Guest editorial: Digital transformation, strategic management and entrepreneurial process: dynamics, challenges and opportunities

The current era is characterized by the advent of the so-called "digital transformation" (Berman, 2012; Hess *et al.*, 2016; Matt *et al.*, 2015; Westerman *et al.*, 2014). This phenomenon profoundly influences the behaviors and operations of organizations (Verhoef *et al.*, 2019).

The significant diffusion of the digital and new technologies are among the key drivers for many companies in the global scenario (Badescu and Garcés-Ayerbe, 2009; Trabucchi *et al.*, 2017; Troise *et al.*, 2021, 2022a, b). Digital transformation enables several changes in entrepreneurship and in organizations strategies, processes and interactions. It is changing the way different players operate and how organizations' function. Despite its strong impact on the economy of many countries, the booming of digital transformation – and the strong use of new technologies – raises a growing number of questions on the changes that traditional businesses, strategies and management practices companies need to establish to respond to them. Particularly, strategic decision-making process represents a key to explore in the digital transformation era.

The use of new technologies to radically improve the enterprises' performance and/or reach (Westerman *et al.*, 2014; Troise *et al.*, 2022a) is a hot topic for scholars and practitioners worldwide. Complex transformations influence many areas such as strategic direction, competitiveness, business model, decision-making, innovation, entrepreneurship and productivity. These transformations present important opportunities for both companies and entrepreneurs (Aydalot and Keeble, 2018; Cohen *et al.*, 2017; Li *et al.*, 2018; Troise and Tani, 2021).

In this scenario, managers, chief information officers (CIOs) and other senior executives face the challenge to handle the opportunities and risks of this digital transformation (Hess *et al.*, 2016). In fact, many boards of directors and senior management teams aspire to the efficiencies, innovations and competitive advantages that digital transformations might deliver (Andriole, 2017). Digital transformations may create significant opportunities for companies to design new business models and change their operations to leverage them (Berman, 2012). A high number of companies, in almost every industry, have conducted several initiatives to explore these new technologies and to exploit their benefits (Hess *et al.*, 2016; Matt *et al.*, 2015). The exploitation of new technologies affects companies and productivity, business processes and innovation management in particular (Matt *et al.*, 2015).

In this evolving scenario, many new technologies have entered the arena and among the most promising are artificial intelligence (AI), IoT, digital platforms, big data, apps, cloud computing, machine learning, blockchain and others (such as the financial technologies).

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These new technologies can also affect business model innovation and can lead to the transformation of several traditional businesses (Mustafa, 2015; Zhong and Nieminen, 2015). Among these business models, smart meters (Kendel and Lazaric, 2015) and smart city (Capdevila and Zarlenga, 2015; Dupont *et al.*, 2015) are two significant examples.

Over the years, scholars tried to predict the evolutionary patterns in industries based on systemic technologies (Manral, 2011) or to identify the benefits seen by management in high technology strategic alliances (Powers and Wilson, 2010). The current literature shows some contributions that investigated different types of factors (environmental, political, etc.) affecting strategic decision-making processes (Elbanna *et al.*, 2014). In this digital transformation era, networks and partnerships offer companies access to new technologies (often previously unknown to the organizations) or to new markets, leveraging new innovations and jointly developed knowledge (Clauss and Spieth, 2017; Kilubi, 2016; Roth *et al.*, 2017).

Digital transformation has received sustained interest in the current literature; however, this topic is still in its infancy in the strategic management research stream. In fact, this important area presents a limited number of contributions and is understudied, even as both practice and policy continue to rapidly advance.

Inevitably, the digital revolution raises several questions on the traditional businesses outlook. Accordingly, the main research questions, both for scholars and practitioners, are related to the impact of these new technologies and to the improvement of the understanding of strategic management. Scholars know very little about the dynamics of new technologies and their impacts on strategic decision-making process. In fact, there is little knowledge on strategic management in the digital transformation era.

This special issue tries to shed some further lights in this field and provide evidence on the main strategies company are exploiting to deal with the new technologies and how they can affect their decision-making process. Furthermore, the recent COVID-19 pandemic provides a significant opportunity of research, given its impact on companies' behaviors (Ghobadian *et al.*, 2022).

Articles in the SI

The first article, "Can digitalization favor the emergence of innovative and sustainable business models? A qualitative exploration in the automotive sector" by Acciarini *et al.* (2022), investigates the role of the digitalization phenomenon in the development of innovative business models and specifically focuses on those that are sustainability oriented. The research examines a case study in the automotive sector and highlights that digitalization and sustainability are key elements to innovate business models and they are interrelated. According to the authors, the innovative transformation – i.e. companies adapting their business models to digitalization and sustainability trends – needs to be as sustainable as possible to offer benefits to organizations, customers and society at large.

The second article, titled "Agile and generic work values of British vs Indian IT workers: a culture-clash case" by Bastiaansen and Wilderom (2022), shows that managers in charge of the transition to an effective agile culture must pay great attention to the specific value constellations of its often highly diverse workforce. The authors conducted a survey, focusing on British and Indian IT professionals in a digital service and consulting firm that was requested by its client to become agile, and derived a set of agile work values of culturally diverse IT professionals together with a set of well-known generic work values. According to the authors, four generic value dimensions were complemented by two agile specific ones: team communication and shared responsibility.

The third article, "E-commerce websites, consumer order fulfillment and after-sales service satisfaction: the customer is always right, even after the shopping cart check-out" by Camilleri (2022), highlights the critical factors of online service delivery of e-commerce websites, during

the (unprecedented) COVID-19 pandemic. The research shows that consumers valued the e-commerce websites' features and their consumer order fulfillment capabilities. According to the author, these factors increase the consumers' satisfaction with online shopping experiences and generate repeat business, as well as positive reviews on social media.

The fourth article, "Digital transformation or analogic relationships? A dilemma for small retailer entrepreneurs and its resolution" by Candelo *et al.* (2022), explores the enabling factors of digital transformation in the small retailers' context. The authors leveraged the lens of stakeholder theory and used a single case study to provide evidence on such transformations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The study reveals that stakeholder relationships based on trust, engagement and empowerment are enablers of digital transformation in entrepreneurial contexts based on analogic relationships and communal sharing relational models.

The fifth article, "Digital transformation and entrepreneurship process in SMEs of India: a moderating role of adoption of AI-CRM capability and strategic planning" by Chatterjee *et al.* (2022), investigates the factors affecting corporate digital entrepreneurship of SMEs in India and the moderating effect of adopting AI–customer relationship management (CRM) capability and strategic planning. The research provides evidence that perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and willingness to change have strong and significant effects on corporate digital entrepreneurship as well as the two moderators have significant impacts on the relationships between corporate digital entrepreneurship and its predictors.

The sixth article, "The role of transformational entrepreneurship in managing a digital platform: the case of Yamamay" by Dicuonzo *et al.* (2022), focuses on the role of digital platforms to support transformational entrepreneurship in the current pandemic scenario. The study specifically analyzed the case of Yamamay and its entrepreneur/founder was interviewed. According to the authors, the implementation of digital platforms has a key role in supporting the entrepreneur in formulating strategic choices that allowed the company to continue offering its services despite the store closures imposed by the pandemic.

The seventh article, "Digital transformation in the economics of complexity: the role of predictive models in strategic management" by Iscaro *et al.* (2022), explores the role of predictive models in the learning and decision-making processes of strategic management. The authors suggest that organizations' need to modify their decision/strategy-making processes, which are increasing in speed and frequency, thus also leading to the formulation of emergent and trigger event strategies based on the identification of conditions that require the revision of all or part of the firm's strategy. The study sheds some lights on the importance of predictive models, acting as filters, transforming data into informative knowledge that decision-makers can interpret based on individual domain knowledge.

The eighth article, "The digital transformation of Swiss small and medium-sized enterprises: insights from digital tool adoption" by Kraft *et al.* (2022), investigates the alignment of Swiss SME managers' understanding of digital transformation and particularly exploring the digital tool adoption in managerial and operative work. Through a multiple case study approach, the authors highlight two digital tool adoption patterns, namely workflow-and-workforce management and workflow-and-team management. According to the authors, this digital tool adoption in operational work also focuses on the digital skills of operational employees.

The ninth and last article, "Factors affecting the adoption of blockchain technology in innovative Italian companies: an extended TAM approach" by Sciarelli *et al.* (2022), focused on the determinants for users' behavioral adoption of Blockchain technology. The authors leveraged the technology acceptance model approach and extended it with two external constructs (i.e. reduced cost and efficiency-security). The research highlights that efficiency-security is an important driver influencing the decision-making process and perceived usefulness represents a strong predictor of the intention to use Blockchain.

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