



Digital Transformation in The MNC Services Sector: Identifying Challenges and Opportunities for Family Businesses

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ABSTRACT

Digital transformation has become a strategic imperative for multinational service corporations (MNCs) and family enterprises operating within global business ecosystems. This study employed a qualitative approach using a systematic literature review and theoretical analysis to examine the challenges, opportunities, and implications of digital transformation. The findings indicate that major challenges include limited digital competencies, resistance to organizational change, substantial investment requirements, and data security concerns. Conversely, digital transformation enhances operational efficiency, supports data-driven services, expands global market access, and accelerates AI adoption. Family enterprises benefit from governance flexibility and long-term orientation, enabling them to adapt more effectively to digital change. The study confirms that digital capabilities constitute strategic resources that foster sustainable competitive advantage and long-term organizational resilience by aligning technological innovation with organizational and socioemotional values.

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of digital technology in recent decades has precipitated substantial transformations across multiple industrial sectors, including the service industry. Multinational Service Corporations (MNCs) confront the necessity of swiftly adjusting to intensifying global competition, evolving consumer behavior, and disruptive technical innovations. Digital transformation is now seen as a strategic imperative for ensuring business continuity and augmenting competitive advantage.

In multinational corporation service firms, digital transformation involves the incorporation of technology into operational procedures, enhancements in service quality driven by data, and the utilization of digital platforms to access a broader market. Nonetheless, executing digital transformation has hurdles, including inadequate technology infrastructure, workforce preparedness, and organizational opposition to change. These difficulties get further intricate when organizations must reconcile innovation with operational stability.

Conversely, digital transformation creates new opportunities, especially regarding operational efficiency, the creation of digital-centric business models, and enhancement of the customer experience. These opportunities are pertinent not only to major firms but also to family enterprises, which frequently function within the value chain or ecosystem of multinational corporations. Family enterprises include distinctive traits, including more adaptable management frameworks and a long-term perspective, which, if effectively managed, can serve as an advantage in embracing digital change.

This study seeks to thoroughly investigate the problems and prospects of digital transformation within the international service sector and its consequences for family enterprises. By comprehending these elements, it is anticipated that family enterprises can develop adaptive strategies to improve competitiveness and business sustainability within the global digitalization context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital transformation refers to essential alterations in how firms generate value by leveraging digital technologies. Digital transformation theoretically emphasizes not just the use of technology but also modifications to corporate strategy, organizational structure, and workplace culture. The resource-based view (RBV) posits that a company's capacity to adeptly manage and leverage digital resources can yield a lasting competitive advantage. Consequently, digital transformation is regarded as a strategic initiative that empowers organizations to enhance efficiency, creativity, and service quality. (Agarwal, A. 2025)

Digital transformation might theoretically be elucidated using the Resource-Based View (RBV) framework, which posits that a firm's competitive advantage is contingent upon its capacity to adeptly manage its resources (Bharadwaj, A., *et al.* 2013). Digital technology, data, and human resource competencies constitute strategic assets that are challenging for competitors to replicate. Consequently, firms that successfully incorporate digital technology into their operational procedures generally possess a more enduring competitive edge. (Civelek, M., *et al.* 2023)

In service enterprises, digital transformation carries more extensive ramifications due to the intangible nature of the items provided. Service digitalization facilitates enhanced client interactions, tailored services, and expedited service delivery. Consequently, digital transformation serves not only as an operational tool but also as a strategic instrument for generating additional value for clients. (Atienza-Barba, et al (2025).

Porter's theory of competitive advantage posits that firms can attain a superior position via differentiation or cost leadership methods. In the digital era, both strategies are progressively shaped by a company's capacity to leverage information technology. (Porfírio, J. A. F., et al. 2024)

Digitalization allows firms to save operational expenses by process automation, while concurrently enhancing service distinction through technology-driven innovation. In international service enterprises, digital technology facilitates cross-border service integration, worldwide customer data management, and enhanced consistency in service quality. (Kraus, S. et al. 2021)

Moreover, competitive advantage in the digital age is not static but rather changing. This signifies that organizations must always innovate to sustain their market position. Consequently, digital transformation has become essential to corporate strategy for attaining and sustaining competitive advantage in the face of intensifying global competition. (Lirios, C. G. 2026.)

Digital transformation is fundamentally a multifaceted and extensive type of organizational change. Theory of organizational change posits that any alteration within an organization will encounter several forms of opposition, originating from individuals as well as from entrenched institutions. (George, G. et.al. 2022)

This resistance is typically motivated by uncertainty, apprehension towards change, and a deficiency in comprehending the advantages of transformation. In the realm of multinational service corporations, the issues are significantly amplified due to the necessity of simultaneous implementation of changes across several units and operational domains. (Kraus, S., 2021).

The efficacy of digital transformation is contingent upon proficient leadership, transparent communication, and the engagement of all organizational members. Moreover, human resource preparedness is a crucial element, as digital transformation necessitates new competencies that the current workforce may lack.

Consequently, digital transformation encompasses not only technology dimensions but also necessitates a shift in corporate culture towards one that is more flexible, innovative, and receptive to change.

The diffusion of innovation hypothesis, proposed by Everett Rogers, elucidates the process by which an innovation is embraced by individuals or organizations within a societal framework. The adoption process unfolds gradually through numerous stages: awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, and adoption.

This hypothesis elucidates why not all firms or individuals within an organization can swiftly adapt to digital transformation. Factors like perceived

technological benefits, complexity, usability, and perceived hazards will affect the pace of innovation adoption.

Multinational service firms with extensive and intricate organizational frameworks frequently encounter difficulties in expediting technology adoption. Consequently, methods for implementing digital transformation must take into account the social and behavioral dimensions of the organization, in addition to the technological components.

This hypothesis is significant in elucidating the status of family enterprises, which frequently exhibit a slower adoption rate, mostly attributable to resource constraints and a propensity to uphold conventional practices.

A family business is an enterprise owned and operated by members of the same family. A defining trait of a family enterprise is the interrelation between corporate objectives with familial principles, which frequently impacts decision-making processes. From the standpoint of Stewardship Theory, proprietors of family businesses typically function as stewards, focused on the long-term viability of the enterprise. This advantage facilitates more steady decision-making and emphasizes long-term objectives over immediate rewards. (Porffrio, J. A. F., et al. 2024)

Conversely, family enterprises encounter difficulties regarding innovation and the adoption of technology. Adherence to old values and constrained resources frequently obstruct digital transition. Consequently, an equilibrium is essential between upholding fundamental family values and adopting innovation to sustain commercial relevance.

In this environment, digital transformation represents a strategic opportunity for family companies to enhance efficiency, broaden markets, and fortify competitiveness, particularly inside the multinational corporation service company ecosystem.

According to the articulated ideas, it is evident that digital transformation in multinational service corporations is shaped by a confluence of internal and external variables. Internal elements encompass digital assets, human resource capabilities, and corporate culture, whilst external aspects comprise global competitive pressures and technology advancements.

Digital transformation yields two primary outcomes: problems and possibilities. Obstacles manifest as organizational opposition, infrastructural constraints, and deficiencies in digital proficiency. Simultaneously, prospects manifest in enhanced operational efficiency, service innovation, and market expansion. The ramifications of these conditions are especially pertinent for family enterprises. Family enterprises that can adjust to digital transformation possess the capacity to enhance their competitiveness and sustainability. Conversely, enterprises that fail to adapt jeopardize being surpassed by competitors.

Consequently, this theoretical framework underscores that digital transformation transcends mere technology advancement; it constitutes a strategic process encompassing resource allocation, organizational structure, innovation, and the intrinsic attributes of family enterprises.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative methodology with a narrative framework to thoroughly examine the phenomena of digital transformation in multinational service corporations (MNCs) and its ramifications for family enterprises. A qualitative method was selected as it facilitates the exploration of meaning, dynamics, and relationships among phenomena that cannot be elucidated just through numerical data.

The study employed is descriptive qualitative, concentrating on a systematic delineation of the conditions and issues under investigation. This study seeks to examine the problems and opportunities of digital transformation and its effects on family companies in a practical environment.

This study utilizes secondary data sourced from scientific journals, academic books, annual corporate reports, and official papers and publications pertinent to digital transformation and family businesses. Secondary data was chosen to acquire a thorough theoretical and empirical viewpoint.

Data collection methods were executed using literature and documentation analyses. Literature reviews were employed to establish a theoretical framework and comprehend essential concepts pertaining to digital transition. Simultaneously, documentation was performed by examining business reports and case studies pertinent to the implementation of digital transformation in multinational service enterprises.

The data analysis method employs a descriptive qualitative analysis framework, adhering to the stages outlined in the Miles and Huberman model, specifically:

1. Data reduction involves the selection and concentration on data pertinent to the investigation.
2. Systematic narrative presentation of data for enhanced comprehension
3. Deriving conclusions by recognizing patterns, correlations, and significances from the analyzed data.

This study used source triangulation to uphold data validity by comparing information from diverse references, hence enhancing the reliability and validity of the research findings.

RESEARCH RESULT

Overview of Digital Transformation Challenges in Multinational Service Enterprises

Family enterprises function distinctively compared to publicly traded corporations. Principles such as trust, loyalty, and long-term sustainability are frequently fundamental tenets. Conversely, multinational businesses (MNCs) necessitate standardization, swift technology adaptation, and professionalization of management [Tigre et al., 2023].

When these two logics align, executives of family businesses in multinational corporations assume the role as border spanners. They must convert global digital strategy into a format that aligns with family dynamics, while safeguarding family values during the transformation process.

A systematic literature study indicates that digital transformation in multinational service corporations (MNCs) is a multifaceted process intertwined

with numerous internal and external challenges. A primary challenge is the scarcity of people resources possessing digital competences. Asymmetry was observed.

The correlation between the pace of technology adoption (including Artificial Intelligence, Cloud Computing, and Big Data Analytics) and the preparedness of the workforce's cognitive abilities and digital competencies. MNC service organizations frequently encounter a predicament where technical infrastructure exists, yet its application is inefficient due to insufficient staff digital literacy. Numerous firms continue to encounter a disparity between swiftly advancing technical requirements and the competencies of the existing personnel.

Moreover, opposition to organizational change constitutes a substantial impediment. Transformations in digital work systems frequently induce uneasiness among employees, particularly those familiar with conventional systems. This illustrates that digital transformation encompasses not merely technology but also the evolution of organizational culture.

Digital transformation encompasses not just the reconfiguration of IT systems but also the reconstruction of organizational culture. Resistance arises from employees' psychological apprehension regarding automation's potential to undermine the stability of their conventional positions. This affirms that the primary impediments are frequently socio-technical rather than technology.

A further difficulty is the substantial initial investment in technological infrastructure and the concomitant dangers to data security. Multinational service firms operating internationally must guarantee that their digital infrastructures are secure, cohesive, and comply with rules in many locations. This intricacy renders the transformation process more arduous than for domestic enterprises. Multinational service organizations, operating across many jurisdictions, encounter the difficulty of disparate data regulatory compliance, exemplified by the discrepancies between the GDPR in Europe and local data privacy rules in developing nations. The compliance expenditures, along with substantial initial capital investment, elevate the financial and operational risks associated with the change.

Prospects for Digital Transformation in Enhancing Organizational Performance

Notwithstanding these hurdles, digital transformation presents substantial opportunity for international service enterprises. A significant discovery is enhanced operational efficiency via business process automation. Digital technology allows enterprises to minimize operational expenses while enhancing service efficiency. The implementation of robotic process automation (RPA) significantly decreases operational transaction costs and eradicates human error in cross-border service delivery.

Moreover, digital transformation creates potential for the development of data-driven services. Companies can utilize client data to better comprehend market demands, allowing them to offer more personalized and targeted services. Digitalization converts consumer interactions into significant data assets. The capacity of multinational corporations to analyze large datasets

facilitates hyper-personalization the capability to anticipate and address client requirements instantaneously, which is a crucial distinction in the service sector.

An equally significant possibility is market expansion via digital platforms. Digital technology has liberated service organizations from territorial constraints, facilitating easier access to worldwide consumers. This offers a strategic edge, particularly amid global competition. Service multinational corporations can access new markets using digital platforms and cloud architecture without requiring a significant physical presence. This reinterprets traditional internationalization theory, which posits that service expansion necessitates physical investment in the target nation.

An instance of digital technology utilized by research participants is Microsoft Copilot. The company offers subscription access to select users for utilizing AI to assist with duties such as delivering accurate information, streamlining the design of presentation decks for clients, and rectifying erroneous wording while presenting reports in other languages.

Data Analysis

The digital transformation of multinational service firms significantly affects family enterprises, especially those integrated within the company's value chain or ecosystem. Studies indicate that family enterprises encounter both obstacles and prospects.

Family enterprises frequently encounter obstacles in technology adoption, both monetarily and regarding digital proficiency. Moreover, the inclination to preserve conventional work practices may obstruct adaptation to digital transformation. Family enterprises must reconcile emotional values and traditions with the imperatives of digitalization (De Massis et al., 2016; Soluk & Kammerlander, 2021).

Conversely, family enterprises have the advantage of adaptability in decision-making and a long-term perspective. These attributes enable them to modify their tactics more rapidly than larger, more bureaucratic organizations.

Digital transformation can serve as a catalyst for family enterprises to: enhance operational efficacy extending market networks using digital platforms developing innovative, more flexible business models in summary, family enterprises that effectively integrate digital technology can not only endure but also prosper in the face of global competition.

Comprehensive Discourse

This study's results indicate that digital transformation is a complicated and multifaceted phenomenon. MNC service organizations encounter obstacles that are both technical and pertain to human and organizational factors. This corresponds with organizational change theory, which underscores the need of internal preparedness for change.

Validation and Theoretical Contribution

Conversely, the opportunities created by digital transformation bolster the notion of competitive advantage, whereby organizations that effectively leverage technology will attain a dominant market position. The phenomena of digital transformation in multinational service organizations and its effect on the family business ecosystem enhances certain principles of strategic management theory.

Digital transformation reinforces the Resource-Based View (RBV), which positions technology and digital capabilities as strategic assets, aligning with both the Resource-Based View and Dynamic Capabilities frameworks (Barney, J. 1991) The findings of this study corroborate and enhance the Resource-Based View (RBV) approach. Digital skills are now perceived not as static assets (like software ownership), but as Dynamic skills the organization's capacity to perpetually adapt, develop, and reorganize internal and external competencies in response to swift environmental changes. In family enterprises, these dynamic qualities are evident in the capacity to integrate historic values (socioemotional wealth) with contemporary digital advancements. (Helfat, C. E., et al. 2023)

The Socio-Technical Theory of Organizational Change posits that failures in digital transformation arise not from technology malfunctions, but from the misalignment of social systems (people, culture) with technical systems. This research elucidates the predominance and sensitivity of the "social" component in family enterprises, as it pertains to kinship dynamics and intergenerational succession.

This study indicates that for family businesses, success in the digital era is significantly contingent upon the capacity to harmonize traditional values with contemporary innovation. Family enterprises capable of adapting to digital transformation will possess a heightened likelihood of attaining long-term commercial viability.

Practical Contributions to Management

This study yields practical advice for practitioners and decision-makers: In implementing cross-border digital transformation, MNCs must consider the digital preparedness of their local partners, especially family enterprises inside their supply chains. Multinational corporations must implement digital onboarding initiatives and foster inclusive technological partnerships to avert value chain disruptions caused by the digital divide. Moreover, MNC Services can lead the incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven technologies that can be collaboratively embraced by partners. The implementation of AI in collaborative business processes such as customer service automation, predictive supply chain analytics, and real-world data processing, will markedly enhance the fluidity and efficiency of the broader business ecosystem, while concurrently bridging existing technological disparities.

Family business executives should utilize their efficient governance frameworks to expedite digital investment decisions, circumventing the protracted bureaucracy characteristic of multinational corporations. In the contemporary age, digital expenditures ought to focus on utilizing AI to automate repetitive internal business activities, leading to enhanced operational efficiency, diminished human mistake, and improved market response. The essential approach is to allow emerging leaders to spearhead digitalization initiatives, while the senior generation maintains the stability of the organization's foundational values.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that digital transformation in multinational service companies (MNCs) constitutes a complex and multidimensional process, encompassing not only technological adoption but also human and organizational aspects. One of the principal challenges identified is the disparity between the rapid advancement of digital technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Cloud Computing, and Big Data Analytics, and the digital readiness of employees (Hanelt, A., et.al,2021). Although many organizations have invested substantially in digital infrastructure, the lack of digital competencies and workforce readiness frequently limits the effective utilization of these technologies. Furthermore, organizational resistance to change remains a critical barrier, particularly among employees who are accustomed to conventional work systems and perceive automation as a threat to job security. These findings support the socio-technical perspective, emphasizing that successful digital transformation depends on the alignment between technological systems and organizational culture.

Despite these challenges, the study demonstrates that digital transformation creates significant strategic opportunities for multinational service organizations and their surrounding business ecosystems. The implementation of digital technologies and process automation enables firms to improve operational efficiency, reduce transaction costs, and minimize human errors in service delivery. Moreover, digital transformation facilitates the development of data-driven services, allowing companies to understand customer preferences more comprehensively and provide highly personalized services. Another important finding is the ability of digital platforms to remove geographical barriers and accelerate global market expansion without requiring substantial physical investments. The use of AI-based applications, such as Microsoft Copilot, further illustrates how digital technologies can improve productivity, enhance communication accuracy, and support decision-making processes. Consequently, digital transformation serves as a strategic mechanism for creating competitive advantages and strengthening organizational performance in increasingly dynamic and globalized markets. (Verhoef, P. C., et al. 2021)

The findings also indicate that digital transformation exerts a profound influence on family enterprises integrated into multinational service ecosystems. Family businesses often face constraints related to financial resources, digital capabilities, and the tendency to maintain traditional business practices, which may hinder adaptation to technological changes. Nevertheless, family enterprises possess distinctive advantages, including governance flexibility, rapid decision-making processes, and a long-term strategic orientation. These characteristics enable them to respond more effectively to environmental changes and implement digital initiatives more swiftly than highly bureaucratic organizations. The study further confirms the relevance of the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Dynamic Capabilities perspectives, emphasizing that digital capabilities have evolved into strategic and dynamic resources that determine organizational competitiveness. Ultimately, family businesses capable of

balancing socioemotional values with technological innovation are more likely to achieve sustainable growth and maintain long-term competitive viability in the digital era.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings indicate that digital transformation is a strategic imperative for multinational service corporations (MNCs) in navigating the complexities of global competition. Digital transformation implementation encounters several hurdles, including inadequate human resource proficiency, resistance to organizational change, and the necessity for substantial technological investment. Nonetheless, digital transformation offers substantial opportunities, such as enhanced operational efficiency, the creation of data-driven services, and market growth via digital platforms.

Digital change poses both a difficulty and an opportunity for family enterprises. Despite family enterprises encountering constraints in technological adoption, attributes such as adaptability and a long-term perspective are essential for managing transitions. The success of family businesses in the digital age is predominantly contingent upon their capacity to adapt and use technology into their business plan. (Kane, G. C., *et.al* 2015)

Based on these conclusions, the following recommendations can be made: It is advisable for multinational corporations in the service sector to enhance investment in cultivating the digital competences of their workforce and to fortify change management to facilitate a more successful digital transformation process. Family businesses require heightened awareness and preparedness in embracing digital technology, achieved through training, collaboration with external entities, and the utilization of digital platforms to broaden their market reach. (Vial, G. 2019)

Future researchers are encouraged to advance this study by employing a quantitative or mixed methods approach and incorporating primary data to achieve more comprehensive and nuanced results. Policymakers must provide an ecosystem that fosters digital transformation for family companies by implementing legislation, incentives, and ensuring sufficient digital infrastructure.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

The findings of this study indicate that digital transformation in multinational service corporations and family enterprises should be examined beyond technological adoption and operational efficiency perspectives. Future research should develop integrative models that investigate the interplay between digital capabilities, socioemotional wealth, organizational resilience, and intergenerational leadership in shaping digital transformation outcomes. Furthermore, longitudinal and cross-country studies are necessary to understand how institutional environments, regulatory differences, and cultural contexts influence the digital readiness of family enterprises embedded in multinational ecosystems. Such investigations would provide deeper insights into the mechanisms through which organizations transform digital competencies into

sustainable competitive advantages and long-term organizational performance in increasingly dynamic and uncertain business environments.

Moreover, advanced research should incorporate emerging technologies, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI), generative AI, predictive analytics, and cloud-based ecosystems, as strategic antecedents of organizational transformation and ecosystem orchestration. Future studies may employ mixed-method or multi-level approaches to capture interactions among individual, organizational, and ecosystem factors that influence digital transformation success. The mediating roles of digital leadership, learning agility, and employee resilience, as well as the moderating effects of governance flexibility and organizational culture, deserve further empirical investigation. Developing comprehensive frameworks that integrate Resource-Based View, Dynamic Capabilities Theory, and Socio-Technical Theory would significantly enrich the theoretical understanding of digital transformation and provide actionable insights for multinational corporations and family businesses navigating the complexities of the digital era.

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