

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE SALES ORGANIZATION: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

Transformation in the digital world is one of the challenges that many sales organizations are currently facing, and such aspects of digital transformation within sales organizations covering database management, customer service excellence, inventory, sales forecasting, sales reporting, employee performance management, and sales force management, determine how a business can compete with the entire digital world. Since digital transformation resembles a company's measure to face increasingly competitive business competition, this transformation process extraordinarily requires full support from top-level management and employees for the expected transformation can positively affect the overall sales organization performance. By conducting a literature investigation on digital transformation in sales organizations using keywords such as "digital transformation; leadership; organization; sales management," this study explored 180 scientific articles and sorted them into 16 most relevant articles. Those articles were later used to test whether full support from top-level management and all employees can positively influence the sales organization's performance as a whole. The present study found that the full support of top-level management and all employees has a positive correlation and relationship to the sales organization's performance in the digital transformation. Therefore, it is highly advised that sales organizations optimize their existing human resources to carry out digital transformation within the sales organization body.

Subjects: Business Transformation; Corporate Management; Human Resource Enhancement

Keywords: Human resources, Leadership, Organization, Top-level management

1. INTRODUCTION

Transformations in information and communication technology have been misconstrued by most business players, resulting exclusively in a few of them have been able to reap the benefits of this technological aspect. Digital transformation is exceptionally beneficial for various companies running in different sectors, sizes, and dematerialization of working processes. Furthermore, it allows companies to optimize their operational efficiency in process management, use of tools, application of methods, and organizational re-evaluation. As digital transformation has become a significant topic and strategic move for all organizations, the opportunity for companies to accelerate business growth and create sustainable competitive advantages beyond their traditional activities is critical. According to Wengler et al., (2020), digital transformation is a profound topic for top-level management, consisting of the organization's board of directors, the chief executive, and the managing director. Besides, digital transformation in the sales organization must be acknowledged as a momentous process because it enables companies to survive and strive in market competition for decades. Systematically, digital transformation boosts company profitability by simplifying processes

and interactions using instruments such as Big Data, Artificial Intelligence, Cloud Computing, Computer Networks, and the Internet of Things. The instrument used in digital transformation offers optimization in terms of innovation that focuses on consumer needs. Although the instruments in digital transformation have become an important issue for many companies in all activities, sectors, and countries, these breakthroughs are not convincing enough for all companies applying such technology far more broadly. Therefore, the adaptation of digital transformation to maximize business elements covering business strategy, business models, business processes, organizational structure, and organizational culture in many organizations is not optimal yet significantly important (Arribas & Alfaro, 2018). Even though digital transformation is quite attempting to be implemented by many business actors, this innovation is not an easy option to implement. Furthermore, Matt et al., (2015) stated that ascertaining whether or not the digital transformation has been optimally implemented was a difficult task. Since 1990-2000, many researchers have paid drastic attention to the impact of the internet, modern communication, and advanced technology on the sales domain, such as Customer Relationship Management and Sales Management Systems (Srivastava et al., 2001; Honeycutt Jr et al., 2002; Speier & Venkatesh, 2002).

Given that digital transformation has received serious attention from the board of directors in many blue-chip companies, several studies (Solomon et al., 2019; Steward et al., 2019) argued that the company's focus needs to be expanded more into technology functions for improving customer experience and service excellence. Therefore, those organizations could operate sustainably in their sales management. Businesses embracing modernization and digital readiness will always involve technology in their sales activities. Those who are extremely familiar with digital readiness can guide the organization they operate, which can trigger their sales team's digitization initiatives in various activities (Zoltners et al., 2021). Technically, the motivation for digitization is always driven by the simplicity of operational sales processes such as order entry, order tracking, inventory, and order fulfillment. Therefore, the basic sales operations in the digitization process must achieve cost efficiency and leverage the sales organization's effectiveness (Ahearne & Rapp, 2010). A study by Brüggemann (2021) found that efficiency improvements in business processes such as customer targeting, advanced automation, wider market reach-out, and swift response to customers are the main goals that sales organizations must achieve in the digitization process. Since increased efficiency can increase revenue, continued adoption of this digital system is the key to successful sales goals.

Many studies have tried and are still working to provide definitions and solutions for managing digital transformation successfully. Although these definitions and solutions are well-developed, frameworks and guidelines for companies to navigate smoothly in digital transformation are still less explored (Chanias & Hess, 2016; Bygstad et al., 2022). Furthermore, the endeavor to systematically summarize a large number of studies that have been carried out into a comprehensive review is still limited. Using a systematic literature review that allows exploration of the academic literature and empirical evidence, this study desires to provide a new perspective on digital transformation and its relationship to sales organizations.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the present study, a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was written by adopting the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses) method, which was first introduced in 2009 and had been widely used for various types of research. The SLR method was carried out systematically through various steps such as question formulation, group formulation, identification of search domains, and identification of publication sources, systematic search, systematic critical analysis, systematic interpretation, and systematic reporting. In order to make it easier for authors to carry out general writing leading to meta-analyses, the SLR method offers documentary evidence-based guidance consisting of checklists and flowcharts (Liberati et al., 2009; Moher et al., 2009), where extensions to original documents have been published since 2015 and all can be found at <https://www.prisma-statement.org/>

Research using a literature review with the PRISMA method was carried out by following several steps, such as protocol and registration, eligibility criteria, information sources, search strategies, study selection, data collection processes, and data item sortation. Those steps can provide a general explanation that will culminate into deeper information. The availability and location of the protocol must be reported. In terms of eligibility criteria, study characteristics, study time frame, language, publication, and reasons driving the authors to use certain elements as eligibility criteria must also be transparent to everybody. Besides, the sources of information in the review must also be clearly explained (Pati & Lorusso, 2018).

In this study, the obtained scientific articles were accessed from the Scopus database. The selection of this database is based on the assumption that Scopus has a high reputation in terms of the quality of sources, abstractions, citations, references, and peer-review scholarly works from various scopes of knowledge. The materials acquisition was done using the keywords "digital transformation; leadership; organization; sales management." From the exploration, the most relevant articles related to the topic were obtained, and the sorting stages of the articles are based on the following steps:

- 1) There were 180 articles with the keywords "digital transformation" and "leadership" (n = 180);
- 2) There were 74 articles related to "organization" (n=74);
- 3) The filtering process was carried out for specifications on "sales organization," resulting in 33 articles (n=33); and
- 4) After scrutinizing them to ensure the most pertinent points, 16 articles were set as finals (n=16).

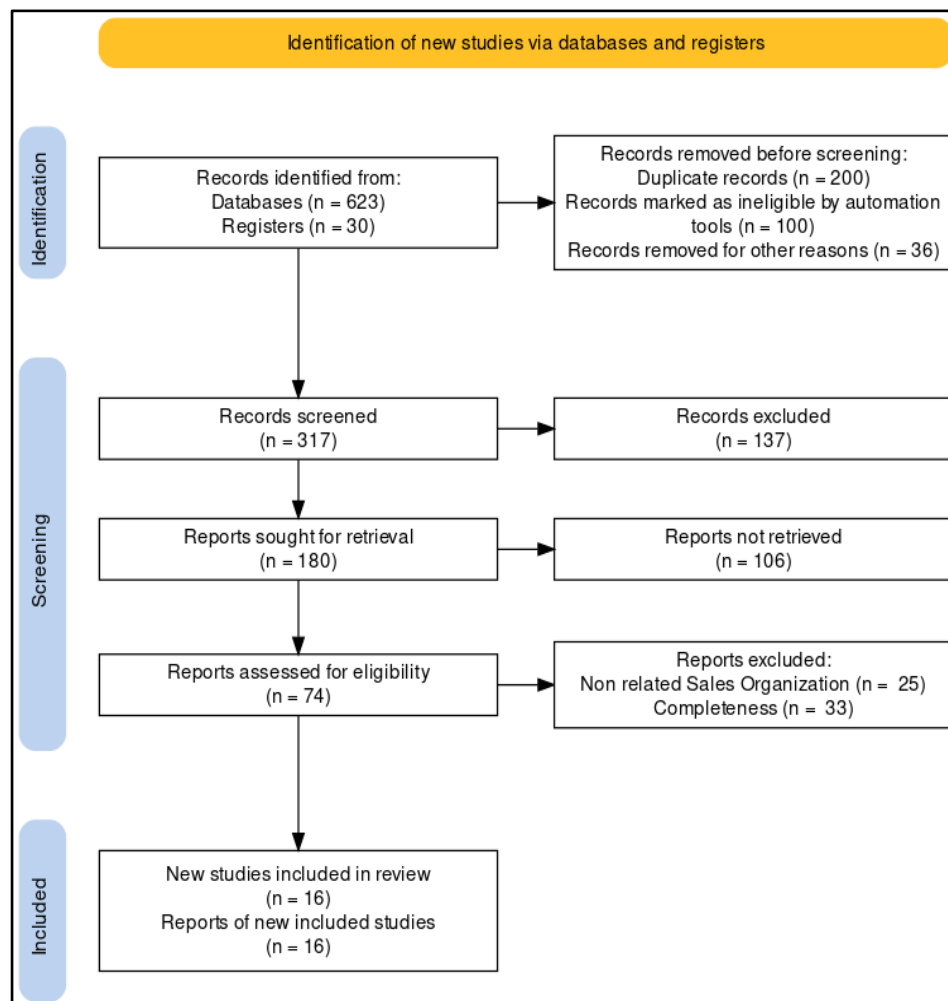


Figure 1. Identification flow chart of studies via databases and registers

The SLR method in this research provides a comprehensive conception of digital transformation and its impact on sales organizations. In achieving this goal, collected articles were refined based on their quality and divided into inclusive and exclusive criteria:

Inclusive criteria:

- 1) Research results must be related to digital transformation and the research questions;
- 2) The publication topics must be related to leadership, sales, and organization;
- 3) Publications must have a transparent methodology and be obtained from trusted sources;
- 4) Publications must be written in English;
- 5) The publication period must be between 2012-21.

Exclusive criteria:

- 1) Studies appearing as editorials, keynotes, opinions, tutorials, workshops, a summary of reports, posters, or unpublished papers/articles, such as theses, dissertations, and books;
- 2) The above documents are excluded because they usually are not undergone the peer-review process.

Therefore, only 16 articles were determined as the most relevant articles discussing the digital transformation process in sales organizations.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 VOS viewer analysis

a. VOS viewer analysis: digital transformation and sales management

Database analysis of several publications available on Scopus in 2012-21 was carried out using the VOS viewer software.

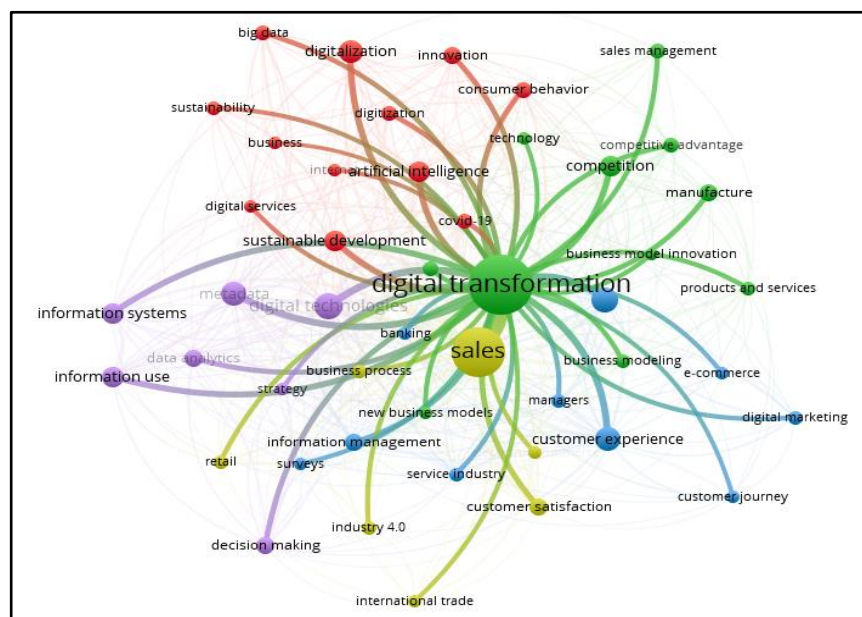


Figure 2. VOS viewer of digital transformation and sales management

Based on the result analysis using the VOS viewer shown in Figure 2, research related to digital transformation has long been associated with sales, especially in terms of its functions in business processes, business models, sales strategy, and manager behavior. On the other hand, digital transformation related to customer experience, customer journey, system decision-making, competitive advantage, big data, artificial intelligence, service digitization, and sales management is significantly rare.



Figure 5. Density visualization of digital transformation

When the Scopus 2012-21 database was visualized using Density Visualization, it was found that research on digital transformation and its correlation with organizational characteristics, such as organizational structure, organization alignment, and strategy development in the organization, had never been carried out as shown in Figure 5.

3.2. Digital Transformation

a. Digital transformation

Digital transformation is the organization's digitization by integrating digital technology and the company's business to achieve the effectiveness and efficiency of business operations. Several studies have various definitions related to digital transformation.

According to Hess et al., (2016), transformation is digitization using technology for better transformations in the company's business model, including product development, production procedures, and organizational structure. Given that digital transformation consists of a combination of several digital innovations, concerns have arisen, such as the revitalization of actors, structures, practices, values, and beliefs within companies. Even Hinings et al., (2018) stated that digital transformation has the potential to intimidate, supersede, and revamp existing ecosystem rules within organizations, industries, or certain business domains. Although there are concerns that digital transformation is a threat, digital innovation has proven effective in strategic and sustainable business processes, building and refreshing business models utilizing advances in digital technology and a collaborative approach (Warner & Wäger, 2019).

Generally speaking, digital transformation has its own challenges. According to Heavin & Power (2018), the phenomenon of digitization opens up opportunities for everyone to innovate and redefine how sales organizations do business, but the capabilities of the business players involved mostly hamper the adoption of digital technology in several organizational domains. Therefore, the two main aspects of digital transformation, such as technology and users, are inseparable and interrelated (Parviainen et al., 2017).

According to Liu et al., (2011), digital transformation strategies have diverse perspectives and aspire to target varying goals. Because the company certainly has a business-centric perspective, digital transformation will touch digitization and technology on products, processes, and organizational aspects. Matt et al., (2015) stated that the adoption of digital transformation had reached a wide range of business networks in all segments of the added-value chain. Therefore, digital transformation requires human resource skills capable of extracting, exchanging, analyzing, and converting data into information that can be processed according to its designation. The processed results can then be used to calculate and evaluate thoughts, making it easier for policymakers to decide on solutions and optimize activities. Furthermore, digital transformation improving the performance of companies has been involved in various activities, such as business models, production processes, customer relations, and product marketing (Schallmo et al., 2019). Digital transformation enables companies to improve their entities by triggering significant changes in their organizational bodies through updating information, computing, communication, and connectivity of technologies. According to several studies (Bondar et al., 2020; Nosova et al., 2021), digital

transformation is an elastic network in all economic sectors that can also be adapted by new actors who are interested in the digital economy, and this digitization scheme has been supported by major refinements in technology such as mobile phones, data processing, distributed computing, cloud, and digital mobile networks (Heavin & Power, 2018; Evans & Price, 2020). Digitization requires new ways of communicating and collaborating in the workplace. The use of technology and digital data is mostly done for earning revenue, increasing business, and changing business processes (not simply transforming into the digital world). Furthermore, Schwarzmüller et al., (2018) stated that digital technology and data could also create an environment for digital business.

Even though conventional running organizations of all kinds and sizes need to be prepared to align and even replace their business processes with more advanced methods (Horváth & Szabó, 2019), digitization may not present some companies comfort (Benjamin & Potts, 2018) if it happens impulsively, especially if implemented in an environment with relatively low adaptation (Kane et al., 2015). Still, according to Kane et al., (2015), the transformations that will be stimulated by digital transformation in a sales organization are leadership, culture, paradigm, attitude towards risk, way of working, application of technology, and willingness to accept endless evolution. Digital transformation must integrate into all aspects of organizational operations, leading to changes in organizational infrastructure and providing added value to its users (McGrath & Maiye, 2010; Vial, 2021). Furthermore, several researchers (Pesch et al., 2021; Vial, 2021) agreed that if digital transformation within a sales organization were implemented as a whole, the fundamental components in business operations would benefit a business model completely new and advanced.

b. Digital transformation in the sales organization

Digital transformation within the sales organization includes digitization of sales channels, transactional communications, offerings, and technology-based services. Because digital transformation requires tactical and strategic business efforts, data-based knowledge of a digital business model can provide added value in implementing sales digitization (Horlacher et al., 2016). According to Matt et al., (2015), digital transformation is a blueprint that supports companies by utilizing technology integration into company operations, and this technology fundamentally improves company performance and capacity.

In line with these findings, several studies (Karagiannaki et al., 2017; Westman et al., 2019) agreed that digital transformation and the optimization of digital technology in the company's business model are closely related to transformations that give added value to products and automation in organizational structure management and production process. The elevated activity of digital transformation adaptation and implementation can be observed from the increasing demand for digital products, which has caused changes in various business models like the music industry (Hess et al., 2016). Furthermore, new digital media and tools such as social media, mobile phones, analytics, and embedded devices have enhanced significant business operations, such as enhancing customer experience, streamlining operations, and creating new business models (Liere-Netheler et al., 2018).

The concept of digital transformation can present technologies such as machine learning and business analytics that can increase the internal efficiency of the organization and address organizational problems (Power & Heavin, 2018). Therefore, increases in sales, productivity, innovation, value proposition, and improved customer interactions are models of the benefits that successful digital transformation can offer (Matt et al., 2015). Even though discussions about digital transformation are mostly associated with success stories and have been intensively campaigned by large consulting firms such as McKinsey and Boston Consulting, responsible management of digital transformation is a principle that requires strong affirmation nowadays.

Specifically, digital transformation in various types and sizes of companies is applied in business strategy, general management, leadership, and organizational culture. Despite the sizes and types of companies, Henriette et al., (2016) grouped digital transformation into three components:

1. Technology: digital transformation is based on the use of new digital technologies such as social media, mobile applications, business analytics, or embedded systems.
2. Organization: digital transformation changes organizational processes and creates new business models.
3. Social: digital transformation is a phenomenon that affects all aspects of human life, both service providers and customers. The function of digital transformation in the social aspect is to improve the customer experience by facilitating the interaction between sellers and buyers.

Customer experience can be assessed from how consumers use products and responses to service providers. The assessment is extracted to accurately determine market segments, consumer behavior in the market, consumer behavior and loyalty, and communication between service providers and customers in the sales process (Schwertner, 2017).

Specifically for business and organizational processes, digital transformation covers automation in the research and development division, production processes, and output distribution. Since digital technology allows people to work at different levels in varying functional areas, digital business modification, new digital business, and digital globalization can only be successfully done by adding a digital element to the products (Schwertner, 2017).

c. Sales organizational performance

Intense business competition in many industries makes the sales organization in one company paramount. Given that the company's revenue is yielded from sales and cost efficiency incurred (Engle & Barnes, 2000), the sales organization's effectiveness will always be the epitome of company direction. Several studies (Churchill Jr et al., 1985; Anderson & Oliver, 1987; Hise & Reid, 1994) have focused on the sales team's relationship to sales organizational effectiveness. The study by Anderson & Oliver (1987) examined how the sales manager's role influences the sales organization's effectiveness. In terms of sales organizational effectiveness, Churchill Jr et al., (1985) made a summary regarding the evaluation and assessment of the

overall organizational output, such as sales value and profitability. The study by previous researchers was refined by Hise & Reid (1994), who found that increasingly strong globalization pressures on conventional companies caused the number of service providers for big customers to decrease. Those reduced transaction activities make higher demands for the effectiveness of sales organizations in providing satisfactory sales performance while enjoying efficiency through digitization.

The sales organization's effectiveness becomes appraisals of sales organization performance from several constituents, like the performance of the sales team members (Piercy et al., 2011). Therefore, the effectiveness of a sales organization can be seen from the output concept of a sales team, consisting of a summary assessment of all members of the sales team with different performances. The effectiveness of a sales organization is influenced by sales management control activities, especially the conduct of the sales team, such as monitoring, directing, evaluating, and rewarding. Good interaction between team members and sales managers will increase the sales organization's effectiveness (Malek et al., 2018). Furthermore, organizational performance can be successful if the transformation process has achieved efficiency between costs and output/results (Chen et al., 2014).

Organizational performance is a mechanism to measure when and how the organization determines its goals. To achieve this goal, the role of managers in their leadership conduct is exceptionally important (Bycio et al., 1995). Leadership is generally defined as the "art" of influencing others to achieve collective ambitions. According to Koech & Namusonge (2012), when carried out optimally, collaboration and cooperative efforts in an organizational context will produce outcomes that align with the collective agreement, and the driving desire for achieving common goals is important and will definitely improve organizational performance. Therefore, leadership is considered unsuccessful and unnecessary if the results obtained are not in line with the expected goals (Posner & Kouzes, 1993).

The sales organization acts as an information mediator for the company, customers, and third parties who need corresponding information. The instantaneous flow and pattern of information to customers and back to the company is a determinant of the company's success in responding to and understanding market needs. Given that digital transformation processes are unique within sales organizations, the processes and information processing capabilities of salespeople (internal, external, and third agents) are complex and have different perspectives from one another (Schmitz & Rader, 2010). According to Verbeke et al., (2011), complexity at the individual sales manager level is divided into two main drivers: external and internal. External drivers consist of the complexity of the customer, competitiveness among service providers, and the complexity of the technology being adopted. On the other hand, internal drivers include the complexity of encouragement systems, roles, and sales technology (Schmitz & Rader, 2010).

d. Research gaps

Research gaps between studies examined in the present study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Research gaps of collected publications employed on this study

Research Gaps	Previous studies	Expected contribution
There is still a dearth of research regarding how digital transformation directly affects the performance of sales organizations.	Guenzi & Nijssen (2021) found that the digital transformation process is not the main solution perceived by employees. Digital transformation even significantly triggers the job stress of sales employees because it creates additional demands on their job. Slightly different, Hauer et al., (2021) found that digitization in marketing and sales activities has indeed simplified day-to-day business and made it more scalable and transparent. However, their implementation has not been fully accepted and widely adopted. Another study by Kuşçu (2019) found that the use of sales technology can improve aspects of sales performance, both in the sales process, sales administration, and also the sales team relationship with the customer.	Presenting how the digital transformation process is taking place in fast-moving consumer goods companies in Indonesia and which areas are affected and benefited from the transformation process.
No research has found how digital transformation influences the performance of sales organizations and what factors influence the success of a digital transformation more expedient technique.	Wengler et al., (2020), who examined digital transformation in sales organizations, found that the people factor (company employees) plays an influential role in the success of digital transformation as they are the actors who work on the transformation process. In perfectly achieving substantial productivity progress, digital transformation practices rely on the richness of data forecasting and processing. Warner & Wäger (2019) examined how companies build dynamic capabilities in digital transformation. Since digital transformation is defined as the use of digital technologies (mobile devices, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, blockchain, and the Internet of Things) for business enhancement, skillfulness is the main mechanism for strategic revitalization for organizational business models, collaborative approach, and corporate culture betterment.	A more detailed explanation is needed on how the digital transformation process can be carried out properly so that it can positively affect the performance of sales organizations, including leadership style, organizational citizenship behavior, and sales management control.

Research Gaps	Previous studies	Expected contribution
The scarcity of research on fast-moving consumer goods companies in Indonesia has to do with sales organizations currently carrying out many digital transformation processes.	Adeniji et al., (2020) researched 500 employees of fast-moving consumer goods companies in Nigeria on some characteristics, such as leadership, employee engagement, and job performance. In Indonesia, Ferdinand & Wahyuningsih (2018) examined the ability of managers to innovate in fast-moving consumer goods companies and their impact on the sales team's performance. Still related to the role of managers in fast-moving consumer goods companies, Jacobs & Mafini (2019) examined how transactional leadership influences supply chain quality and business performance.	The research should be conducted by taking respondents from 20 fast-moving consumer goods companies in Indonesia and dividing the objects into three levels: 12 C-Levels, 60 Directors/General Manager Levels, and 90 Sales Managers in five different cities in order to set them as representatives of the Indonesian population.
The scarcity of research on sales management, especially regarding their digital transformation.	Some studies (Russell & Swanson, 2019; Bothe et al., 2021) found out how sales managers must be able to ensure the availability of information, carry out information processing, and support the motivation of salespeople in gaining knowledge, exchanging information, and making decisions quickly.	Explain how sales management participates in the digital transformation within sales organizations in fast-moving consumer goods companies.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

4.1 Conclusions

Digital transformation, including digitization of corporate communications, sales channels, and product-service offerings, requires tactical and strategic business efforts in their implementation along with the availability of data-based knowledge. Digital business models through digital transformation allow new practices for companies to assemble added value and other positive aspects to the performance of their sales organizations.

Considering that the digital transformation process in various types and sizes of companies has its unique complexity, various obstacles are unavoidable amid the fast development of the current digital transformation. The rapid development of digital technology in many sectors makes it difficult to distinguish which type of company and sales organization fit as the main model and can be said to be successful in the digital transformation process.

4.2 Research Limitations

Some of the limitations faced in this study are as follows:

1. The source of the literature review in the present study is limited to the Scopus database. Expanding other sources such as Science Direct, Google Scholar, PubMed, ProQuest, ResearchGate, and further trusted sources of research articles can certainly provide better results.

2. This research used 16 articles with the strongest relevance to the research topic chosen solely by the researcher. In consequence, the analysis and conclusions drawn are limited to the selected articles.

4.3 Research Limitations

Some practical suggestions for further research are as follows:

1. It is recommended to continue further research on the digital transformation process that emerges in fast-moving consumer goods companies comprehensively since the present study is limited to sales organizations.
2. Continuing similar research with case studies of definite applications of digital technology in sales organizations and their impact on the sales organization's performance is recommended.
3. It is recommended to examine how the digital transformation process plays a role in the collaboration between departments in fast-moving consumer goods companies in Indonesia, such as between sales and marketing teams.

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Disclosure Statement

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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