



## UNIVERSITY OF WALES TRINITY SAINT DAVID

### Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)

Module Title: Critical Literature Review for Doctoral Research

Module code: LCDB7008

Assignment Title:

**Technology advances - specifically in the areas of e-Commerce & e-Business have rendered traditional models of organisational structure and theories of management roles obsolete in the light of the changing nature of 21st century corporations.**

Student Name: Niroshan Lakruwan Fernando Thevarathanthrige

Student ID:2522900

Module Leader: Prof. Amare Desta/ Dr. Xavier Matieni

Word Count : 8357

Submission Date: 21-08-2026

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctor of Business Administration degree.

## Table of Contents

|                                                                 |           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Abstract .....</b>                                           | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>Chapter 1: Introduction .....</b>                            | <b>7</b>  |
| 1.1 Introduction .....                                          | 7         |
| 1.2 Background.....                                             | 8         |
| 1.3 Purpose of the Study .....                                  | 8         |
| 1.4 Problem Statement .....                                     | 9         |
| 1.5 Research Objectives .....                                   | 9         |
| 1.6 Research Question .....                                     | 10        |
| <b>Chapter 2: Literature Review .....</b>                       | <b>10</b> |
| 2.1 Evolution of Technology in Business.....                    | 10        |
| 2.1.1 Information Era.....                                      | 11        |
| 2.1.2 Digital Era .....                                         | 11        |
| 2.2 The Rise of E-Commerce .....                                | 11        |
| Definition .....                                                | 11        |
| Growth .....                                                    | 11        |
| Business Models.....                                            | 12        |
| 2.3 The Emergence of E-Business .....                           | 12        |
| Scope.....                                                      | 12        |
| Strategic Value.....                                            | 12        |
| 2.4 Definition and Explanation of Organisational Structure..... | 12        |
| Hierarchical Structure .....                                    | 13        |
| Frederick Winslow Taylor .....                                  | 13        |
| Functional Structure .....                                      | 13        |
| Henri Fayol .....                                               | 13        |
| Bureaucratic Structure .....                                    | 14        |
| Max Weber .....                                                 | 14        |
| 2.5 Theories of Management Roles.....                           | 14        |
| Henry Mintzberg.....                                            | 14        |
| Peter Drucker.....                                              | 15        |

|                                                                              |           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 2.6 Implications for Traditional Models.....                                 | 15        |
| Strengths.....                                                               | 15        |
| Weaknesses .....                                                             | 15        |
| Limitations in Digital Environments .....                                    | 16        |
| <b>Chapter 3: Changing Nature of 21st-Century Corporations .....</b>         | <b>16</b> |
| 3.1 Increased Connectivity and Globalisation .....                           | 16        |
| Global Markets .....                                                         | 16        |
| Digital Ecosystems.....                                                      | 17        |
| 3.2 Shift Towards Digital Transformation.....                                | 18        |
| Automation .....                                                             | 18        |
| Artificial Intelligence (AI) .....                                           | 18        |
| Cloud Computing.....                                                         | 18        |
| 3.3 Importance of Adaptability and Agility .....                             | 19        |
| Faster Decision-Making .....                                                 | 19        |
| Innovation .....                                                             | 19        |
| <b>Chapter 4: Obsolescence of Traditional Organisational Structures.....</b> | <b>20</b> |
| 4.1 Critical Evaluation of the Central Claim.....                            | 20        |
| 4.2 Hierarchical Structures vs. Flat Organisations .....                     | 21        |
| Traditional Organisational Models .....                                      | 21        |
| Modern Organisational Models .....                                           | 22        |
| 4.3 Matrix Organisations and Cross-Functional Teams .....                    | 22        |
| Collaboration.....                                                           | 22        |
| Agility .....                                                                | 23        |
| 4.4 Decentralisation and Empowerment.....                                    | 23        |
| Decision-Making Speed .....                                                  | 23        |
| Employee Autonomy .....                                                      | 24        |
| Case Studies: Amazon and Alibaba .....                                       | 24        |
| <b>Chapter 5: Redefining Management Roles.....</b>                           | <b>25</b> |
| 5.1 Transformational Leadership .....                                        | 25        |
| Leading Organisational Change.....                                           | 25        |
| 5.2 Embracing Technological Literacy .....                                   | 26        |
| Digital Competencies.....                                                    | 26        |

|                                                               |           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Data-Driven Leadership .....                                  | 27        |
| 5.3 Contemporary Management Approaches .....                  | 27        |
| Contingency Theory .....                                      | 28        |
| Systems Theory.....                                           | 28        |
| Agile Management .....                                        | 29        |
| <b>Chapter 6: Challenges and Opportunities .....</b>          | <b>29</b> |
| 6.1 Overcoming Resistance to Change .....                     | 30        |
| Organisational Resistance .....                               | 30        |
| Leadership and Change Management.....                         | 30        |
| 6.2 Ensuring Data Security and Privacy .....                  | 31        |
| Growing Importance of Data Protection .....                   | 31        |
| Organisational Challenges.....                                | 31        |
| Strategic Implications.....                                   | 32        |
| 6.3 Leveraging Technology for Competitive Advantage .....     | 32        |
| Innovation and Organisational Performance.....                | 32        |
| Customer-Centred Innovation.....                              | 32        |
| Human Resource and Organisational Capability Development..... | 32        |
| Balancing Opportunities and Risks .....                       | 33        |
| <b>Chapter 7: Conclusion .....</b>                            | <b>33</b> |
| 7.1 Summary of Findings .....                                 | 33        |
| 7.2 Evaluation of the Central Claim .....                     | 34        |
| 7.3 Implications for Management Practice .....                | 34        |
| 7.4 Recommendations for Future Research .....                 | 35        |
| 7.5 Conclusion .....                                          | 35        |
| <b>References .....</b>                                       | <b>36</b> |

## Abstract

Management has traditionally been understood through the fundamental functions of planning, organising, leading and controlling. However, the meaning and practice of management have evolved considerably as organisations have become more complex, internationally connected and technologically dependent. The development of management theory demonstrates that managerial approaches have continually adapted to changing organisational and environmental conditions, from classical theories concerned with efficiency, specialisation and control to contemporary approaches emphasising leadership, adaptability, innovation, collaboration and strategic decision-making.

In the 21st century, globalisation, digitalisation, e-commerce, artificial intelligence and rapidly changing consumer expectations have increased the complexity of managerial decision-making. Organisations now operate in highly interconnected markets where customers have greater access to products, information and substitutes, while technological developments continuously change the basis of competition. Consequently, management is increasingly required not only to control organisational resources but also to identify emerging problems, interpret uncertainty, develop strategic responses and create sustainable competitive advantage.

The practical relevance of this issue was reinforced by a personal observation during a routine retail shopping experience, which prompted further curiosity and subsequent research into how established organisations such as Coca-Cola have adapted their product portfolios and strategies to changing consumer preferences. Coca-Cola's development as a broader beverage company provides an illustration of strategic adaptation, with its portfolio extending beyond its traditional flagship soft drink into areas including water, sports drinks, coffee, tea, juice and low- and no-calorie beverages. In 2025, Coca-Cola reported growth in several of these categories, while Coca-Cola Zero Sugar recorded significant growth, illustrating the importance of responding to changing consumer preferences rather than relying exclusively on historically successful products (The Coca-Cola Company, 2026). This observation reinforces the wider argument that contemporary management requires continuous environmental awareness, strategic adaptation and effective resource allocation.

The development from classical management theories to contemporary approaches demonstrates that management itself is not static. The principles established by theorists such as Taylor, Fayol and Weber continue to provide important foundations for efficiency, structure, specialisation and control, while later approaches have increasingly emphasised human behaviour, leadership, systems, contingency, stakeholder relationships and organisational change. Contemporary management therefore does not necessarily represent a complete rejection of earlier theories; rather, it reflects their adaptation and integration in response to changing organisational circumstances.

Within increasingly digital and competitive environments, the distinction between management and leadership has also become particularly important. Managers remain responsible for planning, organising and controlling organisational resources, while leadership is increasingly concerned with creating direction, influencing people, encouraging innovation and managing organisational change. Transformational leadership, technological literacy, collaboration and strategic thinking have consequently become important capabilities for organisations seeking to respond effectively to uncertainty and technological disruption.

Overall, this study argues that effective contemporary management requires a combination of established management principles and evolving leadership and organisational approaches. The historical development of management theory therefore suggests that traditional theories should not simply be regarded as obsolete. Instead, their continuing relevance depends on how effectively they are adapted and combined with contemporary approaches to address the technological, competitive and organisational challenges of the 21st century.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

Technological advancement has fundamentally transformed how organisations operate, compete, and create value in the 21st century. The rapid growth of digital technologies, particularly in e-commerce and e-business, has significantly reshaped business operations, customer interactions, and managerial practices. These developments have forced organisations to reconsider traditional organisational structures and management theories that were originally designed for industrial-era business environments (Johannessen, 2018).

The emergence of digital business models has accelerated the transition from traditional brick-and-mortar operations to highly connected digital ecosystems. Organisations now operate in increasingly complex and competitive environments characterised by global connectivity, real-time communication, real time transactions, data-driven decision-making, and rapid technological disruption. This shift has created significant challenges for traditional management approaches, particularly those based on hierarchical structures, centralised decision-making, and rigid operational processes (Cole and Kelly, 2020).

Classical management theorists such as Frederick Winslow Taylor, Henri Fayol, and Max Weber developed foundational theories that focused on efficiency, control, specialisation, and formal authority. These theories provided the basis for organisational design and management practices for decades (Hudson, 2015)

However, the digital transformation of businesses has raised important questions regarding whether these traditional models remain fully relevant in the context of 21st-century corporations.

Technology has not only altered organisational structures but has also significantly redefined management roles. Modern managers are increasingly expected to act as strategic leaders, facilitators of innovation, and drivers of digital transformation rather than merely supervisors of operational activities. Leadership capabilities such as adaptability, technological literacy, collaboration, and transformational leadership have become essential for organisational success in the digital era (Bass and Avolio, 1990; Kotter, 1990).

This study critically evaluates whether advances in technology, particularly in e-commerce and e-business, have rendered traditional organisational structures and theories of management roles obsolete. The retail and e-commerce sector provides an appropriate context for this analysis due to its high level of digital transformation and continuous technological disruption. Organisations such as Amazon and Alibaba illustrate how technology continues to reshape corporate structures and management practices.

## 1.2 Background

This study is rooted in the significant technological advances that have transformed business operations, particularly within e-commerce and e-business. Over the last two decades, technological innovation has revolutionised the way organisations conduct transactions, manage internal processes, and engage with customers. The rise of digital platforms has created global marketplaces that operate beyond geographical boundaries and traditional time constraints.

E-commerce has transformed the buying and selling of products and services through digital channels, while e-business has expanded the application of technology to broader organisational activities including supply chain management, customer relationship management, human resource management, and strategic decision-making. These developments have fundamentally altered traditional business models and created new competitive pressures for organisations (Ricart et al., 2004).

Historically, organisational structures were largely hierarchical, with clearly defined roles, centralised authority, and top-down communication systems. Such structures were effective in relatively stable business environments where efficiency and operational control were primary objectives. However, these traditional structures are increasingly challenged by the dynamic and rapidly changing nature of digital business environments.

Modern organisations must respond to rapidly evolving customer demands, technological innovation, increased global competition, and market uncertainty. This has encouraged a shift towards flatter organisational structures, decentralised decision-making, agile working practices, and cross-functional collaboration (Johannessen, 2018).

Technology has also influenced nearly every aspect of management practice, including leadership, communication, workforce management, data analysis, customer engagement, and innovation. According to IBM's HR 3.0 report, digital transformation is driving organisations to redesign workforce structures, leadership models, and talent strategies to remain competitive in increasingly technology-driven markets (IBM, 2020).

Understanding these technological developments is essential for assessing whether traditional organisational structures and management theories remain relevant or require significant adaptation in modern corporations.

## 1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to critically evaluate the extent to which technological advances in e-commerce and e-business have rendered traditional organisational structures and theories of management roles obsolete in 21st-century corporations.

This study seeks to analyse the evolution of technology in business, examine the changing nature of modern corporations, and assess whether traditional management theories continue to provide value in contemporary digital environments. Particular attention is given to understanding how organisations adapt their structures and leadership approaches to respond effectively to technological disruption.

The study also explores the growing importance of transformational leadership, technological literacy, innovation, collaboration, and organisational agility as critical capabilities required for effective management in modern business environments.

## 1.4 Problem Statement

Traditional organisational structures and management theories were developed within relatively stable business environments characterised by predictable markets, clear hierarchies, and standardised operational processes. However, 21st-century corporations now operate in highly dynamic and technology-driven environments.

The rapid growth of e-commerce, digital transformation, automation, artificial intelligence, and global connectivity has significantly disrupted conventional business models.

Organisations face increasing pressure to become more agile, responsive, and innovative in order to remain competitive.

This creates an important challenge for businesses: determining whether traditional organisational structures and management theories remain effective or whether they have become obsolete in the face of technological disruption. This issue is particularly relevant in the retail and e-commerce sector, where technological transformation continues to accelerate organisational change.

## 1.5 Research Objectives

This study aims to:

- Examine traditional organisational structures and theories of management roles
- Analyse the impact of e-commerce and e-business on modern business operations
- Evaluate the changing nature of 21st-century corporations
- Assess whether traditional management models remain relevant in the digital era
- Explore managerial changes required to maintain organisational competitiveness

## 1.6 Research Question

This study seeks to address the following research question:

**Have technological advances in e-commerce and e-business rendered traditional organisational structures and theories of management roles obsolete in 21st-century corporations?**

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Evolution of Technology in Business

Technological evolution has significantly transformed the global business environment over the last few decades. Organisations have moved from traditional manual and paper-based systems toward highly integrated digital ecosystems driven by automation, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and advanced analytics. This transformation has reshaped how businesses operate, compete, and create value in increasingly complex markets.

The rapid digitisation of business processes has improved operational efficiency, productivity, and strategic decision-making. Organisations now leverage digital technologies to automate routine tasks, enhance internal communication, improve customer engagement, and generate valuable insights through data analytics (Cole and Kelly, 2020). Technology has therefore become central to achieving operational excellence and sustaining competitive advantage.

The evolution of technology in business can broadly be viewed across three phases: the industrial era, the information age, and the digital transformation era. The industrial era focused primarily on mechanisation and efficiency, whereas the information age introduced computing technologies that improved information processing and communication. In contrast, the current digital transformation era is characterised by interconnected systems, real-time decision-making, artificial intelligence, and platform-based business models (Johannessen, 2018).

These technological developments have fundamentally changed organisational priorities. Businesses are increasingly expected to be agile, customer-centric, and innovative. According to Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014), digital technologies are not merely supporting existing business processes but are actively reshaping entire industries and organisational structures.

### 2.1.2 Information Era

The Information Era introduced significant advances in computing, telecommunications and information systems. Organisations increasingly relied on information technology to support decision-making, communication and operational efficiency.

As organisations became more complex, management theories evolved beyond purely mechanistic perspectives. Systems Theory emerged as an important framework for understanding organisations as interconnected systems that continuously interact with their external environments (Ishaq and Abdullahi, 2023).

This shift recognised that organisational effectiveness depends not only on internal efficiency but also on the ability to adapt to environmental changes and stakeholder expectations.

### 2.1.3 Digital Era

The Digital Era has been characterised by rapid technological innovation, including e-commerce, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, big data analytics and digital platforms. These technologies have transformed traditional business models and accelerated global competition.

According to Johannessen (2018), digital transformation has contributed to the decline of rigid organisational hierarchies and increased demand for flexibility, collaboration and organisational agility. Modern organisations increasingly rely on digital ecosystems that facilitate real-time communication, innovation and customer engagement.

## 2.2 The Rise of E-Commerce

### Definition

E-commerce refers to the buying and selling of products and services through electronic networks, primarily the internet (Andonov et al, 2021).

### Growth

The growth of e-commerce has fundamentally transformed business operations across industries. Organisations are now able to reach global markets, operate continuously without geographical constraints and engage directly with customers through digital platforms.

Andonov et al, (2021) argue that e-commerce provides organisations with significant advantages, including reduced operational costs, enhanced customer relationships and improved market access.

## Business Models

The most common e-commerce models include:

- Business-to-Business (B2B)
- Business-to-Consumer (B2C)
- Consumer-to-Consumer (C2C)
- Consumer-to-Business (C2B)

These models have created new opportunities for organisations while simultaneously increasing competitive pressures.

## 2.3 The Emergence of E-Business

While e-commerce focuses primarily on online transactions, e-business encompasses the broader application of digital technologies to organisational processes and business activities.

### Scope

E-business extends beyond sales and marketing to include:

- Supply chain management
- Customer relationship management
- Human resource management
- Knowledge management
- Strategic planning

### Strategic Value

E-business enables organisations to improve operational efficiency, enhance information sharing and strengthen competitive advantage.

Ricart et al. (2004) argue that technology has expanded the strategic possibilities available to organisations by enabling global integration and new forms of competitive positioning.

## 2.4 Definition and Explanation of Organisational Structure

Organisational structure refers to the formal arrangement of authority, responsibilities, communication channels and reporting relationships within an organisation (Cole and Kelly, 2020).

## Hierarchical Structure

Hierarchical structures involve multiple management levels and centralised authority.

## Frederick Winslow Taylor

Taylor's Scientific Management emphasised task specialisation, efficiency and managerial control (Taylor, 1911).

Strengths:

- Efficiency
- Productivity
- Standardisation

Weaknesses:

- Limited flexibility
- Reduced employee autonomy

## Functional Structure

Functional structures organise employees according to specialised functions such as marketing, finance and operations.

## Henri Fayol

Fayol's Administrative Theory identified key management functions including planning, organising, coordinating and controlling (Fayol, 1949).

Strengths:

- Clear responsibilities
- Operational efficiency

Weaknesses:

- Departmental silos
- Communication barriers

## Bureaucratic Structure

### Max Weber

Weber's Bureaucratic Theory emphasised formal authority, rules and hierarchical control (Weber, 1947).

Strengths:

- Predictability
- Accountability
- Consistency

Weaknesses:

- Rigidity
- Slow decision-making

## 2.5 Theories of Management Roles

### Henry Mintzberg

Mintzberg (1973) challenged traditional views of management by identifying ten managerial roles grouped into three categories:

#### *Interpersonal Roles*

- Figurehead
- Leader
- Liaison

#### *Informational Roles*

- Monitor
- Disseminator
- Spokesperson

#### *Decisional Roles*

- Entrepreneur
- Disturbance Handler
- Resource Allocator
- Negotiator

Mintzberg argued that managers perform diverse and dynamic activities rather than following a linear management process.

## Peter Drucker

Drucker (1954) viewed management as a strategic function focused on organisational effectiveness and results.

His contributions include:

- Management by Objectives (MBO)
- Decentralisation
- Knowledge workers
- Innovation and entrepreneurship

Drucker's work remains highly influential in contemporary management practice.

## 2.6 Implications for Traditional Models

### Strengths

Traditional management theories continue to provide important foundations for organisational effectiveness.

Key strengths include:

- Clear authority structures
- Operational control
- Standardisation
- Accountability
- Efficiency

### Weaknesses

Traditional models have been criticised for:

- Excessive bureaucracy
- Limited flexibility
- Slow decision-making
- Reduced innovation
- Functional silos

## Limitations in Digital Environments

Digital business environments require:

- Agility
- Collaboration
- Innovation
- Rapid decision-making
- Customer responsiveness

Consequently, many traditional structures struggle to respond effectively to the demands of modern organisations.

However, contemporary research suggests that traditional theories have not become entirely obsolete. Instead, many organisations combine traditional management principles with newer approaches such as Systems Theory, Contingency Theory and Agile Management to create more adaptive organisational models (Ishaq and Abdullahi, 2023).

## Chapter 3: Changing Nature of 21st-Century Corporations

Digital technologies have transformed how corporations operate, compete and create value by increasing connectivity, adaptability and organisational agility. Rapid technological change, evolving customer expectations and global competition have challenged traditional business models and management practices. Retail leaders such as Amazon, Alibaba and Walmart demonstrate how digital innovation enhances customer experience, operational efficiency and competitive advantage.

### 3.1 Increased Connectivity and Globalisation

#### Global Markets

One of the most significant consequences of technological advancement has been the expansion of global markets. Digital technologies have reduced geographical barriers and enabled organisations to engage with customers, suppliers, and business partners across international markets in real time. E-commerce platforms have allowed businesses to reach global consumers without the need for extensive physical infrastructure, creating new opportunities for growth and market expansion (Andonov et al, 2021).

Ricart et al. (2004) argue that globalisation and technological advancement have created new strategic opportunities for organisations by increasing market accessibility and enabling international integration. Through digital platforms, organisations can coordinate operations across multiple regions while maintaining consistent customer experiences and operational standards.

Within the retail sector, Amazon has successfully leveraged digital technologies to establish a global marketplace that serves customers across numerous countries. Similarly, Alibaba has expanded beyond China to facilitate international trade through its digital commerce ecosystem. These examples illustrate how modern corporations increasingly operate within interconnected global markets rather than localised business environments.

However, globalisation also presents challenges. Increased competition, regulatory complexity, and cultural differences require organisations to develop more flexible and responsive management approaches. Consequently, traditional organisational structures designed for domestic operations may struggle to address the demands of globally integrated business environments.

## Digital Ecosystems

The rise of digital ecosystems represents another important characteristic of 21st-century corporations. Digital ecosystems refer to interconnected networks of organisations, customers, suppliers, and technology providers that collaborate through digital platforms to create and exchange value.

Unlike traditional business models that focus primarily on internal organisational activities, digital ecosystems emphasise collaboration, information sharing, and network-based value creation. According to Johannessen (2018), digital technologies have facilitated the emergence of more interconnected organisational forms that rely on cooperation and knowledge exchange rather than rigid hierarchical control.

Alibaba provides a strong example of a digital ecosystem. The organisation has evolved from an online marketplace into a comprehensive digital platform integrating e-commerce, cloud computing, digital payments, logistics, and business services. Zhang (2024) argues that Alibaba's digital transformation demonstrates how organisations can create competitive advantage through ecosystem-based business models that support innovation, collaboration, and organisational learning.

The growth of digital ecosystems has therefore challenged traditional organisational boundaries and increased the importance of collaboration, adaptability, and strategic partnerships.

## 3.2 Shift Towards Digital Transformation

Digital transformation has become a defining feature of contemporary corporations. It involves the integration of digital technologies into organisational processes, products, services, and business models to improve performance and competitiveness.

### Automation

Automation has significantly altered organisational operations by reducing manual processes and improving efficiency. Advances in robotics, machine learning, and process automation have enabled organisations to streamline workflows, reduce operational costs, and improve productivity.

Within retail and e-commerce organisations, automation is increasingly used in inventory management, order fulfilment, customer service, and logistics operations. Amazon's fulfilment centres utilise automated technologies to improve warehouse efficiency and accelerate product delivery. Such developments illustrate how automation supports organisational performance while reducing reliance on traditional labour-intensive processes.

While automation offers substantial benefits, it also creates challenges relating to workforce adaptation and job redesign. Organisations must therefore balance efficiency gains with effective workforce management and employee development strategies (IBM Institute for Business Value, 2020).

### Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence has emerged as one of the most influential technologies affecting contemporary organisations. AI enables businesses to analyse large volumes of data, automate decision-making processes, personalise customer experiences, and identify emerging market trends.

Within the retail and e-commerce sector, AI supports recommendation systems, demand forecasting, fraud detection, and customer service applications. Organisations increasingly rely on data-driven insights to improve operational efficiency and enhance customer satisfaction.

Nankervis et al. (2021) argue that technologies associated with the Fourth Industrial Revolution are transforming organisational capabilities and requiring new managerial competencies. Consequently, managers must increasingly understand how to leverage AI technologies to support strategic decision-making and organisational performance.

### Cloud Computing

Cloud computing has become a critical component of digital transformation. It enables organisations to access computing resources, storage, and software applications through internet-based platforms rather than maintaining extensive internal infrastructure.

Cloud technologies support organisational flexibility by enabling remote working, real-time collaboration, scalability, and rapid access to information. They also facilitate the integration of geographically dispersed operations and support digital innovation.

For retail organisations operating across multiple markets, cloud computing improves operational coordination and supports customer engagement through integrated digital systems. As a result, cloud technologies have become essential for organisations seeking to compete effectively in digital business environments.

### 3.3 Importance of Adaptability and Agility

The increasing pace of technological change has elevated the importance of adaptability and agility within modern organisations. Contemporary corporations must continuously respond to market changes, technological developments, and evolving customer expectations.

#### Faster Decision-Making

Traditional organisational structures often rely on centralised decision-making processes that can delay organisational responses. In contrast, digital business environments require rapid decision-making to address emerging opportunities and challenges.

Agile organisations empower managers and employees to make decisions closer to operational activities, reducing delays and improving responsiveness. This approach enables organisations to react more effectively to market changes and customer demands.

Drucker (1954) emphasised the importance of decentralisation and managerial effectiveness in supporting organisational performance. His insights remain highly relevant in contemporary business environments where responsiveness and adaptability are critical success factors.

The growth of e-commerce has further increased the need for rapid decision-making. Retail organisations must continuously adjust pricing strategies, inventory levels, marketing campaigns, and customer engagement activities in response to changing market conditions.

#### Innovation

Innovation has become a key source of competitive advantage in digital business environments. Organisations that successfully develop innovative products, services, and business models are better positioned to achieve sustainable growth and market leadership.

Technological advancement has increased the importance of organisational cultures that encourage experimentation, learning, and continuous improvement. Modern corporations increasingly rely on cross-functional collaboration and knowledge sharing to support innovation initiatives.

According to Bass and Avolio (1990), transformational leadership plays a critical role in fostering innovation by encouraging creativity, organisational learning, and employee engagement. These leadership capabilities are particularly important within technology-driven organisations operating in highly competitive markets.

The experiences of Amazon and Alibaba demonstrate how innovation can support long-term organisational success. Both organisations have continuously invested in new technologies and business models to strengthen customer value and maintain competitive advantage. Their success illustrates the growing importance of innovation as a defining characteristic of 21st-century corporations.

## Chapter 4: Obsolescence of Traditional Organisational Structures

Technological advances in e-commerce and e-business have significantly challenged traditional organisational structures. Historically, organisations relied on hierarchical and bureaucratic models characterised by clear chains of command, formal authority, and centralised decision-making. These structures were designed to promote efficiency, standardisation, and operational control within relatively stable business environments (Weber, 1947; Fayol, 1949).

However, the emergence of digital technologies, global connectivity, and rapidly changing customer expectations has altered the competitive landscape. Modern retail and e-commerce organisations operate in dynamic environments that demand speed, flexibility, innovation, and continuous adaptation. As a result, scholars and practitioners increasingly question whether traditional organisational structures remain suitable for contemporary corporations.

This chapter critically evaluates the extent to which traditional organisational structures have become obsolete in the digital era. Particular attention is given to the retail and e-commerce sector, where technological disruption has been especially significant.

### 4.1 Critical Evaluation of the Central Claim

The central claim of this study suggests that technological advances in e-commerce and e-business have rendered traditional organisational structures obsolete. While this argument reflects significant changes in modern business environments, a critical evaluation reveals a more nuanced reality.

Traditional organisational structures continue to provide important benefits. Hierarchical arrangements support accountability, operational control, governance, and consistency in decision-making. Large organisations operating across multiple geographical regions often

require formal structures to coordinate complex activities and maintain strategic alignment (Cole and Kelly, 2020).

Nevertheless, traditional structures were developed in environments characterised by stability and predictability. Contemporary organisations face constant technological disruption, increased global competition, and rapidly changing consumer preferences. Under such conditions, rigid hierarchical systems may reduce organisational responsiveness and inhibit innovation.

Johannessen (2018) argues that technological advancement associated with the Fourth Industrial Revolution is contributing to the decline of rigid organisational hierarchies. Digital technologies enable faster communication, increased collaboration, and greater employee participation in decision-making processes. Consequently, many organisations are adopting more flexible organisational arrangements.

However, evidence suggests that traditional organisational structures have not become entirely obsolete. Instead, they have evolved. Modern corporations increasingly adopt hybrid structures that combine elements of traditional hierarchy with decentralised decision-making, cross-functional collaboration, and agile working practices.

Therefore, the claim that technology has rendered traditional organisational structures obsolete is only partially justified. Traditional structures remain relevant but increasingly require adaptation to support organisational agility and innovation.

## 4.2 Hierarchical Structures vs. Flat Organisations

### Traditional Organisational Models

Hierarchical organisational structures are among the oldest and most widely used forms of organisational design. They are characterised by multiple management levels, clear reporting relationships, and centralised authority.

The foundations of hierarchical structures can be traced to the work of Taylor (1911), Fayol (1949), and Weber (1947). Taylor's Scientific Management focused on efficiency and standardisation, Fayol's Administrative Theory emphasised managerial authority and coordination, while Weber's Bureaucratic Theory highlighted formal rules, procedures, and hierarchical control.

These approaches provided significant benefits during the industrial era, including:

- Clear authority relationships
- Defined responsibilities
- Standardised processes
- Improved operational control

- Accountability and governance

For large organisations, hierarchical structures continue to provide stability and consistency in decision-making.

However, critics argue that hierarchical structures can create excessive bureaucracy, communication barriers, and slow decision-making processes. In digital environments where rapid adaptation is essential, such limitations may reduce organisational competitiveness (Cole and Kelly, 2020).

## Modern Organisational Models

In contrast, flat organisational structures reduce management layers and encourage greater employee participation in decision-making.

Flat structures offer several advantages

- Faster communication
- Increased collaboration
- Improved responsiveness
- Greater employee empowerment
- Enhanced innovation

Digital organisations often favour flatter structures because they facilitate rapid information sharing and organisational agility. Employees are encouraged to contribute ideas, solve problems, and respond quickly to customer needs.

However, flat structures are not without challenges. Reduced hierarchy may create ambiguity regarding responsibilities and decision-making authority. In large organisations, maintaining coordination and strategic alignment can become increasingly difficult.

Consequently, many modern corporations seek to balance the benefits of hierarchy with the flexibility offered by flatter organisational arrangements.

## 4.3 Matrix Organisations and Cross-Functional Teams

As organisations face increasingly complex business challenges, matrix structures and cross-functional teams have become more common.

Matrix structures combine functional expertise with project-based coordination. Employees may report to both functional managers and project managers, facilitating greater collaboration across organisational boundaries.

### Collaboration

Cross-functional teams bring together employees from different departments to address organisational challenges and pursue strategic objectives.

Within retail and e-commerce organisations, collaboration between technology specialists, marketing professionals, logistics teams, and customer service departments is essential. Successful digital transformation initiatives require coordinated efforts across multiple functions.

According to Systems Theory, organisations operate as interconnected systems where performance depends on the effective interaction of various organisational components (Ishaq and Abdullahi, 2023). Matrix structures support this interaction by encouraging communication and knowledge sharing across departmental boundaries.

As a result, organisations can improve problem-solving capabilities and enhance innovation.

## Agility

Matrix structures also contribute to organisational agility by enabling organisations to respond more effectively to changing market conditions.

Agility refers to an organisation's ability to adapt quickly to environmental changes while maintaining operational effectiveness. In retail and e-commerce environments, agility is particularly important due to evolving customer expectations and technological innovation.

Cross-functional teams facilitate rapid decision-making and encourage experimentation, enabling organisations to respond more effectively to emerging opportunities and threats.

However, matrix structures may also create challenges. Dual reporting relationships can lead to role ambiguity, conflicts of authority, and coordination difficulties. Effective leadership and communication are therefore critical to successful implementation.

## 4.4 Decentralisation and Empowerment

One of the most significant organisational changes associated with digital transformation is the movement towards decentralisation and employee empowerment.

Traditional organisational structures typically concentrate decision-making authority at senior management levels. While this approach supports control and consistency, it may slow organisational responsiveness.

Modern organisations increasingly distribute decision-making authority throughout the organisation, enabling employees and teams to respond more quickly to operational challenges.

## Decision-Making Speed

In digital business environments, rapid decision-making is often essential for maintaining competitiveness.

The growth of e-commerce has increased the need for organisations to respond quickly to customer demands, technological developments, and market changes. Centralised structures often struggle to support this level of responsiveness.

Decentralised organisations empower managers and employees closer to operational activities to make decisions without excessive approval processes. This reduces delays and improves organisational flexibility.

Drucker (1954) advocated decentralisation as a means of improving organisational effectiveness and managerial performance. His arguments remain highly relevant in contemporary organisations where speed and adaptability are critical success factors.

## Employee Autonomy

Decentralisation also increases employee autonomy by providing greater responsibility and authority to individuals and teams.

Employee empowerment has been linked to increased motivation, engagement, creativity, and innovation. Modern organisations increasingly recognise that employees closest to customers and operational processes often possess valuable knowledge that can support better decision-making.

Within digital organisations, empowered employees are often encouraged to experiment, identify improvements, and contribute to innovation initiatives.

However, excessive decentralisation may create coordination challenges and inconsistencies if not supported by clear strategic objectives and effective communication systems. Consequently, organisations must balance autonomy with appropriate governance mechanisms.

## Case Studies: Amazon and Alibaba

The experiences of Amazon and Alibaba provide valuable insight into how technology has influenced organisational structures within the retail and e-commerce sector.

Amazon combines elements of hierarchy with decentralised decision-making and team-based working structures. The organisation promotes rapid decision-making, innovation, and customer-focused problem solving while maintaining strong operational control through clearly defined leadership principles (Amazon, 2021).

Similarly, Alibaba has evolved from an online marketplace into a complex digital ecosystem integrating e-commerce, logistics, cloud computing, and financial services. Research by Zhang (2024) suggests that Alibaba's digital transformation required significant organisational restructuring, greater cross-functional collaboration, and enhanced organisational flexibility.

Importantly, neither organisation has completely abandoned traditional organisational principles. Instead, both organisations demonstrate how traditional structures can be adapted and integrated with contemporary management practices to support innovation and growth.

These examples reinforce the argument that traditional organisational structures are evolving rather than disappearing.

## Chapter 5: Redefining Management Roles

Technological advances in e-commerce and e-business have not only transformed organisational structures but have also fundamentally reshaped management roles. Traditional management theories largely portrayed managers as planners, controllers, coordinators, and supervisors responsible for maintaining organisational efficiency and stability (Fayol, 1949). However, the rapid pace of digital transformation, increased global competition, and evolving customer expectations have created new demands for managerial effectiveness.

Modern managers are increasingly expected to act as facilitators of innovation, leaders of organisational change, and champions of digital transformation. Within the retail and e-commerce sector, organisations such as Amazon, Alibaba, and Walmart demonstrate how management roles have evolved beyond traditional administrative responsibilities towards more adaptive, technology-driven, and collaborative approaches.

This chapter examines how management roles are being redefined through transformational leadership, technological literacy, and contemporary management approaches including Contingency Theory, Systems Theory, and Agile Management.

### 5.1 Transformational Leadership

#### Leading Organisational Change

One of the most significant changes in management practice has been the growing importance of transformational leadership. Unlike traditional leadership approaches that focus primarily on supervision and control, transformational leadership seeks to inspire employees, encourage innovation, and facilitate organisational change (Bass and Avolio, 1990).

Digital transformation often requires organisations to implement new technologies, redesign processes, and adopt innovative business models. These changes frequently generate uncertainty and resistance among employees. Consequently, managers must possess the ability to communicate a compelling vision, motivate employees, and create commitment to organisational objectives.

Bass and Avolio (1990) argue that transformational leaders influence followers through four key dimensions:

- Idealised influence
- Inspirational motivation
- Intellectual stimulation
- Individualised consideration

These characteristics encourage employees to embrace change and contribute actively to organisational improvement.

Kotter (1990) similarly emphasises that leadership differs from management because leadership focuses on creating vision, alignment, and change, whereas management traditionally concentrates on planning and control. In technology-driven organisations, leadership capabilities have become increasingly important due to the constant need for innovation and adaptation.

Within the retail and e-commerce sector, Amazon has built a culture centred on innovation, experimentation, and customer obsession. Its leadership principles encourage managers to challenge existing assumptions, pursue continuous improvement, and support organisational learning (Amazon, 2021). Such practices illustrate the growing importance of transformational leadership within digital organisations.

Alibaba's transformation from an online marketplace into a global digital ecosystem also demonstrates the importance of leadership in driving organisational change. Research indicates that Alibaba's digital transformation required managers to foster organisational learning, support innovation, and develop adaptive capabilities across the organisation (Zhang, 2024).

Consequently, transformational leadership has become a critical managerial capability within contemporary organisations seeking to navigate technological disruption successfully.

## 5.2 Embracing Technological Literacy

### Digital Competencies

Technological literacy has emerged as a fundamental requirement for contemporary managers. Traditional management roles rarely required extensive knowledge of digital technologies. However, the growth of e-commerce, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and data analytics has increased the need for managers to understand and leverage technological capabilities.

Digital competencies enable managers to evaluate technological opportunities, support digital transformation initiatives, and make informed strategic decisions. According to the IBM HR 3.0 report, organisations increasingly require leaders who can integrate

technological knowledge with business strategy to create sustainable competitive advantage (IBM Institute for Business Value, 2020).

Managers must therefore develop an understanding of:

- Digital platforms
- Data analytics
- Artificial intelligence
- Cloud technologies
- Cybersecurity
- Digital customer engagement

These capabilities allow managers to align technological investments with organisational objectives and market demands.

### Data-Driven Leadership

The availability of large volumes of organisational data has significantly changed managerial decision-making processes. Contemporary managers increasingly rely on data analytics to evaluate performance, identify trends, forecast demand, and improve customer experiences.

Drucker (1954) argued that effective management requires informed decision-making based on relevant information. While Drucker wrote before the emergence of modern digital technologies, his emphasis on evidence-based decision-making remains highly relevant.

In the retail sector, Walmart has invested heavily in data analytics and digital technologies to improve inventory management, supply chain efficiency, and customer service. Data-driven leadership enables managers to make faster and more accurate decisions while improving organisational responsiveness.

Similarly, Amazon uses advanced analytics and artificial intelligence to support pricing strategies, demand forecasting, logistics management, and personalised customer recommendations. These developments illustrate how managerial effectiveness increasingly depends on the ability to interpret and utilise digital information.

As organisations continue to generate increasing amounts of data, technological literacy and analytical capabilities will remain essential components of effective management.

## 5.3 Contemporary Management Approaches

The changing nature of digital organisations has encouraged the adoption of contemporary management theories that provide greater flexibility and responsiveness than traditional approaches.

## Contingency Theory

Contingency Theory argues that no single management approach is universally effective. Instead, organisational effectiveness depends upon the alignment between management practices and environmental conditions (Cole and Kelly, 2020).

This perspective directly challenges traditional management theories that advocate universal principles of management. Digital business environments are characterised by uncertainty, rapid technological change, and intense competition. Consequently, managers must adapt their leadership styles, structures, and decision-making processes according to specific organisational circumstances.

Within the retail and e-commerce sector, organisations operating in highly dynamic environments often require different management approaches than those operating in more stable markets. Contingency Theory therefore provides a useful framework for understanding why flexible and adaptive management practices have become increasingly important.

## Systems Theory

Systems Theory views organisations as interconnected systems composed of multiple interacting components. Organisational performance depends upon the effective coordination of these components and their interaction with the external environment (Ishaq and Abdullahi, 2023).

From a systems perspective, managers are responsible for ensuring alignment between organisational functions, resources, processes, and strategic objectives. Rather than focusing solely on individual departments, managers must understand how organisational activities influence one another.

This perspective is particularly relevant within digital organisations where technology has increased interdependence among business functions. E-commerce organisations rely on the integration of marketing, logistics, information technology, customer service, and supply chain operations to create customer value.

Alibaba's digital ecosystem demonstrates the practical relevance of Systems Theory. The organisation integrates multiple business units including e-commerce, logistics, cloud computing, and financial services. Effective management therefore requires a systems-oriented perspective that recognises organisational interdependencies and external relationships.

Systems Theory provides an important framework for understanding the complexity of contemporary organisations and the evolving role of managers within digital environments.

## Agile Management

Agile Management has emerged as one of the most influential contemporary approaches to managing organisational change and innovation. Agile principles emphasise flexibility, collaboration, continuous improvement, and rapid responsiveness to changing conditions.

Unlike traditional management models that rely on long planning cycles and hierarchical decision-making processes, Agile Management encourages iterative learning and decentralised decision-making.

Within retail and e-commerce organisations, Agile Management supports:

- Faster innovation
- Improved customer responsiveness
- Cross-functional collaboration
- Continuous adaptation

Amazon's use of small autonomous teams demonstrates many agile principles. Teams are empowered to make decisions, experiment with new ideas, and respond rapidly to customer feedback. Such practices enable organisations to maintain competitiveness within highly dynamic digital markets.

Agile Management therefore reflects a significant departure from traditional management approaches and illustrates how managerial roles have evolved in response to technological advancement.

## Chapter 6: Challenges and Opportunities

Technological advances in e-commerce and e-business have created significant opportunities for organisations while simultaneously introducing new challenges. The adoption of digital technologies has enabled organisations to improve efficiency, expand into global markets, enhance customer experiences, and develop innovative business models with cost effectiveness. However, digital transformation also requires organisations to address issues relating to organisational change, workforce adaptation, cybersecurity, and strategic competitiveness.

Within the retail and e-commerce sector, organisations such as Amazon, Alibaba, and Walmart have demonstrated the potential benefits of technological innovation. At the same time, these organisations have faced challenges associated with managing large-scale digital

transformation and maintaining competitive advantage in rapidly changing business environments.

This chapter critically examines the major challenges and opportunities associated with technological transformation and evaluates their implications for contemporary management and organisational effectiveness.

## 6.1 Overcoming Resistance to Change

### Organisational Resistance

One of the most significant barriers to successful digital transformation is resistance to change. Employees, managers, and even entire organisational units may resist technological innovations due to uncertainty, fear of job displacement, lack of technological competence, or concerns regarding increased workload.

Argyris (2010) argues that organisations often become trapped in established routines and behaviours that inhibit learning and adaptation. These organisational traps can create significant obstacles when implementing new technologies and business processes.

Within traditional organisations, employees may view technological change as a threat to established roles, responsibilities, and sources of authority. Consequently, resistance can slow implementation processes and reduce the effectiveness of digital transformation initiatives.

The retail sector provides numerous examples of organisations struggling to adapt to digital disruption. Many traditional retailers experienced difficulties responding to the growth of online shopping due to organisational inertia and reluctance to modify established business models. In contrast, organisations that embraced change were generally better positioned to compete in digital markets.

### Leadership and Change Management

Effective leadership plays a critical role in overcoming resistance to change. Transformational leaders encourage employee engagement, communicate organisational vision, and foster commitment to change initiatives (Bass and Avolio, 1990).

Kotter (1990) argues that successful organisational transformation requires leaders to create urgency, build commitment, and communicate a clear strategic direction. Managers must therefore act as facilitators of change rather than merely administrators of existing processes.

In digital organisations, change management has become an ongoing rather than occasional activity. Continuous technological innovation requires managers to develop organisational cultures that support learning, adaptability, and continuous improvement.

IBM's HR 3.0 report highlights the importance of reskilling and workforce development in supporting digital transformation. Organisations that invest in employee development are often better equipped to manage technological change and reduce resistance (IBM Institute for Business Value, 2020).

Consequently, overcoming resistance to change requires both effective leadership and strategic investment in employee capabilities.

## 6.2 Ensuring Data Security and Privacy

### Growing Importance of Data Protection

The increasing reliance on digital technologies has elevated the importance of data security and privacy. E-commerce organisations collect substantial amounts of customer, employee, and operational data, creating both opportunities and risks.

Data has become a strategic organisational asset. Organisations utilise customer information to personalise services, improve marketing effectiveness, and support decision-making. However, the collection and storage of large volumes of data also increase exposure to cyber threats, data breaches, and regulatory challenges.

As organisations become increasingly digital, cybersecurity has evolved from a technical concern into a strategic management issue.

### Organisational Challenges

Cybersecurity threats can result in financial losses, reputational damage, legal liabilities, and reduced customer trust. Consequently, managers must ensure that digital transformation initiatives are accompanied by appropriate security measures and governance mechanisms.

The complexity of digital ecosystems further increases cybersecurity challenges. E-commerce organisations often rely on multiple technology providers, cloud services, payment systems, and supply chain partners. This interconnected environment creates additional vulnerabilities that require effective risk management.

Stakeholder Theory suggests that organisations have responsibilities not only to shareholders but also to customers, employees, suppliers, and wider society (Freeman, 1984). Protecting stakeholder data therefore represents an important ethical and strategic responsibility.

Managers must ensure compliance with data protection regulations while maintaining customer trust and organisational reputation. This requires the integration of cybersecurity considerations into organisational strategy, leadership practices, and operational processes.

## Strategic Implications

Data security should not be viewed solely as a defensive activity. Organisations that effectively manage cybersecurity risks may strengthen customer confidence and enhance competitive advantage.

Consequently, modern managers require both technological literacy and strategic awareness to balance innovation with risk management.

## 6.3 Leveraging Technology for Competitive Advantage

### Innovation and Organisational Performance

While technological transformation presents numerous challenges, it also provides significant opportunities for competitive advantage. Organisations that successfully integrate digital technologies can improve operational efficiency, enhance customer experiences, and develop innovative business models.

According to Andonov et al, (2021), e-commerce enables organisations to access global markets, reduce operating costs, strengthen customer relationships, and improve overall business performance. These benefits contribute directly to organisational competitiveness and long-term growth.

Technology also enables organisations to improve decision-making through advanced analytics, artificial intelligence, and real-time information systems. Such capabilities support greater organisational responsiveness and strategic effectiveness.

### Customer-Centred Innovation

Modern competitive advantage increasingly depends on the ability to create superior customer experiences. Digital technologies allow organisations to personalise products, improve service delivery, and develop more responsive customer engagement strategies.

Amazon's recommendation systems, Alibaba's integrated digital ecosystem, and Walmart's omnichannel retail strategy illustrate how technology can enhance customer value while improving organisational performance.

Customer-centred innovation has become a defining characteristic of successful digital organisations. Managers therefore play a critical role in ensuring that technological investments align with customer expectations and strategic objectives.

### Human Resource and Organisational Capability Development

Technology alone does not guarantee competitive advantage. Sustainable success depends on the ability of organisations to develop the skills, knowledge, and capabilities necessary to utilise technology effectively.

Ulrich and Beatty (2001) argue that human resource functions must evolve from administrative support roles towards strategic partnerships that contribute directly to organisational performance. Similarly, Beer (1997) highlights the growing strategic importance of human resource management within modern organisations.

Nankervis et al. (2021) further suggest that the Fourth Industrial Revolution requires organisations to invest in workforce development, digital skills, and organisational learning. Consequently, managers must ensure that technological innovation is supported by appropriate human capital strategies.

## Balancing Opportunities and Risks

Although technological advancement creates substantial opportunities, organisations must balance innovation with effective governance, risk management, and stakeholder responsibilities.

The experiences of Amazon, Alibaba, and Walmart demonstrate that technological success requires more than the adoption of new technologies. Competitive advantage depends upon the integration of technology, leadership, organisational culture, employee capabilities, and strategic vision.

Therefore, the most successful organisations are those that combine technological innovation with effective management practices and organisational adaptability.

# Chapter 7: Conclusion

## 7.1 Summary of Findings

This study critically evaluated the claim that technological advances, particularly in e-commerce and e-business, have rendered traditional organisational structures and theories of management roles obsolete in the context of 21st-century corporations. Using the retail and e-commerce sector as the primary focus, the research examined the evolution of technology in business, the changing nature of contemporary organisations, the relevance of traditional organisational structures, and the transformation of management roles.

This study critically examined whether technological advances in e-commerce and e-business have made traditional organisational structures and management theories obsolete. While classical theories by Taylor (1911), Fayol (1949), Weber (1947), Drucker (1954) and Mintzberg (1973) remain relevant, digital transformation has increased the need for flexibility, collaboration, innovation and customer focus. Organisations such as Amazon, Alibaba and Walmart demonstrate these changes. Although flatter and agile structures support responsiveness, traditional hierarchies remain important for governance and

accountability. Managers increasingly act as transformational leaders, strategic decision-makers and facilitators of innovation, while organisations must address resistance, cybersecurity, skills shortages and continuous workforce development. At the same time, technological innovation provides substantial opportunities for improving efficiency, enhancing customer experiences, supporting organisational learning, and achieving sustainable competitive advantage.

## 7.2 Evaluation of the Central Claim

The central claim of this study suggested that advances in e-commerce and e-business have rendered traditional organisational structures and theories of management roles obsolete.

Based on the evidence presented throughout this research, this claim cannot be fully supported.

The findings indicate that traditional organisational structures and management theories have not become obsolete. Instead, they continue to provide valuable foundations for organisational design and management practice. Concepts such as planning, coordination, authority, accountability, and organisational control remain essential components of effective management.

However, traditional approaches alone are increasingly insufficient for addressing the complexities of contemporary digital business environments. The rapid pace of technological change, increasing customer expectations, and growing competitive pressures require organisations to adopt more flexible and adaptive approaches.

Therefore, rather than becoming obsolete, traditional organisational structures and management theories have evolved. Modern organisations increasingly combine classical management principles with contemporary approaches such as Transformational Leadership, Contingency Theory, Systems Theory, Agile Management, and digital leadership practices.

This hybrid approach enables organisations to retain the stability and control offered by traditional structures while simultaneously developing the flexibility and responsiveness required for success in digital markets.

## 7.3 Implications for Management Practice

The findings of this study have several important implications for contemporary management practice.

First, organisations should avoid viewing technological transformation as a complete replacement for traditional management principles. Instead, managers should recognise the continuing value of classical theories while adapting them to contemporary organisational contexts.

Second, organisations must invest in developing managerial capabilities that support digital transformation. Technological literacy, data analytics, strategic thinking, innovation management, and transformational leadership are increasingly important competencies for contemporary managers.

Third, organisational structures should be designed to balance control with flexibility. While hierarchical arrangements remain important for governance and accountability, organisations should also encourage collaboration, decentralised decision-making, and cross-functional teamwork where appropriate.

Fourth, successful digital transformation requires continuous organisational learning and workforce development. Managers must create cultures that encourage adaptability, experimentation, and innovation while addressing employee concerns relating to technological change.

Finally, organisations must recognise that technology alone does not create competitive advantage. Sustainable success depends upon the effective integration of technology, leadership, organisational culture, human capital, and strategic management practices.

## 7.4 Recommendations for Future Research

Although this study focused on the retail and e-commerce sector, future research could examine the impact of technological transformation across other industries such as banking, financial services, healthcare, manufacturing, and public sector organisations.

Comparative studies investigating differences between digital-native organisations and traditional organisations undergoing digital transformation may provide additional insight into the effectiveness of various organisational structures and management approaches.

Future research could also explore the long-term implications of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, blockchain, and automation for organisational design and managerial effectiveness.

Additionally, further investigation into leadership capabilities required for managing digital transformation would contribute to a deeper understanding of the evolving role of management within contemporary organisations.

## 7.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, technological advances in e-commerce and e-business have significantly transformed organisational structures and management roles within 21st-century corporations. The retail and e-commerce sector provides clear evidence that digital technologies have altered how organisations operate, compete, and create value.

However, the findings of this study suggest that traditional organisational structures and theories of management have not become obsolete. Rather, they have undergone significant

adaptation and evolution to remain relevant within increasingly digital and dynamic business environments in par with globalisation trend.

The most successful contemporary organisations are not those that abandon traditional management principles entirely, but those that effectively integrate classical foundations with modern management approaches, technological capabilities, and organisational agility. Consequently, the future of management is likely to be characterised not by the replacement of traditional theories, but by their continued evolution alongside technological innovation.

## References

- Amazon (2021) *Leadership principles*. Updated 1 July 2021. Available at: <https://www.aboutamazon.com/about-us/leadership-principles> (Accessed: 30 June 2026).
- Andonov, A., Dimitrov, G.P. and Totev, V. (2021) 'Impact of e-commerce on business performance', *TEM Journal*, 10(4), pp. 1558–1564. doi: 10.18421/TEM104-09.
- Argyris, C. (2010) *Organizational traps: Leadership, culture, organizational design*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199586165.001.0001.
- Bainbridge, H. (2015) 'Devolving people management to the line: How different rationales for devolution influence people management effectiveness', *Personnel Review*, 44(6), pp. 847–865. doi: 10.1108/PR-10-2013-0193.
- Bass, B.M. and Avolio, B.J. (1990) 'Developing transformational leadership: 1992 and beyond', *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 14(5), pp. 21–27. doi: 10.1108/03090599010135122.
- Beer, M. (1997) 'The transformation of the human resource function: Resolving the tension between a traditional administrative and a new strategic role', *Human Resource Management*, 36(1), pp. 49–56.
- Block, P. (2005) 'Ask questions', *Leadership Excellence*, 22(7), pp. 6–7.
- Boxall, P., Ang, S.H. and Bartram, T. (2011) 'Analysing the “black box” of HRM: Uncovering HR goals, mediators, and outcomes in a standardized service environment', *Journal of Management Studies*, 48(7), pp. 1504–1532.

Cedillo Torres, C.A., Garcia-French, M., Hordijk, R., Nguyen, K. and Olup, L. (2012) 'Four case studies on corporate social responsibility: Do conflicts affect a company's corporate social responsibility policy?', *Utrecht Law Review*, 8(3), pp. 51–73.

The Coca-Cola Company (2026) *Annual report 2025*. Available at: <https://investors.coca-colacompany.com/filings-reports/all-sec-filings/content/0001628280-26-010047/ko-20251231.htm> (Accessed: 19 August 2026).

Cole, G.A. and Kelly, P. (2020) *Management theory and practice*. 9th edn. Andover: Cengage Learning.

Drucker, P.F. (1954) *The practice of management*. New York: Harper & Row.

Freeman, R.E. (1984) *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Boston, MA: Pitman.

Galloway, L., Kapasi, I. and Sang, K. (2015) 'Entrepreneurship, leadership, and the value of feminist approaches to understanding them', *Journal of Small Business Management*, 53(3), pp. 683–692. doi: 10.1111/jsbm.12178.

Gazendam, H.W.M. (1993) *Variety controls variety: On the use of organization theories in information management*. Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff.

Heifetz, R.A. (1994) *Leadership without easy answers*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hudson, J.R. (2015) 'Theories of management', [Course reading], Management 1. University of Fort Hare.

Hurasha, C.I. and Chiremba, T. (2016) 'Influence of electronic commerce on business performance: Evidence from e-commerce organisations in Harare, Zimbabwe', *Journal of Economics and Behavioral Studies*, 8(6), pp. 146–152.

IBM Institute for Business Value (2020) *Accelerating the journey to HR 3.0*. 16 October. Available at: <https://www.ibm.com/thought-leadership/institute-business-value/report/hr-3/> (Accessed: 30 June 2026).

Ilie, C. and Schnurr, S. (2017) *Challenging leadership stereotypes through discourse, power, management and gender*. Singapore: Springer.

Ishaq, A.A. and Abdullahi, A.K. (2022) 'Relevance of system theory to open and close systems in organisational management', *Bayero Business Review*, 6(3).

Johannessen, J.-A. (2018) *The workplace of the future: The Fourth Industrial Revolution, the precariat and the death of hierarchies*. Boca Raton, FL: Routledge.

Kahneman, D. (2011) *Thinking, fast and slow*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Kelley, R.E. (1988) 'In praise of followers', *Harvard Business Review*, November–December.

Kotter, J.P. (1990) 'What leaders really do', *Harvard Business Review*, 68(3), pp. 103–111.

Lewis, D. and Noble, A. (2008) *Servant leadership: Bringing the spirit of work to work*. Cirencester: Management Book 2000.

Lipman-Blumen, J. (2017) 'Connective leadership in an interdependent and diverse world', *Roeper Review*, 39(3), pp. 170–173. doi: 10.1080/02783193.2017.1318994.

Morgan, G. (1986) *Images of organization*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Nankervis, A., Connell, J., Cameron, R., Montague, A. and Prikshat, V. (2021) 'Are we there yet? Australian HR professionals and the Fourth Industrial Revolution', *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 59(1), pp. 3–19. doi: 10.1111/1744-7941.12245.

Nyamusenge, D.M. (2018) 'Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): Ambiguities and challenges of leadership', in Western, S. and Garcia, É.-J. (eds) *Global leadership perspectives*. London: SAGE Publications, pp. 61–69.

Öner, Z.H. (2012) 'Servant leadership and paternalistic leadership styles in the Turkish business context', *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 33(3), pp. 300–316.

Ricart, J.E., Enright, M.J., Ghemawat, P., Hart, S.L. and Khanna, T. (2004) 'New frontiers in international strategy', *Journal of International Business Studies*, 35(3), pp. 175–200. doi: 10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8400080.

Robinson, D. (2005) 'Management theorists: Thinkers for the 21st century?', *Training Journal*, January.

Smith, P.A.C. and Pourdehnad, J. (2018) *Organizational leadership for the Fourth Industrial Revolution: Emerging research and opportunities*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Storey, J. (ed.) (2016) *Leadership in organizations: Current issues and key trends*. 3rd edn. Abingdon: Routledge.

Ulrich, D. and Beatty, D. (2001) 'From partners to players: Extending the HR playing field', *Human Resource Management*, 40(4), pp. 293–307. doi: 10.1002/hrm.1020.

Walmart Inc. (2024) *Annual report 2024*. Available at: Walmart Investor Relations – Annual Reports (Accessed: 30 June 2026).

Western, S. and Garcia, É.-J. (eds) (2018) *Global leadership perspectives*. London: SAGE Publications.

Wöcke, A., Bendixen, M. and Rijamampianina, R. (2007) 'Building flexibility into multi-national human resource strategy: A study of four South African multi-national enterprises', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 18(5), pp. 829–844. doi: 10.1080/09585190701249115.

Zaleznik, A. (2004) 'Managers and leaders: Are they different?', *Clinical Leadership & Management Review*, 18(3), pp. 171–177.

Zhang, A. (2024) 'Research on enterprise digital transformation: A case study of Alibaba', *SHS Web of Conferences*, 208, 01014. doi: 10.1051/shsconf/202420801014.

Zhang, F., Fu, P., Xi, Y., Li, L., Xu, L., Cao, C., Li, G., Ma, L., and Ge, J. (2012) 'Understanding indigenous leadership research: Explication and Chinese examples', *The Leadership Quarterly*, 23(6), pp. 1063–1079.