

Cross-Cultural Dynamics and Digital Entrepreneurship: A Review of Technology's Dual Role in International Business

CHIBUEZE UZOMA CHIBUNDU¹, ONYINYECHI HENRIETTA USOH², OKECHUKWU UZOMA IHEME³, ESTHER DOMINIC PETER⁴, FAVOUR CHIMDINDU AKAZI⁵, EMMANUELLA CHINENYE NWOKORO⁶

¹ College of International Business, Chengdu University of Technology, China

^{2, 4} College of Management Science and Engineering, Chengdu University of Technology, China.

³ College of Ecology and Environmental Sciences, Chengdu University of Technology, China.

⁵ Department: Soil Science and Technology, School: Federal University of Technology Owerri, Nigeria

⁶ Department of Metallurgical and Materials Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria.

Abstract- The intersection of digital technologies and cross-cultural dynamics presents one of the most consequential yet underexplored domains in contemporary international business scholarship. This review synthesizes recent academic literature to examine how digital technologies simultaneously bridge and create cultural gaps in international entrepreneurship. Drawing on a structured analysis of the evolving research landscape, the review identifies four principal areas of scholarly debate: the use of digital technologies to improve managerial decisions in international enterprises; ethical and social dimensions of data management in the global entrepreneurial context; challenges related to social dominance in technology adoption; and the need to understand how technologies may evolve and influence managerial decisions amid global economic and technological changes. The analysis demonstrates that while digital tools can reduce geographic and cultural distance, they introduce new forms of dependency, regulatory complexity, and strategic vulnerability. Drawing on micro-foundational perspectives and the Digitally Mediated Multiple Embeddedness framework, the review examines how entrepreneurs' digital knowledge, skills, and abilities-including versatile cognitive capabilities, digital managerial capabilities, and multicultural capabilities-affect social interactions through socio-structural mechanisms including structural support, trust-building, knowledge sharing, and resource configuration. The review concludes by identifying implications for international entrepreneurship theory and proposing future research directions.

Digital technologies have fundamentally altered the landscape of international entrepreneurship, offering new pathways for cross-border value creation while simultaneously introducing novel challenges related to cultural dynamics and social interaction. The emergence of digital platforms, artificial intelligence, and globally distributed work arrangements has created unprecedented opportunities for entrepreneurs to transcend traditional geographic and cultural boundaries. Yet the relationship between technology and culture is neither simple nor unidirectional. Digital tools can reduce certain forms of distance while creating or amplifying others.

Scholarly attention to the intersection of digital technologies and cross-cultural dynamics in international entrepreneurship has grown substantially, yet the literature remains fragmented across disciplinary boundaries and theoretical traditions. A systematic analysis of 131 scientific articles in the Scopus database reveals that the literature has evolved through distinct phases, with four main areas of debate emerging through cluster analysis: a new perspective on using digital technologies to improve managerial decisions in international enterprises; the importance of ethics and data management in implementing new technologies in the global entrepreneurial context; the need to address challenges related to social dominance in adopting and using digital technologies in international entrepreneurship; and the importance of understanding how technologies may evolve and

I. INTRODUCTION

influence managerial decisions in international enterprises.

This review examines the dual role of digital technologies in international entrepreneurship as bridges that reduce cultural distance and as barriers that create new forms of exclusion and dependency. The analysis proceeds in four sections. First, it examines how digital capabilities enable entrepreneurs to navigate cross-cultural challenges. Second, it explores how digital platforms and technologies create new cultural dynamics and forms of social dominance. Third, it analyzes the ethical dimensions of data management in cross-cultural digital entrepreneurship. Fourth, it considers how technologies may continue to evolve and shape cross-cultural entrepreneurial dynamics. The review concludes by identifying implications for theory, practice, and future research.

II. DIGITAL CAPABILITIES AS BRIDGES: ENABLING CROSS-CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

2.1 Micro-Foundations of Transnational Digital Entrepreneurship

Recent scholarship has turned attention to the micro-foundations of transnational digital entrepreneurship, examining how the competencies of individual entrepreneurs enable them to navigate cross-cultural dynamics and build effective international enterprises. Transnational digital entrepreneurship, defined as the establishment of digital enterprises by combining home- and host-country value creation to serve domestic and foreign customers, requires entrepreneurs to operate effectively across multiple cultural contexts simultaneously.

Drawing on a micro-foundational perspective and semi-structured interview data from transnational entrepreneurs from six countries- Finland, Sweden, Norway, New Zealand, Australia, and the United States- and their partners in Pakistan, Sufyan, Glavee-Geo and Zoogah (2023) identified three categories of competencies that enable cross-cultural digital entrepreneurship. Versatile cognitive capabilities encompass the entrepreneur's ability to process information across cultural contexts, adapt mental models to diverse institutional environments, and recognize opportunities that span cultural boundaries.

Digital managerial capabilities include the technical skills needed to deploy digital tools effectively across borders, combined with the managerial capacity to coordinate distributed teams and stakeholders. Multicultural capabilities comprise the cultural intelligence, language skills, and cross-cultural communication abilities required to build trust and shared understanding across diverse stakeholder groups.

These competencies affect enterprise effectiveness through four socio-structural mechanisms: structural support, the establishment of organizational and technological infrastructure that enables cross-border collaboration; trust-building, the development of reliable relationships across cultural and geographic distance; knowledge sharing, the exchange of culturally contextual information that supports effective decision-making; and resource configuration, the strategic deployment of human, financial, and technological assets across national boundaries. This framework advances understanding of how digital entrepreneurship operates across cultures by connecting individual-level capabilities to enterprise-level outcomes through the mediating role of social interaction.

2.2 Entrepreneurial Traits and Digital Capability Development

Entrepreneurial traits interact with digital capabilities to shape international entrepreneurship outcomes in culturally specific ways. Research on Chinese small and medium-sized enterprises demonstrates that specific entrepreneurial traits, diligence, openness, and alertness, enable entrepreneurs to effectively leverage digital platforms for international expansion. Alertness, defined as the capacity to identify and exploit opportunities overlooked by others, proves particularly important in cross-cultural digital contexts where information asymmetries and cultural differences create both barriers and opportunities.

The translation of entrepreneurial traits into international performance operates through digital entrepreneurship as a mediating mechanism. Entrepreneurs with high achievement needs are motivated to engage in proactive digital entrepreneurship, deploying digital tools to identify and serve international customers. Those with high

openness to experience are more willing to experiment with new digital business models and adapt to unfamiliar cultural contexts. Those with high alertness are better able to recognize cross-cultural opportunities that others miss. These findings suggest that no matter how skilled or knowledgeable the entrepreneur is, they can only outperform the market if they make appropriate internationalization decisions.

The cultural and institutional context shapes the expression and impact of entrepreneurial traits. In the Chinese context, cultural factors such as Confucian values, collectivism, and the high value placed on relationships (guanxi) affect traits such as risk propensity and diligence differently than in Western or other emerging economies. This observation underscores the need for cross-cultural comparative research to explore how entrepreneurial traits influence digital entrepreneurship and international performance in different contexts.

2.3 Digitally Mediated Multiple Embeddedness

The Digitally Mediated Multiple Embeddedness framework provides a comprehensive lens for understanding how cross-cultural competencies combine with digital affordances to enable transnational entrepreneurship. The framework integrates multi-dimensional embeddedness, the simultaneous embeddedness of entrepreneurs in multiple cultural, institutional, and social contexts; multifocality, the ability to attend to and balance competing demands across contexts; digital affordances, the capabilities enabled by digital technologies, including AI-enabled tools like language transcendence and algorithmic visibility; resource orchestration, the strategic management of resources across contexts; and entrepreneurial agency, the capacity to act purposefully across cultural boundaries.

Digital technologies amplify the resources available to transnational entrepreneurs, enabling new business models that transcend traditional market boundaries. AI-enabled language transcendence, for example, allows entrepreneurs to communicate across linguistic boundaries without the language skills that would have been required in the pre-digital era. Algorithmic visibility enables entrepreneurs to be discovered by

customers and partners across geographic and cultural boundaries, reducing the liability of outsidership that has traditionally constrained international entrepreneurship.

The framework also highlights how digital entrepreneurs transform cultural capital, language skills, and networks into competitive advantages. Entrepreneurs can leverage their cross-cultural competencies to create distinctive forms of value, identifying opportunities that arise at the intersection of cultures, developing products and services that serve underserved cross-cultural markets, and building bridges between culturally distinct customer and partner communities.

III. DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AS BARRIERS: NEW FORMS OF CULTURAL DISTANCE AND SOCIAL DOMINANCE

3.1 Social Dominance in Technology Adoption

The adoption and use of digital technologies in international entrepreneurship is shaped by patterns of social dominance that can perpetuate or amplify existing inequalities. The literature review identified a cluster of research concerned with "the need to address challenges related to social dominance in adopting and using digital technologies in international entrepreneurship". This body of work challenges assumptions that digitalization operates as a uniformly empowering force, documenting how technology adoption can reinforce existing power structures and create new forms of exclusion.

The social dominance dimension manifests in multiple ways. First, access to digital infrastructure and capabilities is distributed unevenly across regions, sectors, and demographic groups. Entrepreneurs from regions with limited digital infrastructure face structural barriers that their counterparts in digitally advanced regions do not. Second, the algorithmic systems that mediate digital entrepreneurship, including search algorithms, recommendation systems, and marketplace ranking mechanisms, can reflect and amplify biases in ways that disadvantage certain groups. Third, the governance of digital platforms creates dependencies that limit the autonomy of platform-dependent entrepreneurs, particularly in developing economies.

Decisions regarding identity disclosure on digital platforms influence trust formation and cross-border engagement, with implications for groups that face discrimination or exclusion in digital spaces . Research on women entrepreneurship and digital social entrepreneurship shows that digital tools can empower underrepresented actors while simultaneously exposing them to new forms of discrimination and exclusion . This finding suggests that digitalization does not automatically reduce cultural barriers to entrepreneurship but may instead reconfigure them in ways that require careful attention from scholars, practitioners, and policymakers.

3.2 The Platform Dependence Paradox

Digital platforms provide access to international markets while simultaneously creating new forms of dependence that can neutralize the competitive advantages gained from internal digital capabilities. Research on Korean exporting SMEs found that digital platform dependence negatively moderates the link between digital capability and performance, suggesting that excessive reliance on external platforms can limit the strategic autonomy of international entrepreneurs.

The platform dependence paradox highlights how digital technologies can simultaneously enable and constrain cross-border entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs gain access to international customers, logistics infrastructure, and payment systems through platforms. Yet platform governance, including algorithmic ranking, fee structures, and policy changes, can fundamentally reshape the opportunities available to platform-dependent entrepreneurs. In emerging economies, this dependence can be particularly acute, as entrepreneurs may lack alternative channels for reaching international markets.

This observation points to a broader theoretical insight: digitalization does not function as a uniformly enabling force for international entrepreneurship. Digital technologies may lower certain barriers to market entry and accelerate international reach, but they also introduce new forms of dependency, regulatory complexity, and strategic vulnerability. Importantly, these dynamics unfold simultaneously.

Opportunities and challenges emerge together and interact over time, shaping the strategic space in which entrepreneurial actors operate across borders.

3.3 Cultural Sensitivity in Digital Interactions

The development of cross-cultural competence in digitally mediated environments requires capabilities that extend beyond those needed in traditional face-to-face interactions. Research on cross-border e-commerce practitioners has identified five core dimensions of cross-cultural competence: English Skills, Workplace Aptitude, Cultural Knowledge, Cultural Sensitivity, and CBEC Expertise. These dimensions reflect the demands of digitally mediated, culturally diverse, and platform-dependent commercial interactions.

Cultural sensitivity appears to operate differently in digital environments than in traditional cross-cultural business settings. One study found a non-significant impact of cultural sensitivity on performance, suggesting that the construct may be measured differently or operate differently in digitally mediated contexts. This finding may reflect the unique features of digital communication, including text-based interaction, asynchronous communication, and the reduced salience of non-verbal cues, that alter the relevance of traditional cultural sensitivity competencies.

The shift from product-focused to customer-centric business models enabled by digitalization has amplified the role of customers, leading businesses to adapt their approaches to cross-cultural interaction. Digital entrepreneurs no longer adhere to rigid business plans; their actions and decisions evolve continuously throughout the entrepreneurial process. This iterative adaptation to customer feedback, often mediated through digital platforms, requires ongoing cultural learning and adjustment.

IV. ETHICAL AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF DATA MANAGEMENT

4.1 The Data Ethics Gap

The literature review identified a significant gap in attention to the ethical and social aspects of data management in international entrepreneurship . As digital entrepreneurship depends increasingly on the

collection, analysis, and deployment of data across borders, questions of data ethics, privacy, and governance become pressing concerns that have received insufficient scholarly attention.

Data is regarded as the most valuable asset for digital entrepreneurship, yet data governance across borders raises complex ethical questions. Entrepreneurs must navigate divergent regulatory regimes governing data protection, privacy, and cross-border data transfer. The European Union's General Data Protection Regulation, China's Personal Information Protection Law, and similar measures in other jurisdictions create compliance burdens and limit the free flow of data across borders. These regulatory divergences complicate cross-cultural digital entrepreneurship, requiring entrepreneurs to adapt their business models to region-specific data governance requirements.

4.2 The Privacy Paradox in Cross-Cultural Context

The "privacy paradox", the observation that users express concern for privacy and data protection yet willingly share personal information, takes on particular significance in cross-cultural digital entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs operating across borders must navigate varying cultural expectations regarding data privacy, as well as divergent regulatory frameworks. Understanding how data compliance requirements affect the ability of digital entrepreneurs to innovate across cultures is a pressing research priority.

The collection and use of customer data for personalization and value co-creation creates tensions between entrepreneurial opportunity and ethical responsibility. Entrepreneurs who leverage customer data to deliver personalized offerings may create value for customers and competitive advantage for themselves, yet they also bear responsibility for protecting the data they collect. In cross-cultural contexts, these responsibilities are amplified by the complexity of operating across regulatory regimes and cultural expectations.

4.3 Cybersecurity and Trust Across Cultures

Cybersecurity concerns are particularly acute for digital entrepreneurs operating across cultural and institutional boundaries. The expansion of digital operations across borders increases the attack surface

and introduces new vulnerabilities. Research on the role of trust in algorithmic smart contracts, for example, examines how digital entrepreneurs develop dynamic capabilities through platform ecosystems while navigating the risks associated with automated governance mechanisms.

Trust-building in cross-cultural digital entrepreneurship requires attention to both technological and social dimensions. Entrepreneurs must establish trust with customers, partners, and platform providers across cultural boundaries, while also ensuring the security and reliability of their digital operations. The trust mechanisms that operate effectively in one cultural context may not translate to others, requiring entrepreneurs to develop culturally sensitive approaches to trust-building.

V. EVOLUTION OF TECHNOLOGIES AND MANAGERIAL DECISION-MAKING

5.1 The Need for Dynamic Theorizing

The literature emphasizes the importance of understanding how technologies may evolve and influence managerial decisions in international enterprises. Digital technologies are not static; they evolve through use, adaptation, and innovation. Entrepreneurs who succeed in digital international entrepreneurship demonstrate an ability to adapt their strategies and business models as technologies evolve. Scholars increasingly view digital entrepreneurship as a sociotechnical process in which technology and human agency are deeply intertwined. This perspective challenges deterministic accounts that treat digitalization as an exogenous driver of change, instead emphasizing how entrepreneurs shape the technologies they use through adaptation, customization, and innovation. The capabilities that enable this sociotechnical co-evolution, including technical skills, entrepreneurial alertness, and cultural intelligence, are likely to become increasingly important.

5.2 Business Model Innovation as an Iterative Process

Digital entrepreneurship in cross-cultural contexts is characterized by iterative business model innovation rather than adherence to rigid plans. Lean startup approaches, including the "build-measure-learn" cycle, enable entrepreneurs to validate and innovate

their business models through early customer feedback and market testing. This iterative approach is particularly valuable in cross-cultural contexts, where customer preferences, competitive dynamics, and institutional conditions may be unfamiliar and difficult to anticipate.

Business models are highly context-dependent and often involve iterative processes in a dynamic digital environment. They must adapt over time as markets, customer needs, and technologies evolve. Digital entrepreneurs, unlike traditional entrepreneurs, no longer adhere to a rigid business plan. Instead, their actions and decisions evolve continuously throughout the entire entrepreneurial process.

5.3 The Co-Evolution of Opportunities and Challenges
A co-evolutionary perspective on digital international entrepreneurship emphasizes how enabling mechanisms simultaneously generate new constraints. Digital technologies may lower certain barriers to market entry and accelerate international reach, but they also introduce new forms of dependency, regulatory complexity, and strategic vulnerability. These dynamics unfold together, with opportunities and challenges emerging and interacting over time.

The co-evolutionary perspective offers a more nuanced understanding than dichotomous debates about whether digitalization is beneficial or harmful. It directs scholarly attention toward how, for whom, and under what conditions digital entrepreneurship generates sustainable value across borders. This perspective is particularly valuable for understanding cross-cultural dynamics, where the opportunities and challenges of digitalization may be shaped by cultural, institutional, and contextual factors.

VI. IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY, PRACTICE, AND POLICY

6.1 Theoretical Implications

The review has several implications for international entrepreneurship theory. First, the findings suggest that existing international business theories remain relevant but require refinement to capture the qualitative transformation of internationalization processes in the digital economy. While digital technologies alter the relevance of geographic

distance, they do not eliminate the influence of institutional, cultural, and political factors. Instead, these influences reappear in new forms, such as data governance, platform regulation, and digital norms.

Second, the review highlights the need for theoretical frameworks that connect individual-level competencies to enterprise-level outcomes through socio-structural mechanisms. The micro-foundational perspective, with its emphasis on entrepreneurs' digital knowledge, skills, and abilities, offers a promising approach to integrating psychological, sociological, and technological dimensions of international entrepreneurship.

Third, the Digitally Mediated Multiple Embeddedness framework provides a valuable integrative lens for understanding how cross-cultural competencies combine with digital affordances to enable transnational entrepreneurship. The framework's emphasis on multi-dimensional embeddedness, multifocality, and resource orchestration offers a comprehensive account of the capabilities required for cross-cultural digital entrepreneurship.

6.2 Practical Implications

For practitioners, the review highlights the importance of developing digital knowledge, skills, and abilities, including versatile cognitive capabilities, digital managerial capabilities, and multicultural capabilities. Entrepreneurs should assess and cultivate specific traits, such as diligence, openness, and alertness, to effectively leverage digital platforms for international expansion. Practical strategies include targeted training programs, mentorship, and continuous learning initiatives that help entrepreneurs develop the psychological attributes necessary for success in digital entrepreneurship.

The findings also point to the importance of balancing speed and flexibility with governance awareness. Strategies that prioritize rapid digital scaling without sufficient attention to platform dependence, regulatory exposure, and organizational learning may generate short-term gains but undermine long-term resilience. The platform dependence paradox suggests that entrepreneurs should maintain internal digital competencies while using platforms selectively,

ensuring digital sovereignty and protecting against platform lock-in.

6.3 Policy Implications

For policymakers, the findings point to the need for digital governance frameworks that support entrepreneurial experimentation while mitigating systemic risks. Investments in digital infrastructure and entrepreneurial ecosystems can enhance international competitiveness, particularly in emerging economies. At the same time, unresolved challenges related to data sovereignty, cybersecurity, and digital inequality may constrain the inclusive potential of global digital entrepreneurship.

Policymakers should recognize the human element in digital transformation strategies. Initiatives designed to improve digital infrastructure should be coupled with interventions to develop entrepreneurs' soft skills and psychological readiness for digitalization. Training and development programs should focus on enhancing psychological attributes associated with digital capability, including building self-efficacy in navigating digital tools and markets.

VII. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

7.1 Summary of Findings

This review has examined the dual role of digital technologies in cross-cultural dynamics and international entrepreneurship. The analysis demonstrates that digital technologies simultaneously bridge and create cultural gaps. On the one hand, digital tools enable entrepreneurs to overcome traditional barriers to internationalization, including geographic distance, language differences, and limited access to foreign market information. On the other hand, digital platforms introduce new forms of dependence, regulatory complexity, and social dominance that can perpetuate or amplify inequalities. The review has identified four principal areas of scholarly debate: the use of digital technologies to improve managerial decisions in international enterprises; ethical and social dimensions of data management in the global entrepreneurial context; challenges related to social dominance in technology adoption; and the need to understand how technologies evolve and influence managerial decisions amid global economic and technological changes. These

areas of debate reflect the maturation of the literature, moving from early optimism about digitalization as a uniformly enabling force to more nuanced concerns about the distribution of benefits and risks.

7.2 Future Research Directions

Several avenues for future research emerge from this review:

First, the dynamics of AI adoption in cross-cultural entrepreneurship deserve systematic investigation. As AI-enabled tools become increasingly central to international business, research should examine how these tools affect cross-cultural communication, trust-building, and value creation. The extension of digital affordances to include AI-enabled tools like language transcendence and algorithmic visibility offers a starting point for investigation.

Second, the evolving role of platform dynamics in cross-cultural entrepreneurship requires further study. Research should examine how platform governance, algorithmic ranking, and policy changes shape opportunities and constraints for entrepreneurs operating across cultural boundaries. Particular attention should be paid to the experiences of entrepreneurs in emerging economies, who may face acute platform dependencies.

Third, the ethical dimensions of data management in cross-cultural digital entrepreneurship warrant systematic investigation. Research should examine how entrepreneurs navigate divergent regulatory frameworks, manage cultural differences in privacy expectations, and balance entrepreneurial opportunity with ethical responsibility. The privacy paradox in cross-cultural contexts is a particularly promising area for investigation.

Fourth, the long-term trajectories of digital entrepreneurs operating across cultures deserve attention. Research should examine how entrepreneurs' competencies and strategies evolve over time, how they adapt to changing technological and institutional conditions, and what factors distinguish sustainable international success from short-lived expansion.

Fifth, cross-cultural comparative research is needed to explore how entrepreneurial traits influence digital

entrepreneurship and international performance in different contexts. Cultural factors may shape the expression and impact of entrepreneurial traits, suggesting that the generalizability of findings from one context to another cannot be assumed.

Sixth, mixed-method approaches could enhance robustness by triangulating qualitative insights with quantitative data. Such efforts would contribute to refining and extending the theoretical frameworks that guide research on cross-cultural dynamics and digital entrepreneurship.

7.3 Concluding Remarks

The intersection of cross-cultural dynamics and digital entrepreneurship presents both challenges and opportunities for international business. Digital technologies have fundamentally altered the landscape of international entrepreneurship, offering new pathways for cross-border value creation while introducing novel forms of cultural distance, dependency, and risk. The entrepreneurs who succeed in this transformed landscape will be those who develop the cognitive, managerial, and multicultural competencies to navigate multiple cultural contexts, adapt to evolving technologies, and build trust across boundaries.

For scholars, the review highlights the need for theoretical frameworks that capture the sociotechnical nature of digital entrepreneurship, connect individual-level competencies to enterprise-level outcomes, and account for the co-evolution of opportunities and challenges. For practitioners, the review offers guidance on developing the capabilities required for cross-cultural digital success. For policymakers, the review identifies the need for governance frameworks that support entrepreneurial experimentation while mitigating systemic risks.

As digital technologies continue to evolve and reshape international business, the intersection of cross-cultural dynamics and digital entrepreneurship will remain a consequential domain for scholarship, practice, and policy.

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