

Challenges and Coping Strategies for Organizational Culture Transformation in the Digital Economy Environment

Luke Sun*

Baise University, Baise, Guangxi, China

**Corresponding Author*

Abstract: With the rapid development of the digital economy, the transformation of organizational culture has become a key factor for enterprises to cope with market changes and technological innovation. This study aims to explore the challenges faced by organizational culture transformation in the digital economy environment and propose corresponding coping strategies. Through literature review and theoretical analysis, the paper summarizes the impact of the digital economy on traditional organizational culture and identifies key challenges such as cultural inertia, employee adaptability, the integration of technology and culture, and the cognitive gap among management. Combining strategies like digital leadership and incremental transformation, the paper presents concrete proposals to effectively promote organizational culture transformation. The research results show that digital leadership and gradual cultural transformation strategies significantly enhance an enterprise's ability to adapt to the digital economy environment. Finally, the paper emphasizes that when advancing organizational culture transformation, enterprises need to consider leadership, employee training, technological support, and cultural integration to ensure smooth transformation and enhance competitiveness.

Keywords: Digital Economy; Organizational Culture Transformation; Digital Leadership; Cultural Inertia; Incremental Transformation; Employee Adaptability

1. Introduction

The rise of the digital economy is profoundly changing the operational models, market environments, and competitive landscapes of global enterprises. With the rapid development of technologies, especially the widespread application of big data, cloud computing,

artificial intelligence (AI), and the Internet of Things (IoT), fundamental changes have occurred in the modes of production, management, decision-making, and services within enterprises. The digital economy not only redefines the relationship between enterprises and consumers but also drives the transformation of internal structures, management methods, and cultural concepts in businesses [1]. To respond to these changes, companies must continuously adjust and optimize their organizational cultures to better meet increasingly complex and dynamic market demands.

In this context, organizational culture transformation has become a key factor in enterprise development in the digital age [2]. Organizational culture reflects the values and behavioral norms that are mutually recognized by internal members of an organization and is an essential tool for responding to external challenges, promoting innovation, and driving change. Traditional organizational culture tends to emphasize stability, hierarchical management, and control, which suited the needs of the industrial age. However, the digital economy era emphasizes flexibility, innovation, and collaboration, requiring enterprises to break down traditional cultural barriers and reconstruct new cultural models that match these demands.

As the digital transformation continues to sweep across industries, the challenges of cultural transformation faced by enterprises have become more complex. Many traditional enterprises often encounter cultural inertia and employee resistance during transformation, hindering the integration of digital technologies with emerging cultural concepts. The ways in which employees work, communicate, and their openness to innovation may all pose significant obstacles during the transformation process. In particular, traditional organizational cultures with centralized power, slow information flow,

and standardized processes may become bottlenecks during digital transformation. Furthermore, the development of digital technologies requires enterprises to place greater emphasis on cross-departmental collaboration, flat management, and increasing employee autonomy, which demands a new balance between stability and innovation in organizational culture [3].

Thus, the impact of the digital economy on organizational culture is not only reflected in technological changes but also deeply affects corporate strategy, management structures, and work practices. In this case, how to effectively achieve organizational culture transformation has become a major issue for companies undergoing digital transformation. Organizational culture transformation is not just an adjustment to traditional cultural models; it involves a comprehensive reshaping of the core values and behavioral patterns of an organization. Successful cultural transformation helps enhance innovation capabilities, strengthen employee cohesion, and support long-term sustainable development.

However, despite the critical importance of organizational culture transformation in the digital economy, many enterprises face numerous challenges in practice. For example, employees' adaptability to new cultures may be low, as they might resist change due to their familiarity with traditional management methods; senior management may not fully recognize the importance of cultural transformation, resulting in a lack of systematic and continuous transformation efforts. Additionally, a lack of effective cultural communication and training mechanisms makes it difficult for employees to understand and accept changes in corporate culture. These challenges not only impact the effectiveness of digital transformation but may also weaken a company's competitiveness in the digital economy.

This study aims to explore the challenges and coping strategies for organizational culture transformation in the digital economy environment. Specifically, the paper will analyze how the digital economy affects the construction and development of organizational culture from multiple dimensions, identify major obstacles during the transformation process, and propose a series of effective strategies. Through this study, the goal is to

provide a practical cultural transformation framework for enterprises undergoing digital transformation to help them overcome barriers and achieve more efficient operations and stronger market competitiveness.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Relationship between Digital Economy and Organizational Culture

The digital economy, as an emerging economic form, emphasizes the efficient flow of information and technology, as well as the widespread application of digital platforms [4]. With the continuous advancement of internet technologies, enterprises are increasingly relying on data-driven decision-making, digital tools, and technological innovations in their management, service, and production processes. The rapid development of the digital economy has not only driven changes in business models but has fundamentally altered the construction and evolution of organizational culture [5]. Organizational culture, as the spiritual outlook and behavioral norms of an organization, influences employees' behaviors, decision-making processes, innovation capabilities, and team collaboration.

In the context of the digital economy, the transformation of organizational culture within enterprises is primarily reflected in two aspects: first, the shift from traditional hierarchical cultures to more flexible, flattened cultures [6]; second, the transition from a culture characterized by stability and control to one that emphasizes innovation, openness, and collaboration [7]. The introduction of digital technologies has prompted enterprises to place greater importance on the flow of information and the sharing of knowledge, leading to a transformation in organizational culture toward more open, transparent, and interactive models. This transformation not only enhances employee participation and a sense of belonging but also fosters innovation and teamwork.

2.2 Theories and Practices of Organizational Culture Transformation

Scholars have proposed various theoretical models to explain the driving factors and processes of organizational culture transformation. One of the most famous theories is Edgar Schein's three-level model of organizational culture, which emphasizes the

evolution of organizational culture from superficial symbols and behavioral patterns to deeper basic assumptions and values [8]. According to Schein's theory, organizational culture transformation is not only a change in external symbols and behaviors but also a reconstruction of deep values and beliefs. Additionally, many scholars emphasize the key role of leadership in organizational culture transformation. The behavior, values, and cultural guiding capabilities of leaders directly influence employees' cultural identity and adaptability [9]. In the digital economy environment, leaders must not only have expertise in digital technologies but also possess the sensitivity and execution ability to drive cultural change. Research shows that digital leadership plays a decisive role in cultural transformation, particularly in promoting employees' adaptation to new cultures, facilitating cross-departmental collaboration, and strengthening innovation. Effective digital leadership can greatly accelerate the pace of cultural transformation [10].

2.3 Challenges of Organizational Culture Transformation in the Digital Economy

Although the digital economy provides many opportunities for enterprises, many companies still face various challenges during organizational culture transformation. First, traditional organizational cultures are often conservative, and the leadership may not fully recognize the need for cultural transformation, leading to a lack of systematic and coherent measures for transformation [11]. Second, employees' ability to adapt to new cultures is relatively low, especially among older employees, who often exhibit strong cultural inertia and resistance to change [12]. Some employees are accustomed to traditional work methods and find it difficult to quickly adopt new collaborative models and workflows, which presents significant resistance to cultural transformation.

Furthermore, technological adaptability issues have become an important challenge for organizational culture transformation [13]. With the proliferation of digital tools and platforms, employees' ability to adapt to new technologies varies, and some employees may experience considerable pressure due to differences in technical capabilities. This not only affects their

work efficiency but also impacts the overall construction of organizational culture. In addition, the fast-paced changes in the digital economy require organizations to possess high flexibility and adaptability, yet many traditional enterprises still have rigid organizational structures that are not well suited to these rapidly changing demands.

2.4 Coping Strategies for Organizational Culture Transformation in the Digital Economy

In response to the challenges posed by the digital economy, enterprises should adopt a series of targeted strategies for organizational culture transformation. First, enterprises need to drive strategic deployment of cultural transformation through the leadership's initiative [14]. Senior management should clearly define transformation goals, create systematic transformation plans, and use regular cultural promotion and training to help employees gradually recognize the necessity of transformation and its positive impact on personal development.

Second, enterprises should emphasize the cultural adaptation process of employees. In the cultural transformation process, employees are both the most direct beneficiaries and the biggest challengers [15]. Therefore, companies can assist employees in better understanding and integrating into the new culture through organizational training and team-building activities. Particularly for organizations with deeply rooted traditional cultures, using a gradual cultural change strategy can help minimize strong resistance from employees.

Next, companies should focus on establishing flexible organizational structures and innovative incentive mechanisms. In the digital economy, flat management structures and cross-departmental collaboration are key to promoting innovation and improving efficiency [16]. Therefore, enterprises should appropriately adjust organizational structures to break down departmental barriers, promote information sharing, and foster collaboration. Moreover, the design of innovative incentive mechanisms can help inspire employees' creativity and encourage them to participate actively in cultural transformation and technological innovation.

Finally, enterprises should use digital tools and platforms to promote the implementation of

cultural transformation. As digital technologies advance, enterprises can leverage digital platforms and online collaboration tools to speed up information flow, enhance employee interaction and communication, and promote the spread and recognition of culture [5].

3. Theoretical Analysis

3.1 Organizational Culture Theory

Organizational culture theory provides a theoretical foundation for analyzing the key factors of cultural transformation in businesses. Schein's three-level model of organizational culture emphasizes that organizational culture includes both "superficial symbols and behavioral norms" and "deep basic assumptions and values." The latter serves as the foundation for influencing daily behavior and decision-making of organizational members. The arrival of the digital economy requires companies to make profound changes on these levels, especially in terms of the deepest values. Traditional enterprises often focus on control and stability, while the digital economy emphasizes flexibility, innovation, and autonomy. Therefore, organizational culture transformation is not only about adjusting symbols and behaviors but also reshaping deep cultural values and assumptions.

In the context of the digital economy, the power structures of organizations also change. In traditional cultures, decision-making power is often centralized in the hands of top managers, while the rapid development of the digital economy requires companies to decentralize decision-making, promote information sharing, and allow greater decision-making freedom. This demands a transformation in leadership roles, where leaders must become culture change champions rather than mere commanders. The digital economy requires organizational cultures to be open, collaborative, and flexible. Hence, the key to organizational culture transformation is enhancing adaptability and innovation through leadership and management mechanisms.

3.2 Challenges of Organizational Culture in the Digital Economy

The rapid development of the digital economy has brought many challenges to the cultural norms of traditional enterprises. First, cultural inertia is the most significant issue. Many

traditional companies emphasize stability and hierarchical systems, and this cultural model conflicts with the flexibility and innovation required by the digital economy. Employees accustomed to top-down management and centralized decision-making face resistance when adapting to the decentralized, rapid-response model promoted by the digital economy. The low acceptance of new working models and behavior standards among management and employees often leads to slow and challenging transformation.

Next, the differences in employee adaptability pose a challenge for organizational culture transformation in the digital economy. Particularly among middle-aged and older employees, there is lower acceptance of new technologies, and they tend to resist cultural changes. In the digital economy, employees not only need to quickly master new technologies but also need to possess cross-departmental collaboration skills. The dependency on directives from superiors and the limited autonomy inherent in traditional cultures directly conflicts with the demands for self-directed work in the digital economy.

The integration of technology and culture is another barrier faced by enterprises. Although digital technologies can improve efficiency, their introduction often conflicts with traditional cultural practices, hindering cultural transformation. For example, when new digital platforms and collaborative tools are introduced, enterprises may overlook their impact on existing management methods and workflows. Digital technologies demand rapid information flow and flexible decision-making, while traditional management tends to be rigid and centralized. This conflict between management styles and new technological characteristics often undermines overall efficiency.

Moreover, the cognitive gap among management is an important issue during transformation. Traditional enterprises' management often lacks sufficient understanding of the digital economy's impact, continuing to rely on old management models and failing to align strategies with digital trends. This results in management not fully playing a leading role in cultural transformation, lacking clear direction and determination to drive change, which complicates the transformation process.

3.3 Strategies for Coping with Organizational Culture Transformation in the Digital Economy

To address the challenges of organizational culture transformation in the digital economy, enterprises can adopt a series of strategies. First, companies should prioritize the cultivation of digital leadership. In traditional enterprises, leaders typically focus on production efficiency and cost control, whereas in the digital economy, leaders must possess both digital technology knowledge and the ability to drive cultural transformation. This requires enterprise leaders to have a digital vision and innovative thinking, understanding the application of digital tools and platforms to provide strategic support for organizational culture transformation.

Digital leadership is not only about improving individual leadership capabilities but also about enhancing the overall quality of management. Enterprises can improve the digital literacy and collaborative skills of leadership through regular digital training and cross-departmental cooperation. Leaders should also encourage innovation and experimentation, supporting employees in playing an active role in adapting to the new culture and reducing resistance to change.

Secondly, companies should adopt an incremental cultural transformation strategy. Digital transformation is a long-term process, and expecting all employees to adapt quickly is unrealistic. Therefore, enterprises should begin with pilot projects in small-scale departments or teams, gradually advancing the cultural transformation. By experimenting with cultural changes in specific departments, companies can identify issues and make adjustments in practice, thus minimizing risks and unforeseen problems associated with organization-wide transformation. Incremental transformation not only reduces risk but also helps employees gradually adapt to the new cultural environment. Additionally, improving employee cultural adaptability and skill development is crucial for successful transformation. The digital economy requires employees to possess new skills and the ability to collaborate across departments. To help employees better adapt to the new culture, companies need to provide systematic training, including the use of digital tools, the development of innovative thinking, and new collaboration models. Through this training,

employees will be able to integrate more quickly into the new culture, improve work efficiency, and unleash their creativity.

Finally, the dual integration of technology and culture is also an important strategy for promoting organizational culture transformation. Technology and culture should complement each other, with technological tools aligning with the company's cultural values to ensure that technology can effectively drive cultural change. Enterprises can incorporate cultural elements into digital platforms, encouraging interaction and collaboration among employees, thus achieving a positive interaction between technology and culture. This approach will enhance overall operational efficiency and innovation capabilities.

In conclusion, organizational culture transformation in the digital economy requires a multidimensional approach, including leadership, employee training, technological support, and more. Only through a scientific and incremental strategy can companies achieve smooth cultural transformation in the digital economy and enhance overall competitiveness.

4. Conclusion

In the context of the digital economy, organizational culture transformation has become a key factor for enterprises to cope with rapidly changing market environments and technological transformations. This paper analyzes the impact of the digital economy on organizational culture transformation, identifies the main challenges faced in this transformation, and proposes corresponding strategies. The research shows that the core features of the digital economy—such as technological innovation, information flow, and cross-departmental collaboration—require organizational culture to shift from traditional stability and control toward greater flexibility, innovation, and collaboration.

The digital economy brings many challenges to cultural transformation, particularly cultural inertia. Many enterprises face resistance to cultural adaptation during digital transformation, especially when there is insufficient recognition of the new culture by employees and management, leading to slow and difficult transformation. Furthermore, the integration of technology and culture is a significant challenge for enterprises. The introduction of technology does not directly address the fundamental

cultural changes needed, so companies must focus on the deep integration of technology and culture.

To address these challenges, enterprises need to leverage digital leadership to drive cultural transformation. Leaders must not only possess digital technology knowledge but also have a strategic vision and execution ability to drive cultural change. By adopting an incremental transformation approach, companies can reduce employee resistance to new cultures, gradually build employee adaptability, and foster innovation awareness. At the same time, companies should emphasize cross-departmental collaboration and employee training to improve cultural recognition and participation, ensuring a smooth transition in cultural transformation.

Overall, organizational culture transformation in the digital economy is a complex, systemic process that requires comprehensive adjustments at the technological, managerial, and cultural levels. Through a reasonable transformation strategy, enterprises can enhance internal efficiency, promote innovation, and strengthen their competitiveness in the digital economy. Future research could further explore specific industry cases of organizational culture transformation, analyze the impact of industry characteristics on cultural transformation, and examine the specific applications of digital technologies in cultural transformation, providing more targeted and actionable transformation plans for enterprises.

References

- [1] Su, J., Su, K., & Wang, S. (2021). Does the digital economy promote industrial structural upgrading?—A test of mediating effects based on heterogeneous technological innovation. *Sustainability*, 13(18), 10105.
- [2] Joy, S. K., & Sharma, A. (n.d.). Evolution of organizational culture in the digital age. *Evolution*, 6(02).
- [3] Verhoef, P. C., Broekhuizen, T., Bart, Y., Bhattacharya, A., Dong, J. Q., Fabian, N., & Haenlein, M. (2021). Digital transformation: A multidisciplinary reflection and research agenda. *Journal of Business Research*, 122, 889-901.
- [4] Rovenskaya, E., Ivanov, A., Hathiari, S., Kotova, D., Scharler, U. M., & Boza, G. (2025). An ecological perspective to master the complexities of the digital economy. *npj Complexity*, 2(1), 16.
- [5] Vlasenko, T., Havrylchenko, O., & Lypovyi, D. (2023). Transformation of organisational culture in the context of business digitalisation. *Baltic Journal of Economic Studies*, 9(4), 79-87.
- [6] Putri, F. M. (2024). A comparative analysis of Indonesia and China on managing cultural diversity in multinational corporations. *Open Access Library Journal*, 11(3), 1-16.
- [7] Gong, J. (2025). The effects of distributed leadership on teaching innovation in Shanghai, China: The mediating roles of teacher autonomy, teacher collaboration, and teacher self-efficacy. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 16, 1562838.
- [8] Pham, V. K., Vu, T. N. Q., Phan, T. T., & Nguyen, N. A. (2024). The impact of organizational culture on employee performance: A case study at foreign-invested logistics service enterprises approaching sustainability development. *Sustainability*, 16(15), 6366.
- [9] Al Balushi, R. R. A., & Jamaludin, H. B. (2025). Leadership styles as a predictor of employee performance through the moderating role of organizational culture in Oman. *WSEAS Transactions on Environment and Development*, 21, 532-543.
- [10] Liaqat, M. M., & Ullah, H. A. (2024). The impact of transformational leadership and digital literacy on innovation capability: Mediating role of organizational culture for innovation. *Gomal University Journal of Research*, 40(2), 134-145.
- [11] Tadesse Bogale, A., & Debela, K. L. (2024). Organizational culture: A systematic review. *Cogent Business & Management*, 11(1), 2340129.
- [12] Smeulders, D., Dekker, H. C., & Van den Abbeele, A. (2023). Post-acquisition integration: Managing cultural differences and employee resistance using integration controls. *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 107, 101427.
- [13] Sobocinska, M., & Sanak-Kosmowska, K. (2024). The role of organizational culture of enterprises in the process of the company digital transformation in the light of the results of semiotic analysis and case studies. *Organization and Management*,

- 196(2), 43-68.
- [14] Zhang, X., Xu, Y. Y., & Ma, L. (2023). Information technology investment and digital transformation: The roles of digital transformation strategy and top management. *Business Process Management Journal*, 29(2), 528-549.
- [15] Taherizadeh, A., & Beaudry, C. (2023). An emergent grounded theory of AI-driven digital transformation: Canadian SMEs' perspectives. *Industry and Innovation*, 30(9), 1244-1273.
- [16] Fangfang, S., & Tat, H. H. (2025). Exploring the innovative path of enterprise human resource management from the perspective of digital economy. *Journal of Business and Economic Research*, 1(1), 17-25.