A comparison of business platforms used by SMEs to digitalize management activities

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Abstract. *The current economy is based on innovation, and this is the engine that fuels the ambition to gain market share and make a difference in the product. It also helps minimize operational costs and improve operational efficiency, thus maximizing profitability. This requires different skills than we have now. Especially in the context in which technology can replace many manual operations, in many economic fields. The authors aim to present a static in terms of digitalization in Romanian business environment. Through secondary research of current scientific literature there are presented software applications developed for companies to improve their efficiency. Using an online tool Similar web there are extracted up to date data to describe the client perspective towards different tools to help organizations reach digitalization.*

Keywords. Digitalization, software applications, business environment

1 Introduction

The need and access to new technologies and digital tools have grown with the context of the pandemic and the health crisis that has moved both most employees, but also pupils or students, together with their teachers, to the online environment.

Following this challenge, one of the pressing questions was whether all those who need it have access to digital tools, the Internet, and other technologies, and use them. But, with the passage of time, people realized that the right question is whether those who had access to all the necessary tools also had sufficient knowledge and skills to use them.

Access to the opportunities offered by the digital world should be equal for all. The most recent studies show that Romanians are in the last places in terms of daily internet use, compared to other regions in the European Union.
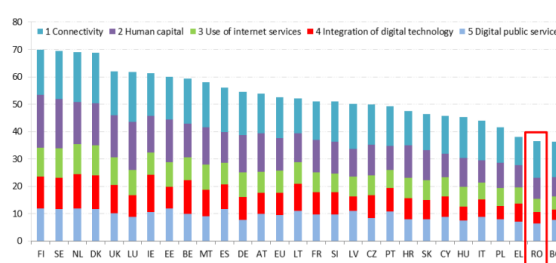

Figure 1. Digital economy and society index (DESI) 2019 ranking. Source: Digital economy and society index, accessed at 8 May 2022

According to the 2019 Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) by the European Commission, Romania is ranked 27th out of the 28 EU member states.

Romania's performance in virtually all the DESI categories assessed indicates small improvements, but considering that the overall gain was moderate, its ranking remained steady. Romania scored highest in the connectivity category since there are so many fast and ultrafast fixed broadband networks available there (especially in urban areas). The economy is still not fully digitalized, more than a fifth of Romanians have

never used the internet, and less than a third possess even the most fundamental digital skills.

Romania performs the worst among the member states when it comes to digital public services, despite the high percentage of e-government users (7th in the EU). On the other hand, Romania has the third-highest percentage of ultrafast broadband subscribers in the EU at 45% of homes. Romania is well-positioned in terms of female ICT professionals, ranking 16th, with 1.3 percent of Romanian women employed.

Any manager is constantly looking for new ways to become even more productive and increase the business and team results. Without an electronic task management system, it is difficult to check and track tasks assigned to colleagues and desired deadlines. By using a task management program leaders have a complete picture of tasks and processes; they can track deadlines and check the status of various tasks.

The aim of this paper is to present the most used web applications in the business environment and to make an analysis of them for further use of organizations. As methodology, the authors analyze latest management software adopted in organizations through a review of scientific papers. Similarweb analytical tool is used to determine current trends for similar sites and their rank in terms of user's usage and appreciation. Following the extracted data, the authors compare the most popular software for management activities. Through this paper the authors pursued three main objectives:
O1. Determine the current trends in terms of business applications
O2. Establish the main types of software applications used by organizations to digitalize their current activity
O3. Determine the user perspective towards software applications used by SMES

2 State of the art

Software solutions are constantly adapted by companies to automate their processes and allocate their time to other activities that lead to high performance. By adopting digitization, efficiency increases, and they remain competitive at the market level.

The management can combine all corporate operations and processes thanks to the effective deployment of the ERP system, giving the firm a competitive edge in the current competitive market. Companies opt to devote a substantial amount of time and money to implementing ERP systems after considering the possible advantages. However, a lot of ERP system installation projects have still fallen short due to other crucial success elements that have been mentioned in the literature. It is crucial to analyze the state of ERP system use in the Republic of Croatia since the use of ERP systems is one of the major indicators emphasized by the European Commission under the Digital Agenda for Europe (EU 2020), which establishes the European Union's (EU) growth objectives by 2020. The purpose of this paper is to identify which companies in the Republic of Croatia consider the most significant critical success factors, considering the peculiarities of business in relation to developed countries and potential differences in attitudes among large companies and medium- and small-sized businesses. This is because critical success factors of the successful ERP implementation are investigated in the Republic of Croatia to a lesser extent. An online questionnaire survey was used for this aim, and the Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare major corporations to medium-sized and small businesses (Hornung, 2020).

Prior studies have emphasized the digitalization of innovation processes and results, particularly in relation to the effects of information technology (IT) on the creation of new products (NPD). This paper's goal is to investigate the influencing variables on the adoption of certain software tools to support innovation management methodologies, known as innovation management software (IMS), and their unique capabilities, as opposed to evaluating general IT usage in the NPD. To investigate which tool functionalities, such as assisted innovation techniques and activities, impact the adoption of IMS, the authors employed an online questionnaire to collect information from 99 innovation managers of German industrial enterprises.

Contrary to earlier hypotheses made in the literature, the findings of this study suggest that IMS adoption by innovation managers is favorably affected if the IMS tools include capabilities for concept appraisal and portfolio management but declined for idea creation and scenario management. Because of this, this article may demonstrate that the digitalization of the innovation process using IT tools is more finely nuanced than a "the more - the better" logic that is frequently supported in the context of digitalization and suggested in the literature on IMS earlier.

These findings contribute to innovation managers' understanding of organizational and technical factors that are transforming the innovation process toward digitalization. Innovation managers want to do this by successfully integrating and utilizing IMS within their NPD. Additionally, IMS providers receive insightful empirical data from the user perspective that may aid in their marketing and sales efforts. From a theoretical standpoint, this study advances previous research on IT use and digitalization in the innovation process by focusing on a segment of digitization for the NPD activities that has received less attention: the perspective of the innovation manager (Huesig, 2018).

The purpose of this research is to examine the current state of knowledge (1998–March 2019) about the effects of implementing enterprise resource planning (ERP) in small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs). Both important success and failure variables are present. The method relies on creating surveys to acquire optional information. It describes the terms that are used to get research articles from databases and

sophisticated studies on the adoption of ERP in SMEs. It also includes consideration and restriction criteria to strengthen the validity of papers. At that stage, a thorough review of the available publications is done to investigate the impact of ERP adoption in SMEs. The real impact of ERP installations on SMEs and the critical criteria that determine their success or failure are revealed (add actual success and failure factors here besides impact). Because only recent research publications were examined, the study presented in this paper has several limitations. Its failure to consider empirical research in favor of only concentrating on the state of the art in the research field is an inherent restriction. However, its revelations will likely be useful and provide guidance for further work. This study adds to the body of knowledge about the beneficial or negative effects that ERP deployment may have on SMEs. Using secondary data collecting techniques, it identifies important success, failure, and impact aspects. The insights will enable SMEs, SMEs' stakeholders, and ERP service providers to better understand the causes of success or failure and to choose the appropriate course of action (Kiran, 2019).

This study evaluates how various digital technology adoptions impact corporate productivity. In an empirical approach that takes business heterogeneity into account, it combines cross-country firm-level data on productivity with industry-level data on the use of digital technologies. The findings offer solid proof that a sector's use of digital technology is linked to increases in firm-level productivity. Effects are more pronounced in routine-intensive industries like manufacturing. As a result of the complementarities between digital technologies and other forms of capital, they also tend to be stronger for more productive enterprises and weaker in the case of talent shortages (e.g., skills, organization, or intangibles). Digital technology may thus be partly to blame for the increasing disparity in productivity performance between enterprises. Therefore, efforts to encourage digital adoption should go hand in hand with building the framework necessary for trailing enterprises to catch up, particularly by facilitating access to skills (Gal, 2019).

With the goal of discovering BPM adoption success criteria, several research on the successes and failures of business process management (BPM) have been carried out. Because of BPM's complexity and breadth, there is currently no widely acknowledged paradigm for its successful deployment. Using business process management software is one way to ensure BPM success in general (BPMS). It is challenging to specify the requirements for choosing BPM software since there is presently no agreement on a universally acknowledged description of the program. This is due to several factors: Because (i) the scope and complexity of the industry, and (ii) the sometimes-complex nature of company demands, additionally, (iii) the features and capabilities of BPM software vary widely amongst suppliers due to the complexity of the

industry. In this post, we look at the technical and contextual aspects of BPMS adoption and the associated key success criteria (CSF). This study's objective was to provide decision-makers with BPMS selection criteria that considered the organizational, environmental, and technological CSFs of BPMS adoption. With order to do this, we used a multiple-case study methodology and conducted a series of interviews in businesses that had either completely or partially adopted BPMS. Semi-structured interviews were utilized to collect qualitative contextual (organizational and environmental) CSFs important for the success of BPMS adoption as well as quantitative data for those issues that can be measured statistically (Bosilj, 2018).

The performance and accomplishment of corporate goals have improved for organizations that have adopted the BPM management method. To reap the rewards of BPM, organizations must properly implement the BPM management methodology across the whole enterprise. There is very little empirical evidence to support the claim that having an organizational culture that is supportive of and in line with the BPM culture is a key component in the success of BPM adoption. In many strategic BPM efforts, an IT solution is put into place. The effectiveness of BPM adoption with firms based in the United States executing BPM efforts including IT solutions varies across different types of organizational cultures inside IT, which was the focus of this non-experimental quantitative correlation study. A BPM project including an IT solution that was developed and implemented during the previous two years was the focus of the target demographic, which was made up of IT personnel who work in the US at companies with at least 50 workers. To assess the impact of organizational culture on BPM adoption, the study involves gathering a sample of 157 IT professionals from the target demographic of at least 223,000 utilizing an online survey company's marketing panel. ANOVA, Tukey-Kramer post-hoc, and Pearson's r correlation parametric tests were employed in the study to examine the sample data. In contrast to market and hierarchical culture types, the results showed that adhocracy culture type had the highest level of BPM adoption success. The adoption of BPM as determined by BPO is significantly positively correlated with the adhocracy cultural type. According to BPO and PPI measurements, there is a sizable inverse relationship between the market culture type and BPM adoption. The association between PPI and BPO is quite positive. The findings are different from previous studies, which may be due to other factors not considered in the current study, such as a distinct national culture, a population that solely includes IT resources, or a mix of both. The knowledge gathered from the current study can aid practitioners in making well-informed choices about how to embrace BPM within their IT community and offer academics knowledge for next

studies on the connection between organizational culture and BPM (Letts, 2019).

This essay investigates how adoption of digital technology is impacted by globalization. The paper's goal is to clarify how globalization influences the uptake of new technologies. Using cutting-edge panel data modeling, the authors leverage country-level data from the globalization index (KOF), digital adoption index (DAI), global competitiveness index (GDI), and total factor productivity (TFP) on 183 nations. According to empirical evidence, globalization has a big impact on how quickly technologies are adopted worldwide. The study's findings demonstrate that globalization has a favorable impact on technology spillovers and transfers, especially when employing digital technology. Countries experiencing considerable technological transition acquire digital technologies at an ever-increasing rate. Our study's data is based on a global viewpoint, with a sizable sample of 183 nations that account for nearly 80% of the transfer process (Skare, 2021).

There are many possibilities for classifying e-business applications. When it comes to business applications, there are two main categories.

1. Intra-business applications, which include all e-business applications that exist in the internal domain of the company / organization. The applications take place within the boundaries of the organization and are connected to the internal activities of the business.

2. Interface applications, which include all applications that exceed the limits of an organization and ensure interaction with external entities such as: customers, a business partner company, or a financial institution.

Most enterprise solutions are based on an intranet infrastructure for sharing information and computing resources between employees. This class of applications is commonly known as B2E (Business-to-employee). In addition, an intranet can be used to facilitate group work or teleconferencing.

Content can be retrieved from internal databases and publications, external databases and publications, and new information from employees. E-business maintains new types of relationships between organizations: automating the exchange of information because of integrating business applications and processes and collaborating by sharing information and knowledge between businesses for mutual benefit (Figure 2).
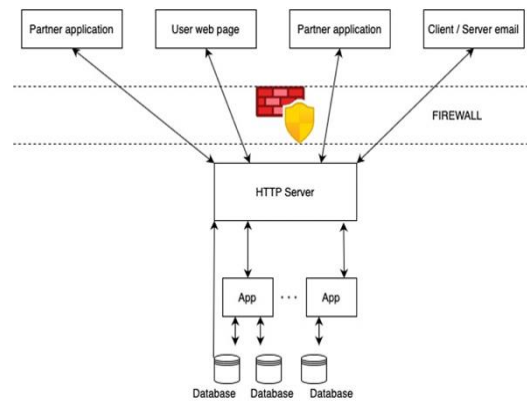

Figure 2. Data share. Adapted after source: Classification of e-business applications, accessed at 11 May 2022

Software applications are those programs that are designed for users to use the computer in a specific problem and to perform a specific task (word processing, billing, DTP, graphics applications). There are different programs each with a specific function, for example:

- Communication programs - Yahoo Messenger, Outlook Express (with these programs a person can send messages and communicate with different people regardless of their geographical location).
- File handling and management programs - Apple OS 9, Linux, Windows Explorer (with these programs a person can create, delete, or rename files).
- Web browsing programs - Netscape Navigator,
- Internet Explorer (with these programs a person can access various Internet pages).
- Word processing programs - WordPro, StarOffice Document, Microsoft Word (with these programs a person can access information in the form of text, with the ability to edit, save and print the document).
- Spreadsheet programs - Microsoft Excel, Lotus 1-2-3, StarOffice Spreadsheet (these programs allow the manipulation of existing numerical data in spreadsheets).
- Database management programs - Filemaker Pro, Microsoft Access, Appleworks (this program organizes large collections of data so that information is available to the user by performing queries and retrieving data).
- Others, used in various fields, specialized - Adobe Illustrator, Quark Express.

The main categories of software and their utility are summarized in the table 1.

Table 1. Software classification. Source: Software classification based on criteria, accessed at 8 May 2022

Software type	Utility
Operating systems	- Basic software packages - Essential for computer operation - The interface between the computer and the user, respectively between the computer and the applications used.
Office packages	- Application packages that help the user to perform the usual tasks related to office work - Includes: text editors, spreadsheets, presentations, databases, calendar.
Text editor	writing letters and other documents
Tabular calculation	working with tables in general, data tables in particular
Database	managing large collections of data, such as information for population records
Presentations	creating printable or projectable presentations to help give lessons, speeches, etc.
Agendas	- replace traditional agendas, - allow the recording and organization of contact details, meetings / meetings, tasks to be performed
Emails	- receiving and viewing emails, - composing and sending new messages, - organizing messages
Internet browser	Internet browsing
Graphics	create, scan, edit and correct images

3 Analysis of software applications used in SMEs

Now there are countless applications with multiple functions to help the process of digitalization (Parviainen, 2017). What a company needs to do is establish its needs, prioritize them, and based on these aspects, choose the best applications that cover its needs and help it grow further (Yoon, 2018). There are companies which prefer custom made applications and some which consider that a better fit are the ones already developed on the market (Koutsabasis, 2008).

According to Risco, the most used software applications are divided in 3 main categories, listed below. Each software platform was analyzed using Similarweb tool from a traffic and engagement perspective, audience perspective and competitors' perspective. Using the online software tool Similarweb there are presented statistics in terms of audience, age range and similar platforms. This is done to highlight that young people have better digital skills are eager to learn and apply software in their daily work activities.

Applications for overall productivity

Evernote is a personal assistant and is an application for organizing. The main feature of the application is the creation of notes and to-do lists, but Evernote has other extremely interesting features: scanning documents, saving favorite web articles and keeping them for later reading and sharing ideas. , notes with team members. Evernote has a basic package that is free and contains only the part of creating notes and other premium and business packages, at prices starting from 11 RON / month. Compared to last month the traffic of this application has decreed by 8.18% on mobile and desktop environment according to Figure 3.

Figure 3. Traffic and engagement, Total visits last 3 months. Source: Similarweb, accessed at 10 May 2022

Audience composition may state the current market share of people from different age intervals.

This application is used by male audience at a percentage of 61.03% and 38.97% by females as presented in Figure 4. The largest age group is formed by people who have the age between 25-34 years old (only on desktop).

Figure 4. Gender, Age distribution. Source: Similarweb, accessed at 10 May 2022
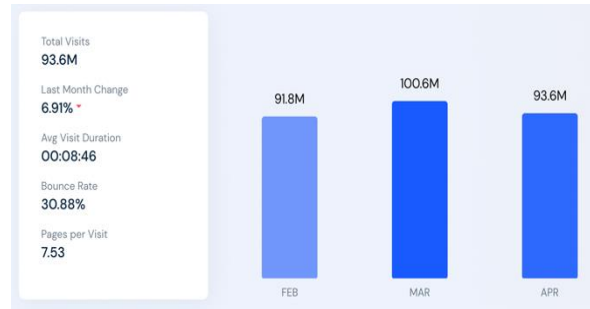

Figure 5. Traffic and engagement, Total visits last 3 months. Source: Similarweb, accessed at 10 May 2022

In Table 2 are presented the top 5 competitors for Evernote. The most visited is Toodledo with 920.9K, but it is not ranked as good as Trello from the user's perspective. If it is taken into consideration the afinity, the first two positions are taken by getpocket and todoist with a percentage of 100%. After Trello, if it Zoho seems to be the best alternative based on these three characteristics.

Table 2. Competitors and Similar sites. Adapted after source: Similarweb, accessed at 10 May 2022

Competitors	Affinity	Monthly visits	Category rank
getpocket.com	100%	13.0M	134
todoist.com	100%	20.4M	78
Toodledo.com	97%	920.9K	2,015
Trello.com	95%	93.6M	13
Zoho.com	92%	50.9M	22

Project Management Applications
Trello is excellent for organizing and tracking any project within the company. The tables, lists, and charts that Trello provides help you better visualize the status of a project and communicate more effectively with team members. Each task is assigned a "card" that can be moved using drag-and-drop depending on the stage of the project. You can add comments, deadlines, everything in a very simple to use and very useful application. The packages are basic (free), Business Class and Enterprise starting at $ 9.99 per user, per year. This month the traffic of Trello has decreased by 6.91% according to Figure 5. Also, it is revealed if the site meets the clients' expectations and if they find it useful.

The audience for Trello is formed mostly by males 67.60% and only 32.40% by females as in Figure 6. The percentages are like Evernote. Also, the main market is formed by people with age between 24-34 years old, meaning young people that work and have digital skills.

Figure 6. Gender, Age distribution. Source: Similarweb, accessed at 10 May 2022

In Table 3 are listed the main competitors for Trello and based on the date Github and Stackoverflow are the best ranked with an affinity of 100% and 97%. Also, on these two platforms are registered the best data in terms of monthly visits, due to their useful content and community.

Table 3. Competitors and Similar sites. Adapted after source: Similarweb, accessed at 10 May 2022

Competitors	Affinity	Monthly visits	Category rank
Github.com	100%	412.9M	4
Stackoverflow.com	97%	274.4M	8
Pivotaltracker.com	89%	404.3K	3,813
Miro.com	87%	25.1M	75
Atlassian.com	86%	25.6M	58

Asana is another web and mobile application used to create and manage projects on a shared table board. It can be integrated with Slack, Google drive and Dropbox to facilitate communication between members without sending more emails. Based on figure 7 the traffic has decreased by 10.88% from past month, but the users still spend a significant time in this platform, around 11 minutes.

Figure 7. Traffic and engagement, Total visits last 3 months. Source: Similarweb, accessed at 10 May 2022

The female percentage (44.70%) is under the male (55.30%) in terms of audience, but the difference is not that high, only 10.6%. This application is used generally by young people having between 25 and 34 years old.

Figure 8. Gender, Age distribution. Source: Similarweb, accessed at 10 May 2022

In Table 4 there are listed the top competitors for Asana. The most monthly visits are on Notion competitor, that is better ranked than Trello.

Table 4. Competitors and Similar sites. Adapted after source: Similarweb, accessed at 10 May 2022

Competitors	Affinity	Monthly visits	Category rank
Trello.com	100%	93.6M	13
Notion.com	99%	113.8M	8
Figma.com	95%	49.8M	10
Calendly.com	93%	32.1M	56
Airtable.com	92%	18.4M	91

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Applications

Nimble is a CRM application that helps to associate customer contacts with social media profiles. Through it, common interests can be found with them, so that everyone can create a customer profile and thus prospect exactly the customers they need. It can be easily integrated with other applications and services such as MailChimp, Evernote, Magento and many

more. The packages provided by Nimble start at $ 19 per user per month.

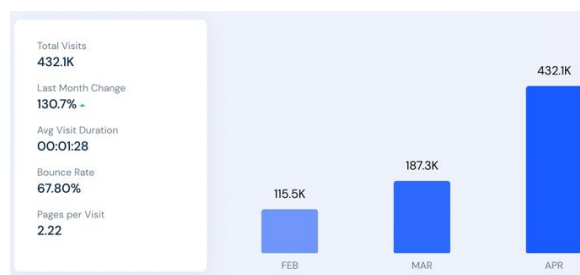According to Figure 9 the traffic has increased on Nimble with 137%.

Figure 9. Traffic and engagement, Total visits last 3 months. Source: Similarweb, accessed at 10 May 2022

The audience is in the same range as for Trello and Evernote meaning 58.62% males and 41.38% females as presented in Figure 10. Also, 32% of the audience is composed by young people with age from 25 up to 34 years old.

Figure 10. Gender, Age distribution. Source: Similarweb, accessed at 10 May 2022

In Table 5 there are listed top 5 competitors of Nimble software. The best ranked is Nimblestorage, followed by Agilecrm. Agilecrm has the most monthly visitors, followed by Sendible. As from an affinity perspective, the top two positions are taken by Sendible and Gravlab with 100%. As it can be seen the values are for affinity are close to each other, but the other two categories have values very different as Nimblestorage has quite a low audience but is better ranked.

Table 5. Competitors and Similar sites. Adapted after source: Similarweb, accessed at 10 May 2022

Competitors	Afinity	Monthly visits	Category rank
Sendible.com	100%	225.6K	29,32
Gravlab.com	100%	<5K	
Nimblestorage.com	88%	61.6K	16,27
Agilecrm.com	85%	268.7K	19,30
Commence.com	85%	10.3K	228

In Figure 11 is presented a comparison made by authors between these 3 top software applications used by companies all around the world. It was taken into consideration the visit average from last 3 months, the duration of the visits and the pages accessed per visit, illustrating the interest of end users. Nimble is by far the most visited, but the users only visit 2 pages and the average time spent is 1 minute. In comparison Trello has an average of 7 pages per visit and users spend around 4 minutes.
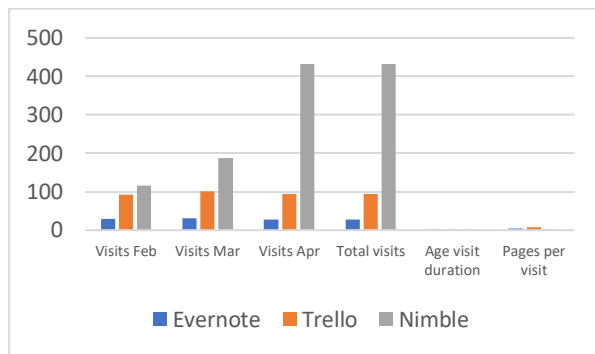

Figure 11. Comparison of software applications for management by visits

4 Conclusions

The business digitalization process is gaining momentum in our country. More and more funds are already being offered for business digitization. Digitization is becoming a necessity in business because of the speed with which the world is developing. Employees are evolving, jobs are changing, and business is becoming more and more automated. Mental work is gaining ground in the face of physical work, with employees' role becoming to think about processes, enter data, and check systems and robots. Digitization is a process, and it is different for each company. It can be different even for companies that have the same field of activity.

The younger generation is now also known as Generation C (connected), because people up to the age of 40 prefer to interact with businesses and services online, but also using software applications, (Cirilli, 2019). From websites, payment platforms and even online counters, all these become easier to access, which is why those who grew up with technology prefer these means. A business that wants to grow quickly and well must work hard to digitize all services and invest in employees and a work environment equipped with tools designed to facilitate their work. Thus, companies must invest in employees, but also in the necessary software solutions to achieve operational excellence, (Sokiyna, 2020).

The study conducted on ERP Systems in Croatian Enterprises analyzed the state of adoption this type software solutions to better understand what are the

factors that generate a successful deployment (Hornung, 2020).

Another paper investigated the factors that affect how software tools that enable innovation management approaches are adopted (Huesig, 2018).

The evolution of knowledge regarding enterprise resource planning software between 1998 and 2019 with the objective of establishing beneficial or negative effects of ERP deployment inside SMEs (Kiran, 2019).

Regarding digitalization and productivity assesses the effects of adopting various digital technologies on company productivity (Gal, 2019).

A case study was done on business process management software was entailed to extract both accomplishments and setbacks found in real world scenarios (Bosilj, 2018).

A survey enacted upon 157 IT professional was conducted to obtain relevant date pertaining to how company culture affects the adoption of BPM (Letts, 2019).

An essay was done with the intent to present the correlations between globalization and digital technology adoption (Skare, 2021).

All the scientific research made by authors through literature review and online analytical tool Similar web are supporting the objectives of this paper, enhancing the importance of digitalization and software applications in SMEs.

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