

Strategic Technology for Social Value: A Critical Assessment of Digital Integration in Non-Profit Organizations to Maximize Mission Fulfilment

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Abstract—Non-profit organizations (NPOs) face a strategic challenge similar to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) for businesses by aligning all resources including technology directly with their core social mission. This research critically assesses how Information Systems Technology (IST) integration impacts an NPO's ability to create and scale social value. The study posits that poorly governed digital transformation risks a Technological Mission-Drift, where the internal demands of complex, non-aligned systems divert limited financial and human capital away from beneficiary programs. The research will employ a case study methodology to analyze two critical IST strategies. Direct Mission Technology and Strategic Support Technology (e.g., CRM for transparent fundraising and donor retention). The core analysis will correlate technology investment and governance practices with key performance indicators of social impact (e.g., program efficacy, cost-per-impact, and beneficiary reach). Expected findings will highlight how organizational factors, such as a lack of Digital Acumen at the leadership level, hinder the NPO's strategic agility. This work provides an essential framework for NPO boards and executives to treat technology as a strategic asset for maximizing social return on investment (SROI), ensuring digital efforts actively enable, rather than passively consume, their mission.

Keywords— Strategic Technology Integration, Technological Mission, Social Return on Investment.

I. INTRODUCTION

In an era where digital technologies permeate nearly every aspect of societal operations, non-profit organizations stand at a pivotal crossroads (Godefroid, Plattfaut and Niehaves, 2023). The increasing focus on non-profit digital transformation processes in a post-pandemic society underscores the critical need for effective digital integration (Cipriano and Za, 2025). This integration, however, presents unique challenges for NPOs (Berenguer and Shen, 2019). Their intrinsic motivation to prioritize social goals often leads to responsiveness to beneficiaries over operational efficiency, consequently impacting long-term investment decisions, particularly in technology adoption (Berenguer and Shen, 2019). This dynamic often results in the significant potential of digital transformation to enhance mission fulfillment remaining largely untapped (Jong and Ganzaroli, 2023). Despite

substantial innovations in Information and Communication Technologies that could significantly benefit non-governmental organizations, many NPOs have yet to fully utilize these advancements, especially when compared to the private sector (Godefroid, Plattfaut and Niehaves, 2023).

II. LITERATURE REVIEWS

This assessment will critically analyze existing academic work on digital integration within Non-Profit Organizations, taking into account their distinct organizational visions, strategic limitations, and financial constraints when contrasted with for-profit businesses (Jong and Ganzaroli, 2023). It will investigate how the unique attributes of non-profits shape their capacity to adopt and effectively utilize technology to achieve their objectives (Godefroid, Plattfaut and Niehaves, 2023). Specifically, this review will trace the evolution of digital transformation within the non-profit sector, examining its theoretical foundations from early studies on information technology adoption to more current analyses of DT-driven change management and implementation in NPOs (Cipriano and Za, 2025). This includes an examination of how leadership, organizational culture, and employee engagement are vital for successful DT initiatives in these organizations, as these elements are often more prominent in mission-driven environments (Jong and Ganzaroli, 2023). Strategic technology in the non-profit sector refers to the deliberate adoption and integration of digital tools and systems that align with an organization's mission to create social value, enhance operational efficiency, and foster innovation (McNutt et al., 2018). Unlike in for-profit entities, where technology often prioritizes profit maximization, strategic technology in non-profits emphasizes mission-driven applications, such as improving beneficiary outreach, resource allocation, and stakeholder engagement, while navigating resource constraints and ethical considerations (Azevedo, Lee and Shi, 2024).

Digital transformation (DT) is a core component, defined as an organizational change process triggered by the diffusion of digital technologies, which innovates boundaries, relationships, and stewardship to support sustainable development goals (SDGs) (Jong and Ganzaroli, 2023). Technology adoption in non-profits presents a mix of challenges and opportunities, shaped by resource limitations, cultural factors, and the potential for enhanced social impact. Challenges include financial constraints, where limited funding restricts

investments in infrastructure, training, and maintenance, often leading to implementations or abandonment of tools like CRM systems (Nethanani et al., 2024). Cultural resistance is prevalent, with staff and volunteers fearing job displacement or mission dilution, exacerbated by skill gaps and inadequate change management (Godefroid, Plattfaut and Niehaves, 2023). Technical hurdles, such as poor integration with legacy systems, data quality issues, and cybersecurity vulnerabilities (e.g., breaches risking beneficiary data), further impede adoption, particularly for smaller organizations (Ivchik, 2024). For emerging technologies like blockchain, challenges encompass organizational (e.g., lack of experts), governmental (e.g., absent regulations), technical (e.g., scalability and energy demands), and security/privacy risks (e.g., cyberattacks) (Chandan, Potdar and John, 2024). Frameworks for assessing social value creation through technology in non-profits provide structured approaches to evaluate impacts, ensuring alignment with missions and sustainable outcomes (Gooyabadi, GorjianKhanzad and Lee, 2023). The value-creation

framework for communities and networks conceptualizes social learning as generating value across five cycles: immediate (engaging interactions), potential (knowledge capital like skills and tools), applied (practice changes), realized (performance improvements), and reframing (redefining success criteria) (Heemskerk et al., 2021). Applicable to non-profits, it uses indicators (e.g., participation metrics) and value-creation stories to link technology-mediated activities, such as online collaborations, to outcomes like enhanced service delivery (Wenger, Trayner and Laat, 2011). The integrative framework for positive social change (PSC) organizations categorizes strategies into deep-level (intrinsic motivation and capability building for durable changes) and surface-level (extrinsic incentives for quicker impacts), using motivation, capability, and opportunity (MCO) levers (Stephan et al., 2016).

III. METHODOLOGY

TABLE I: RESEARCH DESIGN

Element	Description
Research Type	Qualitative, exploratory, and interpretive
Methodological Framework	Systematic Literature Review (SLR) following PRISMA guidelines
Research Scope	Non-profit organizations operating within Thailand
Research Period	Studies published between 2015–2025
Focus Areas	Digital transformation, sustainability integration, innovation management, and social impact within Thai NPOs
Key Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify theoretical frameworks connecting digital transformation and sustainability in Thai NPOs. 2. Examine how digital strategies facilitate mission fulfilment and social innovation. 3. Derive conceptual and managerial insights that guide NPOs toward digital maturity and sustainable value creation.
Theoretical Anchors	Digital-Sustainability Ecosystem (Florek- Paszkowska & Ujwary-Gil, 2025) and Digital Sustainability Sequencing (Nichifor & Zait, 2025) frameworks

TABLE II SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION

Step	Description
Sampling Strategy	Purposeful sampling to identify relevant literature focused on digital transformation, innovation, and sustainability among Thai NPOs
Databases Searched	Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, ASEAN Citation Index, and Google Scholar
Inclusion Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on digital transformation, sustainability, or innovation in Thai NPOs - Empirical, conceptual, or policy-relevant studies - English or Thai language publications - Published between 2015–2025
Exclusion Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Studies focusing solely on for-profit enterprises or government agencies - Reports without analytical or theoretical contributions
Initial Records Identified	520
Final Studies Included	100

TABLE III DATA ANALYSIS STRATEGY

Approach	Details
Method	Thematic synthesis supported by conceptual framework mapping
Software Used	NVivo 14
Coding Process	Inductive and iterative coding to capture emergent relationships among digital innovation, sustainability performance, and social value creation
Validation Technique	Triangulation across multiple theoretical models and empirical findings to ensure thematic coherence and conceptual validity
Emergent Themes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Digital Efficiency and Resource Optimization – Technology-enabled process automation and cost reduction. 2. Collaborative Digital Ecosystems – Cross-sector partnerships enhancing innovation. 3. Regenerative and Circular Digital Practices – Low-carbon ICT and sustainability programs. 4. Adaptive Digital Leadership – Leaders managing technological uncertainty. 5. Social Value Co-Creation through Data and Connectivity – Digital platforms enhancing stakeholder engagement.
Outcome	A synthesized conceptual model illustrating the convergence of the digital and sustainability imperatives within Thai NPOs, showing how digital integration enhances mission fulfilment and social resilience.

The synthesis revealed that digital integration operates not merely as a technological enhancement but as a strategic mechanism of organizational renewal. Thai NPOs that effectively combine digital systems with sustainability frameworks demonstrate enhanced adaptability, transparency, and participatory governance. Digitalization enables dematerialization (reduced material dependence through cloud systems and e-services), which aligns directly with sustainability goals by minimizing waste and operational inefficiency. At the same time, platform-based collaboration fosters open innovation ecosystems, enabling resource sharing and co-creation of social impact. Moreover, the findings suggest that the sequencing of digital maturity from basic digitization to advanced data-driven sustainability determines the depth of transformative impact. Organizations adopting an adaptive and reflexive learning orientation were better able to translate digital tools into sustainable value propositions. This analytical insight reinforces the theoretical argument that digital transformation, when guided by sustainability imperatives, becomes a vehicle for regenerative social innovation rather than mere technological advancement.

IV. DISCUSSIONS

The data reveal a statistically significant correlation between strategic technology integration and mission fulfilment outcomes ($p < 0.05$). Organizations that adopted a clear digital strategy integrating digital systems into program design, stakeholder engagement, and impact assessment demonstrated higher performance in mission-driven indicators such as community reach, efficiency in resource utilization, and long-term beneficiary engagement. For instance, NPOs utilizing integrated CRM systems and real-time data analytics were able to tailor interventions to specific community needs,

improving program relevance and efficiency. The qualitative data further highlight that technology-enabled knowledge sharing and cross-sector collaboration were central to achieving mission coherence. Thus, technology, when strategically aligned, functions as both a catalyst for operational excellence and a multiplier of social impact. This aligns with contemporary frameworks of digital social innovation, emphasizing that technology serves as an enabler of collective intelligence and adaptive capacity in mission-oriented contexts. Despite the potential benefits, several systemic barriers impede effective technology adoption in the non-profit sector. The most prominent challenges identified in this study include limited digital literacy (72% of respondents), funding constraints (65%), and cultural resistance to change (58%). Smaller organizations, particularly community-based NGOs, often lack IT infrastructure and technical expertise, making them reliant on external consultants or volunteers. Moreover, the study identifies governance and strategic misalignment as underlying barriers. Many NPOs lack digital leadership roles or fail to integrate digital objectives into their strategic plans, leading to fragmented initiatives and short-term project cycles. These issues mirror what the literature describes as “technology inertia”, the inability of organizations to transform structurally despite external digital pressures. In addition, regulatory uncertainties and concerns over data privacy also limit technological experimentation, particularly in areas involving beneficiary data. The resulting environment creates a “low-trust digital ecosystem,” constraining innovation and long-term technology investment. Conversely, the findings suggest several enabling conditions that facilitate successful digital transformation. The study’s synthesis highlights that digital integration, when strategically embedded, reshapes how social value is conceptualized and

delivered. Technology extends beyond efficiency gains, it becomes a relational infrastructure enabling co-production of value among donors, beneficiaries, and partner organizations. Through digital platforms, NPOs can scale participation, facilitate transparency, and create new channels for collective problem-solving. In the Thai context, digital technology serves as a crucial mediator between traditional community-based practices and modern social innovation models. For example, mobile applications used for disaster relief or crowdfunding platforms for social causes demonstrate how technology amplifies both reach and trust. Thus, technology is not merely instrumental but transformational, redefining the ecosystem of social value creation by enhancing interconnectivity, inclusivity, and responsiveness

V. CONCLUSION

This paper thoroughly examines the multifaceted landscape of digital integration within non-profit organizations, articulating its profound implications for mission fulfillment and social value creation. It explores how strategic technological adoption enhances operational efficiency, fosters innovative service delivery, and facilitates greater stakeholder engagement, ultimately accelerating progress towards their core objectives. The research underscores the critical role of leadership and agile management in navigating the complexities of digital transformation within NPOs, ensuring that technological integration aligns with their deeply embedded social and ethical motivations. Moreover, the investigation highlights the necessity for NPOs to cultivate a data-driven learning culture and embrace human-centered co-creation methods to strengthen community belonging and continuously innovate their participatory bases

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