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Platform governance and value creation

Coordinating trust, coopetition, and engagement in platform ecosystems

Fa, C.

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English Summary

At the intersection of strategic management and digital platform research, this dissertation examines ‘*platform governance*’ as a central mechanism for value creation. It investigates the paradoxes and dualities that emerge when platform owners implement governance mechanisms to orchestrate interactions among users, complementors, and the platform itself. The thesis shows how mechanisms designed to (a) foster trust, (b) expand platform boundaries, and (c) promote engagement can simultaneously enable and constrain value creation, generating unintended tensions.

The main findings are as follows. 1) *the dual role of trust*: The first study demonstrates that platform owners build trust, for example through certifications, to increase transactions and revenue. However, excessive trust can lead to disintermediation, where complementors and users bypass the platform. By distinguishing between calculative and relational trust, the study shows that the effects of trust vary across industries and transaction values, highlighting a core dilemma: trust is essential for growth, yet must be carefully managed to prevent platform disintermediation. 2) *the unintended consequences of platform integration*: The second study shows that platform integration, while intended to expand network effects, can intensify

competition among complementors and reduce knowledge sharing. This effect is particularly pronounced for non-manufacturer and multi-homing complementors, challenging the assumption that increased market exposure is universally beneficial and revealing potential negative consequences for complementor cooperation. 3) *the strategic value of design change*: The third study examines how relaxing platform control, specifically by increasing the character limit for tweets on Twitter, affects user engagement. The character limit increase promotes user engagement, and the impact is stronger for complementors with large follower networks and weaker for those focused on novel content. These findings suggest that flexible control can facilitate engagement by reducing creation frictions, but may also concentrate attention among dominant complementors and reduce content novelty. Together, these studies contribute to the literature on '*platform governance*' by illustrating the trade-offs involved in orchestrating interactions, sustaining engagement, and fostering value creation within digital platform ecosystems.

Samenvatting

Op het snijvlak van strategisch management en onderzoek naar digitale platformen onderzoekt dit proefschrift ‘*platform governance*’ als een centraal mechanisme voor waarde creatie. Het bestudeert de paradoxen en dualiteiten die ontstaan wanneer platformeigenaren governance mechanismen implementeren om interacties tussen gebruikers, complementoren en het platform zelf te coördineren. Het proefschrift laat zien hoe mechanismen die zijn ontworpen om (a) vertrouwen te bevorderen, (b) de grenzen van het platform te vergroten en (c) betrokkenheid te stimuleren, tegelijkertijd waarde creatie kunnen faciliteren én beperken. Dit leidt vaak tot onbedoelde spanningen.

De belangrijkste bevindingen van dit proefschrift zijn de volgende: 1) *de dubbele rol van vertrouwen*: de eerste studie toont aan dat platformeigenaren vertrouwen opbouwen, bijvoorbeeld door certificeringen, om transacties en omzet te vergroten. Te veel vertrouwen kan echter leiden tot disintermediatie, waarbij complementoren en gebruikers het platform omzeilen. Door onderscheid te maken tussen calculatief en relationeel vertrouwen, laat de studie zien dat de effecten van vertrouwen variëren per industrie en transactiewaarde, wat een belangrijk kernprobleem laat zien: vertrouwen is essentieel voor groei, maar moet zorgvuldig worden beheerd om disintermediatie te voorkomen; 2) *de onbedoelde gevolgen van platformintegratie*: de tweede studie laat zien dat platformintegratie, hoewel bedoeld om

netwerkeffecten te vergroten, de concurrentie tussen complementoren kan intensiveren en kennisdeling kan verminderen. Dit effect is vooral merkbaar bij complementoren die geen producent zijn en bij complementoren die actief zijn op meerdere platforms. Dit illustreert dat meer marktblootstelling niet altijd voordelig is en mogelijke negatieve gevolgen voor samenwerking tussen complementoren kan hebben. 3) *de strategische waarde van ontwerpwijzigingen*: de derde studie onderzoekt hoe het versoepelen van platformcontrole, specifiek door het verhogen van het tekenlimiet voor tweets op Twitter, de betrokkenheid van gebruikers beïnvloedt. Het verhogen van het tekenlimiet bevordert gebruikersbetrokkenheid, waarbij het effect sterker is voor complementoren met grote volgersnetwerken en zwakker voor degenen die zich richten op vernieuwende content. Deze bevindingen suggereren dat flexibele controle betrokkenheid kan faciliteren door fricties bij het creëren van content te verminderen, maar ook de aandacht kan concentreren bij dominante complementoren en de nieuwigheid van content kan beperken. Gezamenlijk dragen deze studies bij aan de literatuur over ‘*platform governance*’ door de complexe afwegingen in kaart te brengen die spelen bij het coördineren van interacties, het behouden van betrokkenheid en het bevorderen van waarde creatie binnen digitale platformecosystemen.

About the Author

Chengdi Fa was born in Shandong, China, on 16 December 1994. She received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Economics from Shandong University, China, and completed a double Master's degree in Finance at Tilburg University in the Netherlands.

After completing her Master's degrees, Chengdi became a PhD candidate in Strategy and Innovation at Amsterdam Business School. Her research focuses on platform ecosystems, with particular interest in how platform governance and platform regulation shape interactions between platforms and complementors. Her work combines quantitative analysis with causal inference methods, complemented by qualitative insights. During her PhD, she was a visiting researcher at Copenhagen Business School, Denmark.

Chengdi regularly participates in international conferences, including the Academy of Management (AOM), the Strategic Management Society (SMS), the European Digital Platform Research Network (EU-DPRN), the European Academy of Management (EURAM), and the European Group for Organizational Studies (EGOS). At these conferences, she presents her research, engages in scholarly discussions, and receives feedback from peers. She has received multiple recognitions for her work, including the Best Paper Award at the EURAM Strategic Management Business Ecosystems and Digital Strategy Track (Winterthur 2022), the TIM Division Best Paper Award Finalist at the Academy of Management Annual Meeting (Chicago

2024), as well as nominations for the SMS Responsible Research Paper Prize (Istanbul 2024) and the SMS Best Conference PhD Paper Prize (Toronto 2021).

She is currently a postdoctoral researcher at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (LMU) Munich, Germany.