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Digital transformation in Nepal: Navigating opportunities and challenges in the Digital Era

Binod Shah[1], Kiran Kumari Sah[2*] and Manisha Jha

1 Faculty of Management, Rajarshi Janak University, Janakpurdham, Nepal, and Faculty of Management, R. R. M. Campus, Janakpurdham, Tribhuvan University, Nepal.
binod.sah@rrmc.tu.edu.np orcid.org/0000-0001-8267-994X
2 Faculty of Management, R. R. M. Campus, Janakpurdham, Tribhuvan University, Nepal.
*Corresponding Author kiran.sah@rrmc.tu.edu.np orcid.org/0009-0007-6109-0424
3 Faculty of Management, University Campus, Janakpurdham, Rajarshi Janak University, Nepal.
kmanisha2055@gmail.com orcid.org/0009-0008-8665-2232

Abstract

This study examines the evolving landscape of digital transformation in Nepal, focusing on the opportunities it presents and the challenges it faces. As a developing country with diverse geography and socio-economic disparities, Nepal is experiencing rapid digital growth, driven by increased internet access, mobile penetration, and government initiatives like the Digital Nepal Framework. The research identifies key sectors such as education, healthcare, governance, and agriculture where digital technologies offer transformative potential. At the same time, it highlights significant barriers including inadequate infrastructure, digital illiteracy, policy gaps, and resistance to change. Through a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative survey and qualitative insights, the study captures public perception, assesses the current state of digital adoption, and evaluates the effectiveness of ongoing initiatives. The findings emphasize the need for strategic investment in infrastructure, comprehensive digital literacy programs, inclusive policies, and collaborative efforts among government, private sector, and civil society. The study concludes that while challenges persist, digital transformation offers Nepal a critical opportunity to achieve inclusive growth and sustainable development if approached with coordinated action and long-term vision.

Keywords: Digitalization, Digital infrastructure, Digital literacy, Digital Nepal Framework

1.0 Background of the Study

The 21st century has been marked by a rapid shift towards digitalization, fundamentally transforming how societies operate, governments function, and economies grow. Digital transformation, the integration of digital technology into all areas of life, has become a critical driver of development, enabling greater efficiency, connectivity, and innovation. Digital transformation holds immense potential to bridge developmental gaps, enhance public services, and accelerate economic growth in the context of Nepal, a country characterized by its diverse geography, socio-economic challenges, and cultural richness.

Nepal has witnessed significant strides in digital adoption in recent years, driven by increasing internet penetration, mobile connectivity, and the expansion of digital services. The government of Nepal has launched initiatives such as the *Digital Nepal Framework 2019*, which envisions leveraging digital technology for socio-economic development across various sectors, including education, healthcare, agriculture, governance, and tourism. Additionally, the rise of digital

payment platforms, e-governance systems, and online marketplaces signifies a growing shift towards a digitally empowered society.

However, Nepal faces a unique set of challenges in its digital transformation journey. Limited infrastructure in rural areas, inadequate digital literacy, and a persistent digital divide between urban and rural populations hinder equitable access to technology. Furthermore, policy gaps, cybersecurity risks, and a lack of skilled human resources pose significant obstacles to achieving sustainable digital transformation. Despite these challenges, the digitalization of Nepal presents a transformative opportunity to address long-standing issues such as inefficiency, corruption, and inaccessibility in public services.

This study aims to explore the multifaceted landscape of digital transformation in Nepal, examining both the opportunities it creates and the challenges it entails. By analyzing the current state of digital adoption, government policies, and private sector initiatives, the research seeks to provide insights into how Nepal can harness digital technologies to foster inclusive growth and development.

Understanding Nepal's digital transformation journey is critical, as it offers valuable lessons for other developing nations navigating similar transitions. This study will contribute to the discourse on digitalization by highlighting Nepal's unique context, identifying key enablers and barriers, and proposing actionable strategies to accelerate the digital transformation process.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing global momentum of digital transformation, Nepal continues to face significant challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, digital illiteracy, policy gaps, and socio-economic disparities that hinder its effective adoption. This study seeks to examine these barriers and opportunities to inform strategies for sustainable digital advancement in Nepal. This research aims to seek the answer of following research questions:

- What are the key opportunities presented by digital transformation in Nepal across various sectors such as education, healthcare, agriculture, and governance?
- What are the primary challenges hindering the implementation and adoption of digital transformation in Nepal, including infrastructure, policy, and socio-cultural factors?
- How can Nepal effectively address these challenges to maximize the benefits of digital transformation and ensure inclusive growth?

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the state of digital transformation in Nepal, with a focus on identifying the opportunities and challenges it presents. The study aims to provide actionable insights for policymakers, stakeholders, and practitioners to foster sustainable and inclusive digital development in the country. Specifically, the objectives are as follows:

- To explore the potential opportunities of digital transformation in Nepal, particularly in key sectors such as education, healthcare, agriculture, and governance.
- To identify the critical challenges that impede the successful implementation and adoption of digital technologies in Nepal, including infrastructure, policy, digital literacy, and socio-cultural factors.

- To propose recommendations and strategic frameworks for addressing challenges and harnessing opportunities to promote inclusive and sustainable digital growth in Nepal.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

This study is important because it will provide an in-depth examination of the opportunities digital transformation offers to Nepal while also critically assessing the challenges that must be addressed to unlock its full potential. By identifying actionable solutions and strategies, the study aims to contribute to the discourse on digital transformation and provide guidance for policymakers, stakeholders, and practitioners to foster an inclusive and sustainable digital ecosystem.

Moreover, as digital transformation is a relatively under-researched area in the Nepalese context, this study will help fill critical gaps in knowledge and provide a foundation for future research and interventions. By navigating both opportunities and challenges, this research can serve as a roadmap for Nepal to harness the power of digital technologies to achieve its development goals in the digital era.

2.0 Literature Review

Digital transformation has become a global phenomenon, with countries striving to leverage digital technologies for economic growth, innovation, and social progress. For developing nations like Nepal, digital transformation offers both a promising opportunity and a daunting challenge. This literature review explores the existing research on the opportunities and challenges of digital transformation, focusing on global trends and their relevance to the Nepalese context. Digital transformation is the strategic integration of digital technologies across all areas of a business, reshaping operations, enhancing customer experience, and fostering innovation (Türk, 2023). It involves a fundamental shift in processes, culture, and business models to fully leverage technological capabilities and stay competitive in a rapidly evolving digital landscape (Tang, 2021).

Digital transformation fundamentally aims to enhance organizational adaptability, efficiency, and responsiveness to customer demands (Trenerry et al., 2021). To fully harness digital technologies, businesses need to reimagine their models, engagement approaches, and internal processes (Irfan et al., 2024). Digital transformation offers transformative potential in areas such as education, healthcare, agriculture, and governance. According to World Bank reports, digital technologies can help developing countries enhance service delivery, improve access to information, and create economic opportunities, especially in rural and underserved areas (World Bank, 2020). For Nepal, the digitalization of agriculture can improve productivity through precision farming and market access, while digital healthcare solutions can bridge the rural-urban health disparity (Adhikari et al., 2022).

In the education sector, digital platforms can enhance learning outcomes by providing remote and personalized learning experiences, especially in geographically challenging regions like Nepal's mountainous areas. Furthermore, the integration of e-governance systems can improve transparency, accountability, and efficiency in public services (Shrestha, 2021).

Despite these opportunities, Nepal faces significant challenges in adopting digital transformation. Digital transformation frequently requires a change in organizational culture, which may encounter resistance from employees concerned about job security or lacking digital competencies (Busco et al., 2023). Additionally, organizations must navigate cybersecurity risks,

potential data breaches, and compliance with data protection laws (Sandfort et al., 2024). Integrating new digital technologies with legacy systems also presents significant challenges (Alshammari, 2023; Steffen et al., 2023). One of the primary barriers is inadequate infrastructure, including limited access to electricity and broadband connectivity in rural areas (Bista et al., 2020). A study by Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA) highlighted that while mobile penetration is high, reliable internet access remains a challenge for many parts of the country (NTA, 2021).

Another critical challenge is the digital divide, which disproportionately affects rural populations, women, and marginalized communities. Digital literacy remains low, limiting the ability of citizens to utilize digital tools effectively (Aryal & Subedi, 2023). Furthermore, a lack of cohesive digital policies and strategies hampers the progress of digital transformation in Nepal (Paudel, 2020). The absence of local content and digital platforms that cater to Nepal's linguistic and cultural diversity also restricts adoption.

Governments in developing countries have implemented various policies to overcome digital transformation challenges. For example, India's "Digital India" initiative has demonstrated the impact of coordinated policies and investments in digital infrastructure (Bhardwaj et al., 2021). Lessons from such initiatives can guide Nepal's strategies. Nepal's Digital Nepal Framework (2019) is a promising step toward creating a comprehensive strategy, focusing on areas such as digital health, education, energy, and agriculture (Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, 2019). However, the framework requires effective implementation, monitoring, and collaboration among stakeholders to achieve its goals (Sharma et al., 2022).

While global literature emphasizes the transformative power of digital technologies, there is limited research on how these opportunities can be contextualized for Nepal's unique socio-economic and geographical landscape. Additionally, the impact of global trends such as artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, and the Internet of Things (IoT) on Nepal's digital transformation remains underexplored.

The literature highlights the dual nature of digital transformation as an opportunity and challenge for Nepal. While the country has initiated steps to embrace digitalization, significant barriers need to be addressed to realize its full potential. This study builds on the existing research by providing a detailed analysis of Nepal's digital transformation landscape and offering strategic recommendations to bridge the identified gaps.

3.0 Methodology

This study employed a survey research design to gain a comprehensive understanding of digital transformation in Nepal to capture public perceptions, institutional challenges, and the effectiveness of digital policies. For the quantitative component, a structured questionnaire was distributed to a diverse group of respondents from urban and semi-urban areas. The survey assessed levels of awareness, adoption, perceived benefits, and barriers to digital transformation in sectors such as education, healthcare, governance, agriculture, and business. Participants were selected through purposive and convenience sampling, targeting students, professionals, government employees, and small business owners. A total of 200 individuals participated in the survey, representing diverse demographics in terms of age, education, occupation, and location. The sample primarily included young people, reflecting the growing digital engagement among Nepal's youth. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics like frequencies and percentages. Ethical protocols were followed, with participants fully informed, assured of confidentiality, and providing voluntary consent. Data were anonymized to protect privacy.

4.0 Results and Discussions

The study on "Digital Transformation in Nepal: Navigating Opportunities and Challenges in the Digital Era" reveals several critical insights into the current state of digital transformation in Nepal. Based on the analysis of data collected from respondents, the findings are categorized into key opportunities, challenges, and potential solutions.

4.1 Demographic Information

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents. The demographic profile of the respondents reveals a predominantly young, urban, and educated population. Males constitute a larger portion of the sample, accounting for 62%, while females make up the remaining 38%. In terms of age, the majority of respondents fall within the 18–25 age group (34%), followed by 26–35 years (33%). This indicates that 67% of the participants are below 35 years of age, suggesting a youthful respondent base. A significant portion of the respondents (69%) reside in urban areas, while only 31% come from rural backgrounds, highlighting an urban-centric perspective in the data.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	**Category**	**Numbers**	**Percentage (%)**
Gender	Male	124	62
	Female	76	38
Age	18-25	68	34
	26-35	66	33
	36-45	46	23
	46 and above	20	10
Location	Urban	138	69
	Rural	62	31
Occupations	Student	38	19
	Government Employee	52	26
	Private sector Employee	57	29
	Entrepreneur/ Business Owner	43	21
	Others	10	5
Level of Education	School	24	12
	Bachelor	110	55
	Master	56	28
	Doctorate	10	5

Source: *Field Survey, 2025.*

Occupationally, private sector employees represent the largest group at 29%, followed by government employees at 26%, with students and entrepreneurs/business owners each comprising 21% of the sample. The remaining 5% fall under other occupations. This diverse mix reflects a good representation of the working and economically active population, as well as emerging entrepreneurs and students. Regarding education, a substantial majority hold at least a bachelor's degree, with 55% having a bachelor's, 28% a master's, and 5% a doctorate. Only 12% have education limited to the school level. This suggests a highly educated group of respondents, likely to be well-informed and capable of critical engagement with social, economic, or policy-related topics. Overall, the demographic characteristics suggest that the survey data predominantly reflects the views of young, urban, and educated individuals with varied professional backgrounds, which may influence the findings and interpretations of the study.

4.2 Understanding of Digital Transformation in Nepal

The responses of 200 respondents regarding their understanding of digital transformation in Nepal are shown in Table 2. 16% of respondents rated their understanding of digital transformation in Nepal as "Very High," suggesting a smaller group of well-informed individuals. 24% of respondents chose "High," indicating a reasonable awareness level. 41% of respondents selected "Moderate," showing that a significant proportion of respondents have a basic or average understanding. 13% of respondents rated their understanding as "Low," pointing to limited awareness in a smaller portion of the sample. Only 6% reported "None," suggesting that very few respondents lack any understanding of the topic entirely. The majority of respondents fall into the "Moderate" category, highlighting the need for initiatives to enhance digital literacy and knowledge of digital transformation in Nepal. Targeted awareness campaigns and training programs could be effective in addressing gaps in understanding.

Table 2: Responses on Understanding of Digital Transformation in Nepal

Response Option	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very High	32	16%
High	48	24%
Moderate	82	41%
Low	26	13%
None	12	6%
Total	200	100%

Source*: Field Survey, 2025.*

4.3 Sectors Benefited by Digital Transformation in Nepal

The responses of 200 respondents regarding sectors in Nepal that have benefited the most from digital transformation are shown in Table 3. Since this is a multiple-choice question, the total count will exceed 200 due to respondents selecting multiple options.

E-commerce was selected by the highest proportion of respondents (84%), indicating that this sector is perceived as having benefited the most from digital transformation in Nepal. This likely

reflects the rapid growth of online shopping and digital payment platforms. Education was identified by 74% of respondents, showing significant recognition of digital tools like online classes and e-learning platforms. Healthcare was chosen by 59%, pointing to advancements such as telemedicine and digital health records improving accessibility and efficiency. Governance received 54%, highlighting the impact of e-governance initiatives like digital citizenship certificates and online tax filing systems. Agriculture was selected by 41%, indicating moderate benefits from digital tools such as weather forecasting apps and online marketplaces for farmers. Other sectors (14%) likely include industries such as finance, tourism, or technology, as specified by respondents.

Table 3: Sectors Benefited by Digital Transformation in Nepal

Sectors	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Education	148	74%
Healthcare	118	59%
Agriculture	81	41%
Governance	108	54%
E-commerce	168	84%
Other	28	14%

Source. *Field Survey, 2025.*

The responses reflect that digital transformation in Nepal is most visible in consumer-focused sectors like e-commerce and education, while healthcare and governance are also making notable progress. However, sectors like agriculture and others may require further investment and innovation to fully capitalize on digital opportunities. This data suggests prioritizing initiatives that extend the benefits of digital transformation to underrepresented sectors.

4.4 Key Opportunities of Digital Transformation in Nepal

The responses of 200 respondents regarding the opportunities of digital transformation in Nepal are shown in Table 4. Since this is a multiple-choice question, the total count will exceed 200 due to respondents selecting multiple options.

Improved access to services (84%) emerged as the most recognized opportunity, indicating that digital transformation is widely seen as a way to enhance accessibility in education, healthcare, and other essential services. Job creation and economic growth (76%) is another major opportunity, reflecting optimism about how digital technologies can drive employment and economic development. Innovation and entrepreneurship opportunities (74%) ranked high, showing that people see digital transformation as a catalyst for startups and new business models. Enhanced government transparency and efficiency (66%) suggests that many believe digital governance can reduce corruption and streamline public services. Bridging the rural-urban divide (56%) highlights the potential of digital tools to reduce disparities in access to resources and opportunities between cities and rural areas. Other (9%) indicates that some respondents see additional benefits, possibly in areas like environmental sustainability, tourism, or financial

inclusion. The responses indicate that digital transformation in Nepal is perceived as a key driver of economic growth, service accessibility, and governance improvement. However, ensuring that these opportunities are equally distributed across urban and rural areas remains a challenge. Future policies should focus on digital literacy, infrastructure development, and startup support to maximize these opportunities.

Table 4: Sectors Benefited by Digital Transformation in Nepal

Opportunities	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Job creation and economic growth	152	76%
Improved access to services (education, healthcare)	168	84%
Enhanced government transparency and efficiency	132	66%
Bridging the rural-urban divide	112	56%
Innovation and entrepreneurship opportunities	148	74%
Other	18	9%

Source*: Field Survey, 2025.*

4.5 Key Main Challenges Hindering Digital Transformation in Nepal

The responses of 200 respondents regarding the main challenges hindering digital transformation in Nepal are shown in Table 5. Since this is a multiple-choice question, the total count will exceed 200 due to respondents selecting multiple options.

Table 5: Main Challenges Hindering Digital Transformation in Nepal

Challenges	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Inadequate infrastructure	165	82.5%
Limited digital literacy and skills	148	74%
Lack of policies or regulations	112	56%
High costs of digital tools and technologies	138	69%
Socio-cultural resistance to digital technologies	98	49%
Other	25	12.5%

Source: *Field Survey, 2025.*

Inadequate infrastructure (82.5%) is seen as the biggest obstacle, indicating that unreliable internet connectivity and electricity shortages are major hurdles for digital transformation in Nepal. Limited digital literacy and skills (74%) highlights the need for better education and

training programs to equip people with the necessary technical knowledge. High costs of digital tools and technologies (69%) suggest that affordability remains a significant barrier, making it difficult for businesses and individuals to adopt digital solutions. Lack of policies or regulations (56%) indicates concerns about the absence of a clear legal framework to support digital development and governance. Socio-cultural resistance (49%) shows that traditional mindsets and reluctance to embrace new technologies continue to slow down digital adoption, particularly in rural areas. Other (12.5%) includes additional challenges such as cybersecurity risks, data privacy concerns, and language barriers in digital content.

The responses suggest that Nepal needs improved infrastructure, affordability, and better digital education to accelerate digital transformation. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-sectoral approach, including government policies, private sector investments, and awareness programs to foster a digitally inclusive society.

4.6 Recommended Government Measures to Accelerate Digital Transformation in Nepal

The responses of 200 respondents regarding the government measures to accelerate digital transformation in Nepal are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Recommended Government Measures to Accelerate Digital Transformation in Nepal

Recommended Measures	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Investment in digital infrastructure (internet, electricity)	164	82%
Policy reforms to support digital innovation	138	69%
Digital literacy and skill development programs	157	78.5%
Public-private partnerships to encourage innovation	128	64%
Other	24	12%

Source: *Field Survey, 2025.*

Investment in digital infrastructure (82%) is the most frequently suggested measure, emphasizing the urgent need for better internet connectivity, electricity access, and technological infrastructure. Digital literacy and skill development programs (78.5%) ranked second, indicating strong demand for education and training programs to enhance digital skills across various sectors. Policy reforms to support digital innovation (69%) suggest that respondents believe the government should create more supportive policies, such as tax incentives for tech startups and streamlined regulations for digital businesses. Public-private partnerships (64%) highlight the need for collaboration between the government and private sector to drive innovation, investment, and technological advancements. Other (12%) responses may include measures such as cybersecurity policies, promoting research and development, or localized digital solutions for rural communities. The responses indicate that enhancing infrastructure, improving digital skills, and reforming policies are the top priorities for accelerating digital transformation in Nepal. The government should focus on expanding internet access, creating

favorable policies, and fostering collaboration with the private sector to drive sustainable digital growth.

4.7 Important Steps for Ensuring a Successful Digital Future in Nepal

The responses of 200 respondents regarding the important steps for a successful digital future in Nepal are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Recommended Government Measures to Accelerate Digital Transformation in Nepal

Steps for a Successful Digital Future	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Building digital infrastructure	175	87.5%
Enhancing digital literacy among all age groups	154	77%
Strengthening the policy framework	138	69%
Encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship	149	74.5%
Other	25	12.5%

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The data on recommended government measures to accelerate digital transformation in Nepal reveals clear priorities among respondents regarding the steps needed for a successful digital future. The most frequently selected measure was building digital infrastructure, chosen by 87.5% of respondents. This indicates a strong consensus on the need for robust internet connectivity, power supply, and access to digital tools across the country, especially in underserved rural areas. The second most cited measure was enhancing digital literacy among all age groups (77%), highlighting the importance of equipping citizens—not just youth—with the skills needed to effectively participate in the digital economy.

Encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship was selected by 74.5% of respondents, reflecting the belief that digital transformation should be leveraged to support startups, local tech solutions, and new business models. Additionally, 69% of respondents emphasized the need to strengthen the policy framework, suggesting that clear, supportive, and inclusive digital policies are essential for long-term success. A smaller portion of participants (12.5%) suggested other measures, which may include issues such as data privacy, cybersecurity, or public-private partnerships. Overall, the findings suggest that for Nepal to advance in its digital transformation journey, the government must prioritize infrastructure development, widespread digital education, supportive policies, and innovation-friendly environments. These actions are seen as foundational to ensuring that the benefits of digitalization reach all segments of society.

5.0 Conclusion

The study “Digital Transformation in Nepal: Navigating Opportunities and Challenges in the Digital Era” provides a comprehensive overview of Nepal’s current digital landscape, highlighting both the significant potential and the persistent barriers facing the country. The findings reflect the perspectives of a predominantly young, urban, and well-educated population, offering valuable insights into the national sentiment toward digital transformation.

Overall, the study reveals a general awareness of digital transformation among respondents, though many rate their understanding as only moderate, underlining the need for broader digital literacy initiatives. Sectors such as e-commerce, education, healthcare, and governance are perceived as the primary beneficiaries of digital advancements, while others like agriculture still lag behind, indicating uneven development.

Opportunities identified include improved service access, job creation, enhanced governance, and increased innovation. However, these are counterbalanced by challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited digital skills, high costs of technology, and socio-cultural resistance. Notably, infrastructure shortcomings and digital illiteracy emerged as the most pressing obstacles.

To address these challenges and realize the full potential of digital transformation, respondents overwhelmingly recommend focused government action in building robust digital infrastructure, enhancing digital literacy across all age groups, strengthening policy frameworks, and fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. Public-private partnerships and targeted reforms are also seen as crucial strategies for sustainable progress.

In conclusion, Nepal stands at a pivotal moment in its digital journey. With strategic investments, inclusive policy reforms, and collaborative efforts between stakeholders, digital transformation can serve as a powerful engine for economic development, social inclusion, and national modernization. The success of this transformation will depend on how effectively these priorities are addressed to ensure that no community is left behind in the digital era.

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