

The Role of Digital Platforms in Shaping the Professional Identity of Young People

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ABSTRACT:

The article is devoted to the study of the impact of social networks and media on the professional development of future specialists in the context of digital transformation of the information space. The article analyzes the processes of how platforms shape professional orientations, skills and career trajectories of a specialist. The goal is to comprehensively assess the role of social networks and media in shaping the professional identity, digital skills and career potential of future professionals, as well as to identify optimal strategies for their use in the educational process. The study is based on a combination of content analysis of information flows in social networks, online media and professional platforms, empirical sociological surveys of

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young people aged 18–45, and a comparative analysis of the functional roles of digital channels (informational, educational, representative, networking). Statistical data processing was used to assess audience interaction and the effectiveness of media projects. It is established that social networks take over the functions of traditional media and become a source of professional information, educational resources and networking platforms. The correlation between activity in digital channels and the development of soft skills, including communication, critical thinking, and media literacy, is revealed. The author proposes a typology of media projects (analytical and research, creative and media, practice-oriented) that contribute to professional self-expression and career advancement. Further research should be directed at studying the impact of specific digital platforms on certain professional fields and analyzing the ethical aspects of using social media in career positioning.

Keywords: social networks, mass media, professional development, digital environment, communication activity, professional self-realization.

Introduction

The dialectical changes in the educational environment and the constant dynamics of labor market requirements have raised the issue of meeting the need to form a new generation of specialists who not only possess professional knowledge but are also able to quickly integrate into the information and communication space. Social networks and free media have already taken their place in this process, increasingly influencing the formation of personal and professional guidelines. The use of digital media as a means of self-expression, communication, learning, and promotion of one's own brand has become one of the key elements of professional growth of future professionals, regardless of their specialization (Ionescu et al., 2022). In addition, the relevance of the study is also due to the increasing role of digital communication channels in the educational process and professional self-determination of modern youth, who are increasingly focused on new sources of knowledge, interpersonal interaction, and public positioning. Social media, on the one hand, serve as a tool for visualizing one's own professional potential, demonstrating achievements and building a personal brand, and on the other hand, actively contribute to the development of the so-called “skills of the twenty-first century”, including critical thinking, media literacy, information management,

creativity and interpersonal interaction in the digital environment (Rafique et al., 2024). The ability to navigate the information flow, create quality content, interpret media messages, and consciously use digital platforms for professional expression is becoming not just an advantage but a prerequisite for the successful functioning of a future specialist in any field.

Literature Review

In a wide range of scientific discourse that analyzes the impact of the media and popular social networks on professional development, there is a tendency to rethink the role of the media not as a means of broadcasting corporate interests, but as a means of forming professional skills, interpersonal communications, and social capital. Taking into account the works of Farid and Taher (2021), Plass and Pawar (2020), we see that professional skills can be defined through the prism of institutional representation of the interests of society (business), through the expansion of the content and functional boundaries of social digital platforms. In the context of professional development, according to Adkhamjonovich (2024), Lo et al. (2024) information environments that allow a specialist not only to get acquainted with industry trends but also to actively participate in professional discussions, form their own point of view, publish analytical materials, carry out public reflection and establish

productive interaction with colleagues through social networks, blogs, online magazines and public forums are of particular value.

A number of scientific papers by Franco et al. (2021), Kozlovskiy et al. (2024), Martin-Gomez and Muñoz de Luna (2024), dedicated to more traditional forms of media in the educational environment, such as university publications and websites, demonstrate that these channels can be adapted to the needs of professional development, but they need to be rethought in terms of content and format. The studies by Bolek et al. (2021) and Markham et al. (2017) show us that even within structured educational information systems, productive environments for self-realization can emerge, but the potential of social media in this context far exceeds the capabilities of traditional media platforms, as it allows for open publication of materials, the formation of a digital portfolio, the expansion of professional contacts and the acquisition of reputational experience in real time.

The studies of such scholars as Reddy et al. (2023), Voznyuk et al. (2022) are illustrative, as they focus on the phenomenon of open media, but also emphasize its potential as a tool for forming a professional community. However, in the context of rapid digitalization, the emphasis is shifting to those platforms that allow future professionals to create content on their own, publish their own work, initiate thematic discussions, and participate in project activities within a virtual professional environment.

As a result, we see that although some researchers continue to consider media as a structured tool for organizational functioning, the latest scientific approaches are increasingly gravitating towards the dominant role of social networks and digital media as open spaces of professional action, where a future specialist can not only learn but also be an active participant in communication exchange. These developments create the need for a similar study of the relationship between professional training and social platforms of our time.

The aim of the article is to substantiate the importance and contribution of social networks and

mass media in the processes of sustainable and effective training of future specialists with the emphasis on personal professional brand.

Methods

The methodological basis of the study is based on a combination of empirical sociological data, secondary content analysis and elements of statistical processing of the results, which allows a comprehensive assessment of the impact of social networks and the media on the professional development of future professionals. Particular attention is paid to the study of media consumption among young people in the context of digital transformation of the information space. The first stage of the study was a content analysis of information flows in five leading digital channels: social networks (Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn), online media, video hosting, digital professional platforms and team environments for media projects. The analysis was conducted based on such criteria as content, frequency of interactions, type of activity (educational, career, representative), level of audience engagement, and quantitative feedback metrics. The second stage was the identification of the subjective experience of young professionals in using social networks and the media to form their own professional image.

The study used a comparative analysis of digital channels used by future professionals in terms of their functional role: informational, educational, representative, and networking, to identify which forms of digital activity correlate most strongly with the formation of a media portfolio, development of soft skills, and involvement in professional interaction.

Results

Variable features of using media and digital social networks to start training specialists

Modern variations in the existence of media and social networks are increasingly able to influence the formation of not only general cultural competence, but also the development of professional orientations and skills within digital communications. Technological advances have provided unprecedented access to global

information resources, making traditional television and print media lose their leading role in the transmission of knowledge, cultural experience, and social norms (Makedon et al., 2020). At the same time, social media have taken over the functions of not only entertainment content, but also a quality source of news, professional information, educational resources, and networking channels.

The experience of empirical sociological surveys, in particular among the audience aged 18 to 45, shows that it is the news posted on social media that causes the highest level of trust among users, which necessitates the study of their impact not only on opinion but also on the formation of professional identity and guidelines for future professionals (Figure 1).

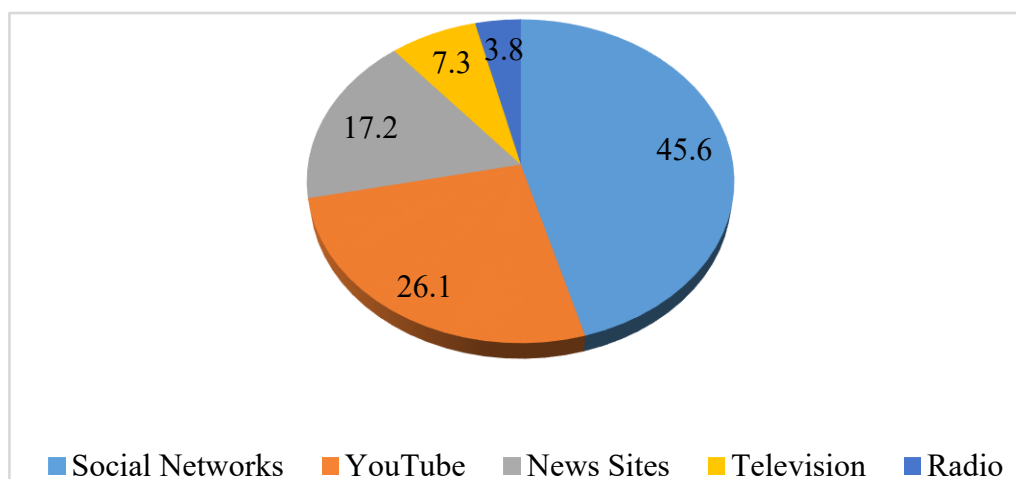


Figure 1. The most popular information channels that form professional guidelines in the training of specialists

Source: developed by the author based on We Are Social & Meltwater (2025)

The rapid growth of investments in the improvement of digital solutions aimed at managing professional training processes indicates that the ability of a future specialist to interact effectively in the field of social media and dynamic media environments increasingly determines his or her professional competitiveness. Therefore, authors can state that digital communication tools, in particular those related to digital technologies, play a leading role in the formation of relevant skills and enable strategic interaction of a specialist with the information space through social platforms (Tran et al., 2024). Among such tools, a special place is occupied by technologies such as:

1. TCMA (Through-channel marketing automation), which coordinate information flows and public messages within a multi-level network of partnerships, allowing young professionals to demonstrate their involvement in professional media communication on an international level;

2. equally important is the use of RTIM (Real-time interaction management), which is aimed at instant response in the social networking environment and allows students and graduates to adapt their communication strategies to meet the current needs of professional audiences, thereby maintaining a dynamic presence in the digital space;

3. it is also worth paying attention to the functionality of MRM (Marketing Resource Management), which allows future professionals to effectively plan and analyze the use of resources within digital campaigns, developing skills in content management and media impact assessment;

4. L2RM (Lead-to-Revenue Management) tools provide a deeper understanding of the mechanisms for transforming content into professional capital, in particular through the analysis of interaction with the target audience, which is especially important for those who are just starting out in their careers and seeking to form their own circle of influence;

5. CCCM (Cross-channel campaign management) tools allow to manage multichannel communications in different social environments, taking into account the specifics of the local context, which is critical in shaping the image of a specialist in the globalized digital world;

6. finally, the CMP (Content Marketing Platform) serves as the foundation for creating, personalizing, and distributing professional content through social networks and media platforms, allowing future professionals to

broadcast their competencies, achievements (Figure 2).

The trajectory of the professional development of future specialists, based on the use of social media in today's realities, is becoming not only a channel of communication or leisure, but also an effective environment for presenting the results of individual or team projects based on real-world tasks and aimed at developing applied competencies (Agarwalla & Sahu, 2024).

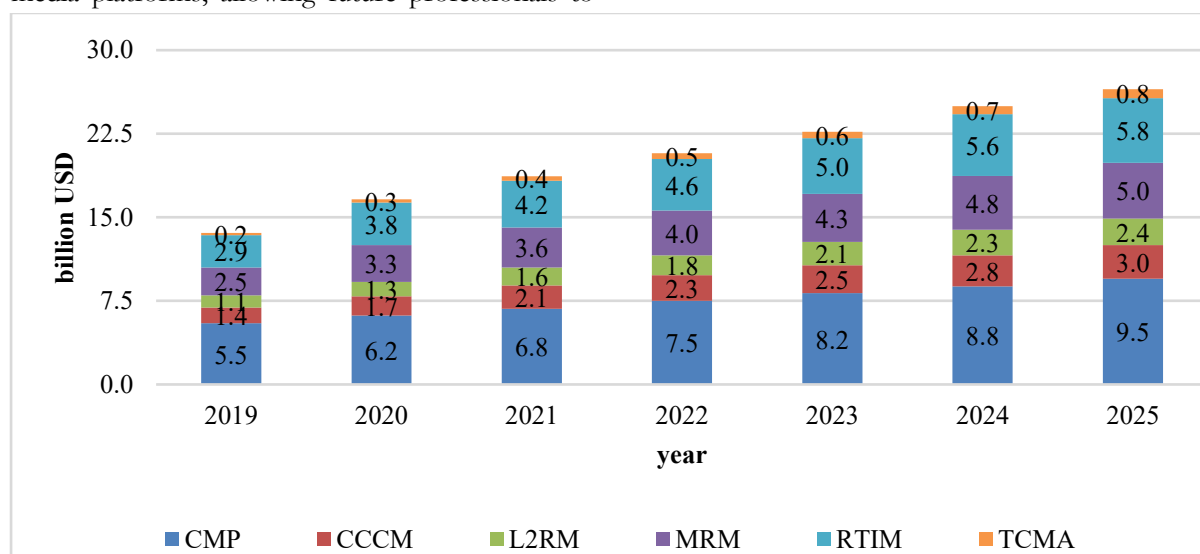


Figure 2. Dynamics of projected costs for automation of international marketing communications tools in 2019-2025 (USD billion)

Source: (Dynamics of forecasted costs for automation of international marketing communications tools in 2019-2025, 2025)

This is how a new type of project activity is being formed in the digital media space – a media project that integrates knowledge, skills of independent information search, processing large

amounts of digital content, a creative approach to creating one's own product, and the ability to present it to a wide audience through social platforms (Table 1).

Table 1. Basing projects in the context of professional development of specialists through the use of social networks and media

Project type	Characterization based on the research topic
Analytical and research	It involves the study of the specifics of using social networks and the media to form a public image, personal brand or expert presence in the industry environment. The structure includes: justification of relevance, definition of goals, objectives and methodology, formulation of hypotheses about the impact of digital platforms on career trajectory, case analysis and formulation of recommendations

Information and review	It is aimed at collecting, systematizing and presenting relevant information on the role of media resources in building professional experience. The result can be a publication in online media, the creation of an analytical digest for a student audience, a thematic blog or podcast analyzing industry trends
Creative and media	Allows to realize the creative potential in creating visual or media content (video, graphics, texts) with educational, professional, or promotional content. It includes the development of personal or team projects, such as a YouTube channel or Instagram page, aimed at promoting a particular industry or skill
Imitation and role-playing (media scenario)	Participants simulate situations of interaction in the professional media space: they take on the roles of experts, interviewers, editors, presenters, etc. They create simulated broadcasts, talk shows, and press conferences. Media literacy and the ability to present oneself and one's position in the public space are developed
Practice-oriented (media workshop)	It has a clearly defined result that is directly related to the use of social media in professional self-assertion. For example: creating a resume profile on LinkedIn, publishing articles in specialized online resources, developing a content strategy for personal promotion
Digital and communication (telecommunication)	It involves interaction between students from different regions or countries through online platforms. It includes joint work on media projects (digital magazines, streams, vlogs), which contributes to the formation of intercultural, professional and communication skills and mastery of modern digital tools

Source: created by the author

In the context of these developments, a qualitatively new form of professional training is being formed, which involves mastering not only professional knowledge but also media tools that open up wide opportunities for self-expression, career advancement, and professional communication. Such a shift in information emphasis contributes to the formation of new models of knowledge consumption among young people and the construction of their own career trajectory, where the key success factor is the ability to adapt to changes in the information landscape and critically reflect on the content produced by the digital environment. The analytical report We Are Social and Meltwater (2025) confirms the stable trend of declining trust in traditional media and the growing role of the Internet and social networks in the consumption of informational, cognitive and educational content.

Four main channels of media interaction play a key role in ensuring the professional development of future specialists: printed sources

(newspapers, magazines, newsletters), television and radio communications, online media and, of course, new media, among which the most significant are social networks. The latter serve not only as a channel of communication or information, but also as a platform for constructing a personal “media portfolio”, which is gradually becoming a tool for professional self-assertion, demonstration of achievements, reputation building, and career advancement (Hosen et al., 2021).

In the media project format, students have the opportunity to implement their own creative initiatives, starting with the formulation of an idea, collecting and processing information, creating content, and ending with its presentation through media platforms and social channels. This form of activity allows to flexibly adapt to changes in the digital environment, develop cross-platform thinking skills, and acquire knowledge of the mechanisms for publishing, promoting, and visualizing information products (Xu, 2024). The fact that the results of these activities can be

published not only in traditional media, but also in social media, where they have a much wider reach and direct impact on the target audience, is quite important.

Media projects focused on digital platforms involve the creation of unique content that is both a way of self-expression and a tool for professional growth (Makedon et al., 2024). Thus, social networks are becoming an environment where students can not only test their knowledge, but also declare themselves as future professionals who are able to navigate the information environment, work with large amounts of data, and effectively interact with the audience, in particular through feedback mechanisms, reputation metrics, and the influence of media personalities.

Tool support for professional training based on social media and media sources

Social networks and the media are increasingly influencing the professional development and formation of the younger generation of specialists, as they offer ample opportunities for the development of key skills that are extremely valuable in the new knowledge economy. In particular, authors are talking about

the development of the so-called “soft skills”, among which the leading place is occupied by the ability to communicate effectively, work in a team, take initiative in the digital environment, publicly present the results of their activities, interact with the audience, and adapt to rapid changes in the information space Gao et al. (2023).

In this context, the digital media environment, which includes online media, video hosting platforms, interactive resources, and, above all, social networks, provides future professionals with tools not only for acquiring professional knowledge but also for practicing their own projects, engaging in cross-sectoral cooperation, and actively interacting with representatives of the professional community to which the student or young professional aspires to belong. Thanks to the interactive capabilities of social media, educational outcomes can be presented to a wide range of stakeholders, including employers, experts in a particular field, opinion leaders, or potential mentors, which in turn contributes to early professional positioning and the development of career subjectivity (Table 2) (Agarwalla & Sahu, 2024).

Table 2. Determining parameters of the impact of social networks and media on the professional development of future professionals

Media interaction channel	Form of activity	Expected results	Emerging digital skills	Career effect
1. Social networks (Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok)	Creating a personal brand, maintaining a professional page	Increasing awareness, establishing connections with professional communities	SMM, visualization, feedback, KPI analytics	Building a reputation, involvement in internships or projects
2. Online media (online magazines, news portals)	Publication of own materials (articles, analytics)	Demonstration of expertise in the chosen topic	Working with sources, journalistic writing, digital editing	Formation of a portfolio, mention in the information field
3. Video hosting (YouTube, Vimeo)	Development of training or presentation video content	Public presentation of knowledge and skills	Video editing, scenario thinking, promotion	Raising the media status, forming a communicative image

4. Digital magazines and newsletters	Participation in thematic issues, content editing	Engaging in interdisciplinary dialog	Information structuring, layout, audience analytics	Expanding your professional network
5. Online team platforms (Trello, Miro, Slack)	Work within joint digital projects	Formation of experience of collaboration in the network	Project management, team communication	Increasing value in the labor market through “flexible skills”

Source: created by the author

The fact that social networks allow for the implementation of the principle of collaborative learning, in which students interact not only with each other but also with real representatives of the chosen field, receiving practical recommendations, advice or even invitations to cooperate, is also valuable. The proposed format is a way to “immerse” students in the professional environment even before completing formal education, to form an idea of the specifics of future activities, and to expand the range of professional contacts through networking (Bai & Zhang, 2024).

The processes of creating and maintaining one's own professional digital portfolio, which may include published media materials, project results, visual or textual content, as well as examples of communication with industry professionals or media representatives, deserve support. This approach allows a future professional not only to demonstrate the skills and knowledge they have acquired, but also to build a digital reputation, which is no less important than a traditional resume or diploma in today's environment (Lo et al., 2024).

The experience of countries around the world shows the effective use of social media in the system of training young professionals: as part of educational projects, teachers are increasingly playing the role of coordinators and inspirers, not just sources of information, directing students to active creative work in the digital environment, helping them find the best ways to implement tasks through online tools.

Thanks to the dynamics of content updates, accessibility of publications and instant audience response, these channels not only disseminate information but also create new conditions for the development of professional skills, including analytical thinking, critical evaluation of received

signals and adaptation of communication behavior to changes in the environment. Social media as a part of the digital infrastructure allows future professionals not only to consume information but also to actively engage in its production, dissemination and discussion in professional communities, forums, thematic groups and specialized networks where relevant knowledge, cases, and experience in solving industry problems are exchanged. Of particular importance is the ability of a professional or young professional to carefully monitor the reaction to their own content, analyze audience interaction with messages, time spent viewing materials, frequency of repeated access to published information, and further actions of other network members after reading the publications (Figure 3) (Shabur & Siddiki, 2024). All of these factors contribute to the sustainable development of competencies that allow assessing the effectiveness of one's own digital presence, adjusting communication strategies, and improving professional representation.

Online platforms that specialize in bringing together professionals by industry, such as energy, agriculture, logistics, engineering, or digital technology communities, create additional conditions for professional growth, as they function as a space for networking, consulting support, sharing ideas, and launching joint initiatives. Through such digital environments, future professionals have the opportunity to communicate with experienced experts, join the discussion of innovations, technologies and practices that are actively being implemented in their field, which, in turn, forms their understanding of market requirements and opportunities for further professional realization (Solomenko, 2022). Thanks to this approach, the professional development of future specialists does not take place in isolation

from the real market, but in its dynamic information field, which allows them to form not only competencies, but also a professional vision, individual style, and understanding of their own role in the relevant professional ecosystem.

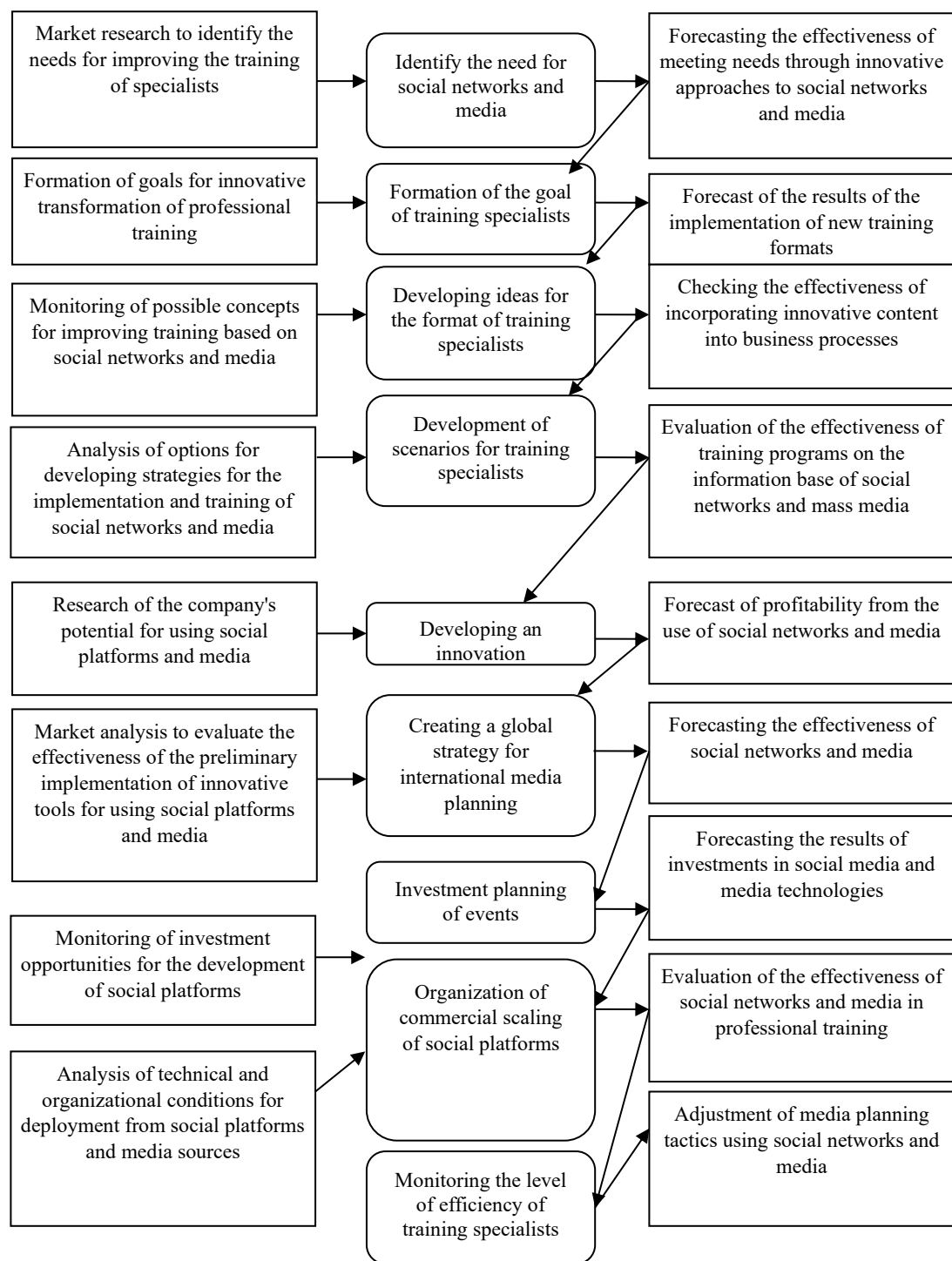


Figure. 3. Stages of using social networks and media in the professional development of future specialists

Source: created by the author

Discussion

The final results of the study are consistently consistent with scientific views on the role of digital platforms and social networks in providing professional training for future professionals. In particular, there is a correspondence with the work of Ionescu et al. (2022), which examines the impact of social networks on the formation of professional self-determination. The authors emphasize the expediency of creating a personal brand and visualizing professional activity in the digital space. The scientific results fully support these theses and positions, establishing a direct correlation between students' regular participation in social media and the development of key professional skills: communication culture, analytical thinking, and effective presentation skills. Additional confirmation of our findings was provided by Rafique et al. (2024), who emphasize the importance of critical thinking, digital organization of personal activities, and media literacy for professional competence. In this study, authors introduced a new parameter, such as the intensity of interaction with online communities, which showed its crucial role in the accumulation of social capital of a future specialist.

A component of the research is the proposed typology of media projects, which provides a systematic ordering of students' educational and practical activities in the digital environment. Unlike a number of previous works, such as Bolek et al. (2021), which focused on specific media formats, our study covers the entire process of digital professional development: from content generation to building a personal portfolio and analyzing one's own online reputation. The discussion raises the question of the role of traditional media in educational practices. Although some researchers (Franco et al., 2021; Martin-Gomez & Muñoz de Luna, 2024) point to their potential usefulness, the results also show a marked decrease in young people's trust in classical media in favor of faster, more adaptive and personalized digital resources, as also mentioned in the report *We Are Social* and Meltwater (2025), etc. The practical focus of the study was the position that the use of

the data obtained in the design of educational programs is aimed at developing digital media literacy, self-presentation skills, content management and the formation of a professional image for each specialist in the future.

Conclusions

The results obtained indicate obvious changes in the mechanisms of professional socialization of future specialists, which have been strongly influenced by digital communications. Such consequences have been shaped by the active development of social networks and media platforms that form a new information reality in the field of training. It has been established that social media have long gone beyond being just news sources and are now an effective tool for self-presentation, communication in professional circles, creating specialized content, and joining industry communities.

The analysis of sociological research has shown that among the audience aged 18-45, there is a high level of trust in information received through social networks, which widens the field of consideration of social networks and platforms as a means of forming professional identity and self-presentation strategies. In addition, the effectiveness of modern digital technologies (Through-Channel Marketing Automation, Real-Time Interaction Management, Marketing Resource Management, Lead-to-Revenue Management, Lead-to-Revenue Management), which provide personalized interaction in the online environment, combining learning, communication and practice into a single media ecosystem, is investigated. Media project activities in social networks are recognized as a valuable area of professional training, which creates a chance for a specialist not only to create their own content, but also to demonstrate their achievements to a wide audience, develop thinking based on working with various platforms, improve digital skills and form a personal "media portfolio" as a driver for successful future employment. A classification of media projects has been developed that includes analytical, review and informational, creative, role-playing, practice-oriented, and digital formats that promote the development of

professional, communication, and intercultural competencies.

In addition, a model of professional development based on the active use of digital platforms is proposed: specialized communities, online publications, video services, and multifunctional applications. The tools shown and worked on should help to realize creative ideas, communicate with leading experts, and acquire relevant knowledge and skills. It is confirmed that thanks to digital technologies, future specialists master strategically important skills: adaptation to changes in the information space, critical reflection on materials, initiation of professional dialogues, self-presentation in the public environment and building long-term professional contacts.

Authorship and Contributions

According to the CRediT taxonomy, the authors contributed equally to the conception, development, and writing of the manuscript. Their collaboration included defining research objectives, conducting data analysis, interpreting results, and preparing the manuscript.

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The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Data are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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