

พลวัตของภาวะผู้นำในยุคดิจิทัล: การปรับตัวเพื่อขับเคลื่อนการเปลี่ยนแปลงอย่างยั่งยืน

Leadership Dynamics in the Digital Age: Adaptive Strategies Sustainable Transformation

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้มุ่งวิเคราะห์พลวัตของภาวะผู้นำในยุคดิจิทัล โดยเน้นการบูรณาการภาวะผู้นำดิจิทัล ภาวะผู้นำเชิงการเปลี่ยนแปลง และภาวะผู้นำการปรับตัว เพื่อขับเคลื่อนองค์กรสู่ความยั่งยืน เชื่อมโยงกับการประยุกต์ใช้ในภาคสาธารณะของไทยที่ยังมีข้อจำกัด การผสมผสานผู้นำทั้งสามมิติดังกล่าวช่วยเสริมสมรรถนะของผู้นำให้สอดคล้องกับพลวัตดิจิทัลและเป้าหมายการพัฒนาอย่างยั่งยืน บทความนี้ใช้วิธีวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ โดยอาศัยการสังเคราะห์วรรณกรรมเชิงวิเคราะห์และการพิจารณากรณีศึกษาองค์กรไทย เพื่อรวบรวมและตีความข้อมูลเชิงเนื้อหาอย่างเป็นระบบ ทั้งนี้ การเลือกใช้วิธีการสังเคราะห์วรรณกรรมมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสังเคราะห์องค์ความรู้ร่วมสมัยจากแหล่งข้อมูลวิชาการที่หลากหลาย เพื่อให้ได้ข้อสรุปเชิงลึกเกี่ยวกับรูปแบบภาวะผู้นำที่เหมาะสมกับบริบทดิจิทัลของไทย ผลการวิเคราะห์ชี้ว่า ผู้นำยุคดิจิทัลต้องพัฒนาทักษะอารมณ์และสังคม การสื่อสารเชิงกลยุทธ์ และความสามารถในการปรับตัว ควบคู่กับการสร้างแรงบันดาลใจและกำหนดวิสัยทัศน์ที่ยืดหยุ่นในโลกที่ซับซ้อน แนวทางดังกล่าวช่วยให้ผู้นำสร้างสมดุลระหว่างเป้าหมายระยะยาวกับการบริหารการเปลี่ยนแปลงระยะสั้นในมิติของโครงสร้าง กระบวนการ และวัฒนธรรมองค์กร บทความนี้จึงเสนอกรอบแนวคิดและข้อเสนอแนะเชิงกลยุทธ์ เพื่อเสริมศักยภาพของภาวะผู้นำไทยในการขับเคลื่อนองค์กรอย่างยั่งยืนในยุคดิจิทัล

คำสำคัญ: กลยุทธ์การปรับตัว ความยั่งยืน ภาวะผู้นำดิจิทัล ภาวะผู้นำเชิงเปลี่ยนแปลง

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Abstract

This article examines the dynamics of leadership in the digital age, with a focus on integrating digital leadership, transformational leadership, and adaptive leadership as strategies for promoting organizational sustainability. It links these dimensions to applications in the Thai public sector, where cultural and structural barriers remain. Integrating these three leadership dimensions enhances leaders' ability to align with digital dynamics and advance sustainable development goals. This study employs a qualitative research approach through analytical literature synthesis and selected case analyses of Thai organizations to systematically collect and interpret qualitative content. The use of literature synthesis is intended to consolidate contemporary scholarly knowledge from diverse academic sources, to generate in-depth insights into leadership models suitable for Thailand's digital context. The findings indicate that leaders in the digital age need to cultivate strategic communication, emotional and social intelligence, and adaptability, as well as the ability to inspire and articulate flexible visions in a complex and uncertain environment. Leaders with these competencies can manage short-term changes in structural, procedural, and cultural dimensions while maintaining long-term goals. This article offers a conceptual framework and strategic recommendations to enhance leadership capabilities for promoting sustainable organizational transformation in the digital age

Keywords: Adaptive Strategy, Sustainability, Digital Leadership, Transformational Leadership

Introduction

Leadership is under growing pressure to quickly adapt while keeping an eye on sustainability in the complex and uncertain digital age (Heifetz et al., 2021; Kane et al., 2021). In order to match their businesses with digital settings and the expectations of many stakeholders, leaders must no longer rely on traditional thinking (Bawany, 2019; Freeman, 2021). In order to encourage the strategic use of technology and connect it to more general objectives like ESG and the circular economy, the idea of digital leadership has emerged (Bocken et al., 2021; Elkington, 2020; Lozano, 2020). In order to promote learning, flexibility, and strategic agility, leadership in this setting necessitates the blending of transformational and adaptive leadership (Johansen, 2019; Petrie, 2020; Prayoonvong & Limwongthong, 2025; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018)

In Thailand, digital transformation has become a national priority, yet organizations face multiple challenges in aligning technological adoption with sustainable practices. For instance, the Digital Economy and Society Development Plan (Rogers, 2023) reported that while over 85% of Thai enterprises accelerated digital adoption after COVID-19, fewer than 40% had integrated sustainability metrics into their strategies. Case studies in the Thai banking and retail sectors further reveal that leadership gaps in digital skills and adaptive capacity remain key obstacles to sustainable transformation (NESDC, 2023). New-generation leaders must also cultivate soft skills such as systems thinking, communication, and emotional intelligence to enhance their capacity for transformational change (Gauthier, 2022; Waldman & Balven, 2022). The integration of digital leadership with adaptive strategies allows Thai organizations not only to survive disruption but also to embed sustainability into their core business models. For example, leaders in the energy sector have applied digital platforms to optimize resource efficiency while simultaneously advancing ESG goals, demonstrating how adaptive leadership enables the alignment of technology and sustainability. This study employs a qualitative research design through analytical literature synthesis, systematically collecting and interpreting data from scholarly sources and relevant case studies. This method was chosen to integrate diverse theoretical and empirical insights, enabling a comprehensive understanding of digital leadership and adaptive strategies within the Thai context, where empirical data remain limited.

Hence the examination of leadership that incorporates what is now called digital thinking, adaptive strategy and sustainability is both timely and essential for organizations facing the fluid challenges of today (Fountaine et al., 2019; Geissdoerfer et al., 2021; Rogers, 2023). However, studies have largely been conducted in Western settings - leaving a dearth of knowledge about how digital leadership and adaptive strategies may be implemented more effectively within the Thai social-cultural and institutional context. This gap presents an important research issue by

investigating how leaders in Thai businesses can juggle a speedy adoption of digital against long-serving sustainability demands.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative research article is to analyze the dynamics of leadership in the digital era with a focus on how leaders adapt and integrate sustainability principles into organizational strategies. Specifically, the objectives are to:

1. To critically analyze the evolving roles, responsibilities, and leadership competencies necessitated by the digital era, with particular reference to the organizational and cultural context of Thailand.
2. To comprehensively examine the significance of soft skills, especially communication, systems thinking, and emotional intelligence, in fostering adaptive capacity and enhancing leadership effectiveness amid conditions of uncertainty and transformation.
3. To empirically investigate the integrative relationship between digital leadership and adaptive strategic approaches, and how this synergy facilitates organizational sustainability, resilience, and long-term transformative growth.

Literature Review

1. Digital Leadership Landscape

In the digital era, organizations face structural disruptions that require agile and transformative leadership. Leaders must foster innovation, adaptability, and strategic use of data while promoting collaboration, trust, and transparent communication. Integrating human capabilities with technological innovation is essential for achieving sustainable competitive advantage.

2. Core Competencies for Digital Leaders

Leadership competencies have changed dramatically from traditional models in the digital age. Systems thinking, which helps leaders comprehend intricate relationships and cross-functional effects within organizations, is one of the most important skills (Senge, 2020). Data literacy has also emerged as a vital skill, empowering leaders to analyze large volumes of data to make timely and informed decisions (Mayer-Schönberger & Cukier, 2021; Sophonthummapharn, 2011). Additionally, promoting new ideas and taking measured risks in a positive way require cultivating a culture of innovation and ongoing learning (Gregersen, 2019). Navigating today's dynamic digital landscape requires the ability to respond effectively to changing contexts and crises, which is a key competency of adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2021).

3. Challenges and Opportunities in Leading in a Digital World

Leaders must make strategic decisions quickly in the complex and uncertain digital age, frequently based on insufficient information (Snowden & Boone, 2021). Additionally, this uncertainty presents chances to promote creativity and try out adaptable strategies (Korn Ferry Institute, 2020). Thus, developing trust via open communication, encouraging a culture of group learning, and utilizing technology and data-driven insights to promote sustainability are all necessary for effective leadership (Fountain et al., 2019; Gauthier, 2022). All things considered, leadership in the digital age requires a structural shift from control to enabling change, necessitating proficiency in data management, agility, and systems thinking. While using technology to create opportunities, leaders must manage complexity and uncertainty while ensuring that sustainability initiatives are based on innovation, vision, and ongoing organizational learning.

4. Leadership Dynamics

Cross-generational and cross-functional collaboration lies at the heart of leadership dynamics in an era marked by rapid change. Leaders must create adaptive spaces that enable shared learning among individuals from different generations (Heifetz et al., 2021). The use of data and technology supports cross-functional decision-making

(Kongtieng & Phadung, 2023; Mayer-Schönberger & Cukier, 2021), enhancing systems thinking that fosters sustainable transformation (Senge, 2020). At the same time, cultivating a culture of continuous and flexible learning is essential (Rogers, 2023). These elements collectively empower leaders to effectively guide their organizations through the complexities of dynamic environments (Westerman et al., 2020).

Table 1 Synthesis of Contemporary Leadership Concepts in the VUCA

No.	Scholar(s)	Core Concept	Application
1	Uhl-Bien and Arena (2018)	Adaptive Space & Enabling Leadership – Leaders must create adaptive space to foster innovation and learning.	Applied to balance formal organizational structures with the dynamic nature of innovation.
2	Heifetz et al. (2009/2020)	Adaptive Leadership – Differentiates between technical problems and adaptive challenges.	Used to guide organizations through complex change.
3	Horney et al. (2020)	Agile Leadership – Leaders must be capable of moving quickly and adjusting strategies in response to environmental changes.	Applied in industries experiencing rapid transformation.
4	Johansen (2019)	VUCA Leadership & Foresight – Preparing for VUCA conditions with 10 key leadership skills, including clarity, agility, and empathy.	Suitable for leaders navigating ambiguity in the digital age.
5	Sullivan-Taylor and Wilson (2019)	Resilient Leadership – Leaders must demonstrate resilience and make decisions under crisis conditions.	Applied in risk management and building organizational resilience.
6	Petrie (2020)	Vertical Leadership Development – Emphasizes developing higher-order thinking capacities rather than merely horizontal skill sets.	Used in organizations aiming to cultivate next-generation leaders from within.

Leadership in the VUCA era requires flexibility, rapid adaptability, and strategic vision to navigate uncertainty. Leaders must create spaces that support innovation and collaborative learning, while continuously developing both deep thinking and new skillsets. Awareness of surrounding changes is central to guiding organizations through crises. Thus, modern leaders must consciously act as both adapters and proactive shapers of the future.

Sustainable Transformation

Organizational sustainability necessitates a strategic transition toward long-term value creation that integrates economic, environmental, and social considerations. Frameworks such as Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria, green leadership, and the circular economy have become increasingly integral to organizational planning and decision-making. Effective leadership is essential in embedding sustainability into the organization's core strategy by aligning its vision, operations, and innovation to achieve systemic and enduring impact.

1. Organizational Sustainability Concept

Organizational sustainability has become central to modern management, emphasizing a balance among economic, social, and environmental dimensions (Elkington, 2020). Effective sustainability requires transforming processes for efficient resource use and minimal ecological impact (Geissdoerfer et al., 2021), adopting circular economy principles to promote reuse and resource circulation (Bocken et al., 2021), and embedding sustainability into organizational values (Lozano, 2020). Active stakeholder engagement is also essential (Freeman, 2021), and transformational leaders are more likely to cultivate a sustainability-oriented culture and drive meaningful change (Waldman & Balven, 2022).

Tabla 2 Synthesis Conceptual of Organizational Sustainability.

No.	Scholar / Year	Core Concept	Contemporary Relevance
1	Elkington (2020)	Triple Bottom Line (3P: People, Planet, Profit)	Organizations must balance profit, social responsibility, and environmental concerns.
2	Geissdoerfer et al. (2021)	Systemic Sustainability	Minimizing negative operational impacts while fostering sustainable innovation.
3	Bocken et al. (2021)	Circular Economy	Designing production processes to enable reuse, recycling, and waste reduction.
4	Lozano (2020)	Integration of Sustainability into Organizational Values	Embedding sustainability as part of organizational culture and management philosophy.
5	Freeman (2021)	Stakeholder Theory	Sustainability must be supported by all internal and external stakeholders.
6	Waldman and Balven (2022)	Transformational Leadership	Visionary leaders are essential for promoting sustainability-oriented values.
7	Raworth (2021)	Doughnut Economics	Economic development must respect ecological boundaries and human well-being.
8	Kiron et al. (2020)	Sustainability as Strategy	Sustainability should be embedded within core business strategies—not limited to CSR.
9	Eccles and Klimenko (2019)	ESG Integration	Using Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) metrics to attract long-term investors.

Contemporary organizational sustainability extends beyond CSR, requiring integration into core business strategies. Unlike CSR, which emphasizes voluntary actions, strategic sustainability positions economic, social, and environmental imperatives as central to organizational value. Operational systems should align with resource circularity and ecological responsibility, yet effective implementation depends on stakeholder engagement. Few studies critically examine how leadership dynamics and strategic adaptation institutionalize sustainability as an organizational norm.

1. The Integration of ESG, Green Leadership, and the Circular Economy

The integration of ESG, Green Leadership, and the Circular Economy has received increasing scholarly and managerial attention. Environmentally oriented leaders foster cultures aligned with ESG objectives, though structural mechanisms remain underexplored (Waldman & Balven, 2022). Circular business models enhance resource efficiency (Bocken et al., 2021), while strategic and structural embedding of ESG drives competitive advantage and systemic change (Kiron et al., 2020; Lozano, 2020). ESG also enhances credibility and long-term investment appeal (Eccles & Klimenko, 2019). Collectively, these perspectives highlight complementarities and gaps, as few studies examine their integration as a unified system, supporting the concept of “Synergy for Sustainable Organizational Transformation.”

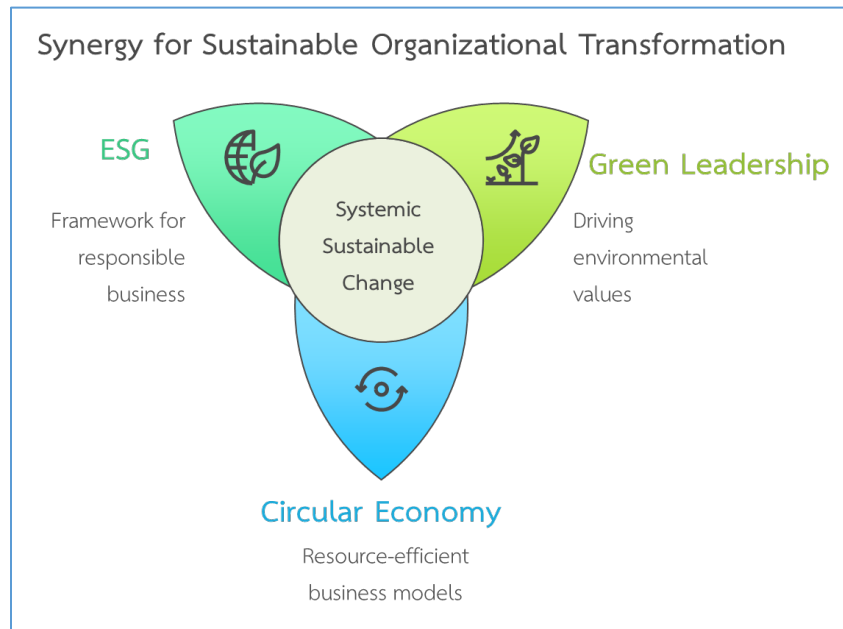


Figure 1: Synergy for Sustainable Organizational Transformation.

The integration of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles, green leadership, and the circular economy represents a critical approach to achieving strategic sustainability. Leaders play a key role in fostering an organizational culture that prioritizes environmental and social responsibility. Business design must support efficient resource utilization and systematic waste reduction. These three concepts mutually reinforce one another to ensure long-term sustainability. Furthermore, leaders need to develop a shared vision that links environmental goals with business outcomes to drive meaningful change. Integrating these ideas also enhances the organization's credibility among stakeholders, including investors, customers, and society at large. When leadership, strategy, and business models operate in alignment, they can collectively advance a systematic and continuous transition toward sustainability.

2. The Role of Leadership in Integrating Sustainability into Core Strategy

The role of leadership in integrating sustainability into core business strategy is well supported by various studies. Waldman and Balven (2022) emphasize transformational leadership that can ignite intrinsic motivation within organizations to drive sustainability values. Meanwhile, Lozano (2020) and Bocken et al. (2021) propose systematically embedding sustainability into organizational culture and business models. Kiron et al. (2020) and Eccles and Klimenko (2019) highlight the necessity of integrating environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors into corporate strategy to engage stakeholders and enhance competitive advantage. Elkington (2020) advocates the Triple Bottom Line concept as a foundational framework for balancing people, planet, and profit in management. Furthermore, Gauthier (2022) and Heifetz et al. (2021) underscore the importance of adaptive leadership capable of managing uncertainty and fostering sustainable change at a structural level.

Leaders play a crucial role in shaping organizational strategies to genuinely advance sustainability by adopting a systemic vision and embedding ESG principles into culture and operations. Leaders must not only implement policies but also cultivate the participation of all stakeholders. Therefore, sustainability integration is both a strategic imperative and a transformative leadership responsibility.

Research Gap

Although research on digital transformation has increased significantly, there remains a lack of focus on dynamic leadership and its critical role in successful organizational change. Additionally, the development of leaders' soft skills, which are qualitative factors essential for driving organizational performance, has been largely overlooked. Studies linking digital leadership with sustainability goals within the public sector in Thailand are still limited. Furthermore, there is an absence of a comprehensive conceptual framework that systematically integrates digital leadership, adaptive strategy, and sustainability. Consequently, existing research does not fully explain the mechanisms by which organizations can be guided through sustainable transformation. Addressing these gaps is urgently needed to advance the academic understanding in this field.

1. Analytical Conceptual

Modern leadership must integrate the principles of transformational, adaptive, and complexity leadership to effectively address increasingly complex and rapidly evolving organizational contexts (Bawany, 2019; Heifetz et al. 2021; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). The application of digital technologies in strategic planning and change management (digital leadership) aligns with the concepts of adaptability and systemic learning within dynamic environments (Prayoonvong & Limwongthong, 2025). Adaptive capacity enhances organizational responsiveness and resilience in the face of uncertainty while fostering continuous learning (Johansen, 2019; Petrie, 2020).

Table 3 Synthesis of Key Dimensions and Theoretical Foundations of Digital-Era Organizational Leadership

Core Pillar	Related Concepts/Dimensions	Supporting Theories	Key Scholars/References
Digital Leadership	The capability to leverage technology for driving transformation, developing digital strategies, and managing digital transitions.	Transformational Leadership, Complexity Leadership	Bawany (2019), Westerman et al. (2020), Kane et al. (2021), Rogers (2023)
Adaptive Capacity	The ability to adapt in uncertain contexts with flexibility and continuous learning.	Adaptive Leadership, Complexity Leadership	Heifetz et al. (2021), Horney et al. (2020), Petrie (2020), Johansen (2019), Snowden and Boone (2021)
Sustainable Transformation	The integration of ESG, circular economy principles, stakeholder values, and the triple bottom line into organizational structures.	Transformational Leadership, Adaptive Leadership	Lozano (2020), Bocken et al. (2021), Freeman (2021), Eccles and Klimenko (2019), Kiron et al. (2020)

Sustainable transformation requires integrating ESG principles, circular economy models, and the triple bottom line into organizational strategy (Elkington, 2020; Freeman, 2021; Lozano, 2020). Leaders who synthesize these dimensions foster a form of visionary adaptation, combining long-term vision with strategic flexibility in complex environments. Effective leadership leverages data, foresight, and adaptability to generate balanced economic, social, and environmental value (Bocken et al., 2021; Eccles & Klimenko, 2019; Fountaine et al. 2019; Kane et al. 2021; Mayer-Schönberger & Cukier, 2021; Kiron et al. 2020).

Effective leaders must inspire transformation (transformational leadership) while navigating uncertainty through strategic adaptation and visionary flexibility, ultimately driving organizations toward sustainable growth in a constantly changing world.

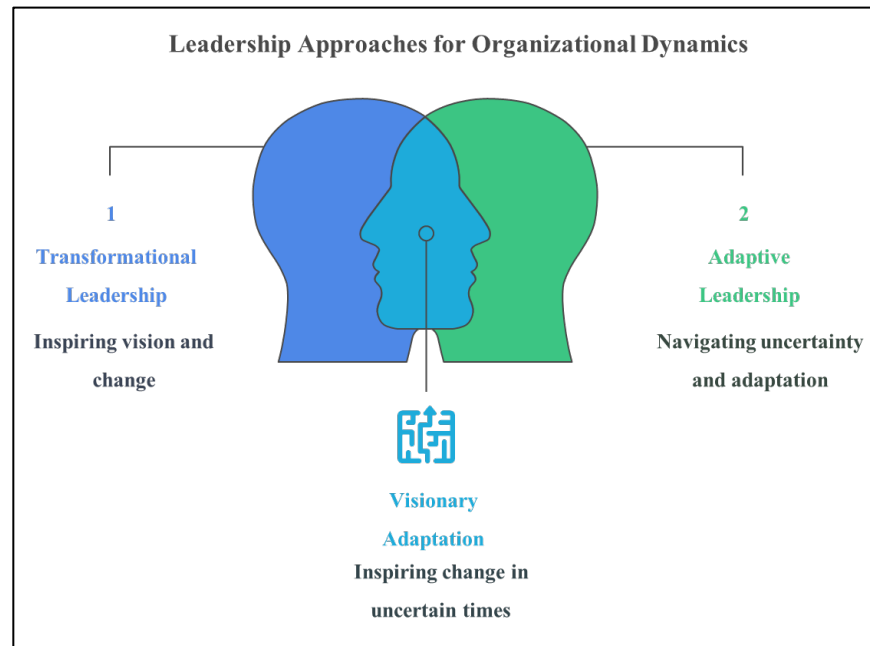


Figure 2: Leadership Approaches for Organizational Dynamics

Leaders in dynamic times must inspire vision and drive change (Transformational Leadership). They must navigate uncertainty with resilience and adaptability (Adaptive Leadership). They need a flexible vision to inspire progress even in unstable conditions (Visionary Adaptation). These three dimensions must integrate to create sustainable and future-ready leadership. Leadership is no longer about control, but about inspiration and creating hope. Guiding the organization forward with confidence, even amidst constant change

Research Methodology

1. Population and Sample The data corpus comprised peer-reviewed journal articles, academic papers, policy reports, and organizational case studies related to digital leadership, transformational leadership, and adaptive leadership within the Thai context, including both public and private sectors. The inclusion criteria focused on literature published within the past ten years, addressing leadership roles in the digital era and providing interpretive, conceptually rich insights rather than purely quantitative summaries.

2. Data Collection Instruments The principal instrument for data collection was a systematic literature synthesis protocol, which included a synthesis matrix for documenting key concepts, variables, and thematic observations from each source. In addition, a quality appraisal checklist was used to assess the methodological rigor, relevance, and credibility of the selected studies, following established guidelines for qualitative evidence synthesis (Noyes et al., 2019).

3. Data Collection The data collection process involved systematic searches across major academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and ThaiJO, complemented by backward citation tracking to ensure comprehensive coverage. Studies were screened according to the inclusion criteria, and relevant content was extracted using an iterative review approach to refine and expand emerging themes as necessary (Dixon-Woods et al., 2009).

4. Analysis Data were analyzed through inductive thematic synthesis, involving line-by-line coding of textual data, development of descriptive themes, and abstraction into higher-order analytical themes (Thomas & Harden, 2008). Cross-study comparisons were conducted to identify synthetic constructs that integrated key concepts

across diverse sources. Data organization and coding were supported by spreadsheet-based matrices to ensure transparency and minimize researcher bias.

Results

The synthesis of empirical studies highlights how digital leadership combined with adaptive strategies creates a clear pathway toward sustainability. Evidence shows that leaders who integrate technological transformation with ESG objectives achieve greater resilience and long-term impact.

1. Evolving Leadership Roles and Competencies in the Digital Era Analysis indicates that leadership in Thai organizations has shifted from hierarchical, directive styles toward participative, innovation-driven, and data-informed practices. Leaders increasingly function as strategic integrators, bridging technology adoption with human-centric management, requiring competencies in digital literacy, systems thinking, and cross-functional collaboration. Particularly in the public sector, leaders are redefining accountability, flexibility, and responsiveness to digital disruption.

2. The Significance of Soft Skills in Enhancing Adaptive Capacity Findings indicate that emotional intelligence, communication, and systems thinking are essential for cultivating adaptive capacity. Empathetic and transparent leaders foster trust and psychological safety, enhancing collective learning and organizational resilience. Systems thinking helps anticipate interdependencies and the effects of digital and environmental changes, while Thai case studies highlight these soft skills as key enablers of innovation and uncertainty management in complex institutional settings.

3. Integration of Digital Leadership and Adaptive Strategies for Sustainability Empirical synthesis revealed that the integration of digital leadership with adaptive strategies enables a coherent pathway toward sustainability. Leaders who align digital transformation with ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) objectives demonstrate stronger resilience and long-term impact. The evidence highlights that organizations adopting adaptive strategic approaches—such as agile governance, participatory decision-making, and continuous learning—are better positioned to achieve sustainable transformation. In the Thai context, this integration supports the national digital and sustainability agendas while reinforcing institutional adaptability.

Discussion

Changing Leadership in the Age of Digital Disruption The findings corroborate the theoretical claim that strategic facilitation roles should replace traditional managerial roles as the primary role of leadership in the digital age. This is consistent with global research showing that managing volatility requires both transformational and adaptive leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2019; Northouse, 2021). This change in the Thai context adds to the findings of previous research by showing how local cultural factors impact digital leadership adaptation. It reflects both technological advancement and a cultural shift in leadership ethos, balancing control and agility, authority and inclusivity.

Soft skills are essential for navigating uncertainty. The study reaffirms that communication and emotional intelligence are essential, not optional, components of successful leadership in companies undergoing digital transformation. This is in line with earlier research (Eva et al., 2021; Vogel et al., 2021) which highlights the fact that leadership performance in the face of uncertainty is influenced by both cognitive and emotional competencies. Our research, however, adds to this knowledge by demonstrating that Thai leaders who practice empathy and systems thinking are especially skilled at balancing digital imperatives with human values, creating organizational environments that support innovation and long-term success.

Combining Adaptive and Digital Leadership to Promote Sustainable Change Empirical synthesis shows that adaptive strategy and digital leadership support sustainability in tandem, connecting resilience-focused strategic thinking with technology-enabled decision-making. Our study adds new evidence from Thailand's public sector,

supporting previous research on leadership and sustainability (Noyes et al., 2019) by showing that this integrated model connects governance reform and digital modernization. Thus, effective leadership encompasses more than just technical proficiency; it also involves adaptability, vision, and long-term resilience, offering other emerging economies a useful framework.

Conclusion and Suggestions

1. Conclusion

An analysis of leadership dynamics in the digital era reveals that leaders must adapt to uncertainty, inspire transformation through transformational leadership, and guide strategic adaptation through adaptive leadership. Developing soft skills, particularly communication and systems thinking, is essential. This study's unique contribution is demonstrating how digital leadership, when systematically integrated with adaptive strategies, enables organizations in Thailand to align technological adoption with economic, social, and environmental sustainability goals. Leadership effectiveness thus extends beyond technical proficiency to include emotional intelligence, systems thinking, and resilience under uncertainty. The article advances knowledge by offering a synthesized perspective that bridges digital leadership, adaptive capacity, and sustainability—providing a new lens for emerging economies like Thailand. It concludes that effective leadership requires not only deploying digital technologies but also cultivating an adaptive and sustainable mindset and fostering a culture of continuous learning and innovation to ensure long-term resilience.

2. Suggestions

2.1 Policy Suggestions

2.1.1 The Office of the Civil Service Commission (OCSC) and the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society (MDES) should develop integrated digital leadership training programs for public sector executives. Training curricula should combine digital technologies, change management, and sustainability leadership to systematically strengthen the capacity of senior officials to drive national digital and ESG agendas.

2.1.2 Government agencies such as the State Enterprise Policy Office (SEPO) should integrate ESG frameworks and digital mindset into executive evaluation criteria. Competency assessment standards should explicitly include ESG and digital readiness indicators, incentivizing governance-oriented and adaptive leadership in the Thai public sector.

2.1.3 The Ministry of Interior and local administrative organizations should promote organizational transformation policies based on Agile Leadership principles. Administrative systems should emphasize flexibility, rapid responsiveness, and inclusive participation across all levels to enhance resilience and sustainable growth in public service delivery.

2.2 Practical Implications and Suggestions

2.2.1 Organizations should integrate digital transformation and sustainability into leadership development programs so that leaders can effectively manage technological disruption and long-term institutional challenges.

2.2.2 Leadership training should place greater emphasis on developing essential soft skills, including emotional intelligence, communication, and adaptability, to better prepare leaders for rapid change and to strengthen organizational resilience.

2.2.3 Institutions, particularly in emerging economies, should adopt the proposed integrative framework by aligning digital leadership with adaptive strategies and sustainability goals to enhance organizational readiness and overall performance.

2.3 Suggestions for Future Research

2.3.1 Empirical Validation of the Integrative Framework Future studies should empirically test the proposed integrative framework that connects digital leadership, adaptive strategy, and sustainability. Quantitative and qualitative investigations across diverse public and private sectors would help determine its applicability, reliability, and contextual relevance, particularly within emerging economies.

2.3.2 Longitudinal Analysis of Leadership Transformation Subsequent research should employ longitudinal designs to examine how leadership competencies evolve over time under the influence of digital transformation and ESG imperatives. Such studies would provide deeper insights into the dynamic adaptation processes and the long-term effects of digital and sustainable leadership practices.

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