# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND DIGITAL CULTURE

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**Abstract**: *The paper marks the strong link between digital transformation and digital culture and how success is the result of two mutually conditioning variables. Digital transformation is a vast and complex phenomenon with multiple implications operating on two levels: microeconomic and macroeconomic. As a result, both internal and external organizational environments are changing profoundly. The digital transformation has two sides (it is both an autonomous strategy and the result of the digital one). This restructuring is taking place as a result of the new effects generated by this process: new business models, increased competitiveness in the business world, increased organizational efficiency and effectiveness, and culture plays an important role in this new landscape. Industry 4.0 is also a key determinant that has imposed a series of organizational changes and is linked to digital culture and digital transformation. The tools used were literature review and bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer for visualizing the main and secondary synapses between the variables. Through them, the hypothesis of interdependence between variables (digital transformation and digital culture) was validated. Digital transformation and digital organisational culture condition each other to ensure organizational success in an increasingly volatile, unstable, ambiguous, and digitally complex environment. The items that ensure the connection of the variables and the way in which new conceptual nodes are connected have been identified.*

## 1. Introduction
Culture is the epicenter of an organization. Firsova et al. (2021) and Cruz-Cardenas et al. (2022) argue that the key determinant of the success of the digital transformation approach is digital culture. Its importance is felt independently of industries and organizational sectors. It is through culture that the positive effects that digital technologies can bring to a business

are maximized, generating business innovations to increase its endurance and adaptability. Due to a highly volatile, unstable, and dynamic, but especially digital, environment, organizations face both problems and opportunities.

The survival of the organization depends directly on digital transformation (Kő, Fehér and Szabó, 2019). Digital culture and digital transformation are inextricably linked in today's digital world and have a key role in guaranteeing corporate success (Runardotter et al., 2020) - hence the symbiosis between the two variables.

Digitally transformative initiatives come into play to cope with the new business environment, with the focus being on restructuring the organizational culture and making it digitally driven (a process that is not just about training employees in new digital technologies but also about updating the mindset across the organization).

## 2. Theoretical background

### 2.1. Digital organizational culture

According to several experts (Clark, 1972; Pettigrew, 1973; Trice, Belasco, and Alutto, 1969), the first research in the field of organizational culture appeared in the early 1970s, and in the 1980s, this concept became an integral part of management (Ouchi, 1981; Pascale and Athos, 1981; Deal and Kennedy, 1982). Digital organizational culture is the set of shared assumptions and overall understanding of organizational practices in a digital context (Velyako, V. and Musa, S., 2023). Lan noted (2021) that an organizational culture is a vital determinant in the digital transformation process, representing lessons for organizations and creating a solid foundation for a successful digital economic future. The need for cultural adaptability and flexibility is also marked by Knech and Hunt (2022) for digital transformation to have a chance of success. This is due to the dynamic and profoundly digital environment; it can be achieved by modernizing existing processes.

Therefore, digital culture is a means for organizations to plan digital strategies in a rapidly changing environment (Zhang et al., 2021).

Belle and Dyk (2019) mark as advantages of promoting and building a digital culture the following aspects: maximizing the degree of involvement and motivation of employees; increasing their ability to take risks; stimulating creativity; but also looking at mistakes as a learning base for improvement.

### 2.2. Digital transformation

Shalamanov et. al. (2020) highlight the complexity of digital transformation through an alignment of business operations, applied technologies, and digital skills across the organization at all levels. If the digital transformation process is well managed, positive effects (high levels of productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness, a considerable decrease in costs) are produced through sound organization of the approach (Толмачов, 2022). The strategies needed to support the digital transformation process are folded into this initiative by imposing a specific organizational structure (Verhoef et al., 2021). Sustainability over time in a digital business environment can be ensured due to digital transformation (Bochulia, 2021). Organizational culture is digitally revitalized through the digital transformation initiative; this is essentially a strategy (Gurbaxani and Dunkle, 2019).

### 2.3 Organizational success

Miles and Snow (1984) validate the importance of organizational success, which is essentially defined by obtaining a tight fit (consistency) between strategy, structure, and management practices. There is a strong connection between leadership and culture; the two variables are mutually dependent (Popa, 2012). Culture impacts an organization's

success more than significantly and, at the same time, has an effect on performance (Warrick, 2017).

Organizational success reported in a digital business environment depends on the ability to adapt and use technologies as efficiently and effectively as possible by integrating these technologies into the digital business strategy (Korchagina et al., 2020). According to Popovic et al. (2022) digital technology is much more than just the use or implementation of technologies, equally important is the mindset and culture, the need to change them to adopt the digitization process, and play a significant role in business operations, business processes.

A digital strategy has several key components (processes, systems, and human resources) to benefit from the most comprehensive and capable approach to integrating the digitalization process (Gerling et al., 2022).

In our view organizational success is influenced by the interaction between the digital strategy and the digital organizational culture of the organization, meaning that the strategic objectives of the digitalization strategy have been achieved.

## 3. Methodological approach

The topic under research can be known in depth through a literature review, leading to more effective data management (Senivongse, Bennet, and Mariano, 2017). In order to work with the very large dataset available, we turned to a program called VosViewer which allow to develop very complex bibliometric maps. Articles which entered the program were selected based on their relevance and key terms (digital transformation and digital culture).

The research questions are:
- Is there a positive link between digital transformation and digital culture in organizations?
- What are the items that link digital culture and digital transformation?
- What are the subsets of the two variables?

## 4. Discussions based on the results

Articles were selected from the Web of Science, and the full record was used as the method for extracting the data needed for the analysis.

The type of analysis was co-occurrence, the unit of analysis selected was all keywords and the counting method was full counting. The bibliometric analysis focused on extracting keywords from 749 relevant articles with a minimum number of occurrences of 5 (1844 words initially, but only 49 remained for viewing).

The items were grouped into 9 clusters. The first cluster consists of 9 items (artificial intelligence, big data, COVID-19, digital economy, digital technology, digital transformation strategy, enterprise digital transformation, strategy, and technology innovation).

The second cluster is composed of eight elements (barriers, business transformation, change management, digital innovation, digital transformation, innovation performance, sustainability, and technology).

Cluster number 3 consists of the same number of variables as the previous one (business strategy, digital business, digital leadership, digital strategy, digitalization, organizational change, performance, and SMES).

Cluster 4 presents the following 6 variables: business process management, digitization, disruptive innovation, dynamic capabilities, and industry 4.

Cluster 5 contains 5 determinants (digital maturity, digital technology, industry 4.0, leadership, and management).

Cluster 6 contains four determinants (digital culture, digital literacy, financial performance, and firm performance).

Cluster 7 also has four elements (innovation, knowledge management, organizational culture, and organizational success).

Cluster 8 has only 3 variables (corporate governance, environmental performance, and sustainability). The last cluster, cluster number 9, has only one element of innovation capacity.



**Figure 1.** Bibliometric analysis of the link between digital culture and digital transformation
Source: Author's analysis/processing based on own data

According to the mapping, there is a direct interdependence between digital transformation and digital culture.

The relational nodes of digital culture are the following: digital strategy, digital leadership, digital literacy, financial performance, dynamic capabilities, digital transformation, sustainability, change management, digitalization, digitization, and digital technology.

The relational nodes of digital transformation are: digital leadership, digital culture, digital strategy, digital transformation strategy, organizational change, digital innovation, digital innovation performance, digital innovation performance, digital technologies, sustainable development, environmental performance, digital economy, organizational culture, firm performance, financial performance, technological innovation, Industry 4.0, digital maturity, innovation capability change management, digitization, business process management. The relational nodes of digitalization are the following: digital leadership, digital strategy, digital culture, leadership, organizational change, business strategy, digital economy, digital

technology, sustainability, innovation, dynamic capabilities, knowledge management, organizational culture, change management, business transformation, Industry 4.0.

The relational nodes of digital strategy are the following: environmental performance, performance, digitalization, business strategies, Industry 4.0, digital maturity, digital technology, digital leadership, digital innovation, digital transformation, digital transformation strategy, digital culture, innovation, change management, and technological innovation.

The relational node of organizational success is knowledge management. Through this node, it interconnects with organizational culture, leadership, digital transformation, sustainability, and digitalization. From organizational culture, a link is made to the digital culture variable, which extends to digital transformation and digital leadership.

Strategy can be seen as a clear laid-out roadmap that points in the right direction for an organization to follow and is fully aligned with the organization's purpose and objectives. The process of developing a digitally appropriate strategy is one of the most important organizational challenges in today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) business environment. The clarity of a digital strategy can lead to an organization's digital transformation as well as generate performance (Turuk, 2020).

The way value is delivered to customers is different due to digital technologies, they have changed profoundly organizations, their operating processes and also the strategy addressed (Wiraeus and Creelman, 2018).

Khaw et al. (2022) place leaders (with highly developed digital skills) at the heart of the causes of successful digital transformation (through an applied digital strategy). Toomey (2013) marks the main tool of digital leaders (digital technologies).

Depending on the power of digital leadership to influence strategy, positive effects on organizational sustainability and competitive resilience will be observed over time. Riziki (2021) sees the style that facilitates positive effects and change based on motivating and inspiring teams and followers as transformational.

Digital transformation, according to Cennamo et al. (2020), plays a major role in an organization and involves strategic restructuring and rethinking of all organizational processes. Tang (2021) refers to digital transformation as being generated by digital technologies that develop new and innovative business models.

Alcácer and Cruz-Machado (2019) link digitization to Industry 4.0, the effect being transformative for organizations (their efficiency is increased). Reischauer (2018) sees this stage of industrialization as generating innovation. Beier et al. (2020) see Industry 4.0 as offering a digital transformation process by incorporating sustainable growth objectives into this approach.

Change management is a common determinant in the spheres analyzed. By cultivating positive perceptions of immersive management methods and digital technologies, transcendental thinking and digital awareness are essential for effective change management in organizations (Akperov et. al., 2022). Digital transformation could not happen without change management, which has the power to mobilize leadership and train the skills needed for organizational sustainability (Kohnke, 2016).
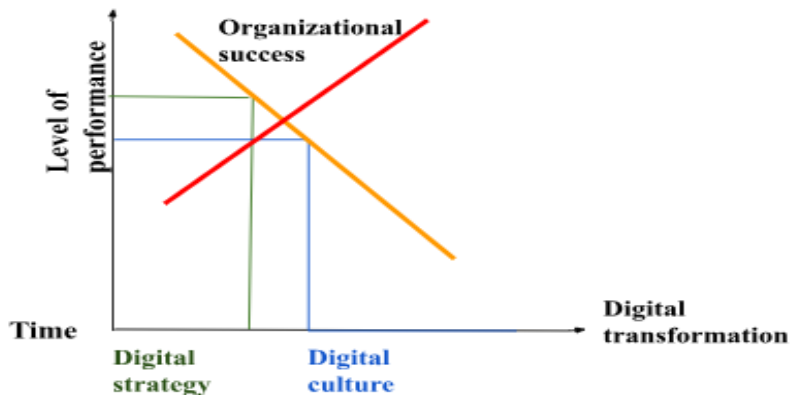
**Figure 2.** Relationships between variables in ensuring organizational success in the digital environment
Source: Author's analysis/processing based on own data

Organizational success cannot be achieved without a high level of performance (this enables organizations to cope with the high levels of competitiveness in today's business environment). De Waal (2012) certifies the interdependence between organizational success and performance. Organizations enjoy higher performance and increased chances of success in their digital transformation efforts when digital culture and digital strategy strike a balance and converge.

According to Mitrea-Carpanu (2021), the high levels of performance achieved by organizations have in common several key positive elements (a leadership style characterized by strength, clarity of proposed objectives, and the ability to adapt and develop continuously their organizational culture). Furthermore, firms that value performance have efficient tracking systems, create goals and rewards for employees, and use high-performance procedures for work (Lenz, 1981).

The successful implementation of digital technologies and of digitalization approaches requires managers to undertake changes of the organizational culture, too, up to achieving a cultural transformation of the organization. Subsequently, digital organizational culture also generates and promotes the approach to new digital transformation initiatives (Trenerry et al., 2021), thus leading to the initiation of a virtuous circle for the organization.

The key transformative element is the interplay between the variables (digital culture and digital strategy) and how they condition and feed into each other. If the digital culture is well-shaped and strong, it will lead to a more effective process of implementing the digital strategy, increasing the organization's responsiveness to change and ability to introduce new technologies to support it. The strategy has the function of shaping the digital culture, which can be achieved by mapping a shared vision of the emerging digital transformation and its related strategic objectives, ensuring organizational success in the digital environment.

Digital technologies represent the common background of digital culture. These are more than necessary in both cases. Digital technologies in relation to digital transformation ensure greater optimization of the organization's activities, shaping the business and providing new opportunities for growth. Digital culture is a result of these technologies, which set new parameters for its functioning within the organization.

The environment that fosters change is provided by the relationship between digital culture and digital transformation (Serpa et al., 2022).

A successful approach (the digital transformation of an organization) requires a digital strategy. This marks the cause-effect relationship between the two variables: the effect is the digital transformation of an organization that it succeeds in achieving, and the cause is the effective development and implementation of the digital strategy. If we look in depth at the issue under research, we realize that digital transformation is not only an outcome; it has the capacity to produce major changes independently (if seen as a single and self-sustaining strategy) due to the broad spectrum of its approach and the proactivity it can enjoy, allowing it to increase its adaptability and development in relation to the digital and dynamic business landscape.

## 5. Conclusions

Digital culture and digital transformation go hand in hand, conditioning each other. Organizations can effectively implement their digital strategy and overcome the challenges of digital transformation by creating a digital culture that readily embraces change and encourages creativity.

Organizations can increase performance, promote innovation, and remain competitive by developing a digital organizational culture that values creativity, learning, agility, adaptability, and using digital transformation strategies, leading to overall organizational success.

It is impossible to overstate how important it is for companies to have a digital culture and digital strategy when it comes to digital transformation. Digitalization is not just about integrating new digital technologies into organizations - it is a strategic decision (it provides the necessary support in terms of competitive resilience and aims for success over a longer time horizon in the marketplace). Digitization can be seen as an innovative business strategy.

The 7 S model validates the synapses between digital leadership, digital culture, and digital strategy. The model focuses on the following variables: strategy, structure, systems, people, skills, style, and shared values. The first three belong to the category of hard organizational elements, and the last four belong to the category of soft organizational elements (Recklies, 2014).Culture is at the epicenter of this model. Each variable of the model interacts with the others and plays an important role in ensuring success.

In a digital corporate context, the interaction between digital organizational culture, digital strategy, digital leadership and the digital transformation process is critical for organizational success. Their harmonization represents the foundation to support and increase employee creativity, cooperation, and adaptation while embracing digital technology-driven changes in the business environment.

Organizations must have a digital strategy in place to successfully navigate and carry out their digital activities while aligning them with the broader company objectives and intentions. The thorough integration of digital technology and procedures across all elements of the company is what digital transformation entails. Setting the vision and direction for digital transformation, building a digital organizational culture of continuous learning and innovation, and enabling people to adopt and use effectively and efficiently digital tools and technologies all play important roles in successfully implementing a digital strategy.

This research paper provides clarifications of the key concepts subject to research: digital leadership, digital culture, digital transformation, but also of the way in which they are interconnected and lead to the achievement of organizational success in the digital environment. A strong correlation was identified between digital culture and digital transformation, with culture playing a key role in the transformation process because it is the one that dictates the way to lead the organization.

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