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Digitalisation of agricultural knowledge providers: The case study of Fars agriculture organisation in Iran

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Abstract

Digitalisation makes significant changes in the structure, operation, and management of agriculture, among these changes, we can mention the transformation of organisational identity into digital identity. The changes made in the organisational identity are analysed based on four components: the speed of change, the nature of change, the source or motivation of change, and the context of changes among knowledge providers who are the specialists and experts of the organisation. The research method of this paper was qualitative and in the form of a case study. The studied case was the Agricultural Organisation of Fars Province, which is one of the top provinces using digital agriculture and, is important in Iran's agricultural production. This organisation has nine managers, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 7 managers (It includes the coordination management of agricultural extension, water and soil, fisheries and aquatics, processing and food industries, and vice president of plant production improvement (which includes management of plant conservation, horticulture, and mechanised agricultural technologies). Surveys show that there are different perceptions of digitalisation among these knowledge providers, but they all agreed that in terms of speed of changes; digitalisation in this organisation started at a slow speed and has intensified over time and in the face of the coronavirus. In such a way that it can be said that almost all intra-organisational and inter-organisational matters are being done automatically (such as administrative correspondence platforms and virtual training). In terms of the nature of changes; these changes have been made with a long time horizon and the organisation is gradually and continuously changing. In terms of source and motivation; in some cases, the origin of these changes has been from the organisation itself (such as the panjareh; the digital system for organising food industry license applicants), in some cases, policymakers have ordered it to organisations (such as the zoning system). In terms of the context of changes; the Fars Agricultural Organisation is regarded as one of the leading organisations in the use of innovations and technologies. Therefore, the integration and acceptance of new and old methods of this organisation will be done well.

Keywords: Agriculture organisations, digital identity, digital transformation, Fars province, knowledge providers