Business Culture Attributes as Microfoundations of Retail Dynamic Capabilities: A Conceptual Framework

Mahfud*
Institut Prima Bangsa, Cirebon
*Email: acepmahfud@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study — *This study aims to develop a conceptual framework that links business culture attributes to dynamic capabilities in the retail sector. Specifically, it investigates how decision tempo, collaboration/engagement, measurement/direction, and work/execution culture attributes act as microfoundations for dynamic capabilities, which in turn influence omnichannel integration and retail execution capabilities, ultimately impacting customer experience and retail performance.*

Research method—*This is a conceptual paper that synthesizes existing literature from organizational culture and dynamic capabilities theories. The framework was developed through a rigorous literature review, focusing on the integration of cultural attributes in the context of retail management and omnichannel retailing. Propositions were derived to link cultural attributes with dynamic capabilities and retail outcomes.*

Result— *The study proposes that the four cultural attributes significantly shape dynamic capabilities in retail organizations. These capabilities are essential for enhancing omnichannel integration and improving retail execution. Furthermore, the study suggests that complementarity (fit) among these cultural attributes strengthens capability development and that environmental factors such as market dynamism moderate these relationships.*

Conclusion— *This paper provides a framework for understanding how cultural attributes influence retail performance through dynamic capabilities. It contributes to retail management by offering a practical approach to assessing and improving organizational culture, with implications for both academic research and managerial practice. Retail leaders can use the framework to optimize culture and enhance operational performance, particularly in the context of digital transformation.*

Keywords: *Business culture, Dynamic capabilities, Retail execution, Omnichannel retailing, Retail performance*

INTRODUCTION

Retail management is increasingly defined by fast-changing consumer demand, omnichannel integration, and operational complexity. In this context, retailers must not only respond to shifting customer preferences but also strategically align their physical and digital channels to create seamless customer experiences. Omnichannel retailing—defined by the coordination of inventory, pricing, fulfillment, and service experiences across both physical and digital touchpoints raises the bar for retail organizations in terms of responsiveness, flexibility, and integration (Verhoef, Kannan, & Inman, 2015). However, despite clear strategies, many retail transformations face challenges, especially in translating these strategies into actionable and synchronized decisions at the store level (Zhu, Kraemer, & Xu, 2017). This misalignment, often referred to as the "last mile" execution gap, remains a persistent issue, undermining profitability and eroding customer trust (Chaffey, 2018).

One of the key organizational factors influencing the successful execution of retail strategies is organizational culture. Culture shapes shared norms, routines, and decision-making processes, all of which influence how an organization adapts to external challenges and coordinates internal functions. While culture is frequently cited as a determinant of transformation success, it is often treated as an abstract concept rather than a set of observable, actionable attributes (Denison & Mishra, 1995). As a result, there is limited understanding of how specific cultural attributes, such as decision tempo, collaboration, measurement/direction, and work/execution, influence organizational capabilities and retail outcomes in practice.

The central aim of this paper is to address this gap by proposing a conceptual framework that links cultural attributes to dynamic capabilities in retail. Dynamic capabilities refer to a firm's ability to sense, seize, and transform in response to environmental changes, a critical capacity for adapting to the fast-paced and competitive retail environment (Teece, 2007). In this framework, we argue that these cultural attributes act as microfoundations for dynamic capabilities, which in turn strengthen two critical capabilities for retail success: omnichannel integration and retail execution (Snyder, 2019). These capabilities are proposed to enhance customer experience quality, a key value-creation mechanism for retailers, which ultimately improves both financial and non-financial retail performance (Grewal, Levy, & Kumar, 2009).

Furthermore, this paper aims to extend existing literature by theorizing the complementarities (fit) among these cultural attributes and exploring how environmental factors, such as market dynamism, moderate their impact on retail capabilities (Hsieh, 2010). By offering testable propositions and a structured framework, this paper contributes to the

understanding of how culture, as a set of observable attributes, can serve as a practical tool for improving retail performance through dynamic capabilities.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HIPOTESYS DEVELOPMENT

A. Literature Review

1 Business culture as a set of effectiveness-relevant traits

A central stream in organizational research argues that culture influences effectiveness by shaping shared assumptions and routines that guide behavior. Denison and Mishra theorize culture through traits such as involvement, consistency, adaptability, and mission—dimensions that map naturally onto engagement, execution discipline, responsiveness, and direction/strategic clarity (Denison, D. R., & Mishra, A. K., 1995).

2 Dynamic capabilities as the capability logic for turbulent retail environments

Dynamic capabilities explain how firms renew competencies to address changing environments—commonly expressed as sensing opportunities/threats, seizing them through timely commitments, and transforming by reconfiguring resources and routines Teece, D. J. (2007). In retail, omnichannel realization and network-level execution require repeated reconfiguration across stores, logistics, IT, merchandising, and service operations making a dynamic capability lens especially relevant (Solem, B. A. A., et. all., 2023).

3 Omnichannel retailing and capability requirements

Omnichannel retailing emphasizes the interplay of channels to deliver seamless journeys rather than operating channels in silos (Verhoef, P. C., Kannan, P. K., & Inman, J. J., 2015). Retailers therefore need integration capabilities spanning data, processes, and decision rights, and research increasingly frames omnichannel realization as a dynamic capability challenge (Solem, B. A. A., et. all., 2023).

4 Retail execution capability and the "last mile" problem

Retail operations research highlights that execution failures (e.g., inventory record inaccuracy, misplaced SKUs) persist even when technology is standardized across a chain—implying that routines, behaviors, and local management practices matter. This motivates treating retail execution capability as a distinct capability pathway through which culture can influence performance outcomes.

5 Customer experience as the value-creation mechanism in retail

Customer experience management is frequently positioned as a strategic logic in retail, shaping loyalty and value exchange. A well-established view models customer experience as driven by

determinants spanning the service interface, social environment, brand, and experience dynamics.

6. Role of Each Cultural Attribute:

Each of the four cultural attributes plays a critical role in shaping dynamic capabilities within retail environments. The clarity of these roles can be strengthened through the addition of concrete examples and case studies that highlight how these attributes manifest in practice.

1. Decision Tempo: This cultural attribute is critical for ensuring that strategic decisions are made quickly and with the necessary autonomy. Retailers who excel in decision tempo can respond swiftly to changes in market conditions or customer preferences. For instance, Zara, the fast-fashion retailer, has been known for its rapid decision-making cycle, which allows it to swiftly produce and distribute new collections based on emerging trends. This agility in decision-making has been instrumental in maintaining Zara's competitive edge in the fashion industry (Ghemawat, 2001).

2. Collaboration/Engagement: Strong collaboration across functional areas enables retailers to align their goals and share information effectively. Walmart exemplifies this attribute through its cross-functional teams that integrate information from its supply chain, stores, and corporate strategy teams. For example, Walmart's "Retail Link" system facilitates real-time communication between its suppliers and stores, which enhances coordination and ensures efficient restocking processes, contributing to operational success (Kumar, 2004).

3. Measurement/Direction: This attribute emphasizes the importance of clear performance metrics and alignment with strategic goals. A clear measurement system ensures that all employees understand the priorities and are aligned with the company's strategic direction. Target Corporation effectively uses Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure store performance across various departments, such as inventory turnover and customer satisfaction, which guides both strategic decision-making and daily operations (Snyder, 2019).

4. Work/Execution: Execution discipline involves adhering to standardized processes and ensuring high-quality operational performance at every level. IKEA demonstrates this cultural attribute through its rigorous training and adherence to its operational standards. IKEA's employees are trained to follow precise store layouts and customer service guidelines, ensuring a consistent customer experience across all locations, which has been key to its global success (Verhoef et al., 2015).

B. PROPOSITION DEVELOPMENT

P1: Decision tempo is associated with dynamic capabilities

A stronger decision tempo culture is positively associated with retail dynamic capabilities because faster strategic and operational decision-making improves the firm's ability to sense and seize opportunities before competitors.

P2: Collaboration / engagement influences dynamic capabilities.

A stronger collaboration/engagement culture is positively associated with retail dynamic capabilities by enabling information sharing, coordination, and learning across functions and units.

P3: Psychological safety as a mechanism within engagement

The effect of collaboration/engagement culture on dynamic capabilities is strengthened when team psychological safety is high, because psychological safety increases speaking up, error reporting, and learning behaviors critical for sensing and transforming.

P4: Measurement / direction influences dynamic capabilities.

A stronger measurement/direction culture is positively associated with dynamic capabilities because well-designed performance measurement systems translate strategy into actionable priorities, supporting seizing and disciplined transformation.

P5: Work/execution influences retail execution capability.

A stronger work/execution culture is positively associated with retail execution capability because standardized routines and execution discipline reduce store-level variation and execution failures (e.g., inventory inaccuracies, misplaced items).

P6: Dynamic capabilities influence omnichannel integration capability.

Retail dynamic capabilities are positively associated with omnichannel integration capability because sensing, seizing, and transforming enable retailers to reconfigure processes and technologies necessary for seamless journeys across channels.

P7: Capability dual-pathway to customer experience

Omnichannel integration capability and retail execution capability jointly improve customer experience quality: integration reduces friction across journeys, while execution ensures reliability at the point of service and product availability.

**P8: Customer experience influences retail performance.**

Customer experience quality is positively associated with retail performance, functioning as a value-creation mechanism linking capabilities to financial and loyalty outcomes.

P9: Complementarity/fit among culture attributes

The positive effects of culture attributes on capabilities are strongest when the four attributes are mutually reinforcing (e.g., fast tempo *with* clear direction and execution discipline), because fit reduces coordination losses and execution drift.

P10: Environmental dynamism as a boundary condition

Environmental dynamism strengthens the impact of decision tempo and collaboration/engagement on dynamic capabilities because rapid change increases the premium on speed and cross-functional sensing.
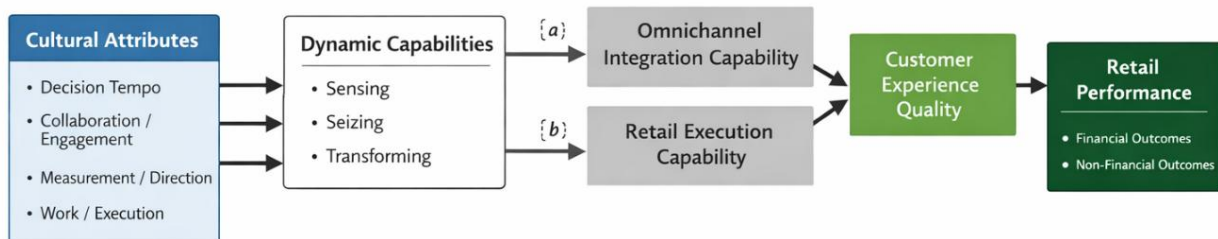
Fugure 1. *Proposed Research Model*

METHOD
1. Research Design

This study follows a conceptual research design to develop propositions based on existing literature. The research does not involve empirical data collection but instead synthesizes secondary data derived from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and reputable sources within the fields of organizational culture and dynamic capabilities.

2. Data Collection

The data for this study was collected from a systematic literature review. The process involved the following steps:

1. Database Selection: Relevant academic databases were searched, including Google Scholar, Scopus, and JSTOR, to identify peer-reviewed articles published in retail management and organizational behavior journals.

2. Search Keywords: The search utilized terms such as "decision tempo," "collaboration in retail," "dynamic capabilities," "retail execution," and "omnichannel integration" to gather pertinent studies.

3. Inclusion Criteria: Studies were included if they were published within the last 10 years and provided direct insights into the relationship between organizational culture and dynamic capabilities in retail settings.

4. Exclusion Criteria: Articles that focused solely on theoretical aspects without practical application in retail environments were excluded.

3. Data Analysis

A qualitative synthesis approach was used to analyze the data. The following methods were employed:

1. Thematic Analysis: Thematic analysis was applied to identify recurring themes and concepts in the literature. The aim was to uncover the mechanisms through which cultural attributes influence dynamic capabilities and retail outcomes.

2. Propositional Development: Based on the themes identified, the propositions linking cultural attributes to dynamic capabilities and retail performance were developed.

3. Framework Development: A conceptual framework was developed that integrates cultural attributes, dynamic capabilities, omnichannel integration, and retail execution capabilities, leading to customer experience and retail performance.

4. Conceptual Framework Development

The framework proposed in this paper builds on the theory of dynamic capabilities (Teece, 2007), which posits that firms develop and leverage specific capabilities to sense and seize market opportunities and transform their operations in response to changing environments. In the context of retail, the framework outlines how cultural attributes act as microfoundations for these dynamic capabilities, which ultimately influence customer experience quality and retail performance.

5. Limitations

The conceptual nature of this research limits the empirical validation of the proposed framework. Therefore, future research should focus on empirical studies to test and refine the propositions. Potential empirical methods could include surveys, interviews, and case studies to gather real-world data from retail organizations.

6. Ethical Considerations

As this is a conceptual paper based on existing literature, no primary data collection involving human participants was conducted. Therefore, no ethical concerns were encountered in the study. However, for future empirical research, obtaining ethical approval and informed consent from participants will be necessary.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
A. RESULTS

Table 1. *Construct definitions*

Construct	Retail-context definition
Decision tempo culture	Shared norms about decision speed, autonomy, escalation, and tolerance for rapid experimentation in merchandising, pricing, fulfillment, and store operations.
Collaboration/ engagement culture	Norms that promote cross-functional coordination (e.g., stores–HQ–supply chain–IT) and psychological safety for surfacing issues and learning.
Measurement/ direction culture	Norms emphasizing clarity of priorities and alignment via performance measurement systems and strategic KPIs.
Work/ execution culture	Norms emphasizing disciplined routines, standard work, continuous improvement, and store-level execution quality.
Dynamic capabilities	The firm's capacity to sense, seize, and transform in response to environmental change.
Omnichannel	The ability to coordinate offerings, information, and processes across

Construct	Retail-context definition
integration capability	channels to support seamless customer journeys.
Retail execution capability	The ability to reliably translate plans into in-store and network operations (availability, accuracy, service, and compliance with merchandising/operations standards).
Customer experience quality	Customer's holistic cognitive–affective evaluation of retail interactions across touchpoints and time.
Retail performance	Financial (sales growth, margin, productivity) and non-financial (loyalty, satisfaction) outcomes.

The proposed research model in Figure 1 illustrates the interconnected relationships between cultural attributes, dynamic capabilities, omnichannel integration and retail execution capabilities, customer experience, and retail performance in the context of retail management.

Cultural Attributes and Their Influence on Dynamic Capabilities

The model posits that cultural attributes—comprising decision tempo, collaboration/ engagement, measurement/ direction, and work/ execution—serve as the foundational elements that shape the firm's dynamic capabilities. These attributes, rooted in shared organizational norms, play a crucial role in facilitating the firm's ability to adapt and respond to environmental changes. Specifically, decision tempo dictates the speed and autonomy of decision-making processes, fostering a rapid response to market dynamics. Collaboration/ engagement enables effective cross-functional coordination, promoting information exchange and collaborative decision-making. Measurement/ direction ensures strategic clarity and alignment through well-designed performance metrics, while work/ execution emphasizes disciplined routines that enhance operational efficiency.

Dynamic Capabilities as Enablers of Omnichannel Integration and Retail Execution

The cultural attributes are theorized to enhance the dynamic capabilities of sensing, seizing, and transforming. These capabilities enable retailers to detect emerging opportunities and threats, make timely strategic commitments, and reconfigure their resources and routines to remain competitive in a fast-paced retail environment. The model separates two critical capabilities: omnichannel integration capability and retail execution capability. The former refers to the ability to seamlessly coordinate offerings, information, and processes across physical and digital touchpoints, ensuring a consistent customer journey. Retail execution capability, on the other hand, reflects the firm's ability to reliably execute its plans at the store

level, ensuring accurate inventory management, service delivery, and compliance with operational standards.

Impact on Customer Experience and Retail Performance

The integration of these capabilities directly impacts customer experience quality, which is a holistic evaluation made by customers based on their interactions with the retailer across all touchpoints. As customer experience quality improves, it leads to enhanced retail performance, both in terms of financial outcomes (e.g., sales, margins, productivity) and non-financial outcomes (e.g., customer loyalty and satisfaction).

Complementarity Among Cultural Attributes

The model further proposes that the alignment and complementarity (fit) among the four cultural attributes are crucial for optimizing dynamic capabilities. When these cultural attributes work in harmony—such as a fast decision tempo complemented by clear direction and execution discipline—organizations can minimize inefficiencies, reduce coordination losses, and prevent execution drift. This fit is vital in ensuring that organizational routines are well-aligned, fostering a sustainable competitive advantage.

Environmental Dynamism as a Moderator

Finally, environmental dynamism is recognized as a moderator that influences the relationship between cultural attributes and dynamic capabilities. In highly volatile environments, the value of decision tempo and collaboration /engagement is amplified, as firms must adapt quickly to rapid changes and uncertainties.

This model offers a comprehensive framework that links cultural attributes to dynamic capabilities and explores their downstream effects on omnichannel integration, retail execution, customer experience, and overall retail performance. This framework contributes to the understanding of how cultural norms shape the internal capabilities necessary for retail success in a competitive and ever-changing landscape.

DISCUSSION

1 Theoretical contributions

1. Culture-to-capabilities mechanism in retail. The framework positions culture attributes as microfoundations that shape dynamic capabilities in a retail execution logic (Teece, D. J., 2007).

2. Dual capability pathways. By separating omnichannel integration capability from retail execution capability, the model explains why some retailers innovate digitally yet still underperform operationally (Solem, B. A. A., et. all., 2023).

3. Configuration thinking. The "fit" proposition advances culture research beyond single-dimension effects, aligning with the view that effectiveness depends on coherent combinations of cultural traits (Denison, D. R., & Mishra, A. K., 1995).

2 Managerial implications for retail management

- Culture diagnostics as an execution tool. Retail leaders can audit the four attributes as operational levers: decision rights and escalation (tempo), cross-functional routines (collaboration), KPI architecture (direction), and store standard work (execution) Edmondson, A. C. (1999).

- Avoid "fast but fuzzy." Speed without measurement/ direction risks thrash; direction without collaboration risks siloed optimization; execution discipline without engagement risks compliance without learning.

- Capability-building roadmap. Use culture interventions to build capabilities: redesign measurement systems to align incentives, cultivate psychological safety to surface issues early, and institutionalize execution routines to stabilize store performance Edmondson, A. C. (1999).

Future Empirical Research

In order to advance the theoretical framework proposed in this study, it is essential to empirically validate the relationships outlined in the propositions (Solem, B. A. A., et. all., 2023). Future empirical research can provide critical insights into the practical applicability and robustness of the conceptual model. The following sections outline potential empirical approaches, including surveys, interviews, and case studies, that could test the propositions presented in the framework.

1. Surveys to Measure Cultural Attributes and Dynamic Capabilities

One of the most effective methods for empirically testing the framework is through large-scale surveys targeting retail managers and employees across various retail environments. Surveys would allow researchers to assess the presence and strength of the four cultural attributes decision tempo, collaboration/engagement, measurement / direction, and work/ execution within organizations. By developing a structured questionnaire, it would be possible to measure how these cultural attributes correlate with dynamic capabilities such as sensing,

seizing, and transforming, as well as with retail outcomes like omnichannel integration and execution capabilities (Franco-Santos, et all., 2012).

Hypotheses Testing: The results from such surveys could be analyzed using statistical techniques such as regression analysis or structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the propositions. For example, Proposition 1 (decision tempo leads to dynamic capabilities) can be validated by testing the relationship between decision-making speed and the firm's ability to sense emerging market opportunities.

Target Population: The survey would target managers and employees in organizations that operate in both physical and digital retail environments, including companies with established omnichannel strategies.

2. Interviews with Retail Executives and Managers

To gain deeper insights into how the four cultural attributes function as microfoundations of dynamic capabilities, qualitative data could be gathered through semi-structured interviews with retail executives and middle managers in omnichannel settings. This method would allow researchers to explore the nuances of how these cultural attributes are developed, how they evolve over time, and how they impact dynamic capabilities in a more detailed and context-specific manner.

Example of Propositions Testing: For example, Proposition 2 (collaboration/ engagement leads to dynamic capabilities) could be explored through interviews with retail managers who have implemented cross-functional coordination strategies. Interviewees could provide real-world examples of how collaboration enhances information sharing and decision-making across departments.

Data Analysis: The qualitative data collected from these interviews would be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and insights related to the relationships between cultural attributes, dynamic capabilities, and retail outcomes. This would provide a deeper understanding of the mechanisms at play and validate the theoretical propositions.

3. Case Studies of Retail Organizations

Another powerful approach for validating the framework is through case studies of retail organizations that have undergone digital transformation or are in the process of implementing omnichannel strategies. By focusing on a few selected retail firms, researchers can examine how the four cultural attributes manifest in different organizational contexts and how they influence dynamic capabilities in practice.

Propositions Testing: Case studies would provide valuable context for testing multiple propositions simultaneously. For instance, Proposition 6 (dynamic capabilities → omnichannel integration capability) could be examined by looking at how retailers that have developed dynamic capabilities (such as sensing and transforming) have been able to successfully implement omnichannel integration strategies. By examining real-world examples, case studies can offer rich, in-depth data that may not be captured through surveys or interviews alone.

Data Collection: The case study method would involve collecting both qualitative and quantitative data, including interviews with key decision-makers, company documents (e.g., strategy reports), and operational metrics related to omnichannel performance. The triangulation of these data sources would provide a comprehensive view of how culture and dynamic capabilities shape retail outcomes.

4. Longitudinal Studies to Assess Temporal Changes

Given the evolving nature of both retail strategies and organizational culture, longitudinal studies could also play a key role in validating the framework. By following retail organizations over a period of time, researchers can observe how cultural attributes change in response to digital transformation and how these changes affect dynamic capabilities and retail performance.

Focus Areas: Longitudinal studies could track the progress of retail organizations as they adopt new technologies, refine their omnichannel strategies, and integrate new cultural practices. This would help validate how temporal shifts in cultural attributes (such as a shift toward faster decision tempos or improved cross-functional collaboration) influence organizational performance over time.

Propositions Testing: For example, Proposition 10 (environmental dynamism as a boundary condition) could be tested by comparing how companies in more dynamic environments (e.g., rapidly changing consumer demands or technological advancements) respond to market changes compared to firms in more stable sectors.

5. Experimental Studies

While not as common in retail research, experimental studies could be used to manipulate certain cultural attributes and observe their impact on dynamic capabilities and retail performance. For example, an experiment could involve creating controlled environments where different decision-making speeds or collaboration methods are implemented, and then

measuring the effects on performance outcomes such as customer experience or execution capabilities.

Propositions Testing: Experimental studies could be particularly useful for testing the effects of individual cultural attributes, such as Proposition 5 (work/ execution → retail execution capability), where the manipulation of standardized work routines could directly show how disciplined execution influences operational outcomes.

Empirical validation of the conceptual framework is essential for confirming the relationships proposed between cultural attributes, dynamic capabilities, and retail performance. Future research should employ a variety of methods, including surveys, interviews, case studies, and longitudinal studies, to assess how these propositions hold true in different retail settings. By combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, researchers can generate a comprehensive understanding of how organizational culture influences dynamic capabilities in the rapidly changing retail environment.

CONCLUSION

This conceptual manuscript develops a retail management research model grounded in a four-attribute view of business culture (decision tempo, collaboration/engagement, measurement/ direction, and work/execution). The framework proposes that these cultural attributes act as microfoundations of dynamic capabilities and, through omnichannel integration and retail execution capabilities, shape customer experience and retail performance. The propositions provide a clear roadmap for future empirical validation and actionable guidance for retail leaders seeking transformation that *actually lands* in day-to-day execution.

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