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THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL LEADERSHIP ON ORGANISATIONAL AGILITY IN A DYNAMIC BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT IN CHINA

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Original Article

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the importance of digital leadership in achieving organisational agility in an ever-changing Chinese economy. With the growing integration of artificial intelligence, big data, and cloud computing in Chinese organisations, they face difficulties due to the dynamic nature of their marketing environments, the increasing pace of technological development, and the changing nature of government regulations. This study examines digital leadership, a knowledge-intensive, vision-based, and flexible type of leadership, and its ability to help organisations overcome these difficulties. Using a quantitative approach, the results indicate that there is a positive relationship between digital leadership and organizational agility, which confirms that digital leaders help organisations sense changes in the environment and act accordingly. The study aims to examine the importance of digital leadership in achieving organisational agility, which confirms that digital leaders help organisations sense changes in the environment and act accordingly.

Keywords: Chinese Business Context; Digital Competencies; Digital Leadership; Environmental Dynamism; VUCA Environment

Introduction

The digital transformation is also affecting the work, competition, and earnings of organisations in the current marketplace. The development of different technological solutions, like AI, machine learning, cloud computing, automation, IoT, and big data analytics, is also impacting organisational approaches and work paradigms. What is currently happening is not a technology shift but a shift in the way businesses perceive uncertainties, leading to a need for adaptive and innovative leadership strategies that can respond to rapid changes and challenges. compete to survive in the marketplace. The current world is experiencing a VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) environment, in which traditional leadership approaches are ineffective at continuously managing marketplace uncertainties.

Consequently, the adoption of digital transformation has become a 'Strategic imperative' from a 'nice-to-have' process. In this respect, digital leadership has been recognized as a very important aspect of organization [1]. Digital leadership is much broader than the concept of being 'tech-savvy'. Digital leadership encompasses the mindset and skill set where the individual has tech skills and an imagination for strategy and innovation. Digital leadership is an important aspect, as it enables the creation of an organisational culture that values learning, experimenting, and thriving. It enables the employees to be better equipped to adapt to the adoption of new technology and the dynamic business environment in which the digital projects of the organisation are operating.

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Digital leadership is closely associated with the concept of organisational agility—the speed at which an organization can notice and respond to changes both within and outside it [2]. Organisational agility is reflected in strategy, operations, markets, and human capital; it helps organisations shift resources, rebuild processes, and develop innovations in uncertain environments. Digital technology increases agility by automating and providing real-time data, but its usefulness is largely dependent on a leader's vision and organisational readiness. Digital leadership is also significant in creating agility through cross-functional collaboration, enhancing digital literacy, and enabling adaptive decision-making.

However, despite the growing number of individuals who have managed to understand the importance of leadership in digital transformation, there is very limited research that has been carried out to establish a direct link between digital leadership and the agility of organisations, especially in industries that are relatively unstable, such as the telecom industry. Based on the theory of disruptive innovation by Christensen [3]. Digital disruptions are a significant challenge for organisations that already operate in this sector. A lot of money is being invested by many organisations in digital innovation, but resistance to change, outdated processes, and inappropriate leadership practices can make the transition process less effective [4]. Based on the resource-based view and upper echelons theory, this research points out the importance of digital leadership as a crucial resource for organisations that influence strategic outcomes and competitiveness. However, the role of digital leadership in maintaining competitiveness and agility during disruption, especially in telecom network organisations, is still a research gap that has not been extensively examined.

Background of the Study

It is encouraging to see an increasing acknowledgement of the importance of leadership in the process of digital transformation, although there is a lack of studies on digital leadership and organisational agility, particularly in the telecom industry. The theory of disruptive innovation, by Christensen, describes digital disruption as a significant threat to existing players in this area. A lot of money is invested by companies in digital innovation, although resistance to change, existing processes, and traditional leadership approaches can negatively affect the efficiency of transformation processes, leading to delays in achieving desired outcomes and undermining the potential benefits of these investments. Based on the resource-based view and upper echelons theory, the importance of digital leadership as a valuable resource that can influence strategic decisions, increase innovation capacity, and improve competitiveness is emphasised. Nevertheless, the important role of digital leadership in maintaining agility and competitiveness during digital disruption, especially in the telecom industry, has not been adequately investigated.

Purpose of the Research

The researchers examined the impacts of digital leadership on the adaptability of Chinese organisations. Chinese organisations are experiencing a paradigm shift due to the advent of AI (artificial intelligence), big data, cloud technologies, and platforms in today's scenario. Keeping abreast of market dynamics and technological advancements is crucial, as is the ability to quickly make decisions and adjust resources.

The research highlighted the importance of digital leadership in making Chinese organizations more agile. In this context, digital leadership is not only about implementing new technologies but also about the mindset, competencies, and habits of leaders that promote the adoption of smart technologies, encourage innovation, and inculcate agility in the corporate culture. To understand digital leadership in China, it is necessary to understand the context in which it operates.

Literature Review

The issue of business adaptation in a constantly changing business environment has gained prominence due to digital transformation, highlighting the importance of digital leadership as a crucial skill for this purpose [5]. Digital leadership is defined as an approach to leadership in an organisation that requires the application of skills related to digital knowledge, strategic thinking, and people management skills. Digital leadership is said to be very different from traditional leadership and traditional leadership styles, as traditional leadership is characterised by stability and structure, whereas digital leadership is extremely flexible, innovative, and data centric. Along with digital knowledge, it also requires being aware of the changes in technology and constantly changing situations, organising digital activities to achieve organizational goals, and organising employee behaviour and skills in relation to technology.

Digital transformation has also increased the degree of attention paid by both practitioners and theorists to the issue of business adaptation to a changing environment, evolving into a specific skill – digital leadership [6]. Digital leadership represents a unique type of leadership characterised by the application of knowledge related to digital technologies, strategic thinking, and management of people to lead business organisations during times of change. Digital leadership is unique because, unlike traditional leadership, which often implies order and stability, digital leadership is flexible, innovative, and results driven. In addition to digital knowledge, it encompasses being conscious of the constant changes in technology, aligning digital projects with organisational objectives, and aligning employee attitudes and skills with the effective use of technology [7].

One of the most important attributes of a digital leader is strategic alignment. When companies employ digital technology in their business, if initiatives that are not aligned with the strategy of the firm are implemented through digital technology, they may cause substantial disruptions, possibly leading to failures in the execution of the strategy [8]. Digital leaders align the digital strategy with the overall organisational strategy, and they make decisions based on data. This attribute was critical in fast-growing economies like China, where stakeholder engagement, a crucial aspect of a digital leader, is supported by technology [9]. Engaging employees, customers, partners, and the government helped leaders gain a deeper understanding of the expectations and needs regarding the digital transformation strategy. This approach is very effective in the Chinese platforms and network-centric business ecosystem, as it fosters collaboration and innovation among various stakeholders, ultimately driving successful digital transformation initiatives [10].

Digital leadership provides the agility that the business requires by accelerating the process of interpreting, deciding, and acting. Agile businesses can identify opportunities and challenges, make decisions quickly, and ride with the decisions made [11]. Technology increases the flexibility of an organisation, but it is leadership that makes the real difference—it is leadership that ensures the proper use of technology to suit the company's characterised culture and habits [12]. An increasing number of researchers observe the relationship between digital leadership and organizational agility, but surprisingly, there is little empirical research that connects the two concepts, particularly in an environment characterised by instability and rapid technological change. This phenomenon is particularly important in the context of China’s constantly shifting digital and economic environment.

Engaging stakeholders is one of the most important qualities of a digital leader. By involving employees, customers, partners, and regulators, leaders can have a deeper understanding of what people are expecting and what they need from digital transformation initiatives. This method is highly successful in China's platforms and network-centric business environment, as it fosters collaboration and innovation among diverse stakeholders, leading to more effective digital transformation outcomes.

Digital leadership enables organisations to be agile by allowing faster interpretation, decision-making, and implementation. Agile organisations can identify opportunities and threats, make quick decisions, and use them effectively. Digital technology increases the flexibility of organisations; however, leadership plays a pivotal role in successfully implementing it to match corporate culture and processes [12]. Although more people have become aware of the relationship between digital leadership and organisational agility, there is a lack of empirical studies that establish a relationship between the two concepts, especially in an environment that is unstable and experiencing fast-paced technological evolution. This issue is especially important in the context of China's unique digital and economic environment.

Research Question

How does the dynamic business environment in China affect the agility of organisations?

Methodology

Research Design

Quantitative techniques of research analysis were employed in the study. The researchers analysed the data using SPSS 25. The relationship between the variables was defined by the odds ratio, together with a confidence gap of 95%. The significance level was determined by a p-value of less than *0.05*. The descriptive statistics helped provide a clear idea of the initial composition of the data.

Sampling

The purposive sampling technique has been used. Based on the 850 responses received, 800 were considered complete and of satisfactory quality for use in the study. Fifty responses were discarded due to the overwhelming amount of data that suggested a lack of trustworthiness in the responses. The dependable dataset of 800 responses provides a solid foundation for any statistical test, factor analysis, or regression analysis.

Data and Measurement

The research used a quantitative analysis to obtain results. The individuals who responded to the survey were required to evaluate their responses using a five-point Likert scale, which is a rating scale that allows participants to express their level of agreement or disagreement with a statement. Moreover, the researcher used internet sources to collect secondary data for the research.

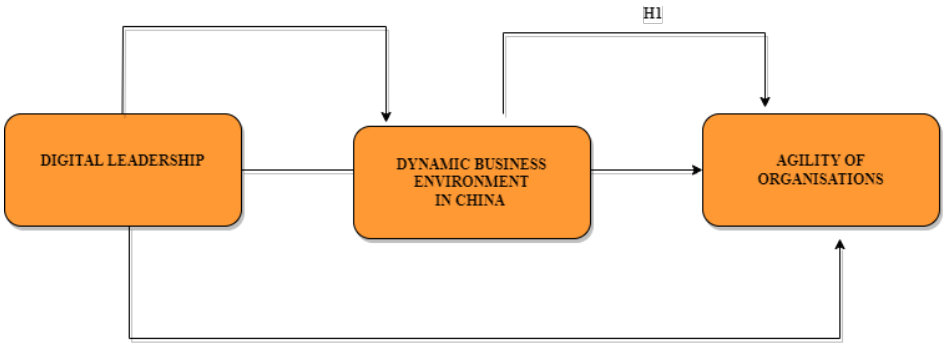
Statistical Software

Microsoft Excel and SPSS-25 were used by the researcher for statistically analysing the data.

Statistical Tools

Analysis of descriptive data has identified some demographic and level-specific characteristics of different programmes. Several inductive statistical analyses employ several methodologies to determine theoretical reliability and validity, as well as calculate odds ratios with 95% confidence intervals and other statistical tools.

Conceptual Framework



Result

Factor Analysis

Factor Analysis (FA) was developed to detect new components using open-source data. In the absence of symptoms, physicians often use regression coefficients to develop more precise diagnoses, which can help identify underlying issues that may not be immediately apparent through traditional examination methods. The primary purpose of employing mathematical models was to detect observable patterns, anomalies, and flaws. Some authors used the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test to assess the results of a regression analysis. This study corroborated the dependent variables inside the model and the inductive definition. Substantial duplication is apparent in the data. Researchers may seek to reduce the image's size to improve understanding. Should they employ MO, their quantity may fluctuate between 0 and

1. A KMO value ranging from 0.8 to 1 is a sign of sufficient sample representation. Kaiser listed the steps required to proceed further. He said that all the previous demands were met. The average value is sixty-nine, which is affected by the range of 0.050 to 0.059. For intermediate use, the ground grades range from 0.70 to 0.79, and HPS from 0.80 to 0.89.
They are astonished by the spectrum of 0.90 to 1.00.

Testing for KMO and Bartlett's

Sampling Adequacy Measured by Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin 0.983

The results of Bartlett's test of Sphericity are as follows:

Approx. chi-square = 942

df = 190

sig = 0.000

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test[a]		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		**0.983**
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	**Approx. Chi-Square**	**942**
	df	**190**
	Sig.	**0.000**
a. Based on Correlations		

Source: Collected by Author

This facilitates the extraction of comments. The researcher applied Bartlett's Test of Sphericity to determine the significance of the correlation matrices. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure indicated that the sample represented a sufficient sample size, with a value of 0.983. The *p*-value from Bartlett's Sphericity test was 0.000. Bartlett's Sphericity test indicated that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix (refer to Table 1).

Independent Variable

- **Digital Leadership**

  Digital leadership has emerged as a prominent theme in current research on organisations, thanks to its immense theoretical, empirical, and practical significance, particularly in the rapidly evolving digital environment, such as China. Digital leadership requires flexibility and responsiveness to the fast-paced technological changes that are redefining modern organisations. Traditional leadership, on the other hand, focuses on stability and predictability [13]. More specifically, digital leadership requires agility and responsiveness to new technological changes, while traditional leadership focuses on stability and predictability. Leaders need to stay up to date with new technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, cloud computing, and the Internet of Things and incorporate them into their organisational strategies and cultures. In industries that experience high levels of change, digital leadership is not only beneficial but also necessary. Today, planning and implementation are increasingly dependent on digital knowledge. In China, projects such as Digital China and Made in China 2025 require leaders to keep up with a dynamic environment of change, competition, and a rapidly changing digital world, which seems more challenging than in other countries [14]. Digital leadership promotes the development of a flexible organisation that is responsive to change and experimentation. It also improves the digital literacy of employees, making it easier for them to adjust to new developments. Data-driven decision-making by leaders increases responsiveness and decreases uncertainty, which is crucial for fostering an environment where employees feel empowered to experiment and innovate within organisations. In general, digital leadership is linked to increased innovation, robustness, and adaptability among organisations. However, in the Chinese

context, the empirical evidence supporting the independent role of this variable is still limited in the current study [15].

Dependent Variable

- **Agility of Organisation**

  This research focuses on the notion of organizational agility as a key determinant of the effectiveness of organizations in responding to market changes caused by digital transformation in the Chinese market. Agility is considered the main variable, which has direct and indirect relationships with the criteria that define digital leadership.

  Organisational agility is a complex and multi-layered construct. It represents the ability of an organisation to sense changes in the environment, make informed decisions, and shift resources in response to external pressures. By facilitating quick reactions to technological shifts, new regulations, and increased market competition, agility increases competitive advantage.

  This study posits that agility is a higher-order construct comprising four interrelated dimensions: strategic agility, operational agility, market agility, and workforce agility. Strategic agility is defined as the ability to sense changes in the environment that may impact organizational goals and business models. Operational agility is the ability to change internal processes and resource allocation. Market agility is the organization's ability to respond to changes in customer behaviour, market trends, and market competition. Workforce agility includes the individual's ability to learn, adapt, take on new roles, and work with new technologies [16].

Mediating Variable

- **Dynamic Business Environment in China**

  This research examines the relationship between digital leadership and organisational agility, with the Chinese economy's rapid change acting as a moderating environment. It explains the mechanisms by which digital leadership could impact organisational agility, considering the rapid progress of technology and the uncertainties involved in China's economy. The study uses a perspective of the complex economic environment as a dynamic variable, affected by factors like unpredictability, changes in organisational dynamics (including changes in customer behaviour and the emergence of new technologies), and other variables that influence economic fluctuations in China. The theoretical framework combines contingency theory and the dynamic capabilities view.

  The model argues that digital leadership has a two-fold effect on organisational agility, with both direct and indirect effects as it influences the organization's reactions to the environment [17]. Leaders with technical skills use data analytics and technology to track environmental changes and enable organisational responses. The data for this study were gathered through a structured survey, designed based on the existing literature on digital leadership, environmental dynamism, and organisational agility [18].

Relationship between Dynamic Business Environment in China and agility of organisations.

This study investigates the effects of China's fast-changing business environment on organisational agility. China's business environment is marked by rapid technological development, high competition, unstable government regulations, and changing consumer behaviours, all of which interact to create a complex and dynamic business environment. Organisations operating in this environment need to develop flexible structures, processes, and cultures to stay relevant and competitive. Based on contingency theory and the dynamic capability approach, this research proposes that organisational effectiveness is dependent on adaptability to external changes [19]. The dynamic nature of the external environment forces organisations to become agile and adopt approaches such as decentralised decision-making, flexible strategies, and dynamic operations. This research also proposes that organizational agility can improve

organisational performance and sustainability, but that its effectiveness is greatly affected by the challenges posed by the fast-changing business environment in China [20].

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between Dynamic Business Environment in China and agility of organisations.

H_1: There is a significant relationship between Dynamic Business Environment in China and agility of organisations.

Table 2: H_2 ANOVA

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	50,552.12	350	2580.241	**1075.50**	0.000
Residual	815.60	449	2.400		
Total	**51,367.72**	**799**			

Source: Collected by Author

The result of this research is important. F = 1075.50: This measurement is the overall F-statistic of the regression analysis. Significance = 0.000: This value shows that $p < 0.001$, which means that the result is highly significant. ***" H_1: "There is a significant relationship between the dynamic business environment in China and the agility of organisations"*** is accepted, and as such, the null hypothesis is rejected (refer to Table 2).

Discussion

The results of this research provide strong empirical support for a link between the dynamic business environment and organisational agility (H_{01}) in China. The ANOVA test results indicate a strongly increased F-value ($F = 1075.50$) with a significance level of $p < 0.001$, indicating that changes in the external business environment explain a large percentage of the variation in organisational agility. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted, confirming that environmental dynamism has a strong impact on organisational behaviour in China.

The results of this research support contingency theory, which strongly argues that an organization's efficiency depends on the fit between internal structures and external environmental factors [21, 22]. In the ever-changing Chinese financial environment, driven by technological disruptions, policy developments, and consumer preferences, organisations need to adopt agile strategies to maintain competitiveness. The results also support the dynamic capability view, which argues that organisations need to change their configurations of resources and capabilities to respond to environmental change [23].

The practical and management implications are evident. Individuals in management and leadership roles within organisations based or operating in China may derive advantages from the implications of this study's results [24]. Organisations may more easily implement benchmarking in specific operational areas across multiple industries if they are certain that the findings are applicable universally across organisational domains. Another management consequence is acknowledging the significant impact of cultural influence on employees across all operational sectors [25].

Secondly, major organisations operating in various sectors in China may want to implement uniform procedures for knowledge sharing (KS) and organisational alignment (OA) throughout their subsidiaries and activities, anticipating analogous results. This may offer important lessons for both Chinese and international managers and leaders in organisations inside China that employ foreign managers, as well as for Chinese organisations operating abroad [26].

Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that the dynamic business environment in China has an impact on the market for elegant organisations. The empirical results show that the rate of technical changes, government control, high competition, and changing consumer behaviour makes it imperative for organisations to be agile. The analysis of conflict also confirms

the significant relationship between environmental dynamism and organisational agility, thus confirming the hypothesis that external factors are the fundamental drivers of adaptive behaviour in organisations. This viewpoint is consistent with contingency theory, which holds that districts should be designed to match the external environment, and the dynamic capabilities view, which highlights the constant reshaping of help. In the Chinese environment, which is characterised by high levels of uncertainty and velocity, associations that can adapt to modifications in the external environment are more likely to succeed.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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