

Bridging the Gap Between Digital Maturity and Competitive Advantage: Are Digital Maturity Models Enough?

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ABSTRACT

Amidst nowadays digital-driven environment, achieving digital maturity has become the focal point of contemporary organisations more than ever before. Therefore, Digital Maturity Models (DMMs) have been subject to various studies. These instruments are means meant to assess the state of an organisation's Digital Transformation (DT). Although (1) higher digital maturity is frequently related to significant competitive advantage and (2) despite the fact that DMMs being the main instrument used to describe it, the role of DMMs in putting across the complex interplay between (1) and (2) seems to be underexplored. Thus, this study aims to shed light on this gap via the examination of the structure and efficacy of DMMs with a special emphasis on how these models help in gaining knowledge and insights pertaining to competitive advantage. Findings suggest that DMMs do constitute an invaluable basis for digital transformation and progression towards digital maturity; nevertheless, they fall short in providing organisations with actionable plans to better leverage their capabilities so as to gain a market edge. To bridge this gap, the authors offer an initial practice-oriented framework that stresses the role of digital maturity practices in converting digital capabilities into competitive differentiators.

KEYWORDS: *competitive advantage, digital maturity, digital maturity models, practice-oriented.*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *O32, M21, L15.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Statistically, global investments in digitalisation initiatives are supposed to reach circa \$3.9 trillion by 2027 (IDC, 2023). This prediction only reflects the importance of digital transformation over organisations. Technological improvements have reshuffled the business environment, which pushed organisations to firmly view digitalisation as an essential impetus of competitiveness (Lichtblau et al., 2015).

As a consequence, in order to make the most of on the promising benefits of these developments, organisations are ever more challenged to effectively assess their current status and their position within their digital transformation journey. This evaluation process is known as the digital maturity assessment. To overcome this task, scholars have elaborated instruments, which they called digital maturity models (DMMs), to assist organisations in assessing their current digital transformation capabilities' level. Over nearly a decade of innovation, up to now, a diverse set of DMMs has emerged; each of them serves a distinct function to support organisations in their path towards digital maturity (Teichert, 2019).

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The literature shows that digital maturity models have received a considerable attention. The investigations around this topic mainly emphasised on aspects such as their structure and dimensions (Teichert, 2019), while other on their value, quality standards, and empirical validation (Thordsen & Bick, 2023). Yet, a gap in the body of knowledge exists regarding how digital maturity models contribute in clarifying the relationship between digital maturity and competitive advantage.

Lee et al. (2022) point out that the current literature does not specifically explain the mechanisms and pathways digital maturity levels make use to help an organisation's competitive advantage. Put differently, while it is widely uncontested that digital maturity plays a vital role in today's business environment, a thorough grasp of how higher levels of digital maturity yield competitiveness benefits still leave much to be desired.

It is against this background that this current paper attempts to investigate whether digital maturity models, as the sole instrument describing digital maturity, convey satisfactory insights to bridge the gap within the current scholarly discourse between achieving digital maturity and gaining the associated competitive advantage.

To fulfil this task, this study's fundamental research questions are the following:

- What are the main insights and information provided by digital maturity models?
- Do the insights offered by digital maturity models sufficiently support organisations in acquiring a competitive advantage related to digital maturity?

More specifically, this research is designed to:

- Advance knowledge in the field of digital maturity models.
- Identify the primary contributions of digital maturity models, with a particular focus on their practical implications.
- Present a new perspective to enlighten the link between digital maturity and the acquisition of a competitive advantage.
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In summary, this research seeks to contribute with original insights to this domain by offering a brand new perspective to improving and redesigning existing digital maturity frameworks to focus on the implementation of digital maturity competencies required for gaining competitive advantage to organisations.

To achieve this research's objectives, this paper is articulated as follows:

First, to provide a comprehensive overview of digital maturity models and their link with competitive advantage, a literature review is conducted to establish a solid theoretical basis. Following this necessary background, we proceed with delineating our research design and analysis method, after which, we present the findings that stemmed from this work. Next, we address the key points of our research questions in the discussion section, and conclude with a proposal where we pave the way to a preliminary framework meant to widen our vista concerning the interplay between digital maturity and competitive advantage.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Digital Maturity and Competitive Advantage

In this era where the business landscape is increasingly prevailed by digitalisation, digital transformation seems to become a sine-qua-none condition to the organisation's success. Organisations tend to consider digital transformation as part and parcel of market viability and

competitiveness. In their effort to exploit the opportunities that come with that transformation, academics have introduced the notion of ‘digital maturity’ as a way to record and document this transformative journey. This term has the merit of being effective in explaining the ways in which a given organisation is engaged in this ever-growing environment (Rader, 2019).

As for maturity, it refers to the extent to which completeness, perfection, and readiness to a desired future state are reached (Lahrman et al., 2011). It is the assessment of organisational capabilities with regard to a given discipline or domain (Rosemann & de Bruin, 2005). Alternatively, digital maturity is defined as “the status of a company’s digital transformation”, meaning that it demonstrates the advancement an organisation has accomplished throughout its digital transformation initiatives and capabilities (Chanias & Hess, 2016).

In academic and practitioner settings alike, there is a wide-spread belief that achieving higher levels of digital maturity directly correlates with acquiring a competitive advantage. Considering this point, higher degrees of digital maturity necessitate the strategic use of emerging technologies to boost the company’s competitiveness (Lichtblau et al., 2015). As a result, organisations that join the bandwagon of digital transformation opportunities earlier are better positioned to assert dominance in a competitive business environment, whereas those that neglect to adequately study the associated challenges risk becoming vulnerable to more digitally adept competitors (Thordsen & Bick, 2023).

Moreover, higher digital maturity levels provide organisations with a competitive edge over many essential indicators such as product quality, customer satisfaction, time to market, and cost efficiency (Grebe et al., 2018). Along similar angle, Westerman et al. (2012) found that organisations exhibiting high level of digital maturity not only achieve substantial financial benefits, but also, outperform their industry peers on a range of financial metrics.

Compared to their less mature counterparts, such organisations are more likely to expand their growth through their pre-existing human and physical resources. Eremina et al. (2019) further support the abovementioned findings and establish a positive relationship between digital maturity and multiple corporate performance metrics such as return on invested capital, return on equity, and sales growth.

Owing to the relevance of the digital maturity concept in tackling a prominent concern within the business context, various efforts have been carried out in order to create suitable tools for assessing the said digital maturity in a given organisation. Those tools have been coined as “digital maturity models”.

Organisations are famous for relying on these models to fully assess their capabilities and spot possible sources of competitive edge. It is of utmost importance then to examine these models in the subsequent section.

2.2 Digital maturity models

Digital maturity models are normative frameworks. They are designed to evaluate the organisation’s present status of its digital transformation effort across many dimensions and levels (Thordsen & Bick, 2023). They also allow organisations to measure and analyse their existing capabilities in relation to multiple business areas, such as technological infrastructure, culture, and leadership, etc. These models are valuable, as they provide precious support to organisations throughout their digitalisation procedures. Indeed, they can engineer a pathway that outlines the necessary steps for developing essential organisational capabilities, much needed for a successful digital transformation (Poepplbuss et al., 2011).

Usually, digital maturity models fulfil three functions; descriptive, prescriptive, and comparative (De Carolis et al. 2017), as explained below:

- The descriptive purpose of a digital maturity model relates to its ability to pinpoint the capabilities and dimensions needed to embark on the digital transformation journey along with a description of their present status within the organisation.
- Regarding the prescriptive aim, this function reflects the aptitude of digital maturity models to write recommendations and action plans that walk those organisations through the evolutionary process from the current maturity level to their desired one.
- Lastly, the comparative purpose of digital maturity models aims to facilitate performance of a cross-comparison amongst similar practices and capabilities across other organisations and industries.

Notwithstanding the versatile essence of these objectives, one single model could serve several purposes at once. That is to say, one could, say, obtain the descriptive and the prescriptive angles albeit using one model only.

In essence, digital maturity models are basically the tools meant to help the organisation sail through the turbulence of digital transformation (Teichert, 2019).

Taking into consideration the positive link between digital maturity and competitive advantage along with the usefulness of digital maturity models as explained above, it is now of paramount importance to shed light on the actual contributions of the said models in providing adequate support for the organisation with the intention of reaching the desired competitive advantages related to digital maturity.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

As stated earlier in this paper, this research aims to inspect the efficiency of digital maturity models in providing the necessary guidance to the organisation in search for competitive advantage. For that matter, the methodology we have chosen in this case is divided into two distinct phases. Initially, we carried out an extensive review of the existing literature that tackled the digital maturity model's theme. Afterwards, to conduct our analysis, we applied predefined criteria to assess the selected pool of digital maturity models.

3.1 Systematic review of literature

In the process of addressing our research questions set above, we first carried out a review of the relevant literature that mainly revolved around our central concept, namely, digital maturity models. We approached research article collection by searching on different databases, including SpringerLink, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. As far as keywords are concerned, we used "digital maturity framework", "digital maturity model", "digital maturity assessment". We also created search strings using Boolean operators like "maturity model" AND "digital transformation"; or "maturity model" AND "digital readiness".

To select relevant works, we applied a criteria-based approach. Special attention was paid to the research's title, abstract, keywords, and citation count. Much of our concentration was based on scholarly publications, which were exclusively limited to journal articles and conference proceedings. Academic articles with a relatively higher citation rate were favoured, as this parameter is systematically linked with face validity, which regulates the importance and relevance of academic publications (Pobiedina & Ichise, 2016).

Practically speaking, however, and to gain deeper understanding of the subject, we incorporated to the selected pool, digital maturity models developed by industry associations along with management consulting companies.

The exhaustive selection method and related inclusion criteria are shown in this table:

Table 1. The selection process and related inclusion criteria

Review phase	inclusion criteria
Review (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articles published only in English language The apparition of search terms in the title or content of the presented results No restriction in time Journal and conference articles and famous consulting firm's reports. citation frequency ≥ 100
Review (2) (abstracts, keywords)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articles that discuss digital transformation maturity in an organisational setting Articles that conceptualise the phenomenon of digital transformation maturity
Full review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability to be consulted Discussing the organisation's digital maturity Providing conceptualisation of digital maturity
Reviewing the reference lists of the included papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articles discussing digital maturity models Other papers or reports describing digital maturity models

Source: Created by the authors

After having carried out a rigorous selection procedure, which takes into consideration the most cited digital maturity models in the literature, we have isolated the 13 most popular and quoted digital maturity models to do a comprehensive analysis in the following sections. The rationale behind limiting the number of the selected papers to 13 is based on the fact that they all share the same structure; this entails that they share the same pool of insights.

Nine of these models have been published by academics, while the remaining four models were elaborated by consulting firms. The Table 2 below indicates the chosen digital maturity models:

Table 2. Selected digital maturity models

Type	ID	Authors
Academic	1	Schumacher et al. (2016)
	2	Berghaus, S. & Back, A. (2016).
	3	Valdez-de-Leon, O. (2016)
	4	De Carolis et al. (2017).
	5	Remane et al. (2017)
	6	Canetta et al. (2018)
	7	Rossmann, A. (2018)
	8	Ifenthaler, D. & Egloffstein, M. (2020)
	9	Gökalp, E. & Martinez, V. (2021)
Consulting reports	10	Lichtblau et al. (2015) - IMPLUS
	11	Anderson and Ellerby (2016) – Deloitte
	12	VanBoskirk et al. (2017) – Forrester
	13	Geissbauer et al. (2016) – Pwc

Source: Created by the authors

3.2 Qualitative content analysis

Our first research question sought to uncover the essential contributions of digital maturity models vis-à-vis the insights provided, and to go about this question, we have chosen qualitative content analysis. The reason behind this decision is that this method facilitates the assessment of textual data according to predefined categories (Mayring, 2014). Alternatively, it could prove to be significantly beneficial in offering insights in the area of digital maturity models (Thordsen & Bick, 2023).

Qualitative content analysis has thus been applied for all the short-listed models. The purpose is to see the extent to which they align with the predetermined criteria necessary for the overall maturity models requirements. Along similar veins, this paper pays special attention to the requirements related to the insights and information that these models provide. It primarily focuses on the input of digital maturity in terms of insights only, instead of other criteria such as quality, empirical evidence, and applicability of the said models. Briefly, then, the point is to find out whether digital maturity models do meet their promise basing our focus on the insights they deliver.

Based on Mayring’s approach (2014), this research is deductive; because, the text is analysed and coded following the establishment of categorisation mechanisms. The deductive categories and the coding guidelines are delineated in the table below:

Table 3. Analysis criteria

Category	Definition	Anchor samples	Encoding rules
Descriptive	Clear identification – at least - of the dimensions of digital transformation	“The DMM evaluates digital capability across five clearly defined business dimensions” (Anderson & Ellerby, 2016) “Our research design consists of three steps: (1) developing the dimensions of the DMM through a literature review, expert interviews, and focus groups...” (Berghaus & Back, 2016).	The paper should provide a clear and precise identification of the business dimensions addressed to assess digital maturity
Prescriptive	Recommendation of measures to ensure the transition from current level to desired level	“DMM is meant to serve as a guide and tool to be referred to throughout the process..... Any organisation needs to start by considering these components in a top-down approach and refer to them alongside the DMM survey results... Use these business priorities in parallel to the DMM survey results to drive action and initiate digital transformation in your organisation” (Anderson & Ellerby, 2016) “The developed roadmap for DX maturity improvement was also explained.” (Gökalp & Martinez, 2021)	The paper should incorporate terms related to guidance, a roadmap, or actionable steps aimed at enhancing the organisation's digital maturity.

Source: Created by the authors

It is according to the criteria abovementioned in the table that the analysis of the selected 13 models has been done. There has not been any need for computer-assisting programs, e.g.,

QCMap software, as a result of the relatively small pool size. The authors executed the task manually. The results of this analysis are discussed in the following sections.

4. FINDINGS

The results of the deductive content analysis are presented presently. Table 4 provides an overview of the selected models with their matching characteristics based on the predefined criteria.

Table 4. Results of qualitative content analysis

Digital maturity model ID	Descriptive insights	Prescriptive insights
1	•	
2	•	
3	•	
4	•	
5	•	
6	•	
7	•	
8	•	
9	•	•
10	•	•
11	•	•
12	•	•
13	•	•

Source: Created by the authors

Results show that all of the examined digital maturity models convey descriptive insights, together with the identification of the principle dimensions of digital transformation in the organisation. These dimensions are different from one model to another. For instance, Berghaus and Back (2016) presented a model which evaluates digital maturity through nice dimensions: customer experience, product innovation, strategy, organisation, process digitisation, collaboration, information technology, culture and expertise, and transformation management.

The Pwc’s digital maturity model (2016), on the other hand, includes seven dimensions: agile IT architecture, digitisation and integration of vertical and horizontal value chains, organisation, employees and digital culture, compliance, security, legal & tax. Truly then, each model tackles different business-related aspects with varying terminology. Still, the most noticeable common dimension encompasses both technical and social facets: strategy, technology, culture, leadership and management and process digitalisation.

Another key point is that only five models of the total of 13 selected models offer prescriptive insights. These prescriptive insights are translated via a proposition of a roadmap and action plans to help the organisations in their process of digital maturity. Some of the suggested actions are those that call for an assessment of the current maturity level by (1) an analysis of results extracted from an action plan (Gökalp & Martinez, 2021), (2) planning a digitalisation strategy, (3) a creation of pilot projects, and finally, (4) by identifying the required capabilities (Geissbauer et al., 2016). In addition to this, we notice that only one of the five prescriptive models was elaborated by academic researchers. The rest were developed by consulting companies.

5. DISCUSSION

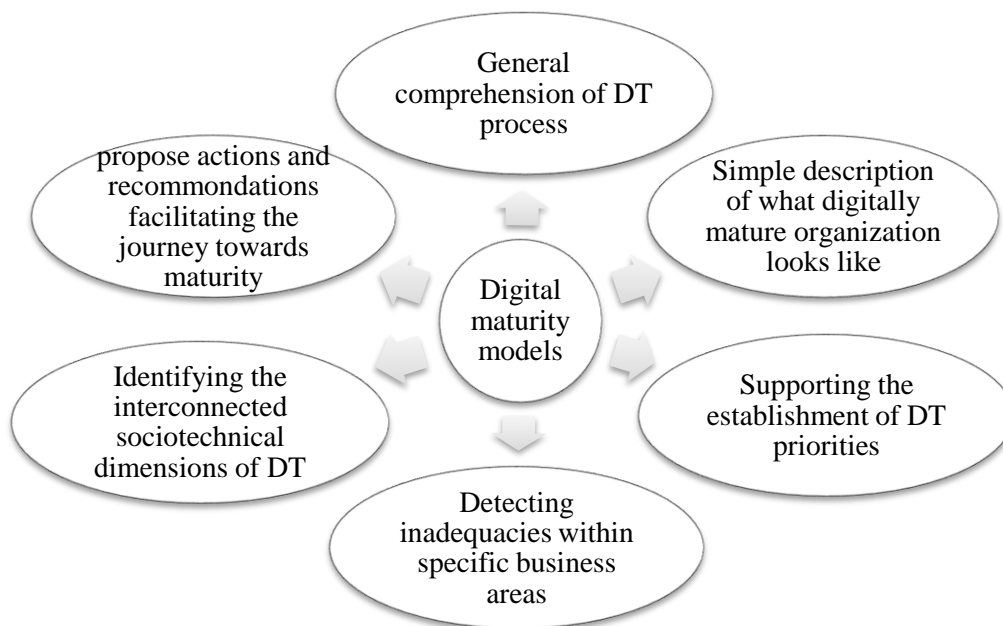
As discussed throughout this paper, digital maturity models play an uncontested role in enlightening the difficulties that arise from digital transformation within organisations. Thus, this research examines the contribution of these models, along with the knowledge they give rise to. Indeed, it analyses these instruments with a special emphasis on the information they convey and the extent to which these pieces of information are sufficient in clarifying the link between digital maturity and competitive advantage. This study also seeks to determine the adequacy of the said insights in helping those organisations gaining competitive edge within their evolving digital maturity.

To do so, and considering the findings of our analysis, this section is structured around three main points. The first one is the exploration of the contributions of the digital maturity models with respects to insights. Second, an examination of the limitations and shortcomings of these models. And finally, we are broadening the discussions about digital maturity through new perspectives.

5.1 The Contribution of Digital Maturity Models

Digital maturity models help the organisations in assessing their position amidst digitalisation tremendously. They are known for their unique structure that provides organisations with valuable insights enabling them to overcome the difficulties that come along digitalisation. Below is a figure recapitulating the main benefits of these models:

Figure 1. Key contributions of digital maturity models



Source: Created by the authors

Fundamentally, digital maturity models are means developed to examine the current level of digital transformation within an organisation across specific aspects and levels. Their main contribution consists of a general understanding of the evolution of digital transformation by distinguishing the characteristics of digitally mature organisations and their respective capabilities. They not only encompass technical aspects such as digital infrastructure and automated operations, they also stress the importance of the social dimensions of digital

transformation including leadership and employees' skills in fulfilling a successful digitalisation.

They bridge the gap between the mutual effect of social and technological capabilities in the digitalisation procedures. In the case of our study, all the analysed models cover these features, except Deloitte's model (2016). The latter does not delve deep enough into the description of the characteristics of digitally mature organisations along the designated dimensions.

Furthermore, digital maturity models not only define the dimensions of digital transformation but also describe their optimal status. This enables organisations to compare and benchmark their current capabilities against digital best practices (Geissbauer, et al., 2016; Valdez-de-Leon, 2016).

The insights gained from the digital maturity models serve two purposes. (1) They are an important tool that helps organisations in uncovering the deficiencies and areas that require improvement across the various business domains. (2) The assessment enabled by digital maturity models can help to formulate digital transformation priorities that are aligned with current context of the organisation. As far as their prescriptive function is concerned, digital maturity models (Anderson & Ellerby, 2016; Geissbauer et al., 2016; Gökalp and Martinez, 2021; Lichtblau et al. 2015; VanBoskirk et al., 2017) do provide organisations with actionable guidelines in order to smooth the digital maturity evolution. Indeed, these guidelines prove to be highly appreciated to enhance the level of digital maturity.

These contributions identified in this study are consistent with Bititci et al. (2015) findings. To put it simply, maturity models are undeniably crucial in the development process of organisational capabilities. They constitute a more reliable tool for reflection, improvement, and organisational change.

5.2 Limitations and Shortcomings of Digital Maturity Models

As noted previously then, digital maturity models guide the process toward digital maturity. Nevertheless, these frameworks also come with notable limitations. Because of the nature of this research's focus, we only highlight limitations from the competitive advantage perspective.

According to the findings presented in Table 4, our analysis reveals that little attention, if at all, was paid to the prescriptive functionality of digital maturity models among the academic community. As a matter of fact, five out of the 13 models examined are prescriptive in nature and offer actionable recommendations, four of which were developed by consultancy firms. This observation could be explained by the special effort deployed by these teams in their investigations, who obviously operate as industry experts and practitioners. Clearly then, consultancy firms are, by far, more verged toward prescriptive models and practicability than academics.

This observation aligns with Berghaus and Back's study (2016), who maintain that the scope of digital transformation is wide enough for the application of prescriptive functions to digital maturity models to take place, particularly because of the non-linear trajectories of digitalisation. This breadth involves a clear-cut delineation of each model's area of application.

More importantly, the prescriptive insights these models provide tend to direct the organisations towards unlocking new capabilities. In so doing, they may inadvertently and internally manipulate the fulfilment of the criteria the models demand, without necessarily converting them into genuinely effective practices or initiatives.

Alongside the earlier discussed constraints, there seems to be another equally noteworthy limitation. More often than not, there is no explicit connection between digital maturity capabilities with respect to competitive advantage. The current structure of the existing digital maturity models is missing the direction organisations need to generate a competitive advantage, a strategic insight that firms often search for the most so as to stand out in nowadays' highly competitive environment.

Along similar lines, Lee et al. (2022) claim that possessing digital maturity capabilities is far from being enough as organisations will have to adopt adequate maturity practices as well. Complementing this perspective, it is important to observe that digital transformation maturity, as dealt with by Teichert (2019), is an ongoing process of evolution, often shifting spectrum to fit certain needs. Put differently, the road to digital maturity cannot be limited to one pathway only.

Further still, the fast-paced competitive landscape, the consumer expectations fluctuations, as well as the quick technological developments mean that the static form of digital maturity models could be considered as just a still capturing a specific instant in time. This static aspect puts their perspective in a straight-jacket, i.e., it tremendously restricts their aptitude to capture an ever-evolving ecosystem in which they operate. The insights they generate are, as a consequence, insufficient.

To encapsulate it altogether, the Table 5 summarises the primary limitations of digital maturity models in providing meaningful insights to competitive advantage.

Table 5. Limitations of digital maturity models

Limitations	Description
Prescriptive character	Only few models consider their prescriptive functionality and solely provide recommendations on how to acquire new capabilities.
Absence of exploration of competitive advantage	A clear direction on how organisations should operationalise their digital maturity capabilities to acquire competitive advantage is missing.
Static character	Digital maturity models are considered as snapshots capturing a specific instant in time. They are not able to reflect the ongoing evolution of the concept of digital transformation.

Source: Created by the authors

5.3 Towards New Perspectives

The findings of our investigation show that digital maturity models do offer valuable insights; while, simultaneously, they also come with their own set of shortcomings. Indeed, they fail in showing a satisfactory level of exhaustiveness in successfully guiding organisations to generating a competitive advantage. Bearing in mind their practical side, it is unrealistic to assume these models to be both perfect and exhaustive (Thorsen & Bick, 2023).

To secure competitive advantage, organisations ought to shift their attention from identifying and gaining digital capabilities, which is still a vital first step regardless, to prioritising the positive outcomes derived from the practical applications of those digital capabilities. In view

of this account, “understanding how organisations can best exercise their digital maturity potentiality for digital transformation becomes a pertinent matter of consideration” (Lee et al. 2022). There seems to be an urge to switch from a model-centric approach to a more practice-based one if one pursues tangible competitive advantage.

Drawing from Lee et al. (2022) premise “while traditional digital maturity models may help in benchmarking existing capabilities in an organisation, and identifying areas that require further improvement, such capabilities need to be further exercised and enacted in practice – at the correct instances – in order for successful and meaningful digital transformation to ensue”, espousing that a practice-based standpoint has many advantages to offer. In fact, practices ease the conversion of digital capabilities into actions that actually give rise to tangible business outcomes.

To illustrate this, owning new digital technologies is an important capability; however, the organisations equally need to discover innovative methods to maximise profit out of them. In this way, they could build new services, or improve customer experience, and so forth. This is one concrete case of how they could make these tools more practice-oriented. Beyond that, this approach endorses continuous learning and adaptation culture with the aim to tailor and fine-tune their practices in accordance to their specific contexts.

By prioritising practices over static maturity models, organisations become more flexible in dealing with the difficulties and challenges on the one hand, and on optimising their already existing strength on the other. As depicted in Figure 2, we propose an initial attempt to investigate this approach.

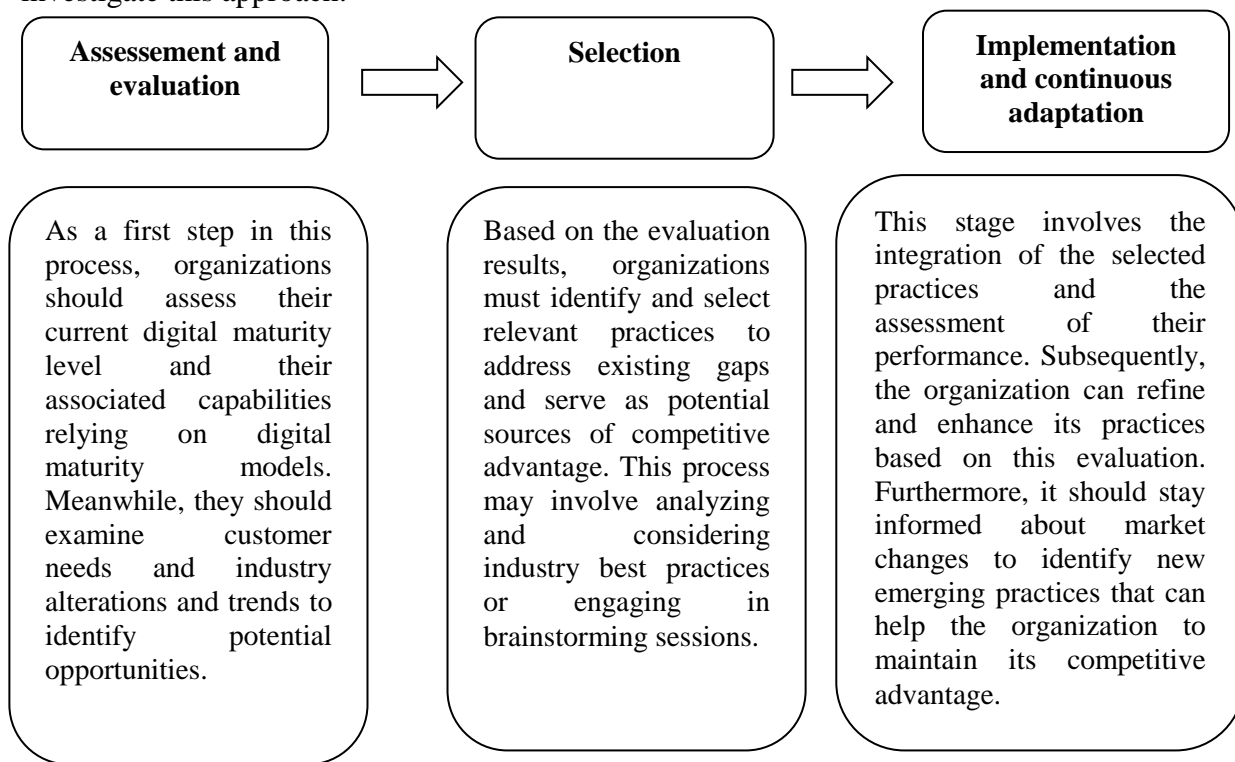


Figure 2. Practice-oriented approach to acquire competitive advantage

Source: Created by the authors

In a similar fashion to prescriptive digital maturity models, the proposed approach follows three key steps:

The first step consists in placing contextualisation at the forefront. As the findings indicate, accessing insights from digital maturity models is a good starting point to accelerate the process toward competitive advantage. Alongside this, analysing customers' needs and industry trends are also interesting external standpoints to consider.

The second step revolves around the identification of relevant practices. These practices should conform to the organisation's current position regarding its digital journey and its available resources in order to ultimately generate a competitive superiority.

The final step presents the cyclic and progressive style of this method that intervenes in nurturing flexibility in the selection and employment of digital maturity practices.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This paper set out to study the role of digital maturity models in explaining the link between digital maturity and competitive advantage, particularly in bridging the existing gap in the literature regarding the depth of the insights the models offer in assisting organisations achieving the competitive advantage associated with digital maturity.

Our research demonstrated that these insights alone are not sufficient in providing practical solutions and plans to the organisation in order to make better profits off the digitalisation process. However, despite this point, they could still be valuable in accelerating the progression to digital maturity.

To resolve this issue, the present paper introduced a practice-based framework. It basically focuses upon defined steps that help organisations translate their digital capabilities into actionable actions; in this way, this framework aims to guide organisations to identify new ways to differentiate themselves in the fiercely competitive business milieu.

Theoretical implications

The present research has got significant input into theoretical discourse thanks to the gap it bridges within the body of knowledge. It furthers the discussion revolving around both value and shortcomings of digital maturity models. It adds another way at tackling the deficiencies of those models. Notably, it revisits the definitions of the models and suggests areas for further research and refinement in the domain of operationalisation and practical guidance for organisations.

Practical implications

At the practical level, this research opens the managers' eyes on the limitations of digital maturity models and encourages them to delve further into the operationalisation of their capabilities.

In this way, the importance of integrating digital practices to secure that digital maturity is showcased and reflected in both tactical and strategic decision-making for generating profit. The proposed framework represents a firm initial groundwork to push managers into adopting a more practical stance in their digital planning activities.

Limitations and future perspectives

Like any research, this study also has certain limitations. This consists on the fact that the adopted methodology in this paper primarily relies on literature review. This method tends to narrow down the evidence and undermines the theoretical foundations, so it does not provide a solid basis of the presented framework.

In this case, thus, the perspective this paper proposes should be regarded as just an introductory endeavour to shed light on digital maturity practices. Thus, future researches should investigate the practice-oriented perspective in more in-depth.

This may involve adopting longitudinal and case studies. The point here is to inspect how digitally mature organisations fully exploit their digital capabilities to gain superiority and make profits.

Such works could broaden our vistas regarding the best practices and perspectives in this topic and help solidify the presented framework. Indeed, doing so will make a significant leap into a better understanding of the relationship between digital maturity and competitive advantage.

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