where the latter implies structural change in business models and decision-making processes. The empirical patterns observed in Romania suggest that, although firms are increasingly embedded in a digitally connected environment, the transition toward fully integrated digital operations remains partial and fragmented.

It is also important to acknowledge certain limitations of the present analysis. The study is based on secondary statistical data, which, although reliable and nationally representative, is subject to limitations related to data availability and continuity over time. In several cases, missing values restrict the possibility of constructing fully continuous time series, which may affect the precision of long-term trend interpretation. Moreover, the descriptive nature of the analysis does not allow for the identification of causal relationships between variables, but only for the observation of patterns and correlations. Future research could address these limitations by employing econometric methods or panel data approaches, allowing for a more robust assessment of the determinants of digital adoption at firm level. Building on these considerations, future research directions could also explore sectoral differences in digitalization intensity, as well as variations according to firm size, ownership structure, or regional distribution. Such an approach would provide a more granular understanding of how digital transformation unfolds across different segments of the Romanian economy. Additionally, examining the relationship between digital adoption and firm performance indicators such as productivity, profitability, or export intensity would contribute to a more comprehensive assessment of the economic impact of digitalization.

In a nutshell, the evidence presented in this paper suggests that Romania is characterized by a dual reality of digital development. On the one hand, the country demonstrates strong performance in terms of digital connectivity, which provides a solid foundation for further transformation. On the other hand, the effective use of digital technologies within enterprises remains uneven and, in some cases, underdeveloped. The central challenge for the coming years will therefore not be the expansion of access, but the transition toward meaningful digital integration, capable of generating measurable improvements in efficiency, innovation and competitiveness within the business environment.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) usage statement:

Gemini was used for generating the figures outlined in the paper.

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