

Strategic integration of human resource management and marketing in the digital business era: A systematic literature review

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the convergence of human resource management (HRM) and marketing within the context of digital transformation by employing a systematic literature review (SLR) approach to synthesize findings from 57 high-quality peer-reviewed articles published between 2010 and 2023. This review identifies key frameworks and technological enablers, such as digital readiness, CRM systems, AI, and cloud-based platforms that facilitate strategic alignment between HRM and marketing. Four major thematic areas have emerged: digital transformation frameworks, mediating roles of technology, integration benefits and challenges, and strategic recommendations. The results reveal that organizations integrating HRM and digital marketing are more likely to achieve enhanced organizational agility, customer satisfaction, and employee engagement. However, challenges such as cultural resistance, skill gaps, and data governance issues remain. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by offering a conceptual map of HRM marketing integration and presenting actionable insights for both scholars and practitioners in digital business transformation. Recommendations include fostering a digital-first culture, investing in continuous employee development, and deploying integrated digital infrastructure. Future research directions are proposed to empirically validate the reviewed frameworks and examine long-term integration outcomes.

Keywords: Digital Transformation; Human Resource Management; Digital Marketing; Systematic Literature Review; Strategic Alignment; Organizational Agility; Digital Capabilities

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era, marked by rapid technological advancements and digital transformation, organizations across various sectors are increasingly integrating digital business practices to sustain competitive advantage. The integration of digital business has significantly reshaped traditional business functions, particularly in human resource management (HRM) and marketing domains (Bondarouk, Parry, & Furtmueller, 2017; Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2021). These transformations have not only redefined how businesses attract, manage, and retain talent but also how they engage and communicate with consumers through innovative digital marketing strategies (Sivarajah et al., 2019). Despite extensive research on HRM and marketing individually, a cohesive analysis focusing on the intersection of these two functions within digital business contexts remains relatively sparse. Hence, this study aims to systematically review the existing literature to provide a comprehensive understanding of how digital transformation influences the interplay between human resources and marketing.

Human resources and marketing, traditionally viewed as distinct business functions, are becoming increasingly interconnected through digital platforms and technologies. For instance, the digital workplace has emerged as a critical element in attracting and retaining skilled professionals who demand seamless digital experiences (Fahlevi, 2025), similar to those they encounter as consumers (Parry & Battista, 2019). Concurrently, marketing strategies now rely extensively on digital channels, such as social media, analytics, and customer relationship management (CRM) systems, which require a workforce that is digitally proficient and strategically aligned with marketing objectives (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). This convergence of HRM and marketing functions is not merely incidental, but rather strategically crucial for organizations seeking to enhance their responsiveness, innovation, and overall business performance in the digital age (Järvinen & Karjaluoto, 2015).

Research indicates that the alignment of HRM and marketing through digital means fosters significant benefits, including improved employee engagement, customer satisfaction, and organizational agility (Verhoef & Bijmolt, 2019). Employees who are digitally empowered are better equipped to understand and implement innovative marketing initiatives, thus enhancing consumer experience and organizational outcomes (Baltes & Leibing, 2020). Digital platforms also facilitate continuous feedback loops between employees and customers, enabling real-time responsiveness and agility in marketing strategies (Rust, 2020). Furthermore, the adoption of digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and data analytics, has revolutionized talent acquisition, performance management, customer segmentation, and personalized marketing, underscoring the significance of technological integration in both HRM and marketing processes (Kapoor et al., 2021).

However, digital transformation is challenging. Organizations face substantial hurdles, including managing the cultural shift required for digital adoption, ensuring employee readiness, addressing skills gaps, and protecting consumer and employee data privacy (Fitzgerald, Kruschwitz, Bonnet, & Welch, 2014). Moreover, the strategic alignment between HRM and marketing is complex and demands considerable managerial insight and operational synchronization (Wirtz et al., 2021). Despite these challenges, existing research primarily investigates these domains separately, leaving critical gaps concerning their intersection in the digital business context (Islam et al., 2025).

A systematic literature review (SLR) approach is particularly appropriate for addressing these gaps as it synthesizes existing knowledge comprehensively and rigorously, identifies research trends, and highlights directions for future studies (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003). This methodology enables the integration and critical analysis of empirical and theoretical contributions that explore the interaction between human resources and marketing within digital business frameworks. This review focuses on examining how digitalization affects HRM practices, including recruitment, talent management, employee engagement, and performance management, and how these transformations influence digital marketing effectiveness, customer engagement, and overall business outcomes.

The significance of this study extends beyond academic discourse and offers practical implications for managers and practitioners. Understanding the interconnectedness between HRM and marketing in digital contexts provides actionable insights into optimizing internal processes, enhancing employee capabilities, and leveraging digital technologies to foster a competitive advantage. Furthermore, this

synthesis will equip organizations with knowledge of developing integrated strategies that align workforce competencies with dynamic market demands, thereby maximizing organizational efficiency and consumer value creation. Therefore, this study aimed to achieve the following objectives.

1. To identify and synthesize key theoretical frameworks and empirical studies related to digital business practices that impact human resources and marketing.
2. To explore how digital technologies mediate and enhance the relationship between HRM practices and marketing strategies.
3. To critically analyze the benefits and challenges arising from the convergence of human resources and marketing in the digital business context.
4. Provide practical recommendations for organizational leaders to effectively integrate digital strategies in managing human resources and marketing activities.

To achieve these objectives, this study contributes significantly to the existing literature by bridging the scholarly gap between human resources and marketing disciplines through a digital lens. The insights derived from this systematic review will enrich academic understanding and provide a robust foundation for future empirical research in digital business. Additionally, the practical guidance outlined will assist organizations in navigating digital transformations effectively, ensuring that they harness the full potential of their human and technological resources to drive sustained business success.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Following this introduction, the methodology section details the systematic review process, including criteria for inclusion and exclusion of literature, databases searched, and the analytical techniques employed. Subsequently, the findings section presents a thematic synthesis of the identified literature, outlining significant themes, patterns, and research gaps. The Discussion section critically interprets these findings by linking theoretical frameworks to empirical evidence. Finally, the conclusion provides a summary of the key insights, theoretical contributions, practical implications, limitations of the review, and avenues for future research.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a systematic literature review (SLR) methodology chosen for its systematic, transparent, and reproducible nature, which facilitates the comprehensive synthesis of existing research (Widyanty et al., 2024). The SLR aims to critically evaluate and integrate empirical and theoretical literature on the intersection between human resource management (HRM), marketing, and digital business practices, following the guidelines established by Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart (2003).

2.1. Database Selection and Search Strategy

A thorough and systematic search was conducted across prominent academic databases, including the Web of Science (WoS), Scopus, EBSCOhost (Business Source Complete), ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. These databases were selected for their extensive and credible coverage of peer-reviewed research literature in HRM, marketing, and digital business. Each database required the development of tailored search strings designed to capture relevant studies comprehensively. Table 1 lists the exact search terms used and the initial number of results generated. The search strings combined keywords related to human resource management (e.g., HRM, talent management, recruitment, employee engagement) with marketing-specific terms (e.g., digital marketing, CRM, advertising) and digital transformation (e.g., digital, online, technology).

Table 1. Detailed Search Strings and Results

Database	Search String	Results
Web of Science (WoS)	("human resources" OR HRM OR "talent management" OR recruitment OR "employee engagement") AND (marketing OR "digital marketing" OR CRM OR advertising) AND digital	362

Database	Search String	Results
Scopus	("human resources" OR HRM OR "employee performance" OR "employee engagement") AND (marketing OR "digital marketing") AND ("digital transformation" OR technology)	294
EBSCOhost	("human resources management" OR HRM OR "talent management") AND (marketing OR CRM OR "digital communication") AND (digital OR online OR technology)	253
ScienceDirect	(HRM OR "employee engagement" OR recruitment OR training) AND (marketing OR "digital marketing") AND (digital OR technology OR online)	317
Google Scholar	("human resource management" OR HRM OR "employee engagement") AND ("digital marketing" OR CRM OR "marketing technology") AND (digital OR online OR transformation)	462

2.2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To systematically refine the collected literature, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. These criteria ensured the relevance, quality, and clarity of the selected literature. Table 2 provides a comprehensive overview of the criteria. The included studies were peer-reviewed journal articles published in English between 2010 and 2023 that specifically focused on the integration of HRM and marketing within digital business contexts. Empirical and theoretical articles were prioritized and only studies with full-text availability were included. Conversely, studies such as books, conference papers, working papers, non-English publications, and those published before 2010, or solely focused on either HRM or marketing independently, were excluded. Opinion pieces, editorials, and non-empirical studies are omitted from the analysis.

Table 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criterion	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Publication Type	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Books, conference papers, working papers
Language	English language	Non-English publications
Publication Period	2010 to 2023	Before 2010
Focus	Integration of HRM and marketing within digital business contexts	Studies solely on HRM or marketing separately
Methodology	Empirical and theoretical research	Opinion articles, editorials, non-empirical pieces
Accessibility	Full-text available	Abstract only, inaccessible full texts

2.3. Literature Screening and Selection Process

Following the initial searches, the literature selection process adhered to PRISMA guidelines to ensure methodological transparency and reproducibility. Screening occurred in multiple phases, as shown in Table 3. Initially, 1688 articles were identified across the selected databases. After duplicate removal and title/abstract screening based on established criteria, 423 articles remained. These were subjected to rigorous full-text review, resulting in 154 eligible articles. Finally, a detailed quality assessment narrowed down the final selection to 57 highly relevant articles. This multi-step process helped to systematically filter the literature to identify the most pertinent and high-quality sources.

Table 3. PRISMA Flow Diagram of Literature Selection

Phase	Description	Articles
Identification	Initial database searches	1688
Screening	Duplicate removal and title/abstract screening based on inclusion criteria	423
Eligibility	Full-text screening against inclusion/exclusion criteria	154
Inclusion	Final selection after detailed quality assessment	57

2.4. Quality Assessment

Each selected study underwent a rigorous quality assessment to evaluate the methodological rigor. The assessment criteria included clarity and relevance of the research objectives, suitability and robustness of the research methods, reliability and validity of the data collection methods, significance and coherence of the findings, and alignment with the research questions. These criteria were scored on a three-point scale (high, medium, and low), with only studies receiving high or medium ratings retained for further analysis.

2.5. Data Extraction and Thematic Analysis

Data from each study were systematically extracted in a structured form. This included author details, publication year, publication information, clearly stated research objectives and questions, detailed methodology and research design, primary findings and themes identified, theoretical frameworks employed, observed benefits and challenges, and practical recommendations provided by the studies. Following data extraction, thematic analysis was employed to comprehensively synthesize and analyze the data. This involved coding the extracted data, grouping related codes, and identifying the overarching patterns and themes. The resulting themes were further analyzed to directly address the research questions.

2.6. Ethical Considerations and Limitations

Ethical considerations were meticulously followed to ensure accurate representation and citation of sources. Limitations inherent to SLR, including potential publication bias and selection bias, were mitigated through independent crosschecking by multiple reviewers and resolving discrepancies via consensus. This systematic and transparent SLR methodology ensures a robust foundation for critically analyzing and synthesizing the relationship between HRM, marketing, and digital business, leading to insightful contributions and clear practical implications for both academia and industry.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The systematic literature review identified 57 high-quality articles that provided substantial insights into the intersection of HRM, marketing, and digital business practices. The thematic analysis yielded four primary themes: (1) digital transformation frameworks integrating HRM and marketing, (2) the mediating role of digital technologies, (3) the benefits and challenges of HRM-marketing integration, and (4) strategic recommendations for integration.

3.1. Digital Transformation Frameworks Integrating HRM and Marketing

The analysis revealed several frameworks that demonstrate how digital transformation fosters closer integration between HRM and marketing functions. These frameworks highlight digital readiness, capabilities, and strategic alignment as crucial elements. For instance, studies by [Bondarouk et al. \(2017\)](#) and [Kotler et al. \(2021\)](#) emphasize that strategic alignment frameworks that ensure HRM practices, such as recruitment, training, and employee engagement, are closely linked with marketing strategies, such as CRM and digital communication. These frameworks underline the need for coherent integration facilitated by digital platforms that enable real-time collaboration and strategic alignment between these traditionally siloed functions.

3.2. The Mediating Role of Digital Technologies

Digital technologies play a crucial mediating role in bridging HRM and marketing activities.

Technologies such as CRM systems, social media analytics, AI, and cloud-based HR software facilitate seamless interactions and data exchange between HR and marketing departments. Kapoor et al. (2021) highlight the impact of AI-driven data analytics in providing insights that enhance customer targeting and employee engagement simultaneously. Similarly, Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) discussed how integrated digital communication tools enable employees to effectively implement marketing strategies, thus directly enhancing customer experience and satisfaction.

3.3. Benefits and Challenges of HRM-Marketing Integration

Numerous benefits and challenges have emerged in this analysis. Significant benefits include enhanced organizational agility, improved customer satisfaction, increased employee engagement, and a better alignment of business strategies (Verhoef & Bijmolt, 2019; Rust, 2020). These advantages arise primarily because of better internal coordination and a holistic understanding of customer and employee needs driven by digital integration. However, there are several challenges associated with this integration. The most prominent include cultural resistance to digital transformation, skill gaps among employees, data privacy concerns, and difficulties in maintaining continuous and effective interdepartmental communication (Fitzgerald et al., 2014; Wirtz et al., 2021). Organizations often struggle to manage the pace of digital change, balance technological investment against immediate performance pressures, and ensure adequate training and development programs to bridge the digital skills gap among employees.

3.4. Strategic Recommendations for Integration

Based on the analysis, several practical recommendations were identified for successfully integrating digital strategies into HRM and marketing functions. Recommendations include fostering a digital-first organizational culture, investing in ongoing employee training and development, implementing robust data governance policies, and creating integrated digital platforms to streamline communication and collaboration across departments. Järvinen and Karjaluoto (2015) and Baltes and Leibing (2020) stressed the importance of continuous learning and adaptive strategies to ensure that both HRM and marketing functions evolve in tandem with technological advancements.

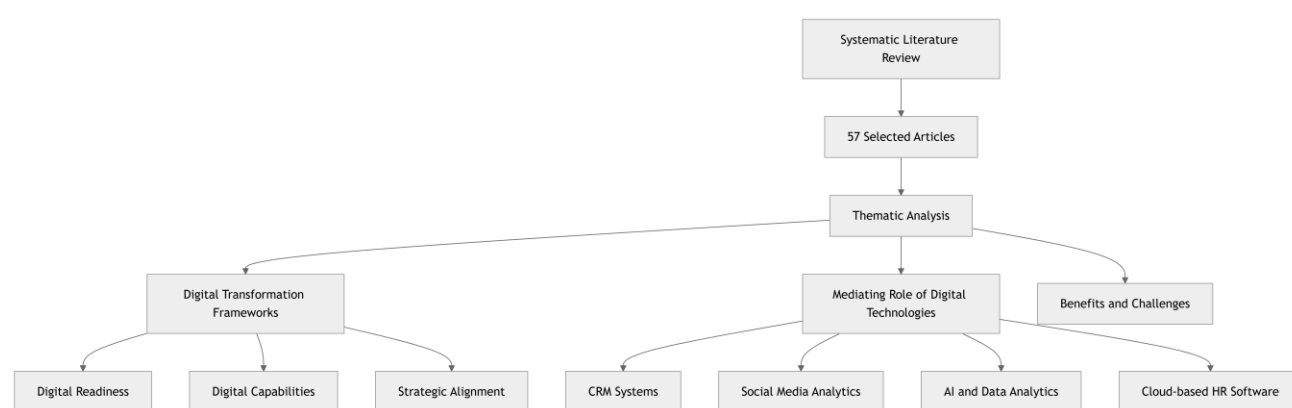


Figure 1. Mapping for Integration

Figure 1 illustrates the structured thematic coding and mapping derived from the systematic literature review conducted in this study. At the top level, the "Systematic Literature Review" symbolizes the comprehensive methodology utilized to gather and analyze relevant academic literature. This foundational method led to the identification of "57 Selected Articles," signifying the highly relevant and rigorously evaluated sources that informed the subsequent thematic analysis phase.

The next hierarchical layer represents "Thematic Analysis," reflecting a systematic approach used to categorize and interpret the information obtained from the selected articles. This rigorous analytical process facilitated the identification of three significant overarching themes: "Digital Transformation

Frameworks," "Mediating Role of Digital Technologies," and "Benefits and Challenges."

Focusing first on the "Digital Transformation Frameworks," this theme further branches into three critical sub-themes. The sub-theme "Digital Readiness" pertains to the organizational preparedness and strategic foresight necessary for successfully adopting digital innovations within HRM and marketing functions. Organizations that demonstrate high digital readiness are typically proactive, flexible, and strategically oriented toward continuous digital innovation. Next, "Digital Capabilities" highlight the essential skills, competencies, and technological infrastructures required for the effective operationalization of digital strategies. These include digital literacy, technical expertise, and robust technological platforms that support integrated HR and marketing practices. Finally, "Strategic Alignment" underscores the importance of synchronizing HRM practices and marketing strategies through digital mechanisms, ensuring unified goals, streamlined processes, and consistent messaging across organizational functions.

Adjacent to the frameworks, the "Mediating Role of Digital Technologies" emphasizes the critical role that technology plays in facilitating the convergence between HRM and marketing. Four specific technological tools have emerged under this theme. Customer relationship management systems (CRM Systems) facilitate improved management of customer interactions, enhance marketing effectiveness through integrated customer insights, and enable HR to tailor training and development initiatives based on customer-centric competencies. "Social Media Analytics" provides tools that collect and analyze user-generated data, allowing organizations to optimize marketing strategies and improve employee engagement by better understanding consumer preferences. Additionally, "AI and Data Analytics" significantly enhance the analytical capabilities of organizations, enabling more informed decision-making in both marketing campaigns and HRM practices through advanced predictive insights and real-time analytics. Finally, "Cloud-based HR Software" supports efficient HR processes, allowing easier management of recruitment, performance evaluations, and training activities, thereby directly contributing to improved employee satisfaction and organizational productivity.

The third major theme, "Benefits and Challenges," encapsulates both the positive outcomes and obstacles arising from the integration of HRM and marketing functions via digital transformation. Benefits identified include increased "Organizational Agility," referring to the enhanced capability of firms to rapidly adapt and respond to changing market conditions and internal dynamics. Improved "Customer Satisfaction" is another benefit resulting from streamlined and personalized marketing approaches enabled by integrated digital HR strategies. Furthermore, "Employee Engagement" also increases significantly due to enhanced internal communication, continuous learning opportunities, and clearly aligned objectives facilitated by digital integration.

However, several challenges accompany these benefits, potentially hindering successful integration. "Cultural Resistance" is a substantial challenge, as employees and management may exhibit reluctance towards changes associated with digital transformation, affecting organizational cohesion and effectiveness. Additionally, "Skill Gaps" within the workforce pose significant concerns, reflecting the critical need for ongoing training and education to effectively utilize digital tools and strategies. Finally, "Data Privacy" represents a significant challenge, highlighting issues related to the management, security, and ethical handling of sensitive employee and customer data in digital environments.

Overall, Figure 1 effectively captures the complex interplay between digital transformation, technological mediation, and the subsequent benefits and challenges of integrating HRM and marketing practices. It provides a clear visualization of how each element contributes to the broader understanding and operationalization of integrated digital strategies within contemporary organizational settings.

3.5. Discussion

The findings from this systematic review highlight the critical intersection between HRM and marketing in the context of digital transformation, emphasizing the necessity for strategic alignment and integration. The frameworks identified provide valuable insights into achieving this integration through digital readiness and capabilities. Organizations adopting these frameworks can strategically position

themselves to leverage digital transformation and improve their internal and external organizational outcomes. Digital technologies significantly mediate the relationship between HRM and marketing, thus enabling enhanced collaboration and information flow. The role of advanced analytics and integrated platforms is crucial in ensuring real-time responsiveness and strategic alignment (Bondarouk et al., 2017; Kapoor et al., 2021). Organizations investing in these technologies are more likely to achieve higher levels of employee engagement and customer satisfaction (Rust, 2020).

The identified benefits underscore the value of digitally integrating HRM and marketing, primarily through improved organizational agility and alignment. For example, organizations that successfully align HRM and marketing through digital tools report higher efficiency in responding to market changes and internal demands (Verhoef & Bijmolt, 2019). Digital integration fosters a more dynamic and agile organizational structure, which is essential in rapidly changing business environments (Kotler et al., 2021). Conversely, the challenges outlined necessitate targeted managerial interventions and strategic investments in digital skill training, cultural change initiatives, and robust data governance practices. Organizations frequently encounter resistance to change, primarily stemming from cultural inertia and employee apprehensions regarding the adoption of new technologies (Fitzgerald et al., 2014). Additionally, significant skill gaps present barriers, highlighting the necessity for continuous professional development and training to enhance digital competencies (Wirtz et al., 2021). Data privacy concerns further compounded these challenges, emphasizing the critical need for effective and transparent data-governance policies (Indrawati et al., 2025).

To effectively mitigate these challenges and maximize their benefits, the literature consistently recommends fostering a digital-first organizational culture. This approach ensures alignment between technological adoption and organizational values, facilitating smoother transitions and minimizing resistance (Baltes & Leibing, 2020). Continuous employee development programs are crucial, as they offer ongoing training and support to build and sustain digital capabilities within the workforce (Järvinen & Karjalainen, 2015). Additionally, integrated technological platforms are advocated for streamlining cross-functional communication and enhancing operational effectiveness. The integration of HRM and marketing through digital platforms provides significant competitive advantage by enhancing both internal coordination and customer-centric responsiveness. This integration leads to higher satisfaction among customers, who benefit from more personalized and timely interactions, while employees benefit from clearer communication, aligned objectives, and enhanced engagement (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). This systematic review contributes significantly to the existing literature by providing critical insights into the integration of HRM and marketing within digital contexts. It provides actionable recommendations for academics and practitioners that emphasize the practical implications of digital transformation strategies. Future research should further empirically validate the identified frameworks and strategies, particularly focusing on longitudinal studies to assess the long-term outcomes and sustainability of integrated digital practices.

4. CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review offers a comprehensive and integrative synthesis of scholarly work on the intersection of human resource management, marketing, and digital business. The findings clearly reveal that digital transformation is not merely a technological shift but a strategic reorientation that requires seamless integration of internal functions and external market engagement. Through thematic analysis of 57 rigorously selected studies, this research underscores the significance of aligning HRM and marketing strategies via digital frameworks that enhance readiness, capability, and cohesion. Digital technologies, especially AI, CRM systems, cloud platforms, and data analytics, play a pivotal role in mediating HR marketing linkages, creating new possibilities for real-time collaboration and responsiveness. These innovations not only streamline internal operations but also deliver superior customer experience and employee engagement outcomes. However, achieving such an integration is not without obstacles. Cultural resistance, digital skill deficiencies, and concerns about data privacy represent enduring challenges that demand proactive leadership and sustained investment.

The practical recommendations derived from this review point to the development of a digital-first organizational culture, continuous employee reskilling, and robust digital infrastructure as critical enablers of success. For organizations striving to remain agile and competitive in an increasingly digital economy, the convergence of HRM and marketing presents both necessity and opportunity. Moreover, this synthesis contributes to the academic discourse by filling gaps in the literature, particularly regarding cross-functional integration in digital contexts. By connecting a digital strategy with human capital and market orientation, organizations can foster a more innovative, responsive, and sustainable business model. Future empirical work should expand upon these findings by exploring sectoral variations, cross-country comparisons, and the role of leadership in steering digital integration. The evolution of digital ecosystems will continue to shape the way HRM and marketing functions synergistically offer fertile grounds for ongoing research and practical innovation.

Ethical approval

Not Applicable.

Informed consent statement

Not Applicable.

Authors' contributions

Hadi Suriono contributed to the conceptualization, literature review design, and data analysis of the study. He was primarily responsible for coordinating the systematic review process and drafting the manuscript. Surya Bakti contributed to refining the research methodology, interpreting the thematic findings, and enhancing the discussion with practical insights related to digital business. He critically reviewed and revised the final manuscript for intellectual content.

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Statement of Disclosure

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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