



Journal of Product Innovation Management

Special Issue Call for Papers:

“Innovation via Business-to-Business (B2B) Digital Platforms, Platform Ecosystems, and Platform-based Business Models”

Manuscript submission deadline: April 30, 2024

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Special issue aims:

This is a call for insightful scholarly contributions to the innovation management literature on technology-enabled business-to-business (B2B) platforms and platform ecosystems. Contributors to the special issue are encouraged to focus on how innovation and growth can be spurred through digital multi-sided platforms and platform-based business models, which are intertwined with multiple ecosystem actors – owners, providers, producers, complementors, and end-user networks – across multiple industries involved in manufacturing, healthcare, energy, automation, and knowledge-intensive services, among others.

Motivation for the special issue

The interplay of digital transformation and innovation management has received increasing attention in recent years (Appio et al., 2021; Spanjol & Noble, 2020; Wetzels, 2021). Specifically, digital transformation affects how industries and firms compete and organize for innovation in a digitalized world (Appio et al., 2021). Indeed, the development of new products and services is changing in response to digital technologies, such as digital multi-sided platforms (Chen et al, 2021; Rietveld & Schilling, 2020). Digital platforms are among the fastest-growing research domains enabling previously unrelated actors to converge into a platform ecosystem (comprising firms, complementors, and end users) and offering companies novel ways to innovate and develop and platform-based business models (Adner, 2017; Jacobides et al., 2018). Moreover, digital platforms and associated platform ecosystems are increasingly developed by business-to-business (B2B) companies, such as GE, ABB, and Siemens, leading to digital transformation across industries (Mishra & Tripathi, 2020). The platform and ecosystem literature addressing business-to-consumer (B2C) platforms and digital marketplaces, such as Facebook, Uber, and Airbnb (Cennamo, 2021), have not been applicable or replicable in the industrial B2B setting and have, therefore, created a gap in both knowledge and practice (Jovanovic et al., 2021). Hence, there is a need to better understand industrial platforms and platform ecosystems in B2B settings,

as well as how they affect the underlying innovation mechanisms (Lanzolla et al., 2021 Leminen et al., *forthcoming*).

In comparison to B2C platforms or digital marketplaces, B2B platforms and platform ecosystems exhibit different characteristics in terms of platform structure and strategy (Cennamo, 2021; Giustiziero et al., 2021). B2B digital platforms that typically emerge as proprietary platforms do not directly follow the “winner-takes-all” strategy (Eisenmann, 2008; Saadatmand et al., 2019) where the platform owners or sponsors gradually open the platform to complementors and partners (Boudreau, 2010). The layered architecture of platforms in B2B settings is highly advanced in leveraging the industrial Internet of things (IIoT) and autonomous solutions (Leminen et al., 2020; Thomson et al., 2021), creating intelligent machines or smart things with sensing, connection, communication, and autonomously acting capabilities (Aversa et al., 2020; Rindfleisch et al., 2017), which enable unique industrial applications, such as real-time representations of industrial assets (i.e., digital twins) and autonomous mobile robots (Björkdahl, 2020; Dalenogare et al., 2018). Since B2B platforms are often investment heavy and industrywide, they play a major role in the transformation of industry verticals (de Reuver et al., 2018).

The presence of digital platforms and ecosystems in B2B firms also calls for business model innovation (Kohtamäki et al., 2019; Randhawa et al., 2021a). They not only dismantle established business models but also provide opportunities to design new business models to support newly developed digital products, services and solutions (Sestino et al., 2020; Sjödin et al., 2020a). Moreover, this situation may require operating with multiple and often conflicting business models (Visnjic et al., 2021; Smith & Baretta, 2021). Furthermore, in industrial B2B ecosystems, well-established incumbents from various industries are brought together, often without a predefined orchestrator. Here, it remains unclear who leads the business model transformation and evolution efforts. Indeed, the full potential of platform-based business models can only be realized if companies collaborate and share data, engaging in so-called “open innovation” with stakeholders across the ecosystem (Dahlander et al., 2021; Randhawa et al., 2016). Openness and data sharing are, therefore, at the heart of data-driven, customised solutions and business models enabled by B2B digital platforms and ecosystems (Sjödin et al., 2020b; Randhawa et al., 2018).

B2B digital platforms and associated platform ecosystems are also characterized by different dynamics of complementor engagement and governance (Vivek et al., 2021; Hilbolling et al., 2020). More specifically, the onboarding and alignment of complementors, other OEMs, and end users are complex and difficult to achieve (Murthy & Madhok, 2021; Hannah & Eisenhardt, 2018). This requires, for example, a complementor-specific model of governance based on the value and data complementors bring to the ecosystem (Alaimo & Kallinikos, 2021; Kretschmer et al., 2020). The orchestrator, keystone player, or ecosystem leader plays a distinct role in platform ecosystem governance, coordinating complementarities across supply-side and demand-side ecosystem actors (Bonina et al., 2021; Randhawa et al., 2021b). In a B2B context, this includes alignment with technology stack providers and industrial incumbents, among others. The role of ecosystem actors is also changing and evolving – being a leader or a complementor depends on the market context. Finally, it is evident that the wider regulatory and policy systems need to be adapted or reconceptualized to support new B2B platforms and platform ecosystems (Jovanovic et al., 2022; Kamalaldin et al., 2021). Thus, B2B platforms do not follow the “winner-takes-all” mantra of B2C platforms and ecosystems but rather bring to light the additional challenges of cohabitation facing multiple ecosystem actors, digital platforms, and platform competition – especially, in complex, regulated industries, such as manufacturing, energy, and healthcare.

Special issue scope and exemplar inquiry directions

This call for papers aims to summon high-quality scholarly articles that reconceive established theories and develop new conceptions of innovation employing B2B digital platforms and platform ecosystems. We encourage conceptual and empirical papers, both qualitative and quantitative, that provide insights into best practices on the transition to B2B digital platforms and ecosystems. In particular, high-quality empirical studies with rich and unique data on B2B contexts are welcome. Furthermore, the aim of the special issue is to advance our understanding of the design, management, and governance of innovation

in the light of new advances in B2B platforms, the realities of the emerging industrial digital ecosystems, and the introduction of novel business models. Thus, we encourage contributions that address – but are not limited to – the following topics.

- *The evolution of B2B digital platforms and platform ecosystem dynamics:* How do ecosystems based on B2B digital platforms emerge and evolve? How does the development of new technologies shape ecosystem evolution? What do we know about the dynamics of ecosystems in the context of B2B digital platforms?
- *Creation of multi-sided B2B digital platforms:* What are the emergent and prominent forms of multi-sided B2B digital platforms? What are the new principles and practices of multi-sided B2B digital platforms enabling actors at different levels to collaborate on novel technology and services as well as platform business model innovation?
- *Actor roles and stakeholder management in B2B platform ecosystems:* How are the roles of B2B platform ecosystem actors changing as a result of new and emerging technology-enabled platforms and their underlying business models? How can ecosystem leaders manage B2B platforms and orchestrate their participating actors in relation to new business models?
- *Governance of B2B digital platforms and platform ecosystems:* What are the governance practices employed by platform owners or sponsors to incentivize engagement, openness, and data sharing among diverse actors? How can platforms and ecosystems be orchestrated to ensure that value is created for and appropriated by all ecosystem actors? How can regulatory frameworks and policies be designed both to support the adoption of B2B platforms and ecosystems and to avoid their potential negative impact?
- *Scaling B2B digital platforms to different customer segments and markets:* How can new technologies enable the scaling or hyper-scaling of B2B digital platforms? What is the relationship between new technology-enabled business model innovation and firm boundaries when scaling B2B platforms to multinational and global markets?
- *Business model innovation for B2B digital platforms and platform ecosystems:* What characterizes new B2B digital platform business model (innovation)? How can business models be (re-)designed and developed for value creation, value delivery, and value capture across platform-based ecosystems? What new forms of business model innovation are enabled by the emergence of digital B2B platforms and their unconventional ways of conducting business?
- *Open innovation for B2B digital platforms and platform ecosystems:* How can firms leverage open innovation to achieve collaboration, co-competition, and/or coordination across B2B platform-based ecosystems? What open innovation strategies can promote multi-actor engagement and data sharing in B2B digital platform-based ecosystems? What forms of open innovation can help align interdependencies among actors to achieve value co-creation through B2B digital platforms?
- *Theorizing innovation in the context of B2B platforms, platform ecosystems, and platform-based business models:* How can existing conceptualizations of value creation, value capture, and value delivery be redeveloped to suit the requirements of new technology-enabled B2B platform-based business models? What new innovation typologies might emerge in response to new technology-enabled B2B platforms, platform ecosystems, and platform-based business models? How can we quantitatively model and measure new technology-enabled B2B platform business models and their performance, and how does this translate into business model design?
- *Understanding the micro-foundations of the transition to technology-enabled B2B platform-based business models:* What cognitive and behavioral factors influence managerial decisions in transitioning to platform-based business models in B2B firms? What micro-processes underpin the transformation to platform-based business models in B2B? What are the individual-level enablers and constraints in the shift to B2B platforms, ecosystems, and related business models?
- *Best practices for integration of multi-actor data sources to enable B2B digital platforms:* How can new and emerging types and sources of data be integrated beneficially to promote ecosystem business models? What organizational structures, processes, and practices can facilitate the adoption of platforms, ecosystems, and platform-based business models in B2B?

- *New technology-enabled B2B platform business models fostering sustainability and growth:* How can traditional industries benefit from new technology-enabled B2B platform business models? How are novel B2B platform-based business models driving the sustainability and growth of firms and their industries? What are the industry-specific and cross-industry lessons from studying B2B platform-based business model innovation? How can technology-enabled B2B platforms, platform ecosystems, and platform-based business models be designed to address grand challenges and balance the economic and societal impact?

Authors are encouraged to contact the editors if they would like to propose a study based on ideas not listed here. We welcome contributions regarding both platforms and platform ecosystems that acknowledge the academic sediments – in particular, contributions that integrate scholarly discussion on platforms and platform ecosystems with mainstream research on innovation. Furthermore, we encourage manuscripts across the whole theoretical and methodological scope of the *Journal of Product Innovation Management* (JPIM) (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/15405885>) that can provide a unique perspective on B2B digital platforms, ecosystems, and platforms-based business models employing diverse methodological approaches and interdisciplinary theoretical, empirical, and methodological work.

Review process timeline

Milestone	Date
Meeting the special issue guest editor(s) session at AOM, IPDMC, ISPIM, R&D Management & WOIC ¹ 2023 conferences and JPIM Research Forum	June 2023, July 2023, November 2023
Paper proposal ² deadline (optional)	September 30, 2023
Paper proposal feedback (if applicable)	October 31, 2023
Submission deadline (full paper)	April 30, 2024
First round decision	August 31, 2024
In person dedicated workshop (for authors with invited revisions)	Fall 2024
Revision due	February 29, 2025
Second round decision	May 30, 2025
Second revision due	August 30, 2025
Final editorial decision	October 30, 2025
Anticipated publication	Fall/Winter 2025

¹ WOIC is World Open Innovation Conference

²An optional step prior to formal submission is a short (3 to 5 page) proposal so that authors can obtain feedback from the editors on their work in progress. This step is not mandatory to be eligible to submit a full paper. The proposal should include key elements of the study, such as motivation/positioning, link to the relevant literature, illustration of the method(s), preliminary findings, intended contributions, and future research directions. Moreover, we ask authors to indicate their research’s stage of development at the time of submitting their proposal.

Submission

All final submissions should be made through the JPIM system at www.jpim.online. Be sure to indicate your targeting of this special issue when prompted.

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