ECONOMICS
& Sociology

DIGITAL MARKETING EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS IN JOB ADVERTISEMENTS – MUST-HAVE SOFT SKILLS FOR ENTRY-LEVEL WORKERS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT. The aim of the study is to explore the employers' demands for personal skills in graduate and junior positions in the field of digital marketing. The research summarizes the review of academic literature on transferable soft skills, focusing on the digital marketing sector. Job requirements in digital marketing related to graduate and junior employability skills are studied for the following occupations: junior digital marketing manager, social media manager and digital marketing manager assistant. The article presents the findings of a content analysis of 5548 digital marketing job advertisements downloaded in February 2021, in a period of one month, from the top five job finding websites in Hungary. The authors' classification framework includes a core set of relevant skills and competences that can be used to conduct the assessment. Thirty-one most frequently mentioned soft and hard skill categories are grouped into five main categories and analyzed with quantitative methods. Within the scope of the study, an occurrence frequency analysis is conducted in job advertisement texts and the data is analyzed with descriptive statistical methods. Moreover, the findings cover the importance of foreign language knowledge and software knowledge as they appear in job ads. The differences between foreign and multinational companies' soft skill requirements are still under examination. The data show that, while hard skills in job advertisements are still dominant, soft skills are also emphasized in the field of digital marketing. In analyzing the results, the authors look at what employers focus on when searching for graduate students and employees for junior positions. The academic and practical implications of the study are useful for further research, as it presents a collection of essential digital marketing employability skills.

Introduction

Labour markets are under pressure from the combined effects of several megatrends, globalization, digitalization, and the rapid shift of employee generations. Employability skills are changing quickly as technology and digitalized global supply chains progress and global economies integrate further. Industry 4.0 and economics are interconnected at many interfaces, leading to a growing body of research in the field regarding motivation, sustainability, and human resource management.

Educational institutions have an increasing role in the transfer of soft skills and in the personal development of students. Workplace managers are increasingly recognizing the need for change as a result of online solutions and new forms of communication. However, innovation, the use of digital space and the synthesis of artificial intelligence still need to be further developed (Bencsik, 2021). The trend towards Industry 4.0 technology requires appropriate innovative teaching methods. In the study referenced in this paragraph, creativity and communication were considered the most important aspects in the field of education. The most important skills from the students' side were teamwork and communication. As a result of industrial development, job profiles that did not exist before may emerge, which will require the acquisition of new skills (Silva et al., 2021).

The rapid development of industry is leading to a continuous reordering of the top 10 competences and the introduction of new skills. Educational institutions need to adapt to these transformations in order to equip students with the right skills to meet the changing labour market expectations (Szabó & Bartal, 2020).

Besides layoffs during the Covid-19 epidemic, there was also a higher demand for workers in IT and senior intellectual jobs. Furthermore, new jobs were also created. The order of importance of the different skills also changed as a result of the coronavirus epidemic. The emergence of home office work as a result of the pandemic has led to an increase in the value of certain skills, the most important being collaboration and teamwork, digital skills, empathy, autonomy, IT skills, workload and stress tolerance. However, motivation, patience and leadership soft skills did not have the same level of significance (Pató et al., 2021; Padilha et al., 2021).

Drawing on research by Dajnoki and Kun (2020), they found that during the epidemic period, competencies in specific areas such as marketing lost importance, while social skills, stress management and flexibility were valorized. During the epidemic, the development of a number of competences became important, ranked as follows: 1. digital competences, IT skills, online technology 2. communication, assertiveness, conflict management 3. empathy, EQ, social skills 4. collaboration, teamwork 5. flexibility, quick adaptation 6. resilience, stress tolerance, workload capacity (Kópházi, 2020).

As a result of the current economic processes, there are many changes not only in the structure of individual sectors, but also in the structure of employment. On the other hand, high-skilled employers have expanded occupations and churn rapidly, but at the same time there is a challenge for others with low or outdated skills in declining areas of employment. Digitalized business models often employ specialized workers with specific industrial and with specific software set knowledge. As graduate employability is a key issue for higher education, the improvement of university students to become workplace-ready is even more difficult in a digital marketing field.

The structural changes in the global and local digital economy, such as technological progress, digital processes and automation require relevant new skills from the marketing graduates as well. Participation in adult lifelong learning in a population aged 25-64 is a key indicator in the EU workforce strategy, as it refers to long term employability, which may be the core success factor in the carrier path (EC, 2016). The growth of the domestic role of

multinational companies has created new expectations that can be experienced by both employers and employees. The constant pressure to innovate, and the rapid development of technology have led to the need for an analytical, social and interdisciplinary synthesizing vision. Another important factor is the increase in the number of services related to accelerating urbanization and ageing in developed societies, which has led to an appreciation of non-cognitive skills. Numerous studies examined employers' job offers and recruitment practices, which show that employers have recognized the importance of non-cognitive skills (Clarke, 2016; Börner et al., 2018; Hoeschler & Backes-Gellner, 2018; Verma 2019). Both employers and employees should be aware of their skills and expectations, which help motivate employees to develop skills and provide financial recognition to employers (Bassi & Nansamba, 2019). The change in the structure of the labor market shows that the number of jobs in which social skills and professional expectations are dominant has been increasing in the last decades (Varga et al., 2017). According to Mészáros (2017), hard skill as a name covers the professional knowledge that can be acquired in education. This knowledge means the special professional and general skills required by employers. Hard skills are well measurable (digital skills, language skills, profession-specific and mathematical skills, etc.) and can easily be referred to in an advertisement. In addition to professional expectations, the appreciation of non-cognitive, so-called soft skills can be observed in the labor market, which link to people's personality traits, temperaments, attitudes and are most needed to be able to work successfully with others and serve as a basis for managerial skills (Ackerman et al., 2003; Alpert et al., 2009; Fazekas, 2020; László & Szabó, 2020).

The present study thus fulfils a kind of gap-filling function in the above topic. A critical competitiveness factor was examined from a specific perspective. The main purpose of our research was to strengthen our presumption that the labor market is now adapting to the needs of new generations as well as trying to reach young people via new platforms. In addition, social networking sites have also become unavoidable as a method of recruitment. The research was conducted on a base of 5548 online job advertisements in February 2021. In the following chapters of the study, we established a theoretical foundation for employability skills, followed by the results of practical research presented through answering the research questions. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the most important new findings of the research, implications to academic literacy and to university educators.

1. Literature review

Employability skills are essential skills i.e., personal qualities and values that enable employees to thrive in any workplace. There are several definitions of 'employability'. The one adopted from Yorke (2006) is as follows: "a set of achievements - skills, understandings and personal attributes - that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy."

Students' employability is improved by academic literature and soft skills that enable employees to adapt to the constantly changing work environment. An awareness of essential hard and soft *s*kills are critical factors for competitiveness and employability for universities and graduate students and wherever employees are on their carrier paths. The differences in desirable job transition options are based on the information on skills required and on building up strategies on identifying options. The problem solving on an employers' lens is based on the development of cross-functional skills, which are common, non-specialized skills required by job applicants to be considered for a role, applicable to a wide range of jobs *(*See Table *1).*

Table 1. The job transition options and opportunities from the lens of employers and employees

	An employer lens	An employee lens
Desirable job transition options and opportunities	• maximizing productive re-deployment opportunities for workers • identifying priority job transition pathways among a number of viable and desirable options • optimizing the collective outcomes for a wide range of individuals	• mapping out viable and desirable job transition options from the perspective of a single role • measures the size of the opportunity space • building up personal strategy for moving out of declining job types • navigating the uncertainties of the future of work more securely
Problems, threats and solutions	• employees do not have the right skills for the new jobs • ageing population • adult training should better target the disadvantaged • non-standard work is not a marginal phenomenon • social protection needs to be adapted to the future of work	• the range of tasks that need to be accomplished within a job role • knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories, and practices that acts as a foundation for skills • skills are used to apply knowledge to complete tasks • cross-functional skills: common, non-specialized skills required by job applicants to be considered for a role, applicable to a wide range of jobs/specialized skills: skills particular to an industry or a job

Source: *own compilation based on Cournoyer (2018), OECD (2019), and WEF (2018)*

Cross-functional skills are mostly soft skills, which are defined as skills "used to indicate personal transversal competences such as social attitudes, language and communication capability, friendliness and ability of working in team and other personality traits that characterize relationships between people" (Cimatti, 2016). In terms of marketing soft skills, Robles (2012) explored the executive perceptions of the most relevant soft skills, as perceived most important by business executives: integrity, communication, courtesy, responsibility, social skills, positive attitude, professionalism, flexibility, teamwork, and work ethic. As minimum skills required for a digital marketing job, Doyle (2019) listed the following skills: technical skills, MS Office skills, knowledge of statistical software, database analysis, meta-skills in online marketing, oral communications, written presentation, team/leadership skills, time management, creative problem solving, statistics and quantitative analysis. In these lists, hard skills were also highlighted as basic hiring skills for employers.

Evolved around employability factors and desired skills in various marketing fields, former research (Finch et al., 2013; Gregorio, 2019; Kenton, 2020; Kovacs, 2021; Walker et al., 2009) found that soft skills had outstanding importance in marketing positions. Former studies examining employers' job advertisements and recruitment practices reported that employers had recognized the importance of non-cognitive skills as being more relevant than a decade ago (Hoeschler & Backes-Gellner, 2018). Both employers and employees should be aware of their soft skills and expectations, which help motivate employees to develop skills and provide financial recognition to employers (Bassi & Nansamba, 2019). The change in the structure of the labor market shows that the number of jobs where social skills and professional expectations require specific soft skills related to analytical skills (Varga et al., 2017), even though these skills are more difficult to measure than digital knowledge, work field-specific experience, language and mathematical knowledge (Mészáros, 2017).

According to Fazekas (2020), non-cognitive skills are relevant in positions where employers need to cooperate and communicate intensively with others. Because of the increasing number of versatile data sources, digital marketers seek employers capable of handling multiple digital tools. Bobbitt et al. (2000), Gonzalez-Padron and Ferguson (2015) and Key et al. (2019) found that the teaching innovations, such as in-depth experiential learning projects provided a way to accomplish learning experience while at the same timebridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application in case of marketing students. In the Hungarian context, Daruka (2017) and Holik (2019) explored the most relevant soft skills and highlighted communication skills as the most relevant in hiring situations. Pauceanu et al. (2020) investigated the status and the perception of university students about future required employability skills and their evaluation of the effectiveness of the university educational programs in maximizing their skills and career competencies.

In their research, Karimi and Pina (2021) investigated soft skills that were not included in students' knowledge, in addition to skills that would be valued in the future. To fill the missing soft skills, they described processes that could effectively raise the level of students' soft skills by engaging representatives from companies. Based on the results of the research, the authors concluded that leadership and human relations could top the list of soft skills in the coming years. They called for close cooperation between higher education institutions and employers to address the growing skills gap among university students. The synergies between theoretical knowledge taught in university education and the practical experience that could be gained in the competitive sector were also emphasized by Sujová et al. (2021). Cooperation between the two poles could successfully achieve the objective of universities to develop students' personal skills in addition to transferring knowledge.

The Covid-19 epidemic has also had a major impact on higher education activities. Online learning tools can be used effectively to develop hard skills but have limited success in developing soft skills. The study found that for a large proportion of business and engineering students, e-learning could be used to good effect to acquire digital and technical skills (Kamysbayeva et al., 2021).

Utilizing content analysis of job advertisements in a cross-country survey of marketing professionals, Gregorio et al. (2019) identified five employability skill categories and 29 skills and capabilities, which are shown in Table 2. Five identified factors were listed in order of factor contribution of the factor structure, and basic soft skills were described as the most relevant employability factors. The collection is parallel with the research of LinkedIn (WEF, 2020). Creativity, persuasion, collaboration, adaptability, emotional intelligence and the top soft skills are more human-centric than last year (Van Nuys, 2019).

The most important skills in 2021 were adaptability, collaboration, creativity, emotional intelligence and persuasion. Emotional intelligence was a very important skill in 2021, with self-awareness, self-management, social skills, empathy and motivation being part of the category (Lambert, 2021).

A former finding found that university students with working experience had different perceptions on employability skills from students without former working experience (Kovacs, 2021).

Table 2. The employability skillset of marketing graduates

Factors	Skills
Basic soft skills	Flexibility, Teamwork, Interpersonal skills, Initiative, Motivation, Oral communication and presentation skills, Stress resilience
Digital and technical skills	Knowledge of social media, Knowledge of Mobile, Knowledge of E-commerce, Knowledge of Analytics and real time practices, Knowledge of Internet & software knowledge, SEO & SEM
Core marketing skills	Planning, organization and time management, Content creation across channel, Creative thinking, Precision and attention to detail, Sales knowledge and management skills, Ability to manage multiple marketing tasks
Analytical skills	Data-driven/data-oriented, Good conceptual and analytical skills, Statistical knowledge, Problem-solving, Critical thinking, Ability to synthesize information into meaningful and actionable reports
Customer insights skills	Knowledge of company and of its customers, Knowledge of research methods, Knowledge of customer touchpoints and journey, CRM and relational skills

Source: *Kovacs, 2021 based on Gregorio, 2019*

Examining business graduates and employers, there are accessible studies on skills in marketing Azevedo et al. (2012) and Barker (2014) that found that employers were not very confident regarding business graduates' abilities in key knowledge areas and in key generic competencies that seemed to be essential in long term employability. In a subsequent analysis, graduate competences were tested and identified as important predictors of employers' satisfaction with graduates' work performance with text-mining method, Rios et al. (2020) found on a sample of roughly 120,000 job advertisements. Implications for developing educational standards around 21st-century skill development were discussed. Collaboration, communication, content analysis, critical thinking, descriptive analysis, problem solving, social processes/development and textual analysis seemed to be the most relevant skills for the future.

We found a shortage in academic research in the areas of digital marketing. The basic competencies needed for young workers to find employment need to be examined, as those have not been researched before.

1.1. The aim of the study and research questions

The aim of the research was to assess the online job advertisements' content analytics focusing on skill requirements categorized into different skill categories. The proportion of the skill categories occurring in ads served as the basis for the analysis to answer the research questions.

During the investigations based on theoretical knowledge, the following research questions were formulated, which are related to the areas that determined the research and later the directions of analysis:

RQ1: What is the proportion of soft skills within the required skills mentioned in job ads?

RQ2: What are the most frequently mentioned soft skills in digital marketing job ads?

RQ3: What is the specific software knowledge required in the work field of junior digital marketing?

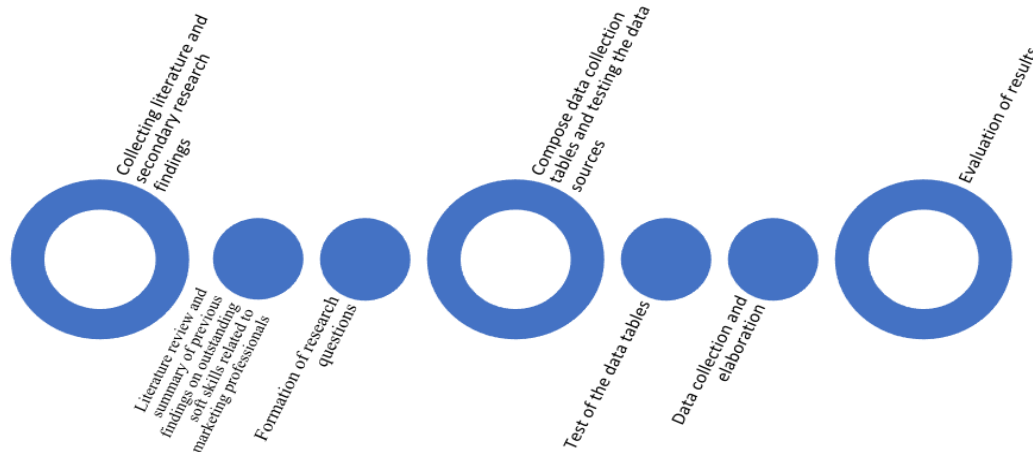RQ4: In what proportion of the ads is foreign language proficiency required?

Figure 1. Logical process of research
Source: *own construction*

The objective based on the research questions was to prove that there were outstanding soft skills and hard skills mentioned in job advertisements seeking for graduate students. Figure 1 illustrates the logical process of the research.

2. Methodological approach

2.1. Data collection and analytical methods

In the exploration section of the research, eighteen job advertising portals were listed. For testing the keywords and filtering systems of the job portals, digital and online marketing keywords and filtering possibilities were tested and the search results were summarized. In conclusion, it is not possible to precisely state the proportion of all graduate and junior job advertisements that the advertisements represented in the sample because of the inaccurate filtering. For analytics, 5548 job advertisements were downloaded in February 2021 from the five TOP Hungarian online portals: Profession.hu, hu.Indeed.com, LinkedIn.com, Jobline.hu, Careerjet.hu. These portals were selected because these platforms are the most frequented in the field of digital marketing and the usability and filtering systems fulfilled the research sampling requirements.

There has been a guidance on the collection criteria of job advertisements: for the work experience (interns and junior positions with maximum 3-year experience) and the work field (digital marketing general). The data collection was full scope. The data analysis was generally derived from the accumulated practice of studies with similar research questions. Unstructured text data needed to be standardized. The coding keywords were utilized from a former study (Kovacs, 2021). After filtering the duplicated cases, 1543 job advertisements were analyzed.

The skill category development and coding were based on the former study of Gregorio (2019) and the Hungarian adoption of the categorization by Kovacs (2021). According to the coding protocol of the research, the keywords of the job advertisements were coded to thirty-one most frequented skill categories. During the data cleaning process, duplicated and incomplete (items with high missing values) were excluded. The excluded portion of the items was under five percent.

2.2. Data collection conclusions

Ad filtering systems are different and therefore filtering junior positions are not supported on some platforms, which is a barrier for researchers and candidates when searching for positions. Hence, advertisements for full-time permanent positions that did not specify significant experience requirements in each of these areas, but which stated that applicants should possess particular soft skills were categorized, coded and analyzed with descriptive statistical methods using SPSS Statistics 27 programs. Ethical issues were minimal, as the study did not directly involve human participants or deal with sensitive issues during the data collection. The job position advertiser companies were not mentioned.

2.3. Study limitations

First, the study of Croneis and Henderson (2002) pointed out that some jobs were not advertised externally; therefore, the online advertisements did not cover the whole job market. The job advertisements reflected the desired values (Xu, 1996) and not exactly covered all the requirements. In practice, the reason for this may be that some job ads are advertising newly created positions. Moreover, there were limitations because of filtering internships and junior positions. The timeframe of the study was one month. The data collection for the study was carried out in February 2021. According to the study of Bennett (2002), there are more waves in seasonality in terms of job ads: in February, in May, in July, in October and in December. Data capture over a long duration could have evened out seasonal variations in the job market (Bennett, 2002). Data collection did not coincide with the Covid lockdown in 2021, but the labor market effects of the Covid pandemic may distort sampling and sample representativeness.

3. Conducting research and results

Stage one of the current research comprised a content analysis of 1543 job advertisements aiming at graduate students and junior marketing professionals. On average, the advertisements were promoted on more than three career online portals. Eighty-two percent of the ads were in Hungarian, twenty-seven percent of the ads were in English, while under one percent of them were in other languages. Some of the advertisements were bilingual. First, a frequency analysis of the skill categories was conducted. Thirty-one skill types were merged into five main skill categories that are visualized in *Figure 2*. The most frequently mentioned category was the basic skill category with 1268 mentions within 1543 job advertisements. Besides, core marketing skills and technical skills were also outstanding. Analytical skills occurred in more than 60% of the advertisements where mostly problem-solving and good conceptual and analytical competencies were emphasized.

The structure for job advertisements tends to be fairly consistent and standardized. When applying for a position, an applicant should have knowledge about the accomplishments and skills required. It seems that in advertisements the goal is to help candidates to identify the knowledge, skills and expertise required conscientiously. The overall conclusion of the content analytics was that most of the job advertisements were poorly written, or there was not enough information about the job details. There is a high chance that applicants cannot find out if they have the required skills for specific job positions. The ads in general are too standardized and they may fail to pick candidates with high competencies without describing duties and responsibilities because of using a standard formula. Former research emphasized the importance of a detailed description of the offered positions' skill requirements in finding the most fitting candidate.
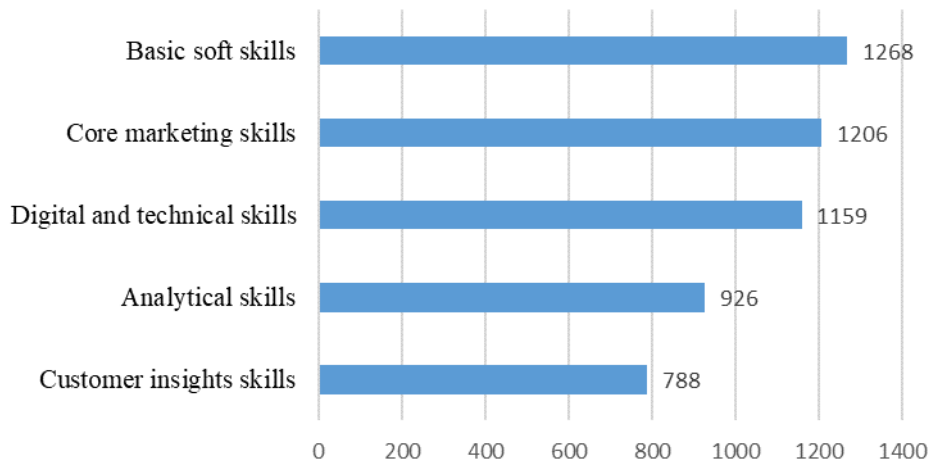
Figure 2. Mention frequencies of skill categories in digital marketing job advertisements
Source: *own compilation based on current research*, N=1543

Within basic soft skills, one notable disparity was that interpersonal skills were mentioned in only 17.1 percent of the advertisements and teamwork also appeared to be less highly esteemed 18.4 percent of the ads, while presentation skills were considered worthy of a separate mention by 25.9 percent of the employers (see *Figure 3.*). Personal motivations i.e., initiative and stress resilience were less frequent. However, these fields had been confirmed to be more important for employers by previous research. The high occurrence of the teamwork category was outstanding as it was not highly mentioned in other authors' results, although this category had already been confirmed by previous research to cover collaboration, good communication skills, empathy and listening skills. This skill group was highly preferred in multilingual and English job ads.
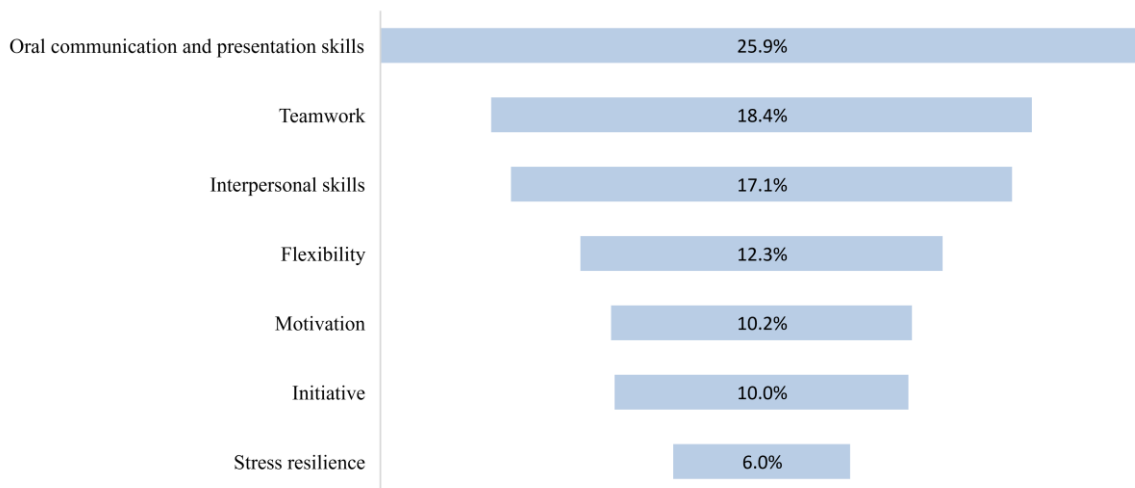

Figure 3. Basic soft skills in digital marketing job advertisements (in percent)
Source: *own compilation based on current research*, N=1543

It was indeed the case that advertisements for certain types of occupation tended to demand particular sets of personal skills. Based on the former study of Bennett (2002), 42% of the advertisements for marketing jobs demanded good communication skills, 32% IT knowledge, 27% teamwork, 24% interpersonal skills, 23% motivation and 22% analytical skills. A former study of Heang et al. (2019) in the field of finance and marketing found the following five main categories to be most important: presenting, discussing and defending

views (8.0%,) fluency in English (8.0%), communication (7.5%), listening effectively (7.2%) and using information technology (6.2%). Omar et al. (2012) found 76% for communication / interpersonal, 66% for ITC and technical, 64% for foreign language, 36% for teamwork, and 34% for personal quality. There were different levels of mentions in the former studies, which can be partly explained by the cultural differences. Looking at the frequencies of basic skill categories, oral communication and presentation skills reached the highest frequency (see Table 3). Knowledge of Internet and software and teamwork was the second and third most important skill category for employers.

Table 3. Skill categories mentioned in digital marketing job advertisements (frequency and in percent)

Skill category	frequency	percent
BSS – Oral communication and presentation skills	960	62.2
DTS – Knowledge of Internet & software knowledge	872	56.5
BSS – Teamwork	685	44.4
CMS – Precision and attention to detail	660	42.8
CMS – Planning	634	41.1
BSS – Interpersonal skills	631	40.9
CMS – Organization and time management	593	38.4
DTS – Knowledge of social media	579	37.5
AS – Problem-solving	563	36.5
CMS – Creative thinking	560	36.3
CIS – Knowledge of company and of its customers	547	35.5
AS – Good conceptual and analytical skills	522	33.8
CMS – Contents creation across channels	516	33.4
CMS – Ability to manage multiple marketing tasks	467	30.3
CMS – Sales knowledge and management skills	463	30.0
BSS – Flexibility	456	29.6
DTS – Knowledge of Analytics and real time practices	425	27.5
CIS – Knowledge of research methods	425	27.5
AS – Data-driven/data-oriented	399	25.9
DTS – Knowledge of E-commerce	392	25.4
BSS – Motivation	379	24.6
BSS – Initiative	370	24.0
AS – Statistical knowledge	326	21.1
DTS – Knowledge of Mobile	317	20.5
CIS – Knowledge of customer touchpoints and journey	312	20.2
AS – Ability to synthesize information into meaningful and actionable reports	311	20.2
AS – Critical thinking	226	14.6
BSS – Stress resilience	223	14.5
DTS – SEO & SEM	210	13.6
CIS – CRM and relational skills	206	13.4

BSS – Basic soft skills, DTS – Digital and technical skills, CMS – Core marketing skills, AS – Analytical skills, CIS – Customer insights skills

Source: *own compilation based on current research*, N=1543

The percentages of advertisements citing language knowledge were 85.2% for English, 8% for English and German and 3% for English and French, while other languages were mentioned under one percent each. In 12% of the advertisements, language proficiency was required.

Software proficiencies were mentioned as follows: Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PPT) - 48.8%, Google (Analytics, Ads) - 14.7%, Social media (analytics, advertising) – 7.2%, SAP - 3.6% and Canva - 2.8%. Programming knowledge: HTML - 4.3% and SQL - 2.3%.

Figure 4 presents the percentages of basic marketing skills mentioned in the advertisements. Precision reached the highest rate of mentions, while ability to manage multiple marketing tasks and sales knowledge had the lowest frequency.
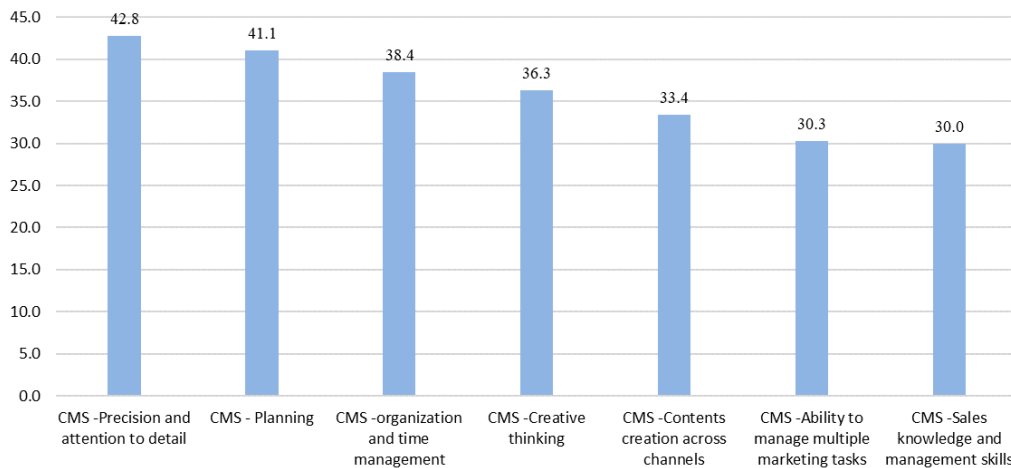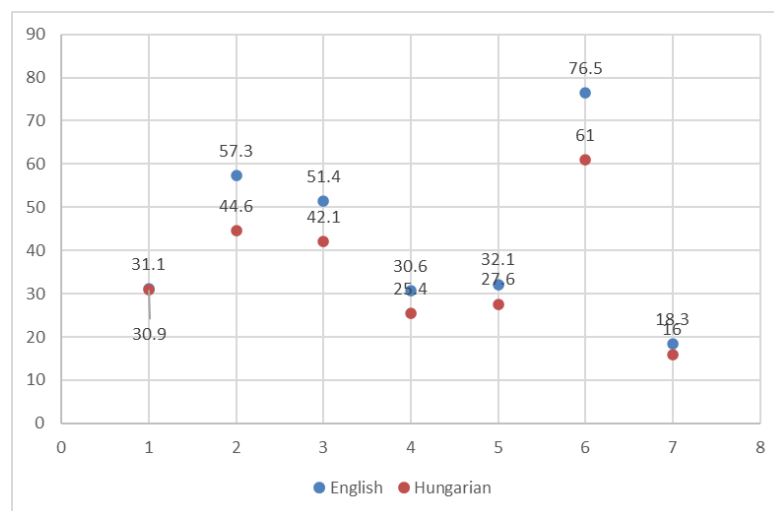

Figure 4. Basic marketing skills mentioned in digital marketing job advertisements (in percent)
Source: *own compilation based on current research*, N=1543

There was a difference between advertisements in English, mostly advertised by multinational companies, and those in Hungarian in highlighting soft skills. The differences were significant for teamwork (Crames's V=0,188; p=0,000), for interpersonal skill category (Crames's V=0,181; p=0,000) and for taking the initiative (Cramer's V=0.155; p=0.001). (*Figure 5*).

1 Oral communication and presentation skills 2 Teamwork 3 Interpersonal skills 4 Flexibility 5 Motivation 6 Initiative 7 Stress resilience

Figure 5. Basic soft skill category frequencies in the English and Hungarian language advertisements (in percent)
Source: *own compilation based on current research*, N=1543

Conclusion

Based on the literature review, the perceived importance of soft skills has increased tremendously during recent decades; and this is well reflected in the findings of our research. In summary, the common skills required by the employers across digital marketing junior positions were English language proficiency, communication and presentation skills, knowledge of internet marketing and using different software. Employers were seeking more well-rounded graduates with soft skills. Within soft skills, teamwork and interpersonal skills were also dominant in job ads. Advertisements for marketing and general management jobs were significantly more likely to demand core marketing and basic soft skills as well as software and language knowledge. Faculties should encourage and motivate students to master their soft skills. Students who excel in academic knowledge with technical skills related to digital marketing do not have a competitive advantage in a high range of positions.

During the content analytics process, thirty-one skill categories, five skill category groups as well as software and language knowledge were analyzed. Positions with more soft skill orientation tended to demand candidates with team working and presentation skills. Findings revealed that the most relevant skills were "oral communication and presentation skills", "knowledge of Internet-marketing and software knowledge", "teamwork", "precision and attention to detail", and "planning". The findings revealed that there were significant differences between domestic and multinational companies' advertisements in three skill categories: teamwork, interpersonal skill category and taking the initiative. One of the key reasons why many students invest in university education was to improve their employment prospects. The curriculum of business education should ensure the development of soft skill attributes among students.

The practical implications of this study for university educators are that this research acts as a collection of required skills of university students to improve readiness for different work fields. Moreover, for further academic research, this research contributes to addressing the gap between recruiters' expectations for the business graduates and the level of skill sets of graduates from business schools. Moreover, attention should be paid while developing and redesigning curriculums to ensure the employability of business graduates.

This study could be a basis for future studies and would help business education institutions guide their students to master the skills, and to develop and prepare them for real-life battles in the job market. Another possible area of future research would be to create a scientific framework to develop soft skills among business graduates.

Acknowledgement

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