

Communication in the Digital Age Through the Prism of Administrative Culture.

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Morocco's digital public sector reforms are a strategic tool for modernisation, improving service efficiency, transparency and citizen inclusion. These government-led projects are reshaping organisational structures, administrative processes and communication patterns from a traditional paper-based hierarchical system to an open and interactive digital platform. This article analyses how the digital transformation is redefining administrative communication in Morocco and examines the legal, institutional and cultural factors that are influencing this transformation. It explores the opportunities offered by new technologies and the challenges associated with their adoption, and evaluates the impact of new technologies on communication practices, the quality of services, and the interaction between citizens and the state in the digital age.

Objectives: The aim of this article is to examine the changes brought about by the digitalisation of administrative communication in Morocco, focusing in particular on the institutional, legal and cultural determinants shaping its trajectory by exploring to what extent is digital transformation reshaping the paradigm of Moroccan administrative communication, and what role does organisational culture play in this reconfiguration ?

Methods: the chosen methodology is centred on a descriptive analytical approach highlighting the regulatory framework and relating concrete practical cases from the experience of Moroccan public administrations.

Results: The results of the study reveal that the success of the digital transformation of communications requires the promotion of an organisational culture that encourages innovation and flexibility. Although the digitisation of public services is an opportunity for modernisation, it remains hampered by structural and cultural factors that are deeply rooted in the Moroccan administrative apparatus. The persistence of a fixed bureaucratic culture, based on a dynamic of control, hierarchical rigidity and centralised decision-making, makes it difficult to fully adopt communication in the digital age

Conclusions: Digitalisation of the Moroccan public sector is both a modernisation tool and a communications revolution, transforming the way administrations engage with citizens. Beyond the technical infrastructure, successful implementation requires a rethink of traditional bureaucratic communication practices, moving from hierarchical, paper-based exchanges to transparent, digital interactions. This transformation requires new skills in digital communication, from engaging with social media to delivering data-driven services, while maintaining cultural sensitivity. For effective adoption, civil servants need to be trained in these evolving communication practices, management needs to set an example of digital transparency and processes need to be redesigned around user-centric principles. It is only through this holistic approach, combining technological, organisational and communication changes, that Morocco's digital administration can truly improve efficiency and public trust.

Keywords: Communication, Public administration, Digital, Organisational culture.

INTRODUCTION

The digital reforms undertaken by Moroccan public administrations are a strategic lever for modernisation, aimed at improving the efficiency of services, administrative transparency and the inclusion of citizens. Led by major

initiatives, these transformations are having a profound impact on organisational structures, administrative processes and, more particularly, on modes of communication both internally and externally.

Administrative communication is a fundamental pillar of public administrations, insofar as it determines both their operational efficiency and their relations with users. In Morocco, this communication has traditionally taken place within a rigid hierarchical framework, the legacy of a deeply rooted centralised bureaucracy. However, like many public administrations around the world, this communication has undergone profound changes under the impetus of the digital revolution, a transformation which, far from being reduced to the simple integration of digital technologies, calls into question age-old cultural and organisational practices.

This development calls into question the foundations of administrative law, raising the delicate issue of reconciling the modernisation of processes with the preservation of fundamental principles. The dematerialisation of administrative exchanges requires an overhaul of the procedures for transmitting, validating and archiving documents, thereby redefining the traditional structures of public administration. However, this transformation is hampered by organisational inertia and an administrative culture characterised by the pre-eminence of the written word.

The aim of this article is to examine the changes brought about by the digitalisation of administrative communication in Morocco, focusing in particular on the institutional, legal and cultural determinants shaping its trajectory by exploring to what extent is digital transformation reshaping the paradigm of Moroccan administrative communication, and what role does organisational culture play in this reconfiguration ?

To answer these two questions, the chosen methodology is centred on a descriptive analytical approach highlighting the regulatory framework and relating concrete practical cases from the experience of Moroccan public administrations.

This research has two main focuses, the first explores the evolution of public administration communication in the digital age, while the second looks at the influence of organisational culture on the digitalisation of administrative communication.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Successive moves towards decentralisation and administrative deconcentration, as well as the renewal and modernisation of the State, have encouraged the optimisation of links between public institutions and citizens. Public organisation, the understanding of policies, the quality of the services offered to users, the development of projects and the formulation of decisions all require communication that enables us to listen to social demand and assess situations that are criticised, catalysing the necessary changes and contributing to the joint ownership of change.

The concepts of transparency, participation, listening, efficiency and effectiveness are now the watchwords for redefining the image of institutions and rethinking the way they relate to citizens, underlining the importance assigned to communication in public administrations. (KRA, 2014, p. 67).

Communication is defined as a dual process that reconciles the production and dissemination of relevant information linked to the entity's internal and external environments with the creation of structured relational interfaces. At a deeper level, it is an essential strategic function which aims to synchronise and align distinct and independent elements, thereby creating the conditions required to optimally achieve the organisation's strategic objectives. This dual facet, informative and integrative, makes communication a crucial lever for organisational performance (Nicole & Thierry, 2002, p. 9).

Internal communication can be described as all exchanges of information within the organisational sphere. It fulfils a number of strategic functions, in particular the dissemination of results, the transmission of information about the organisation and the explanation of managerial orientations.

It is an essential component of the organisation's communication, operating solely internally and having a particular influence on the behaviour and perceptions of staff. This communication mechanism plays a dual role, providing human resources with a framework for expression that is conducive to their professional development, while at the

same time encouraging the emergence of a group dynamic that is in line with the organisation's objectives (EL KORRI, 2016, p. 132).

While external communication is communication between the organisation and its external environment, external administrative communication refers to all exchanges and interactions between the public administration and external stakeholders, whether citizens, businesses or other public bodies.

In the digital age, these interactions have undergone a profound metamorphosis following the advent of new technological tools such as online platforms, mobile applications and social networks. While these tools undeniably encourage simpler exchange and interaction, their effectiveness remains dependent on both the organisational infrastructures put in place and the culture embedded within government departments.

Law no. 31-13 on the right of access to information, promulgated by Dahir no. 1-18-15 of 5 Joumada II 1439 (22 February 2018), has profoundly transformed administrative communication in Morocco by instituting a new paradigm based on transparency, accountability and citizen participation.

By implementing Article 27 of the new Constitution, this law marked a break with an obscure administrative culture, by imposing an obligation on public institutions to proactively disclose information of general interest. Government departments are now required to publish data on a regular basis even before an official request is made, marking a genuine revolution in Moroccan bureaucratic practices.

In addition to this proactive communication, the law provides for an individual right of access to information, giving any citizen, legal entity or even foreigner residing in Morocco the possibility of accessing administrative documents, subject to certain legitimate restrictions. This dynamic, governed by precise deadlines and controlled by a commission set up for this purpose, encourages a more balanced relationship between the administration and users.

Law 31-13 therefore represents a decisive step in the modernisation of Moroccan public action, enabling a significant advance in transparency and helping to establish a more open and democratic culture in line with international practices in terms of communication.

In the digital age, a new facet of the right of access to public information has emerged, namely open data. This concept goes beyond the simple communication of administrative documents and focuses instead on the use and re-use of information held by public bodies. More specifically, it involves direct access to the raw data collected or produced, in order to make the most of its economic, social and democratic benefits.

Traditionally, access to information has been part of a rigid framework, subject to the logic of requesting documents held by public authorities, in accordance with procedures established by law. Although this mechanism guarantees the right of access to information, it limits dissemination to a simple, passive and controlled transfer.

In contrast, open data policies establish proactive and inclusive access, free from any restrictions inherent in re-use. This concept, which breaks with the previous paradigm, has particularly important legal, social and economic implications, in terms of both administrative transparency and democratic innovation.

In fact, the advent of digital technology has radically transformed the way in which public administrations communicate with their external partners, forcing them to adapt to new technological and societal demands. Traditionally confined to physical media and unilateral channels, this communication has gradually been digitised, bringing new prospects in terms of accessibility, transparency and user involvement.

Information is now ubiquitous and streamed, making it accessible on a larger scale than ever before. Digital technology has therefore created a hyper-competitive environment, in terms of both content and form, where users consume on demand (Adrdour, 2020, p. 16). In addition, the digital invasion of government communications is driving research into transparency (Mabillard & Villeneuve, 2023, p. 1968).

This dynamic was reflected in Act No. 54-19 instituting the Public Services Charter, promulgated by Dahir No. 1-21-58 of 3 Hija 1442 (14 July 2021). This legislation represents a decisive turning point in the modernisation of public action by introducing a new administrative paradigm and establishing as cardinal principles the requirement for quality, the imperative of transparency and the obligation to process users' requests quickly.

In addition, it has strengthened the mechanisms for holding administrations to account, thereby establishing a genuine balance between public service and accountability. This step forward reflects the legislature's desire to bring government operations into line with contemporary standards of good governance, while at the same time meeting the growing expectations of users in terms of the efficiency and accessibility of public services.

Article 4 of Act no. 54-19, which instituted the Public Services Charter, establishes a rigorous regulatory framework designed to root the principles of good governance at the heart of the operation of the administration.

This legislation pursues fundamental and complementary objectives, including the establishment of an administration that is open to its environment, both internal and external, through the concerted mobilisation of all players in an approach to improving services and continually optimising service quality, and the effective implementation of the principle of transparency through the systematic production, dissemination and publication of data and information relating to the operation of public services.

Article 4 therefore seems to be the linchpin of renewed administrative governance, in line with international issues in terms of transparency and citizen participation, while taking account of the specific features of the Moroccan context as defined by the 2011 Constitution. However, its effective implementation presupposes a profound change in administrative cultures and internal processes, particularly in terms of data management and relations with users.

Article 5 of the Public Services Charter enshrines a fundamental principle to which public services are subject, that of openness, through communication with users, receiving and interacting with their observations, proposals and grievances concerning the improvement of public service performance.

By establishing this permanent dialogue, the Charter recognises that any improvement in the performance of public services inevitably involves actively listening to citizens, who are now seen as key players in evaluating and optimising the actions of the administration.

Article 24 of the Public Services Charter lays down a substantial obligation for public services to communicate proactively, thereby enshrining an essential rule governing the relationship between public services and users. It states that Public services shall communicate regularly on their missions, programmes, activities and the services they provide, using the available means of communication, in particular electronic means, including electronic sites designed for this purpose, in perfect harmony with Article 5 of the Public Services Charter, which enshrines the right of users to make observations and express grievances, this article completes the edifice of an interactive and dialogical administration, where institutional information and citizen participation are mutually nourishing.

This reflects a clear political will to implement modernised administrative governance, in line with international standards of open government, where proactive transparency and digital tools are now seen as real levers for an administration that is both more efficient and more legitimate in its day-to-day actions.

THE INFLUENCE OF ADMINISTRATIVE CULTURE ON COMMUNICATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

In his speech delivered on 14 October 2016 on the occasion of the opening of the first session of the tenth legislature, His Majesty King Mohammed VI, may God assist him, stressed that the reform of the administration rests on three inseparable pillars, notably, a profound transformation of administrative mentalities and practices, the adoption of an effective legislative framework and the continuous optimisation of public services for the benefit of citizens.

This institutional overhaul necessarily implies a substantial strengthening of training and qualification programmes for civil servants, who are the essential interface between the administration and users.

At the same time, it calls for improved working conditions and the introduction of a comprehensive system combining incentives, accountability mechanisms and sanctions, to ensure both the efficiency of the public service and the quality of its relationship with users.

In recent years, the Moroccan public administration has undertaken numerous reforms and initiated innovative experiments in various fields with a view to supporting the national economic and social development strategy and overcoming the challenges imposed by globalisation and international competition.

It has thus embarked on a process of transformation and modernisation focused on improving the conditions of access to a quality public service, governed by the principles of efficiency and performance, through the adoption of measures aimed at simplifying administrative procedures while stimulating the emergence of an efficient, effective and local administration.

In this sense, digitalisation is now a strategic lever for modernising the administration and improving the quality and accessibility of public services, while at the same time promoting the rationalisation of the management of public resources.

It acts as a catalyst for transparency and governance, and as a key factor in ensuring a certain level of performance and efficiency in the administration in line with the growing demands of citizens and businesses.

However, this dynamic has a transversal influence on various aspects, encompassing management methods as well as the optimisation of processes, the foundations of service delivery, human resources, even the administration's culture and communication methods.

The digital transformation of Moroccan public administrations has involved not only the introduction of technological tools, but also an organisational change in hierarchical structures. Administrative communication, historically rooted in a centralised bureaucratic logic, has gradually opened up to more horizontal, instantaneous and possibly more transparent practices.

Culture is a complex set of knowledge, beliefs, habits, customs, laws, ethics, morals, art and all the other capacities that the individual acquires as a member of a society. Culture is present in everything we do and think. Culture is acquired through membership of a group and consists of a set of values and beliefs that influence the behaviour and attitudes of the members of the group. Culture is also seen as a distinct factor specific to a particular environment (Alla & Rajâa, 2022, p. 2016).

Organisational culture can be described as a range of shared norms, representations and beliefs, but above all as values shared by the members of an organisation (Fourtier & Apostolidis, 2020, p. 1). Generally speaking, this culture is deeply rooted and exerts an influence on behaviour and decisions at all levels of the organisation. It is therefore essential to understand an organisation's culture in order to understand its managerial choices (Mouadili, 2024, p. 59).

Table 1: Definitions of organisational culture

Authors	Definitions
Silversweig & Allen (1976)	Organisational culture is the integrated system of socially constructed practices within a professional community.
Deshpande & Webster (1989)	Organisational culture is defined as an integrated system of shared values and collective beliefs that fulfil a dual function: on the one hand, they provide the members of the organisation with an interpretative framework enabling them to understand the institutional mechanisms and, on the other, they transmit and perpetuate the behavioural norms expected within the organisational structure.
Denison (1984)	Organisational culture is a dynamic configuration of norms, collective representations, symbols, rituals, guiding principles and fundamental assumptions, constantly updated and commonly accepted by all the players in the organisation.

Schein (1992)	Organisational culture is seen as a collectively-developed blueprint designed to facilitate the integration of employees and optimise their adaptation to the work environment.
Cooke & Szumal (1993)	Organisational culture manifests itself as an integrated system of collective representations of a normative nature and behavioural prescriptions, internalised by all the players in the organisation.
Lederache (1995)	Organisational culture is a process of cognitive and systemic mutualisation, developed collectively to understand, decipher and interact with the socio-professional environment.
Aycan & al. (1999)	Organisational culture is a synthetic representation of an organisation's internal environment, materialising the degree of alignment between management and employees in terms of shared beliefs, fundamental values and implicit assumptions.
Jones & George (2003)	Organisational culture emerges from a shared matrix of practices, normative frameworks, axiological frames of reference and collective projections, which guide the actions of players towards the achievement of organisational goals.

Source: Compiled by us

Notwithstanding the plurality of definitions, a common denominator emerges, namely the existence of a shared foundation between the members of the organisation. However, the scientific community agrees that organisational culture results from the articulation of four fundamental components: collective implicit assumptions, shared axiological and cognitive frames of reference, normative behavioural frameworks, and a hermeneutical process underlying organisational functioning (Binkkour & Abidi, 2021, p. 280).

Rajâa and El Ghazlani (2022) have attempted to define organisational culture on the basis of several definitions previously proposed by other authors. According to them, organisational culture constitutes an intricate and collective sub-set, developed, identified or shaped by the players in an entity over the course of its historical development in order to respond to the challenges and circumstances encountered, through mechanisms for acquiring knowledge, whether structured or spontaneous, institutionalised or tacit. It is passed on in a dynamic that is both collective and individual, with experienced members inculcating in novices these operating patterns that have been validated by experience and set up as behavioural archetypes for understanding, reasoning, feeling and reacting to similar contexts.

This system constantly interacts with human resources, structural layout and steering mechanisms to generate normative frameworks. It emerges and manifests itself under the influence of a plurality of interdependent elements which, when combined, endow the organisation with a distinctive atmosphere and singularity, giving organisational culture a role analogous to that of the individual personality.

This culture is embodied in a mosaic of components, including historical landmarks, key events, emblematic figures, ritual practices, established customs, shared convictions, religious frameworks, formal or implicit prescriptions, institutionalised responses, guiding principles, fundamental postulates, the collective imagination, founding allegories, ethical canons, acquired know-how, interactional modalities and valued behaviours.

In the context of Moroccan public administration, organisational culture plays an essential role in the process of adopting information and communication technologies. A highly hierarchical structure, marked by centralised decision-making processes, tends to slow down the implementation of digital tools by highlighting the rigidity of procedures and resistance to change. Rooted in a traditional bureaucratic model, Moroccan administrations face structural obstacles to the implementation of technological reforms.

The predominance of a vertical chain of command restricts staff autonomy and hinders innovative initiatives that are perceived as undermining the established order. This institutional rigidity partly explains the slowdown in the digitalisation of public services, despite the modernisation imperatives imposed by the public authorities.

According to Max Weber, bureaucratised administration is essentially determined by the possession and application of specialised knowledge, and communication, developed by dedicated departments within the public organisation, is thus subject to bureaucratised operating rules (Bessières, 2009, p. 23).

Communication between the administration and users is based on a network of perspectives and assumptions, and the attachment of agents to the bureaucracy within an administrative apparatus perceived as omnipotent, particularly in the current politico-historical context, undoubtedly creates a rigid barrier restricting exchanges with users.

This is communication geared towards the sender's intentions, with the aim of imposing on users the directives predefined by the administration and getting them to accept decisions that have already been made without taking into account their real needs or aspirations (Bolap, 1990, p. 199).

On the other hand, administrative systems that have adopted a more inclusive and participatory culture are better at implementing, adopting and disseminating digital tools, thereby influencing their communication processes.

Table 2 : Influence of organisational culture on communication

Impact	Main sub-dimensions	Transverse sub-dimensions
Configures the style of communication	Core values	Shared knowledge
	Communication styles	Key facts
	Basic assumptions	Collective representations
	Shared morality	
	Guiding principles	
Determines communication practices	Rituals	Founding myths
	Rules	Expected behaviour
	Customs and habits	Shared beliefs
	Historical solutions	Key facts
	Internal laws	
Promotes or hinders open communication	Relationship climate	Organisational stories
	Shared beliefs	Symbols
	Expected behaviour	References
	Founding myths	
	Symbols	Rituals
It embodies culture (Tools and media)	Organisational references	Core values
	Organisational histories	Guiding principles
	Collective representations	Shared knowledge

Source : Compiled by us

For an organisation to be able to adjust effectively and adapt to changes in its environment, communication must be easy between the bottom and the top and between the hierarchy and subordinates, changes in the external environment must be controllable and objectives must be proportional to the organisational resources available (Crozier, 1962, p. 373).

Digital tools have greatly enhanced public administrations' communications by providing easier access to information and greater transparency. Thanks to websites, mobile applications and digital platforms, users can now obtain the information they need, without delay or geographical restrictions.

With the help of search engines integrated into public authority websites, frequently asked questions, conversational agents and virtual assistants, users can find answers to their questions immediately, as shown by a number of promising initiatives.

The « Daribati.ma » mobile application offers innovative multilingual functionalities such as a voice assistant and a geographical location of tax centres with attendance indicators. In the healthcare sector, the « Tbib24 » mobile application offers an intelligent conversational agent and dynamic frequently asked questions tailored to the patient's profile, with the aim of facilitating exchange and interaction during remote consultations. Territorial collectivities are not standing on the sidelines, and have proposed a conversational agent called « Wikit » to enhance their proximity to users by helping them, with a few simple messages, to obtain the information they need, even outside opening hours.

These digital innovations also provide personalised services, such as user spaces that allow citizens to consult and track their current procedures and receive notifications of their progress. This immediacy and clarity considerably improves the user experience and significantly reduces the frustration caused by old-fashioned administrative procedures.

In fact, the dematerialisation of procedures, through platforms such as « Chikaya.ma », has profoundly altered interactions between public officials, as well as between public services and users. In some cases, this dynamic tends to blur the rigid barriers represented by traditional hierarchies by facilitating immediate and direct exchanges. However, these advantages cannot be fully exploited because of deep-rooted cultural resistance.

The digitalisation of communication often comes up against age-old attitudes, where distrust of new technologies and attachment to traditional working methods hinder the adoption of digital solutions.

In most Moroccan administrations, the bureaucratic culture characterised by rigid hierarchies and centralised decision-making compromises adaptability. In addition, lack of awareness and fear of change limit the effectiveness of reforms.

A dominant organisational culture still favours formalism, paper trails and hierarchy, and these elements are generally at odds with the flexibility, speed and interactivity demanded by digital communication.

Resistance to change often stems from a lack of shared understanding of the challenges of digitalisation. Many public servants see digital technologies as a threat to their routines, their jobs and even their professional legitimacy.

One of the main obstacles to be overcome is the lack of digital skills in many public services. Despite training efforts, there is still a significant gap between the availability of technological tools and their actual use by public servants.

This organisational culture, which is proving to be resistant to modernisation, is preventing users from benefiting from the gains in efficiency, transparency and accessibility that digital communication promises.

Unless there is a change in mentality and a better grasp of digital tools, there is a risk that these digitalisation efforts will remain incomplete, leaving Moroccan society on the sidelines of the opportunities offered by the technological revolution.

Furthermore, the reshaping of roles by digital technology has generated new expectations in terms of responsiveness, traceability and performance. These developments are putting new pressures on public servants, who are sometimes insufficiently trained in these technologies, and increasing the need for strategic and organisational management of change.

CONCLUSION

The digitalisation of Moroccan public administrations represents a strategic lever for modernisation and efficiency. However, its implementation remains dependent on profound cultural and organisational changes. Far from being

reduced to a simple technical tool, digital communication calls into question the very foundations of Moroccan bureaucracy, its hierarchies, norms and modes of legitimisation.

Any digital reform cannot succeed without a concerted transformation of mindsets and organisational practices. The digitalisation of Moroccan public administrations has profoundly revolutionised communication methods, redefining the way in which the State interacts with its users.

The results of the study reveal that the success of the digital transformation of communications requires the fostering of an organisational culture that encourages innovation and flexibility.

Although the digitalisation of public services is an opportunity for modernisation, it remains hampered by structural and cultural factors deeply embedded in the Moroccan administrative apparatus. The persistence of a fixed bureaucratic culture, based on a dynamic of control, hierarchical rigidity and centralised decision-making, makes it difficult to fully adopt digital communication.

To overcome these obstacles, an integrated approach combining technological innovation, organisational reform and cultural transformation is required. This involves, in particular, rethinking traditional working methods and adopting a mindset open to change within the Moroccan public administration. Staff must be trained and made aware of the benefits of digital technology, while bureaucratic processes must be streamlined to adapt to the new technologies. This cultural change cannot be achieved without a strong commitment from decision-makers, who must embody this vision and disseminate it throughout all levels of public administration.

As is the case with all research, this study has its limits, in particular the complexity of the administrative environment and the multiplicity of players involved, which means that it is not possible to exhaust all its complexity. It therefore requires a more meticulous and in-depth analysis using empirical investigation. Further research is therefore essential for a complete understanding of the interactions between administrative culture and communication in the digital age. In this sense, a diachronic approach, going back to the conceptual sources, is essential in order to trace the evolution of the subject. We could therefore look at the impact of organisational culture on the implementation of digital transformation within the Moroccan public administration in order to gain an insight into the behaviours and values of the members of the structure that is trying to implement digital transformation initiatives in response to the demands of its environment.

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