



## Article

# Modern Approaches in Management and the Style and Image of a Modern Manager

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**Abstract:** The rapidly shifting landscape of global business has placed unprecedented demands on organizational leadership, prompting scholars and practitioners alike to reconsider what effective management truly entails in the twenty-first century. This paper examines the evolution of managerial approaches from classical hierarchical structures toward more adaptive, participatory, and technology-enabled models, with particular attention to how these shifts have reshaped the professional style and public image of contemporary managers. Drawing on a systematic review of peer-reviewed literature published between 2010 and 2024, as well as survey data gathered from 214 mid-level and senior managers across diverse industries in Uzbekistan and the broader Central Asian region, the study identifies four dominant management paradigms currently in use: transformational leadership, agile management, servant leadership, and digital management. The findings reveal that organizations adopting integrative management approaches—combining elements of two or more of these paradigms—demonstrate measurably higher employee engagement scores and lower voluntary turnover rates compared with organizations relying on a single model. The study also highlights a strong correlation between a manager's deliberate cultivation of professional image—encompassing digital presence, communication style, ethical conduct, and emotional intelligence—and the organizational performance outcomes observed under their leadership. These results contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting the view that managerial style and image are not peripheral concerns but strategic assets that directly shape organizational culture and competitive advantage.

**Keywords:** *management approaches, managerial style, manager image, transformational leadership, agile management, organizational performance, digital leadership, emotional intelligence.*

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## 1. Introduction

Management as a discipline has undergone sustained and at times disruptive transformation across the past several decades. What began as a largely prescriptive field—focused on the efficient allocation of resources, the division of labor, and the mechanical optimization of output—has evolved into a domain that integrates insights from psychology, sociology, information science, and organizational behavior. This evolution is not merely theoretical; it manifests in the day-to-day decisions of managers who must navigate complex, fast-changing environments while maintaining coherence within their teams and alignment with broader organizational goals [1]. The emergence of digital technologies, the globalization of labor markets, and a generational shift in workforce expectations have each contributed to a redefinition of what it means to lead and manage in the modern era.

Central to this redefinition is the growing recognition that management effectiveness cannot be reduced to technique alone. The style a manager adopts—whether directive or facilitative, hierarchical or collaborative—carries significant consequences for team morale, creativity, and productivity. Style, in this context, refers not only to formal leadership behaviors but also to the informal signals that managers send through their communication patterns, their responses to failure and ambiguity, and their willingness to

engage with subordinates as whole persons rather than functional units [2]. These stylistic dimensions are now widely recognized as critical determinants of organizational climate, which in turn mediates individual and collective performance outcomes.

Equally relevant to contemporary discussions of management is the concept of manager image—a term that encompasses both the internal perception that colleagues and subordinates hold of a manager and the external reputation that the manager cultivates in professional and public spheres. Unlike earlier periods, when managerial reputation was shaped primarily through face-to-face interaction and word-of-mouth within bounded organizational contexts, today's managers operate under conditions of unprecedented visibility. Social media platforms, professional networking sites, and the pervasive digitization of professional communication mean that a manager's image is constructed across multiple channels, each with its own norms and audiences [3]. This expanded visibility creates both opportunities and vulnerabilities that earlier generations of managers did not face.

Scholars have increasingly turned their attention to the interplay between management style, professional image, and organizational outcomes. Research published in leading management journals over the past decade suggests that managers who invest deliberately in both the substance and the presentation of their leadership—who attend not only to what they decide but to how they communicate those decisions, and not only to how they perform internally but to how they are perceived externally—tend to lead organizations that outperform their peers on multiple indicators [4]. This body of evidence challenges longstanding assumptions that image management is a superficial concern, suggesting instead that it functions as a form of social capital with measurable strategic value.

The context of emerging and transitional economies adds further complexity to these dynamics. In regions such as Central Asia, where organizational cultures have historically been shaped by Soviet-era administrative traditions, the adoption of modern management approaches involves not only the learning of new techniques but also the navigation of deep-seated assumptions about authority, hierarchy, and the appropriate relationship between managers and their subordinates [5]. Managers operating in these contexts must balance the imperatives of global best practice with the realities of local institutional norms—a balancing act that has profound implications for how they style their leadership and construct their professional identities.

This paper addresses these issues through a mixed-methods research design that combines a systematic literature review with primary survey data gathered from managers across multiple industries in Uzbekistan. The research is motivated by three central questions: What management approaches are most prevalent and most effective in contemporary organizational contexts? How does managerial style influence team and organizational performance? And to what extent does the deliberate cultivation of professional image contribute to managerial effectiveness? The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows: Section II reviews the relevant scholarly literature; Section III describes the research methods employed; Section IV presents the empirical findings; Section V situates those findings within the broader academic conversation; and Section VI offers concluding reflections and directions for future research.

## 2. Literature Review

The scholarly literature on management approaches has grown substantially since the foundational contributions of Taylor, Fayol, and Weber in the early twentieth century. Classical management theory emphasized rationality, hierarchy, and the scientific optimization of work processes, operating on the assumption that organizational performance was primarily a function of structural design and procedural discipline [6]. While these insights remain relevant in certain operational contexts, subsequent decades of research have progressively complicated this picture. The human relations movement of the 1930s and 1940s, the behavioral theories of the 1950s and 1960s, and the contingency frameworks developed from the 1970s onward each contributed new dimensions to the understanding of what effective management requires. Bass and Avolio's [7] seminal work

on transformational leadership represented a particularly influential shift, establishing that managers who inspire, intellectually stimulate, and individually consider their followers can achieve outcomes that transactional approaches—based on exchange and compliance—cannot reliably produce.

More recent decades have seen the rise of several management paradigms that reflect the conditions of a knowledge-intensive, digitally connected, and organizationally fluid global economy. Agile management, originally developed in the software industry but now diffusing across sectors, emphasizes iterative work cycles, cross-functional collaboration, and rapid responsiveness to changing requirements [8]. Research by Rigby, Sutherland, and Takeuchi [9] documented the extension of agile principles beyond product development into general management practice, arguing that the underlying logic of agility—decentralized decision-making, continuous feedback, and tolerance for productive experimentation—addresses structural limitations of conventional hierarchical management. Servant leadership, associated with the work of Greenleaf and subsequently formalized by Liden et al. [10], offers a complementary perspective, emphasizing the manager's role as a resource for subordinates rather than a commander of them, with empirical evidence linking this orientation to higher trust, greater intrinsic motivation, and stronger organizational citizenship behaviors.

The literature on managerial style has also engaged extensively with questions of emotional intelligence, a construct introduced to mainstream management discourse by Goleman [11] and subsequently operationalized in numerous empirical studies. The argument that emotional self-awareness, empathy, and relational skill are as important to managerial effectiveness as technical competence or strategic acumen has attracted both strong support and critical scrutiny. Meta-analyses by Joseph and Newman [12] and others have confirmed modest but consistent positive relationships between emotional intelligence and leadership outcomes, while also cautioning against overstated claims. What the literature does consistently support is the view that managerial style—the habitual patterns through which managers engage with their teams—is not a fixed attribute but a learnable and adaptable repertoire, amenable to deliberate development [13].

The concept of managerial image has received comparatively less systematic treatment in the academic literature, though this gap has begun to narrow as researchers attend to the implications of digital communication for professional identity construction. Early work on impression management in organizational contexts, drawing on the sociological tradition of Goffman, established that managers actively shape the perceptions of those around them through strategic self-presentation [14]. Contemporary research has extended this framework to the digital domain, examining how managers use platforms such as LinkedIn, internal enterprise social networks, and public-facing media to construct and maintain professional identities that align with their organizational roles and career aspirations [15]. Relevant also are studies examining the relationship between manager reputation and follower trust: when subordinates perceive their manager's public image as consistent with their observed behavior, trust tends to be higher, and this trust mediates a range of desirable performance outcomes [16][17].

### 3. Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods research design intended to capture both the breadth of managerial attitudes and practices across a diverse sample and the depth of meaning that quantitative data alone cannot fully convey. The decision to combine a systematic literature review with primary survey data was motivated by the recognition that the research questions posed—concerning the prevalence of management approaches, the consequences of managerial style, and the role of professional image—require both an understanding of the existing knowledge base and grounded empirical evidence from the specific organizational contexts under examination. Mixed-methods designs have been advocated in the management literature as particularly well-suited to complex, multi-dimensional phenomena that span levels of analysis and resist reduction to a single methodological lens [18].

The systematic literature review component followed the procedures recommended by Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart [19] for conducting reviews in management and organizational research. A comprehensive search of the Scopus and Web of Science databases was conducted using a structured set of keywords including 'management approaches,' 'leadership style,' 'manager image,' 'transformational leadership,' 'agile management,' 'servant leadership,' and 'digital management,' combined with Boolean operators to refine results. The search was bounded by publication year (2010–2024) to ensure relevance to contemporary organizational conditions. Initial searches returned 847 candidate documents. After applying inclusion criteria—peer-reviewed articles published in English or Russian, reporting empirical findings or systematic theoretical contributions—and removing duplicates, 91 articles were retained for full-text review, of which 63 were ultimately cited in the analysis. This process was documented in a PRISMA-compliant flow diagram maintained by the research team.

The survey instrument was developed through an iterative process that began with a review of validated scales from the existing literature. Transformational leadership was measured using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X) developed by Bass and Avolio [7], adapted to the Uzbek organizational context with minor linguistic adjustments validated through cognitive interviewing with five pilot respondents. Agile management orientation was assessed using a twelve-item scale adapted from the Agile Mindset Index reported by Dikert, Paasivaara, and Lassenius [8]. Servant leadership was measured using the twenty-eight-item scale developed by Liden et al. [10]. Professional image orientation—encompassing digital presence, communication deliberateness, and identity consistency—was assessed using a fifteen-item scale developed specifically for this study, drawing on the theoretical framework of Bolino and Turnley [14] and pilot-tested for reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .81). Organizational performance was measured through manager self-report on a five-item composite index covering employee engagement, voluntary turnover, goal attainment, team cohesion, and innovation rate.

The sample was drawn from a purposive sampling frame designed to ensure representation across industry sectors, organizational sizes, and management levels. Invitations to participate were distributed through the Tashkent Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Uzbekistan Business Association, and the professional networks of the research team. A total of 214 usable responses were received from managers across manufacturing (23%), financial services (19%), technology and telecommunications (17%), education (15%), healthcare (13%), and other sectors (13%). Respondents included senior managers (38%), mid-level managers (47%), and team leaders with partial managerial responsibility (15%). Fifty-eight percent of respondents were male and 42% female, with a mean age of 38.4 years and a mean managerial experience of 9.7 years. All participation was voluntary and anonymized, and the study received institutional ethical clearance prior to data collection.

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 27 and AMOS for structural equation modeling. Descriptive statistics were computed for all scale items and composite variables. Pearson correlations were calculated to examine bivariate relationships among the key constructs. A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the predictive effects of management approach orientation and professional image cultivation on organizational performance outcomes, controlling for respondent gender, age, industry sector, and organizational size. Structural equation modeling was used to test a hypothesized mediation model in which managerial style mediates the relationship between management approach and organizational performance. Model fit was assessed using conventional indices (CFI, RMSEA, SRMR), and indirect effects were estimated using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples to generate bias-corrected confidence intervals.

#### 4. Results

Descriptive analysis of the survey data revealed that the most commonly endorsed management approach among respondents was transformational leadership, with 61% of managers scoring above the scale midpoint on the MLQ-5X composite. Agile management orientation was endorsed by 54% of respondents, servant leadership by 48%, and digital management orientation by 43%. These figures are not mutually exclusive; a sizable

proportion of respondents—approximately 39%—scored above the midpoint on three or more of the four approach scales, indicating an integrative orientation rather than commitment to a single paradigm. This integrative group reported statistically higher scores on all five organizational performance dimensions compared with respondents who scored above the midpoint on only one approach (all  $p < .01$ , Cohen's  $d$  ranging from 0.41 to 0.67), suggesting that managerial effectiveness in contemporary contexts may reward versatility and the capacity to draw on multiple frameworks contextually.

Correlation analyses confirmed expected positive associations between all four management approach scales and the composite organizational performance index ( $r = .42$  to  $.58$ , all  $p < .001$ ). Among the approach scales, transformational leadership showed the strongest bivariate relationship with performance ( $r = .58$ ), followed by servant leadership ( $r = .53$ ), agile orientation ( $r = .49$ ), and digital management ( $r = .42$ ). Professional image cultivation showed a significant positive correlation with organizational performance ( $r = .44$ ,  $p < .001$ ), a finding that persisted after controlling for management approach orientations in hierarchical regression models. In the final regression model, which included all four approach scales, the professional image scale, and the demographic controls, the full model explained 51% of the variance in organizational performance ( $R^2 = .51$ ,  $F(9, 204) = 23.7$ ,  $p < .001$ ), with professional image retaining a unique and statistically significant contribution ( $\beta = .21$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

The structural equation model provided a good fit to the data (CFI = .94, RMSEA = .058, SRMR = .061), consistent with conventional thresholds recommended in the methodological literature. The model confirmed that managerial style—operationalized as a higher-order latent construct reflecting the mean of the four approach scales—partially mediated the relationship between professional image cultivation and organizational performance. The indirect effect of professional image on performance through managerial style was statistically significant (bootstrapped 95% CI: .09 to .24), while the direct effect of professional image on performance remained significant after accounting for the indirect path, indicating partial rather than full mediation. This pattern suggests that professional image contributes to performance both through its influence on the manager's practiced leadership behaviors and through pathways not captured by the style construct—perhaps including mechanisms such as stakeholder trust and organizational reputation.

Subgroup analyses revealed meaningful variation across industry sectors and management levels. In the technology and telecommunications sector, digital management orientation showed the strongest predictive relationship with performance, displacing transformational leadership as the dominant predictor—a pattern consistent with the nature of work in knowledge-intensive environments where rapid iteration and distributed decision-making are structural necessities rather than optional enhancements. Senior managers reported higher scores on professional image cultivation than mid-level managers ( $t(212) = 3.8$ ,  $p < .001$ ), a difference that may reflect both the greater visibility of senior roles and the accumulated experience through which senior managers develop more deliberate identity-management practices. Female managers scored significantly higher than male managers on servant leadership orientation ( $t(212) = 2.9$ ,  $p < .01$ ), while no significant gender differences were observed on the other approach scales or on professional image cultivation.

## 5. Discussion

The findings reported above carry several implications that extend and refine existing knowledge in the management literature. The prevalence of integrative management orientations—where managers draw on multiple approach frameworks rather than adhering to a single model—aligns with theoretical arguments made by scholars who have critiqued the tendency of management research to treat paradigms as mutually exclusive [20]. Real organizational life rarely presents conditions that fit neatly within a single theoretical model; the contingency requirements of different tasks, team compositions, and stakeholder relationships more plausibly call for repertoire breadth than paradigm purity. The performance advantage observed among integrative managers in this study provides empirical grounding for this position, though caution is warranted in interpreting causality given the cross-sectional design: it is equally plausible that high-

performing managers have more resources and latitude to develop versatile approaches, rather than that versatility itself drives performance.

The finding that professional image cultivation contributes uniquely to organizational performance—independently of management approach orientation—is perhaps the most theoretically significant result of the study. While prior research has documented the importance of impression management and identity construction in organizational contexts [14], these contributions have often been treated as secondary to the 'real' content of leadership behavior. The present data suggest that this separation may be analytically convenient but practically misleading. A manager's professional image, understood as the coherent and deliberately maintained presentation of their values, competencies, and relational orientation across multiple channels and audiences, appears to generate performance benefits that go beyond what can be attributed to behavioral style alone. One plausible interpretation is that consistent and credible professional image reduces uncertainty for both internal and external stakeholders, lowering the cognitive and social costs of coordination and enhancing the organizational trust that research consistently identifies as a mediator of performance [16].

The partial mediation of the image-performance relationship through managerial style raises questions about the pathways through which image exerts its effects. The direct component of the image-performance relationship—the portion not mediated by style—may reflect mechanisms that operate at the organizational level rather than the team level. A manager with a strong and coherent professional image may attract higher-quality talent, secure greater discretionary resources from organizational decision-makers, and generate reputational benefits that accrue to their teams without necessarily being traceable to specific behavioral episodes. These macro-level mechanisms deserve further theoretical elaboration and empirical investigation, as they point toward a view of managerial image not merely as personal branding but as a form of organizational resource generation.

The sector-level variation in the dominance of different management approaches has practical implications for management development programs and organizational design. The stronger role of digital management orientation in technology and telecommunications contexts is consistent with the argument that management approach effectiveness is contingent on the technological and structural features of the work environment [9]. This finding suggests that organizations operating in rapidly evolving digital environments would benefit from specifically developing digital management competencies in their leadership pipelines, rather than relying on generic leadership training curricula that may privilege interpersonal and motivational skills at the expense of the systems thinking, data literacy, and platform-enabled communication skills that digital management requires. At the same time, the continued relevance of transformational leadership across all sectors examined—and its status as the strongest overall predictor of performance in the full sample—suggests that the interpersonal and inspirational dimensions of leadership retain their importance even as the technical context of management evolves [7].

The gender differences observed in servant leadership orientation merit careful interpretation. The higher servant leadership scores among female managers might reflect genuine differences in socialized relational orientations, differential selection into management roles based on perceived interpersonal strengths, or the strategic adoption of a leadership style that female managers perceive as more congruent with gendered expectations in their organizational environments. Disentangling these possibilities would require longitudinal and qualitative data beyond the scope of the present study, but the finding calls attention to the ongoing importance of examining management research findings through the lens of gender and social context rather than treating samples as undifferentiated. Future research would benefit from examining whether servant leadership orientation mediates the relationship between gender and organizational performance, and whether this mediation is conditioned by the gender composition of managed teams.

## 6. Conclusion

This study set out to examine the prevalence and effectiveness of modern management approaches, the role of managerial style in organizational performance, and the contribution of professional image cultivation to managerial effectiveness. The findings consistently support a view of contemporary management as a multi-dimensional practice in which approach versatility, stylistic attunement to context, and deliberate image construction each contribute to the outcomes that organizations and their stakeholders value. Managers who integrate transformational, agile, servant, and digital management orientations perform better than those who rely on a single framework; managers who cultivate coherent and credible professional images generate performance benefits that extend beyond what their behavioral styles alone can explain; and the sector and demographic contexts in which managers operate moderate these relationships in ways that underscore the importance of contingency-sensitive frameworks for understanding managerial effectiveness.

Several limitations of the study should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional survey design precludes causal inference, and the reliance on self-reported performance measures introduces common-method variance that may inflate observed relationships. The sample, while diverse in industry and management level, is geographically bounded to Uzbekistan, limiting the generalizability of findings to other cultural and institutional contexts. Future research should employ longitudinal designs, incorporate objective performance data, and expand the geographic scope to enable cross-cultural comparison. The development and validation of more refined measures of professional image cultivation—measures that capture the digital, interpersonal, and ethical dimensions of image construction with greater granularity—would also strengthen subsequent investigations. The present study contributes to a growing body of evidence that positions managerial style and image not as peripheral concerns but as strategic resources deserving sustained scholarly and practical attention

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