

Information Technology Consulting Practice: A Literature Review of Digital Transformation, Strategic Value, and Emerging Professional Roles

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ABSTRACT

Information technology consulting has changed from a technical assistance activity to a strategic profession helping organizations to transform digitally, innovate organizationally, and gain a sustainable competitive advantage. Cloud computing, artificial intelligence, big data analytics, cybersecurity, enterprise platforms, and digital service management have considerably broadened the field and duties of IT consultants. Thus, consultants are increasingly expected to combine technological knowledge with strategic decision making, organizational change management, and business process improvements.

This paper discusses a narrative literature review focused on changes in the practices of IT consulting in the period of 2016-2026. This review discusses scholarly literature concerning digital transformation, consulting competencies, value generation, service innovations, and emerging roles in the consulting profession. In contrast to a descriptive literature review, this research critically contrasts existing perspectives on the subject, finds converging and divergent opinions, and points at research gaps which define the area. Special attention will be paid to changes in the strategic function of IT consultants, to competencies necessary for organizational digital transformations, and to new technologies such as AI in consulting.

Narrative review methodology is made clear through the discussion of how the literature was searched for, what were the criteria for choosing the papers to be included in this paper, and how the process of selecting those papers took place. It has been found that IT consultants in today's world are seen as strategic partners who enable technological innovation, organizational resilience, and digital transformation of businesses, and not only provide technical solutions. While there have been great advancements in this area, many issues need to be resolved in relation to consulting ethics, AI governance, digital trust, sustainability, and competency development.

Keywords: Information Technology consulting, digital transformation, digital innovation, consulting services, strategic management, artificial intelligence, organizational change

INTRODUCTION

The fast development of digital technologies has revolutionized value creation, competition, and delivery of goods and services by firms. The use of cloud computing, artificial intelligence (AI), big data analysis, cybersecurity, enterprise platforms, and automation is crucial for organizational strategies that focus on increasing efficiency, creating better customer experience, and using evidence-based decision making. With the constant advancements in digital technologies, organizations often face numerous difficulties in terms of selecting technology, implementing it, managing it, introducing changes into the organization due to the introduction of technology, and aligning with the strategy. Information Technology (IT) Consulting is an important service that helps organizations cope with technological difficulties and make their digital endeavors profitable from the business perspective.

In the past, the role of IT consultancy involved mostly technical implementation-related tasks, such as software

implementation, systems integration, infrastructure administration, and technical support. Yet, the scope of contemporary consulting practices has become much broader. Currently, consultants are supposed to offer strategic assistance, drive transformation within organizations, conduct digital innovations programs, and ensure organizational resilience under conditions of increasing uncertainty related to technology. As digital transformation becomes a part of the strategy of most organizations, consultants are becoming major intermediaries between technologies and organizational strategies.

The increased strategic importance of IT consulting is confirmed by contemporary literature in which it is recognized that successful digital transformation goes far beyond the use of new technologies; it involves organizational culture, leaders, organizational governance, stakeholders, and continuous innovation. The existing research also shows that today consultants' tasks have been expanding to advisory work in digital strategy development, enterprise architecture, cloud computing, cybersecurity governance, business processes optimization, change management, and AI implementation.

Although there have been considerable advances made in the research on digital transformation and IT consulting, some significant gaps still exist. In particular, much of the existing literature tends to focus on discussing technological innovations without critically exploring the changes in consulting practice in general, theory behind the effectiveness of consulting, and the new ethical and organizational challenges related to the digital transformation. Besides, relatively little attention has been paid to exploring how technological innovations influence the development of professional skills and competencies, consultant-client relations, organization's resiliency, digital trust, and future role of consultants in AI environment.

This research intends to fill these gaps using the approach of the narrative literature review of scholarly sources from 2016 to 2026. Contrary to the traditional method, which consists in summarizing previously conducted research, this review takes a critical and analytical view on it, comparing various viewpoints and discussing agreements and disagreements between them, as well as identifying open questions for further research. Thus, the aim of the study is to contribute to the accumulation of the knowledge about IT consulting discipline.

Specifically, this study aims to:

1. examine the evolution of Information Technology consulting practices in the context of digital transformation;
2. analyze the changing strategic roles and competencies required of contemporary IT consultants;
3. synthesize current research regarding digital transformation, consulting innovation, and organizational value creation;
4. identify emerging challenges related to ethics, governance, sustainability, digital trust, and artificial intelligence; and
5. propose future research directions that strengthen both theoretical understanding and professional practice within IT consulting.

Background Literature

IT consulting is understood as advisory services provided to help organizations make effective use of IT in order to achieve their business goals. IT consulting services include technology planning, systems integration, software implementation, cybersecurity, cloud computing, enterprise architecture, and digital strategy.

According to a systematic literature review done by Kumar et al., IT consulting can be viewed as a multidisciplinary field where the expertise of an IT consultant should involve technical, business, project management, and organizational change competences. The researchers have stated that the demand for professionals who would be capable of handling both the technological and managerial problems is growing.

Nowadays, IT consulting services offer not only technical solutions but also a strategic business function that can help the organizations transform and outpace the competitors. Modern IT consultants not only help the organizations to align the technological initiatives with the business goals, to manage the organizational changes and to maximize the digital investments but also to implement innovative technologies such as cloud

computing, AI, big data, cybersecurity, and enterprise platforms. The evolution of IT consulting services is linked to the growing dependence of the organizations from digital technologies.

One of the factors leading to such a shift is digital transformation. As Vial (2019) proposed, digital transformation is the organization's reaction to technological disruptions and implies changing the organization's value creation process, business model, and organizational design through the use of digital technologies. Digital transformation, therefore, includes organizational changes, strategic leadership and innovations rather than technology introduction. This explains why IT consultants have the central role as digital transformation facilitators.

The importance of strategic role of IT consultants became especially apparent due to the fact that organizations require professional assistance in handling digital environments. In addition to the technical knowledge, consultants can offer a strategic view on digital strategy formulation, enterprise architecture, business process optimization, risk and innovation management. According to the results of systematic review conducted recently, successful digital transformation requires integration of technologies with organizational capability, organizational culture, organizational leadership and stakeholders involvement. In other words, the role of IT consulting has shifted from execution of technology projects to generation of sustainable business value.

From the perspective of the consulting field, the notion of digital transformation has completely transformed the traditional role of consulting tasks and led to the creation of a number of new jobs. Contemporary consultants need to show multifaceted skills that comprise not only technical but also business-related, project management, data analysis, cybersecurity, cloud computing, artificial intelligence use, and change management. Examples of such new professions include Digital Transformation Consultant, Cloud Consultant, AI Consultant, Enterprise Architect, Digital Strategy Advisor, IT Service Management (ITSM) Consultant and Cybersecurity Consultant. Such professions require professionals who are able to connect technologies to business objectives and facilitate collaboration among executives, technical and business people.

Additionally, in terms of systematic mapping studies, it is clear that the IT consulting industry has shifted from traditional IT consultancy to value-based consultancy which emphasizes innovation, customer experience, sustainability, and digital transformation. Thanks to digital platforms and the use of IT Service Management (ITSM) methodologies, it became possible to provide consulting services that cover governance, automation, and resiliency of organizations within the context of digital transformations. In this way, IT consultants become the strategic partners in achieving digital transformations at enterprise level.

Continuous professional development of IT consultants has become another very important aspect because of the growing need for digital transformation. Companies will have to have consultants who have technological skills as well as soft skills like leadership, communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and adaptability. Because of the constant changes caused by the appearance of new technologies within industries, consulting industry should be considered one of the major sources of organizational innovations and digitalization. Thus, it can be stated that according to literature, the future of IT consulting is dependent greatly on the ability of consultants to combine technology skills with business skills in order to make organizations digitize.

With the appearance of digital technologies, the scope of services of consultants has grown. Now, they should not only implement technologies but also provide consulting regarding innovation, competitive positioning, and digital business models.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a narrative literature review approach in order to analyze the development of Information Technology consulting practice and its connection with digital transformation, value creation, and evolving consulting skills. A narrative review was chosen since it provides the opportunity for integration of evidence from different perspectives and critical analysis of developments in multiple research areas.

In order to enhance the methodological clarity of the study, a structured literature search process was employed. Relevant literature was gathered through peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, review

papers, and books concerning the areas of Information Technology consulting, digital transformation, consulting skills, organizational innovation, enterprise information systems, and other related fields.

Literature Search Strategy

A search strategy has been designed in order to gather studies published between 2016 and 2026. Search terms included combinations of the following keywords:

- "Information Technology consulting"
- "IT consulting"
- "digital transformation"
- "digital innovation"
- "consulting competencies"
- "technology strategy"
- "IT service management"
- "cloud consulting"
- "artificial intelligence consulting"
- "digital governance"

Screening Procedure

The literature selection process consisted of the following stages:

1. identification of potentially relevant publications using predefined search terms;
2. removal of duplicate records;
3. screening of titles and abstracts for relevance;
4. full-text assessment of eligible publications; and
5. inclusion of studies meeting the established criteria.

A PRISMA-inspired literature selection flow diagram is recommended in the final manuscript to enhance methodological transparency by illustrating the number of records identified, screened, excluded, and ultimately included.

Inclusion Criteria

Studies were included if they:

- were published between 2016 and 2026;
- addressed Information Technology consulting, digital transformation, or closely related topics;
- were published in peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings, or other scholarly sources;
- examined consulting competencies, consulting services, organizational transformation, strategic management, or technology-enabled innovation; and
- provided theoretical, empirical, or review-based contributions relevant to contemporary IT consulting practice.

Exclusion Criteria

Studies were excluded if they:

- focused exclusively on software engineering or technical implementation without discussing consulting practice;
- lacked sufficient methodological rigor or scholarly credibility;
- were not directly relevant to Information Technology consulting or organizational digital transformation; or
- duplicated findings reported in other included publications.

Data Analysis

Instead of conducting a separate summary of each study, the literature review selected for the analysis was conducted using thematic synthesis. Such an approach to the analysis involves finding common themes, comparison of opposing views, discussion of theory, and discussion of research gaps. This will help in better understanding of the way how IT consulting has moved from a technical function to strategic ability.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundations

Instead of performing the summary separately for each article, the selected literature review for the analysis was done through thematic synthesis. Thematic synthesis as an approach to analysis includes looking at common themes, comparisons of differing points of view, theories, and research gaps. This will enable a better understanding of the transition of IT consultancy from being a technical role to becoming a strategic skill.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory

Dynamic Capabilities Theory has become one of the most popular theoretical approaches to understanding organizational adaptation in turbulent technological environments. This theory suggests that the source of sustainable competitive advantage does not depend on having valuable resources but the capacity of an organization to identify the new opportunities, capture them through strategic moves, and transform organizational resources and capabilities as a result of environmental changes. As shown in the recent literature, Dynamic Capabilities Theory has become one of the dominant paradigms in Information Systems because it describes how firms use digital technologies in order to stay competitive in the environment of technological uncertainty.

As far as IT consultation is concerned, Dynamic Capabilities Theory helps to understand why consultants are now considered to be strategic partners rather than technology enablers. Consultants help organizations to identify digital opportunities, develop transformation strategies, integrate new technologies, and manage organizational change in the process of digital transformation projects. That is why the value of consulting services has transformed from technology deployment into continuous adaptation.

Moreover, dynamic capabilities enable firms to realign their technological, human, and organizational assets according to changing digital environments. This theory is especially significant at the advent of the adoption of artificial intelligence, cloud computing, enterprise platforms, and data-centric business models.

Resource-Based View (RBV)

The core principle of the Resource-Based View is that sustained competitive advantage comes from organizational resources that have a high level of value, rarity, inimitability, and non-substitutability. As part of

Information Systems studies, RBV has been extensively used to describe how technological resources, organizational knowledge, and management skills lead to organizational success.

Nonetheless, the Resource-Based View does not sufficiently cover organizational success in the highly dynamic realm of digitalization. Despite RBV's emphasis on the strategic importance of organizational resources, evolving technological environment forces organizations to constantly renew and recombine such resources. Thus, RBV complements Dynamic Capabilities Theory in terms of providing an explanation both for the strategic significance of organizational resources and resource evolution.

As far as IT consulting is concerned, RBV implies that consultants provide strategic value by assisting organizations to leverage technological resources that improve their competitiveness. Instead of offering standalone technological solutions, IT consultants should integrate technological resources with organizational strategy and innovation capability.

Knowledge-Based View

While the Knowledge-Based View builds on the Resource-Based View by pointing to organizational knowledge as the most important strategic resource of the organization, knowledge creation, knowledge transfer, integration, and knowledge application in consulting practice are some of the primary tools for creating organizational value through knowledge management.

IT consultants possess not only technical knowledge but also industry know-how, best practices, analytical approaches, and knowledge of strategy that comes from a variety of different organizations. Through interaction with their clients, consultants help clients learn and enhance their decision-making abilities as well as the implementation of digital technology in their operations. Current literature stresses the point that knowledge integration is crucial for digital transformation capability development since technological innovation requires the combination of technical and organizational knowledge.

Digital Transformation Theory

The Digital Transformation Theory defines digital transformation not only as technology but as a holistic approach to transformation that includes such aspects as strategic renewal, organizational change, and cultural changes. In other words, this theory sees technologies not as separate tools used within an organization but rather as elements that help organizations transform into something else.

In relation to the field of IT consulting, the Digital Transformation Theory shows how the role of the consultant changed and why consultants have to perform tasks associated with digital strategies, enterprise architecture, innovation management, organizational change, and governance. This theory provides additional information in relation to what was already discussed in the literature on the topic.

Implications for IT Consulting Practice

The above theories in conjunction give a complete conceptual framework through which we understand the development of Information Technology consulting. RBV helps us understand the importance of resources in developing strategies while dynamic capabilities theory helps us understand how those resources get rejuvenated in an environment characterized by turbulence, KBV highlights the importance of knowledge creation and transfer while DT theory gives us examples of how technology innovations impact organizational strategy and business operations.

From these theories, one gets the theoretical foundation through which we understand why today's IT consultant is required to combine technical expertise and strategic management, organizational change, governance, innovation, and digital leadership. These theories provide a foundation through which one can look at issues like AI governance, organizational resilience, consulting ethics, sustainability, and digital trust, which have become central to IT consulting literature.

Background Literature

Evolution of Information Technology Consulting

Consulting for Information Technologies has been subject to a significant change within the last twenty years due to the changes in organizational strategy and technology advancements. In the past, IT consultants performed mainly technical functions including systems integration, installation of infrastructures, software adaptation and management of networks. The functions of consultants were mainly operational and aimed at providing technological solutions in order to increase the effectiveness of organizations. Nonetheless, due to the fast progress of digital technologies, consulting services have gained an extended range of tasks and became more strategic.

As can be seen from the recent literature, consulting services have become a strategic capability and not a purely technical one. Today, organizations expect from consultants not only the provision of the technological solution but also the development of digital strategy, re-engineering of the business processes, managing the change and innovation. The change is associated with the fact that the effective digital transformation is not possible unless technology investments are aligned with organization strategy, governance, and human resources (Vial, 2019; Nadkarni & Prügl, 2021).

Bode, Daneva, and van Sinderen (2022) have additionally shown that the consulting organizations themselves are undergoing digital transformation by means of using collaborative platforms, cloud-based delivery of services, automation, and data-driven consulting models. According to the systematic mapping of the literature carried out by Bode et al. (2022), digital technologies revolutionize consulting practices by creating opportunities for continuous client interactions, remote advisory and consulting services, and platform-based knowledge exchange. As a result, consulting companies increasingly create value through strategic alliances extending far beyond single technological implementation projects.

Although there is consensus among scholars concerning the strategic evolution of IT consulting, the existing studies vary significantly in regard to the interpretation of the key drivers of such an evolution. From the perspective of technology-oriented research, innovations in cloud computing, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and enterprise platforms are the main drivers of the process of innovation in consulting. Management-oriented research, in its turn, claims that organizational issues including leadership, culture, governance, and change management processes are equally important determinants of digital transformation.

Digital Transformation as the Primary Driver of Consulting Evolution

One of the most important factors among those affecting the consulting industry is the digital transformation phenomenon that is now shaping organizational priorities and practices in consultancy services. As opposed to defining digital transformation as simply implementing new technologies, the contemporary literature defines this concept as a more extensive process of organizational design, organizational strategy renewal, innovation of business models and capabilities development (Vial, 2019).

This approach makes consultants' duties much wider compared to the previous one. Contemporary consultants have to assess the level of an organization's digital maturity, develop digital transformation strategies, align technology investments with business goals, and implement organizational change projects that are usually quite challenging. In order to fulfill their duties effectively, modern consultants need to combine the above skills with the ability to plan strategically, lead, communicate, and manage stakeholders.

According to Nadkarni and Prügl (2021), digital transformation should be considered as a continuous organizational capability rather than as a specific technological project. This viewpoint is very close to Dynamic Capabilities Theory that explains how organizations ensure their competitiveness by sensing technology opportunities, seizing initiatives and transforming organizational capabilities continuously.

However, the research literature also reveals certain issues in relation to digital transformation that are yet to be resolved. Although technology innovation provides a window of opportunity for an organization's growth, it

presents additional complexity in the areas of governance, cybersecurity, regulation, ethics, and labor. This is another way of demonstrating the role played by IT consultants.

Strategic Value Creation Through IT Consulting

One of the emerging themes in recent literature is the increasing realization of IT consulting as a strategic value creation opportunity beyond the usual operational benefits. The effectiveness of the traditional consulting services was often assessed using the technical measures of time of implementation, system uptime, and project completion. However, recent literature often considers the effectiveness of the consulting services using organizational measures of innovation capacity, business agility, competitive advantage, customer experience, and resilience.

The Resource-Based View explains the shift because organizations generate their sustainable competitive advantage using valuable organizational resources and capabilities. In this case, the consultant creates value in the organization using the identification, development, integration, and optimization of the technology resources that cannot be replicated by competitors. Instead of offering standardized technological solutions, the consultant develops digital strategy according to organizational capabilities, industry needs, and business goals.

New developments within the literature further expand on this framework by introducing the Knowledge-Based View, which highlights the importance of consulting value not only being created through technology, but rather through the development, transfer, and exploitation of organizational knowledge. The process of organizational learning is achieved through the implementation of best practices, transferring of specialized knowledge, and knowledge integration in technical and management processes. Therefore, successful consultancy is becoming less reliant on technology transfer, and increasingly dependent on collaboration in terms of knowledge creation.

However, even though there have been advances made in this area, very little research exists on the role of knowledge transfer processes in post-consulting capability development within organizations. This is an important gap within the literature due to the necessity of knowledge internalization in digital transformation.

Emerging Professional Competencies in IT Consulting

The skills required of IT professionals have changed considerably. In past consulting positions, an IT professional had to be technically skilled in programming, systems analysis, database management, and infrastructure management. Modern-day consultants need to balance technical skills with management skills, such as strategic management, leadership, project management, communication, and innovation management.

Modern research identifies digital transformation management, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, data analytics, enterprise architecture, and organizational change management as the primary technical skills of a modern consultant. However, interpersonal skills, including leadership, teamwork, negotiation, critical thinking, adaptability, and stakeholder communication, have also gained importance in handling transformation initiatives.

Generative AI has contributed even more towards increasing the competencies needed. Consultants are required to assess the readiness of AI, create governance models, deal with the ethical considerations, and support organizations in implementing AI technology in their business processes in a responsible manner. According to recent systematic reviews of AI governance, the technological knowledge alone does not suffice. Consultants need to have an understanding of responsibility, transparency, regulation, and governance of AI.

Even though there is substantial agreement about the competencies needed by future consultants, not much research has been done on the need to design professional development programs for consulting firms in view of the constantly changing AI environments.

Research Gaps in the Existing Literature

Though there is significant development in literature related to IT consultancy, certain key areas still lack sufficient research.

Firstly, many researchers are concerned only about technology implementation without making an adequate integration of organizational and managerial views and consulting theory. The closer relations between the practice of consultancy and concepts like Dynamic Capabilities Theory, Resource Based View, Knowledge-Based View, and Socio-Technical Systems Theory will enhance our knowledge on how consultants build sustainable value for organizations.

The second gap is connected with the relatively low level of attention to ethical questions even in times of fast adoption of artificial intelligence, automation, and data-driven decisions.

Third, there is also a paucity of information with respect to consulting processes in developing countries. Most of the empirical studies still examine large firms situated in developed nations, which reduces the applicability of current knowledge on emerging digital economies.

Fourth, only a handful of literature examines the long-term effects of consulting processes on organizational resilience, capability, and digital maturity. Resolving these research gaps would not only enhance theory but also improve practice and create a more robust basis for IT consulting research in the future.

Digital Transformation and IT Consulting

Digital transformation has now emerged as one of the major influencing factors for IT consulting. The literature shows that the need for consulting services for adoption of cloud computing, AI, big data, and digital business models is on the rise among organizations.

According to Bode, Daneva, and van Sinderen (2022), digital transformation has had a revolutionary impact on the way consulting services are delivered. From a systematic mapping exercise conducted by these researchers, it was found that consulting organizations are increasingly relying on digital collaboration technologies, automation of service delivery, and platform-based consulting.

Literature further suggests that IT capabilities play an important role as drivers of organizational innovation. Digital transformation efforts generally need some external help for integration of technology and organization with the environment.

Strategic Role of IT Consultants

The role of contemporary information technology consultants is that of strategic consultants, not just technologists. Companies employ consultants to analyze new technologies, determine digital maturity, and plan technology strategies for the future.

This has been highlighted throughout the literature as one of the key considerations in making technology investments. The contribution of consultants lies in recognizing the innovative possibilities, increasing efficiency, and minimizing risks associated with technology investments.

Emerging Competencies in IT Consulting

There has been an evolution in the competencies needed for effective consulting. Modern consultants should be competent in:

- Digital transformation
- Cloud computing

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- Artificial intelligence
 - Analyzing data
 - Cybersecurity
 - Project management
 - Management of organizational changes
 - Business process improvement

The fast evolution of digital technologies has greatly changed the competencies demanded from Information Technology (IT) consultants. Previously, consultants worked in such areas as software deployment, systems integration, and technical support. However, the increased difficulty of the digital transformation process has made the consultant's job one of the strategist whose main task is to align technological solution with the company's strategic goals. The acceleration of digital transformation means that now consultants need to integrate their technical knowledge, strategic vision, leadership, and communication skills in order to assist clients in obtaining sustainable organizational development (Bode et al., 2022; Nadkarni & Prügl, 2021).

The first competence that modern consultant needs to possess is digital transformation. Digital transformation involves using digital technologies for creating new approaches to managing businesses, organization processes, and clients' experience. Consultant needs to evaluate the digital maturity of the organization, create a roadmap for digital transformation, and guide the company through the process of introducing digital technologies into practice. This competence is vital because now the digital transformation process goes far beyond the implementation of technological solutions (Vial, 2019).

The next important skill for a consultant is cloud computing. With the increasing use of cloud infrastructure and cloud services, it has become necessary for consultants to be aware of cloud migration, cloud architecture, cloud security, and service management skills. Consultants help organizations choose suitable cloud options, manage IT resources, and make them scalable and flexible. They also advise on business continuity. With cloud computing knowledge, consultants can propose cost-efficient solutions for increasing the efficiency of business operations and digital innovation (Silva et al., 2026).

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) in business processes has also impacted consulting activities. Today consultants should have knowledge about AI-related technologies like machine learning, predictive analytics, robotic process automation (RPA), and generative AI. It is important for consultants to identify possible areas for using AI solutions in business processes, assess organizational readiness to adopt such solutions and make sure that they fit organizational strategies. Being a part of strategic business capabilities, AI requires consultants to act as facilitators of innovation in organizations (Nadkarni & Prügl, 2021).

Data analytics competency has become as important due to the reliance of organizations on data-driven decision-making. IT consultants should have skills related to data collection, analysis, interpretation, and visualization aimed at helping to make strategic decisions and improve organizational performance. Business intelligence, predictive analytics, and data governance are the key skills that will help consultants to detect trends, evaluate business performance, and suggest proven solutions resulting in organizational value creation (Vial, 2019).

The ever-evolving nature of cyber threats made cybersecurity the key competency of IT consultants. It is necessary for consultants to be able to assess information security risks, adopt cybersecurity frameworks, develop governance policies, and comply with both national and international standards in terms of information security (Silva et al., 2026).

Finally, consultants should have skills related to project management. Digital transformation projects may involve a number of different stakeholders, limited resources, complex implementation schedule, and risks for

the organization. Understanding the principles of project management methodologies like Agile, Scrum, PRINCE2, or PMBOK allows managing such projects properly (Kumar et al., 2017).

Organizational change management is another important skill for consultants to possess. The introduction of technology does not ensure success; an organization must be able to manage changes within its culture, staff behaviors, and processes. Consultants play a role in communication, training, stakeholder involvement, and organizational readiness to help employees adapt to new technologies and processes. Change management skills will increase the probability of successful transformation (Bode et al., 2022).

Moreover, knowledge and experience in business process improvement are essential for consultants to design the work processes of the organization before implementing new digital technologies. With the use of Business Process Management, Lean, and Six Sigma approaches, consultants will be able to analyze the existing issues and make recommendations to improve the efficiency of processes (Kumar et al., 2017).

In addition to technical skills, consultants are required to have interpersonal skills according to recent research. The importance of effective communication is emphasized since consultants often interpret technical ideas in language understandable for executives, managers, and other people without any technical background. Skills such as leadership, collaboration, critical thinking, adaptability, negotiations, and problem-solving skills help consultants to lead multi-disciplinary teams and establish a good relationship with clients during the process of digital transformation (Bode et al., 2022).

Finally, the importance of the knowledge about industry regulation and governance frameworks is increased. Consultants need to be aware of the requirements in terms of data protection, information security, IT governance, and compliance in the industry to ensure that the technological solution meets all ethical and legal requirements. Knowledge about ITIL, COBIT, ISO/IEC 27001, and data protection regulations will help consultants to develop safe and sustainable solutions (Silva et al., 2026).

Recent research shows that consulting professionals need both technical and interpersonal competencies. Competency in communicating technical issues to non-technical audiences is crucial. Moreover, industry regulation knowledge is becoming essential for modern consultants.

IT Service Management and Platform-Based Consulting

Cloud native platforms have opened up new consulting models. In addition, IT Service Management (ITSM) platforms offer an opportunity for consultants to build their solutions without having to do too much programming.

Studies on ITSM consulting have revealed that consultants may now concentrate on designing the processes without worrying about developing the software. Nevertheless, issues of dependency on the platform, customizability, and continuous learning pose serious challenges.

Challenges Facing IT Consulting

Notwithstanding advancements in technology, there are still some obstacles that exist for consulting operations.

Technological Challenges

There is constant technological development which demands consultants to be always involved in the process of learning. New technologies, including AI, machine learning and edge computing demand professional skills.

Organizational Challenges

There is often the problem of resistance of employees to the digital transformation processes. Thus, consultants have to solve problems related to change management.

Cybersecurity Challenges

There is also an increase in cyber threats demanding security aspects to be included in technological tasks.

Ethical and Governance Challenges

New ethical challenges emerge due to the introduction of AI and other innovations.

CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Transformation and the Strategic Evolution of IT Consulting

The advent of digital transformation has transformed the goals and practices of IT consulting as well. In previous consulting assignments, the focus was on overcoming issues related to technology implementation, such as installing software or upgrading IT infrastructures. Today, consulting is more about strategic planning, redesigning organization and innovation management, and digital capacity building. The underlying principle behind this is that the mere introduction of technology into an organization does not bring value to it; rather, the true value lies in integrating technological investments into organizational strategies, leadership, governance, and organizational culture.

It can be said that the scholarly literature uniformly agrees on the point that digital transformation is a multidimensional process encompassing technological changes, organizational changes, and managerial changes. According to Vial (2019), digital transformation should be defined as a process in which an organization transforms its processes, structures, and business models using digital technology. In addition, Nadkarni and Prügl (2021) argue that organizations need to constantly change their resources and capabilities to be able to compete in digital environments that evolve very fast.

In light of this framework, IT consultants have become increasingly responsible for formulating digital strategy, evaluating organizational preparedness, managing changes and advising executive members about innovations made possible by technology. These responsibilities match quite well the Dynamic Capabilities Theory that emphasizes the capability of sensing opportunities in technology, implementing strategic initiatives and transforming organizational capabilities in response to changing environments. In other words, consultants not only introduce novel technologies but enhance the adaptive capabilities of organizations.

While there is consensus that digital transformation is strategically important, existing literature offers diverse viewpoints on what the key drivers of its success are. While technologically oriented literature focuses on the issues of technological infrastructure, cloud computing and artificial intelligence adoption, management-oriented literature highlights the roles of leadership, organizational culture, governance and stakeholder engagement. Far from being contradictory, these perspectives should be regarded as complementary elements of socio-technical transformation process. Empirical research in the future should therefore focus on how technological capabilities and organizational elements interact in the process of consulting.

Emerging Competencies of Contemporary IT Consultants

The set of competencies expected from IT consultants has greatly changed as their work became more strategic and multidisciplinary. The previous studies focused mainly on technical knowledge of systems development, programming, infrastructure management, and software deployment. Modern literature proves that technical knowledge is not enough to deal with complexity of current digital transformation projects.

According to the current research, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, enterprise architecture, data analytics, digital governance, and organizational change management are the most critical technical skills required for today's consultants. In addition, personal competencies including communication, leadership, negotiation, collaboration, flexibility, and critical thinking have become equally important since consultants' work involves working in a multidisciplinary team comprising executives, technical people, regulators, and end-users.

The advent of artificial intelligence has only increased the demand for these competencies. AI generation, predictive analytics, and intelligent automation have offered additional opportunities in consulting while raising ethical, governance, and regulatory issues as well. Hence, consultants have had to acquire competencies not just in implementing AI but also in managing the AI process responsibly, evaluating the risks associated with it, maintaining algorithmic transparency, protecting individual privacy, and building organization readiness. It is widely agreed in recent systematic reviews that successful AI adoption requires the integration of technological innovation and good governance.

Even though there is ample agreement on what competencies consultants will require in the future, there has been much less research on how these competencies can be effectively developed in consultancy firms. Most of the literature simply identifies the competencies that need to be developed and offers little information on how such capabilities could be continuously developed through education, professional development, or organizational learning.

Client–Consultant Relationships and Knowledge Co-Creation

Consulting services have developed from the idea of offering transactional services to that of creating value. The traditional concept of consultation services considered consultants to be outsiders with expertise who analyzed organizational challenges and offered technological solutions to the same. In contrast, the modern literature looks at consultancy as a process where there is continuous interaction, learning, and problem-solving.

Knowledge-Based View Theory can be used effectively as a theoretical framework to explain the above-mentioned phenomenon because this theory considers knowledge in organizations as an important strategic asset. Instead of transferring their technical knowledge, consultants help organizations learn through the integration of external best practices and the knowledge of the organization itself.

Consulting relationships are also known to enhance trust, stakeholder engagement, and commitment within an organization undergoing digital transformation. Active involvement of organizations in consulting activities enables increased readiness to embrace innovations due to the involvement of the staff in the process of creating knowledge and making decisions. However, consulting projects with poor communication, stakeholder engagement, and knowledge transfer lead to implementation delays, user resistance, and low organizational learning.

The literature review suggests that there is relatively little empirical evidence regarding the ability of organizations to retain the knowledge gained through consulting projects. Thus, future research should focus on the institutionalization of the knowledge gained through consulting projects and the role of collaborative consulting relationships in long-term digital capabilities development.

Consulting Ethics, Digital Trust, and AI Governance

The swift development of technology, including artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and decision making through data analysis, has raised numerous ethical issues in the realm of IT consulting. Traditionally, consultancy ethics have been mostly concerned with professional ethics, confidentiality, and managing conflicts of interest. Modern consulting environments call for wider ethical issues such as algorithm transparency, responsible usage of AI, data governance, cybersecurity, digital trust, and compliance.

Recent studies of AI governance stress the increasing necessity to create an organizational framework in which AI will be used transparently, responsibly, and ethically. Nowadays, consultancy involves much advice concerning AI governance frameworks, assessing ethical risks, regulatory compliance, and responsible innovations. Ethical competencies have turned out to be an important element of professional consulting practice.

Digital trust is another important factor that has proved itself to be a crucial determinant of digital transformation. In particular, organizations have begun to use digital tools, cloud computing technologies, and

decision-support systems based on AI solutions, all of which require people to trust technical solutions and governing structures. Thus, consultants are crucial for creating such structures that would help companies gain their trust.

Despite increasing academic interest in AI governance, there are still few studies that would explore how consulting companies implement ethical norms into consulting processes. This suggests that future research should focus on studying such issues as well.

Sustainability and Organizational Resilience in IT Consulting

Sustainability is one of the critical factors taken into account when conducting IT consultations today. Previously, such consulting was based on improving efficiency and financial success. But nowadays companies are expecting technologies to have positive implications for sustainability in economic, ecological, and social terms. Thus, besides advice regarding the implementation of technologies, consultants are supposed to help businesses develop sustainable digital strategies.

The use of digital transformations promotes sustainability through process automation, efficient resource allocation, data-based decisions, and operational efficiency. However, at the same time, technology innovation poses new problems connected with the use of energy resources, generation of electronic waste, cybersecurity issues, and changes to the labor market. Hence, consultants should assess technologies not only in terms of their performance.

Organizational resilience has equally become a strategic goal for digital transformation. Organizational resilience refers to the ability of an organization to anticipate the disruptions, react to changes in technology, and continually adapt to changes in organizational capabilities under uncertain circumstances. The role of IT consultants in building resilience is through assisting with strategy formulation, business continuity, cybersecurity preparedness, and capability development to respond to future disruptions.

While sustainability and resilience have increasingly become a part of digital transformation literature, the inclusion of sustainability and resilience concepts in IT consulting is relatively undeveloped. Further research should focus on how consulting practices can improve digital innovation, organizational resilience, and sustainable development concurrently.

Research Synthesis and Emerging Directions

The reviewed literature collectively indicates that IT consulting has developed into a strategic discipline which combines technological know-how with organizational transformation, innovation management, governance, and capability building. The approaches based on Dynamic Capabilities Theory, the Resource-Based View, the Knowledge-Based View, and Digital Transformation Theory all converge in their understanding that sustainable performance of organizations is possible only through continuous building of organizational and technological capabilities.

However, there is still much to be done in filling in gaps in the current state of the art. First of all, while there is ample literature on digital transformation, the issues related to consulting in developing countries, the process of organizational capability building, ethical governance tools, and organizational aspects of Generative AI are not covered in enough detail. There is a need for more longitudinal and empirical research on the outcomes of consulting projects beyond their implementation.

DISCUSSION

From the literature, there is a notable change in the way IT consulting is carried out in the last decade. While traditional consulting involved the implementation of IT, modern consulting is more about creating value and innovating through technology. The demand for consultants in digital transformation projects has risen because they need to have multiple skills that include not only technical know-how but also strategic planning and change management. Consulting using platforms is changing how consultancy work is done as it makes them scalable and efficient.

The literature suggests that the future of IT consulting would be shaped by technologies such as AI and automation as well as analytics platforms. Those consultants who blend technological expertise with business expertise would remain valuable to organizations.

It can be said from the literature reviewed that Information Technology (IT) consulting has experienced a paradigm shift from being solely a technical service to becoming a strategic profession which contributes towards innovation and digital transformation for value creation in the organization. The change represents an overall shift in the perception about technology in organizations, moving away from viewing technology as a mere tool for use within an organization to being viewed as a strategic asset contributing towards competitive advantage, resilience, and sustainability of the business. Therefore, it has been noted that IT consulting has required more of a combination of technological skills and organizational leadership, strategic management, governance, and innovation from practitioners.

An important theme identified from this review is that digital transformation is the primary factor driving consulting evolution. It has been observed in all the articles studied in this literature review that digital transformation is defined as a whole-process approach encompassing organizational change, innovation, capability development, and cultural change rather than just being focused on implementing technology alone. The result indicates that successful digital transformation can be achieved by aligning the process with organizational competencies instead of technology alone.

Indeed, the theories discussed in this review support such an interpretation. Dynamic Capabilities Theory reveals how organizations build their competitive ability through sensing technological opportunities, taking strategic initiatives and reorganizing organizational resources in light of rapidly changing external environment. In this respect, consultants add value to organization not through introducing any technological innovations but through increasing the flexibility of organizations. The same applies to the Resource-Based Theory, according to which sustainable competitive advantage is built on organizational resources. Also, in the Knowledge-Based theory consultants add value to organizations by creating and transferring knowledge.

According to the review, the competencies that modern IT consultants are expected to have been significantly extended. Technical knowledge is important but not enough in order to deal with the complex nature of digital transformations. Modern consultants need to combine competencies in cloud computing, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, enterprise architecture, data analytics, and digital governance with competencies in leadership, communication, negotiation, project management, and organizational change management. This multilateral competency portfolio is justified by the growing complexity of digital ecosystems in which technological choices affect organizations, regulation, and performance at the same time.

One of the contributions of the current review is that consulting practices have seen the emergence of artificial intelligence as a revolutionary trend. With generative AI, predictive analytics, and intelligent automation becoming increasingly popular, consultants gain new possibilities for improving decision support, knowledge management, process optimization, and customer service. However, these innovations also raise ethical, legal, and governance issues connected with algorithmic transparency, accountability, privacy, biases, and regulation. Thus, consultants are now expected to offer their clients recommendations not only on how to implement AI solutions but also how to design an effective AI governance framework for making sure that AI implementation is responsible and ethical. Therefore, ethical competence and AI governance should be included in future consulting competency models.

Another valuable discovery of the current review is associated with the change in the nature of client-consultant relationship. While the traditional consulting approach was to treat consultants as external experts offering technical solutions, contemporary consulting literature stresses that the relationship between client and consultant implies a partnership marked by mutual learning, constant communication, and co-creation of knowledge. The reason is that digital transformation requires the active involvement of an organization as well as its knowledge rather than only external expertise.

Furthermore, the review draws attention to the rising relevance of sustainability and organizational resilience in IT consulting. Modern organizations no longer consider only the efficiency and economic performance when

assessing the success of consultation projects. The expectations from digital initiatives have changed and include contributions to environmental sustainability, responsible governance, organizational adaptability, and organizational resilience to disruptions in technology. Thus, IT consultants play an important role in assisting organizations to develop a sustainable digital strategy, balancing innovations, cybersecurity, regulatory requirements, and organizational resilience.

Though the literature provides significant progress in research, there are still some gaps to be addressed. First of all, while much attention is paid to the implementation of technologies, little is known about the development of organizational capabilities, the consulting effectiveness in developing countries, knowledge preservation after consultation, and organizational issues related to Generative AI. Second, empirical research on ethical governance models, digital trust, sustainability, and organizational resilience are limited even though they have gained great importance for professional consulting practice.

CONCLUSION

This narrative literature review examined the evolution of Information Technology (IT) consulting within the context of rapid digital transformation between 2016 and 2026. The review demonstrates that IT consulting has evolved from a predominantly technical support function into a strategic discipline that enables organizations to achieve digital innovation, organizational transformation, and sustainable competitive advantage. This evolution reflects the increasing complexity of digital technologies and the growing recognition that successful digital transformation depends not only on technological implementation but also on organizational capabilities, governance structures, leadership, and continuous learning.

The synthesis of the literature indicates that digital transformation has fundamentally redefined the responsibilities of IT consultants. Contemporary consultants increasingly function as strategic advisors who facilitate organizational change, develop digital strategies, manage technological innovation, and support organizational resilience. Their responsibilities extend beyond technology implementation to encompass enterprise architecture, digital governance, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence (AI), business process improvement, and organizational capability development. Consequently, the competencies required of IT consultants have become increasingly multidisciplinary, integrating technical expertise with strategic management, leadership, communication, project governance, and organizational change management.

The review also demonstrates the value of integrating multiple theoretical perspectives to explain contemporary consulting practice. Dynamic Capabilities Theory, the Resource-Based View, the Knowledge-Based View, and Digital Transformation Theory collectively provide a comprehensive conceptual foundation for understanding how consultants contribute to organizational competitiveness. These perspectives explain that consulting effectiveness depends not merely on technological expertise but on the ability to develop organizational capabilities, facilitate knowledge transfer, and enable continuous adaptation within dynamic digital environments.

Furthermore, the review identifies several emerging issues that are likely to shape the future of IT consulting. Artificial intelligence, particularly Generative AI, is transforming consulting services by enhancing decision support, knowledge management, automation, and client engagement while simultaneously introducing ethical, governance, and regulatory challenges. Similarly, digital trust, sustainability, cybersecurity, organizational resilience, and responsible AI governance are becoming increasingly important considerations for consulting practice. These developments suggest that future consultants must possess broader competencies encompassing ethical decision-making, governance, risk management, and responsible innovation alongside technical expertise.

Although substantial progress has been made in understanding digital transformation and consulting practice, important knowledge gaps remain. Existing research continues to focus predominantly on technology implementation while providing comparatively limited investigation into consulting effectiveness within developing economies, long-term organizational capability development, AI governance practices, digital trust, sustainability, and post-project organizational learning. Addressing these gaps will strengthen both academic understanding and professional consulting practice.

Overall, this review contributes to the growing body of knowledge by providing a critical synthesis of the evolution of IT consulting, integrating multiple theoretical perspectives, identifying emerging research themes, and proposing directions for future investigation. As organizations continue to navigate increasingly complex digital environments, IT consultants will remain central to enabling technological innovation, organizational resilience, and sustainable digital transformation.

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