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Electronic Markets on platform culture

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A fourth notion that complements the topics platform complexity, platform dualities and platform transformation from past Electronic Markets editorials, is platform culture. If businesses aim to master continuous technological and/socio-organizational change as involved in platform transformation (Alt, 2022a, 401), then culture is known to be a key factor. A recent article in the Sloan Management Review quotes an executive that “the biggest component of digital transformation is the cultural change that goes along with it. It’s good to have a strategy and technology that will enable it, but the hardest work is around culture, reeducation and the upscaling of the organization” (Pedersen 2022, p. 2). In reverse, a survey among 1700 respondents from 340 organizations in Europe and the US saw culture as “the number one hurdle to digital transformation” (Buvat et al., 2018, 2). It was not only the lack of a digital culture, but also of the unequal distribution of digital culture within the organization: in the study 40% of the senior executives and only 27% of employees were describing their organization as possessing a digital culture. The survey concludes by suggesting measures to close the employee-leadership gap, such as to become customer-centric, agile and flexible, as well as collaborative, open-minded and innovative in thinking. A more recent report also observed a worker-employer disruption and saw this driven by remote work models that spread during the pandemic (Schwartz et al., 2021). Again, culture was attributed a key role in improving workplace attractiveness for recruiting and in keeping the talented workforce. Such cultural gaps are not new to the information systems (IS) literature as shown by a survey from the 1990s, which reports that the “culture gap existing between IT and business professionals [...] was losing or seriously delaying IT opportunities for their company to gain competitive advantage” (Finnegan and Willcocks 2006, 569).

Views on culture

Although many authors (e.g. Jackson, 2011, Gibbons et al., 2021, Biswas et al., 2022) have emphasized the role of culture for the success of business strategies, organizations and IS, the phenomenon of culture is rather difficult to grasp and due to its visible as well as invisible nature not fully amenable to deliberate design. Very often, the explicit and implicit patterns, norms and values that influence the behavior of human groups and define culture, are emergent and comprise multiple dimensions. This is reflected in the review by Leidner and Kayworth (2006) who state that “one of the greatest challenges in IS-culture research is in defining exactly what culture is and how one goes about measuring it” (p. 380). Based on their analysis of prior definitions of culture they identify research on the national level (in particular, cross-national studies) and on the organizational level. They argue that culture should be conceived as shared values since “regardless of level (organizational or national), values play a common role in determining patterns of IT development, adoption, use, and outcomes” (p. 381). Among the six themes on the role of culture in IS research, most attention received the unidirectional relationship between culture and IT (i.e. from culture on IS dimensions) and only a smaller amount of research was directed at the impact of information technology (IT) on culture and the emergence of a dedicated IT (or digital) culture. Over the years, researchers shed more light on the mutual relationship, whereas technology also impacts culture as, for example, postulated by the symmetric treatment of IS and social organizations in actor-network theory (Walsham, 1997). From the background of this mutual understanding, a multidimensional framing for the present issue of Electronic Markets shall be undertaken along four views.

First, culture may be observed on a broader *societal level*. Following this view, interactions among organizations and individuals occur within a social and cultural setting (Håkansson & Snehota, 1995), which is influenced by national cultures. These cultures frame the behavior and conduct among actors in key dimensions such as the

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formation of trust (Lundgren & Walczuch, 2003) and the six dimensions of culture in general (with collectivism and individualism as well as masculinity versus femininity, see Hofstede, 2011). They determine which behavior is appropriate as well as the assumptions preceding or underlying actions by human actors. For example, the interpretation of statements or facial expressions differs depending on the cultural context (see Brand et al., 2022 and Tastemirova et al., 2022 in this issue) as the attitude towards technology also does. This may be explained by the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), which posits that technology is embedded in a social context and that human action shapes technology. In this vein, the article of Treiblmaier (2022) states that “Bitcoin is what users make of it and consists of the attributes that they assign to it”. While the values and actors in a society provide meaning to a technology, technology also shapes societies and (sub)cultures. Notions as “network culture” (e.g. Hands, 2013), “digital or on-demand culture” (e.g. Beer, 2019), “tech, hacker and algorithmic culture” (Semenzin, 2021) and “internet and digital culture” (Lovink, 2022) capture change caused by algorithms, online meetings, social media, digital entertainment or the ubiquitous access of (true and false) information and the reachability of individuals in general. For example, social media culture with user generated content has enabled individuals to not only consume but also to produce content for self-promotion purposes (Duffy et al., 2017). Thus, the societal view captures an overall environment for organizations and individuals in their various roles (as customers, employees, entrepreneurs), which in turn will be shaped by the use of technology within society and deliberate measures like education or regulation.

Second, specific cultures emerge within organizations. The prominence of *organizational culture*, as mentioned in the introductory paragraph of this editorial, has been mentioned in the literature early on. For example, Tushman and Nadler (1986) describe the need to establish a culture that involves technological change as part of the company’s vision and Inamdar (2022) describes digital transformation and innovation processes as cultural change that permeates all members of the organization. Among the goals are to adopt tools for cross-functional collaboration and information sharing (Finnegan & Willcocks, 2006), such as reflected in agile development approaches or the Devops philosophy. Research by Özcan et al. (2022) indicates that digital platform operators are likely to be successful, if they feature a culture open for business model innovation like it is typically present in start-up businesses and if incumbent organizations are able to overcome their traditional hierarchical organization model. In particular, business model innovation comprises the ability to understand customer needs, to question current business logic, to think in business models, to

Table 1 Views on culture in the context of digital platforms

View	Description
1. Societal culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General social trust within (national) societies • Norms and values for interaction among individuals • General attitude towards the use of technology (“digital culture”)
2. Organizational culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technological change as part of an organization’s vision • Ability to interact with external partners (“networkability”) • Shared values for collaboration and information sharing
3. Platform culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emerging culture on digital platforms • Role of platform providers (“god view”) • Values that users attribute to platforms they use
4. Culture platformization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Platforms for cultural communities • Platforms for culture goods and digital art (“crypto art”)

manage idea creation, to conquer internal resistance and to manage partners (Frankenberger et al., 2013). Such collaborative and network-centric corporate culture is not limited to platform operators and has been referred to as networkability of organizations (Alt et al., 2000). An important skill of networkable organizations is to master the challenges of mismatching cultures that is almost inevitable when multiple independent partners collaborate. Again, early research (Snehota & Håkansson, 1995) confirms that cultural differences are drivers of interorganizational coordination costs and state that “numerous real-life examples illustrate that compatible cultures increase the likelihood of success” (p. 353). In other words, if organizational cultures prevent the sharing of information among partners, substantial competitive pressure (e.g. market power) will be necessary to render technological systems successful.

A third view is associated with the notion of *platform culture* itself. Values may emerge over a longer term on the platform through platform use and platform design. On the one hand, platform users will develop their ways of sharing and commenting content and shape a certain culture for interactions on a specific platform. These informal rules may lead to unspoken expectations to how users behave (“netiquettes”) and to how content is interpreted. The most democratic form of such interactions appears when original and authentic content is shared, but restrictions might be enacted by platform owners in case of conflict with ethical or other policies of conduct (e.g., sharing of fake, offensive or discriminating content). Although such rules will not always be explicitly documented for political or competitive reasons, they will be more formal and deliberately designed by the platform provider. As described by Sundararajan (2014), platform providers have the privilege of following what is happening on their platform – a phenomenon he referred to as “god view” – and to formulate rules on which behavior

is allowed on the platform and which behavior will be sanctioned. In doing so, platform providers create “an appropriate platform culture – shared norms, values and capabilities among the [service] providers” (Sundararajan, 2014) and platform participants in general. As example, Sundararajan (2014) explains the differences in how platforms treat their participants between Airbnb (community culture) and Uber (control culture). Another example are word filters that are used in censorship algorithms by platform providers to block certain unwanted words (Day, 2021). Contrary to the provider-dominated cultures on centralized platforms, more recently a new platform culture on decentralized platforms is apparent that differs and often resembles the liberal (sometimes anarchic) ideas of the early internet. This is suggested by Semenzin (2021), who describes how the visions of the world users have in mind (e.g. regarding governance, monetary system) influence an emerging blockchain culture that originates from crypto communities.

A fourth view captures the application of digital platforms in the culture sector or the *platformization of culture* (Cho, 2021). On the one hand, this comprises platforms that allow existing actors in the culture domain (e.g. theaters, museums, libraries, communities) to present themselves in the digital space and to interact with their partners (e.g. authorities, artists, media) as well as with their members or the general public. On the other hand, culture platforms reflect the movement towards digital content (Ronchi, 2009) and may be found as art platforms (Goriunova, 2011) as well as for presenting and trading other culture goods. Examples such as Spotify, highlight the impact since they “have fundamentally changed the whole system in which music is produced, distributed, and consumed, thereby actively shaping the music culture in general” (Cho, 2021, 74). A recent form of such platforms has emerged in the sphere of decentralized platforms with non-fungible tokens (NFT). NFT platforms like Opensea safeguard the authenticity of digital art products (“crypto art”) and allow these “crypto collectibles” to be traded (Bai et al., 2022). Although an overview on the decentralized economy (Lage et al., 2022) and some thoughts on considering NFTs as a possible solution in the event ticketing industry are included in this issue (Feulner et al., 2022), more research on such NFT platforms may be expected to appear in Electronic Markets. This applies to all views on culture in the field of electronic markets since they are known to emerge from and to be sustained by collective action (Somasundaram, 2003)—a phenomenon that will not happen if cultural factors prevent actors from (active) participation. Thus, following the well-known saying whereas “culture eats strategy for breakfast” (Gibbons et al., 2021, 116), platforms and culture should rather have breakfast together.

Issue 32/3 articles

Due to the transformation to the continuous article publishing model (CAP), the present issue of Electronic Markets is again extensive with a total of 41 articles including this editorial and the preface of the special issue section. As described in the last editorial (Alt, 2022a), CAP requires that all articles, which were produced under the hitherto online first model, are assigned to an issue in 2022. Four articles are included in the special issue on “The cultural impact in platform competition” that was organized by the guest editors Yun Wan, Makoto Nakayama, Chei Sian Lee, Simon Poon and Panagiotis Stamolampros. It features an immediate link to the introductory section on platform culture above. In their preface, the guest editors frame the four articles and argue that global and multi-national social media platforms increase the complexity of platform strategies due to differences across (national) cultures (Wan et al., 2022). For example, they explain that algorithms used in recommendation and marketing systems need to take into account cultural factors of the various markets they operate in. In particular, ratings and reviews from different cultural backgrounds might differ substantially in their meaning and call for adequate interpretation.

In addition to the focus on societal and platform culture that is present in the special issue papers, an interview emphasizes the organizational culture dimension. Being a manager with global responsibility at the consulting firm Accenture, Rahul C. Basole shares his impressions on how digital transformation projects have developed since the pandemic. He reports that major technological projects have received higher priority, but that change is not only technological in nature, but requires strong alignment with organizational, political and cultural factors. To reap the benefits of artificial intelligence (AI) and other technologies, organizations will need to accompany change management measures that implement continuous learning, community engagement and cross-disciplinary collaboration skills. Besides explaining the role of organizational culture, he elaborates on the elements of AI platforms, the potential of single views in business processes and visualization as an important element in reducing the rising complexity of networked business scenarios (Alt, 2022b).

The interview is followed by a large section of 34 general research articles. In a wider sense, most of these articles feature a link to the views on culture mentioned above (see Table 1) and serve to advance the multidimensional perspective on culture in the context of digital platforms. The first cluster comprises a set of 16 articles that relate to postings, such as reviews and personal presentations on digital platforms, which were introduced in the fields of societal and platform culture (views 1 and 3). It is followed by a

second cluster of twelve articles that aim to advance the understanding of platform users (views 1 and 2 in Table 1) and a third cluster of six papers in the context of decentralized platforms (views 3 and 4). The latter are driven by recent technologies in the area of distributed ledgers that foster new insights on platform culture due to their ability in substituting traditional intermediaries and in empowering end users.

General research articles 1 – platform postings

The first contribution in the general research section raises the question whether personality still matters in e-commerce. Using the example of crowdfunding, Janina Sundermeier and Tyge F. Kummer show how perceived hubris influences the assessment of founders' trustworthiness. Based on signaling theory, the authors conducted a survey among 108 Amazon MTurk users in the US and concluded that the personality of a start-up founder strongly impacts the behavior (i.e., the funding decisions) of potential backers. In particular, this is the case in reward-based e-commerce settings where buyers invest into a future product. The authors show that hubristic as well as non-hubristic behaviors promise positive effects. On the one hand, hubris as an important trait in the start-up culture, signals the "ability and legitimacy to turn the planned product into a success, meet the stated delivery times, and fulfill the terms of the contract" (Sundermeier & Kummer, 2022). On the other hand, hubris might also involve opposite effects if it turns into overconfidence and favors non-hubristic entrepreneurs that also signal positive traits, such as benevolence and empathy. For example, the research suggests that retailers should consider using videos in social media campaigns in addition to other existing features in e-commerce, such as customer testimonials or quality seals.

The second article comes from Colombia and reports findings on how female entrepreneurs in a developing country have used Facebook for their subsistence. Based on a literature review, the authors Sonia Camacho and Andrés Barrios interviewed 30 female entrepreneurs that conducted social commerce in a Colombian all-female Facebook community (Camacho & Barrios, 2022). They find that the offerings of the social media platform helped the entrepreneurs in identifying business opportunities, in building a market, in trust building as well as in creating value. Together with 15 functionalities that were identified from the social media platform, a set of eleven affordances was formulated. These affordances were found to positively impact buyer behavior since they convey the communal and social aspects, which are more relevant in interactions among women than in

interactions with male participants. In particular, this influences the creation of trust that in turn favors the disclosure of information, the emergence of closer relationships and the augmentation of social capital in general. From a cultural perspective the findings have a dual link since they illustrate how women in developing countries may overcome cultural gender-based institutional barriers and since the affordances contribute to a trusting gender-sensitive culture on the platform.

The third paper sheds light on reviewing and introduces a set of general research papers on diverse aspects of online reviews, which were recognized as an important cultural feature on digital platform that strongly impacts buyers' decisions. Titled "Explaining reviewing effort: Existing reviews as potential driver", the authors Christoph Rohde, Alexander Kupfer and Steffen Zimmermann investigate whether existing reviews on digital platforms matter for future reviews and what implications arise for designers of review systems. Based on a large sample of reviews from Google Maps and from Yelp, they reveal that a higher number of existing reviews for an offering on a digital platform reduced the propensity to write an optional review and that even if reviews were contributed, they were likely to be shorter in nature (Rohde et al., 2022). In the same vein, many reviewers were found to refrain from contributing reviews if their own experiences differed from the ratings on the platform. The authors finally state that designers of review systems need to be aware of the tradeoff between providing many reviews and the incentives for users to write reviews.

Further advice for review system designers is contained in the fourth paper. It focuses on a specific aspect of reviews, which is the impact of inconsistent reviews on the time consumers need for their purchase decisions. It recognizes that consumer-generated reviews are often more trusted by other buyers than the information provided by the sellers themselves. At the same time, inconsistencies arise when the qualitative (i.e., text) and quantitative (i.e., stars) assessments differ. In two experiments conducted with participants on restaurant reviews, the authors Andreas Johannes Steur, Fabian Fritsche and Mischa Seiter found that contrary to their initial expectation, inconsistent reviews did not necessarily increase the time consumers required for their decision-making (Steuer et al., 2022). As suggested in the title of their paper "It's all about the text", they reveal that only the qualitative reviews (and not quantitative ratings) had implications on the decision times and that review platform providers should, among other, aim for aggregated ratings that include qualitative reviews based on sentiment analysis as well as on highlighting keywords in the reviews.

The fifth article investigates the consequences when sellers try to improve the description and impression of their

offering by placing deceptive product reviews. For example, this occurs if authors post reviews of their own books or if unverified reviews appear and create false expectations about a product. In their experiment with three products in the soccer fan merchandising area, Tim Kollmer, Andreas Eckhardt and Victoria Reibenspiess observed that consumers were able to detect such behavior in particular when reviews feature an increasing density of deceptive characteristics. Although previous experience with deception had no impact on the consumers, they were less inclined to purchase the product once they suspected deceptive behavior (Kollmer et al., 2022). Similar to the previous article, this research derives recommendations for platform providers, among others the use of deception recognition mechanisms to improve the transparency on and the presentation of deceptive elements in reviews.

The sixth paper targets the social phenomenon of homophily in social networks and hypothesizes that the revenues of these platforms correlate with the engagement of their users. To foster platform engagement, new linkages to other platform users are suggested, based on shared interests and preferences. Michael R. Ward scrutinizes this phenomenon in his empirical analysis of friends' preferences on a dataset of 37 million gaming sessions in the social network Raptr, which was discontinued in September 2017. His results confirm the influence of other users' preferences on the own behavior in using the social network platform, in particular regarding the hours of use as well as regarding the probability of continued use (Ward, 2022). The author expects the findings to be applicable in other domains beyond gaming, for example research and commerce platforms, and recommends that platform providers leverage their insights on user preferences in user recommendation mechanisms.

Consumer buying behavior and interactions have become one of the three main topics addressed in articles that were published in *Electronic Markets* between 2009 and 2020. This was the result of a broad text mining and bibliometric analysis of 330 articles conducted by Nora Nahr and Marikka Heikkilä in the seventh paper. They found two main topics (service quality, blockchain and other trust building solutions) and 28 topical cluster groups that were helpful in "uncovering the identity of *Electronic Markets* research" (Nahr & Heikkilä, 2022). They describe this core identity as "a balanced set of core research themes that bring technological, business or human / social perspectives to the research of networked businesses and the digital economy" and emphasize that some articles consider culture and the incentives to use it in the context of the technology's implementation. In sum, they found the journal's scope to support differentiation in the competitive "marketplace" of academic information systems journals. They draw a positive conclusion on how the journal has evolved and how the articles are

cited, but also point at potential areas for further improvement. Among them are more coverage of subjects such as ethics and sustainability, which in turn may be influenced by platform culture topics like included in the present issue.

Paper eight also contributes to the topic of supporting the buying behavior in e-commerce with recommender systems. The authors Sylwia Sysko-Romańczuk, Piotr Zaborek, Anna Wróblewska, Jacek Dąbrowski and Sergiy Tkachuk explore how the performance of recommendations (i.e., a recommendation leading to the purchase of a recommended product within the subsequent 24 h), is affected by different combination of three data modalities (i.e., consumer behavior data, product information, visual inputs). In their online experiment among Romanian users of a footwear platform, they outlined that the visual modality was the most influential for predicting shoppers' behavior followed by behavioral data (Sysko-Romańczuk et al., 2022). At the same time, the authors stress that designers of recommender systems need to acknowledge the influence of factors, such as the prior experience with the vendor and the inclination of buyers to assess products themselves, and that more nuanced strategies deem appropriate.

The ninth paper focuses on the role of reviewer experience and conducts an "An empirical analysis of experienced reviewers in online communities". Based on data from Yahoo! movie user ratings, the authors Hoon S. Choi and Michele Maasberg confirm that only a small number of users are active as reviewers and that differences exist depending on gender as well as on the reviewers' experience in writing reviews. In particular, novice reviewers would focus on popular products on the market, which are less demanding to assess. Experienced reviewers would in contrast prefer reviewing more sophisticated products that require the consideration of a larger number of attributes. Such higher expertise was also linked with the inclination to give products lower scores, which was especially evident with female experienced reviewers. The authors advocate multidimensional rating schemes and binary extreme ratings (e.g., thumbs up or thumbs down), which on the one hand allow experienced reviewers to express their differentiated assessments, and expect mostly novice reviewers to make use of the extreme ratings on the other (Choi & Maasberg, 2022).

Reviewer characteristics provide a link to the tenth paper. Building on data from Yelp, the author Hui-Ju Wang analyzes the relationship between the position of a reviewer in the structure of the social network (e.g., whether (s)he is an influencer) and the characteristics of the reviewer (e.g., gender, review experience). For this purpose, the authors adopted a data science approach to analyze the properties of the reviews (e.g., pictures, length, topics) and of the social network (e.g., regarding peripheral and core positions).

Among the findings were differences between peripheral and core reviewers in terms of content richness, of contributing early reviews and of the number of brands reviewed (Wang, 2022). Implications are derived for marketing managers since the approach serves to target core reviewers, who mostly are opinion leaders, and to identify mismatches between the brand's intended positioning and the perception by the reviewers. The proposed data science methodology is also believed to be applicable beyond the use case from the restaurant industry presented in this research.

An important aspect of customer engagement are surveys where businesses seek feedback on whether their customers recommend the company, a certain brand or product, to friends or colleagues. In a simple form, customers give ratings from zero to ten and these may then be calculated towards a net promotor score that serves as an indicator for future sales. An advanced measuring is presented in the eleventh paper that introduces the network promotor score (NePS), which includes more data on reviewers without requiring more extensive feedback on behalf of the customers. In a similar way as the previous paper, the authors Supriyo Mandal and Abyayananda Maiti aim to include individual reviewer characteristics in the score. The NePS metric recognizes the reviewer's reliability as well as the reviewer's position in the social network and aims to estimate his or her power in influencing other consumers. In their experiment and with an evaluation based on datasets from three products listed on Amazon, the centrality in the network and the clustering coefficient are judged helpful in successfully forecasting product sales (Mandal & Maiti, 2022).

Another experimental research on active and passive users of social media platforms is included in the twelfth paper. Titled "The effects of advertisement disclosure on heavy and light Instagram users", the authors Zofia Sater-nus, Patrick Weber and Oliver Hinz emphasize the role of influencer marketing as a competitive factor in today's marketing strategies. As heavy users and opinion leaders, they have direct access to a large number of followers who share some interests. However, many of these influencers receive compensations from the businesses they advertise, which results in a mix of commercial and editorial content. The research focuses on Instagram, which has emerged as an important platform for reaching especially the younger generation of users and calls for more transparency by tagging advertising content in these postings via different disclosure types. In their experiment with real user profiles on Instagram, the authors enhance existing research by considering the impact usage intensity (i.e., heavy and light users) and the various disclosure types (Saternus et al., 2022). Among others, they conclude that marketing strategies on social media should differentiate between users of different usage

intensities and that influencers should consider deliberately employing different disclosure types. At the same time, the research indicates that users in general are aware of the platform culture and are wary of influencer content that contains advertising elements.

Paper thirteen addresses advertisements on websites and investigates the ad quantity customization (AQC) concept, which allows users to determine the amount of advertisements displayed on their website. As indicated in the title "Empowering users with ad customization and its effects on website stickiness", AQC intends to increase user engagement as well as the inclination to return (referred to as website stickiness). In their online experiment with a news article, the authors Dominick Werner, Martin Adam and Alexander Benlian were successful in showing that customizing advertisements is an additional option in digital marketing. The influencing factors they report are perceived empowerment, informational fit-to-task and perceived enjoyment (Werner et al., 2022). In the spirit of relationship marketing, the authors argue that AQC might initially decrease advertisement revenues, but that this might be compensated over a longer-term relationship due to website stickiness. They also show possible effects of changes in platform culture that come along with increased user empowerment.

Customization to customer requirements and expectations is also the topic of the fourteenth paper. It focuses on smart services that act in a proactive and autonomous way. Such digital assistants are referred to as proactive services and aim to alleviate the life of humans by recommending or even ordering purchases or by proposing budget or investment plans like the case with so-called robo-advisory systems. The research by Annette Wenninger, Daniel Rau and Maximilian Röglinger uses the features of proactive services from an existing taxonomy and assesses these features in an online survey among 259 respondents that was based on a smart fridge scenario. Their key question was how the customers rated the features and how these were seen to influence customer satisfaction. The results illustrate that customers were reluctant in handing control to a system and preferred to maintain their autonomy in decision-making. Despite the actions of the proactive service might have been beneficial to the customers from an objective point of view, the impact of customer satisfaction was negative (Wenninger et al., 2022). However, the researchers found that personality traits like the familiarity with technology influence this attitude and recommend to improve the transparency of the reasoning of the autonomous system (so-called explainable AI see issue 32/4 of Electronic Markets) as well as of the use of personal data (so-called privacy-by-design).

Personal data links to the fifteenth paper, which analyzes the role of names with regard to discrimination and the choice of peers on sharing platforms. Using the example of

ridesharing, Olga Abramova asks the question “No matter what the name - we’re all the same?” and examines ethnic discrimination in ridesharing marketplaces. Among the many factors that influence the trust between unknown individuals are the names from different cultures as well as the role of gender. The author states that “in ridesharing, participants with European descent names are reluctant to male peers with Middle Eastern descent names, and the nature of this discrimination is taste-based” (Abramova, 2022). To contain the problems of discrimination and to improve the sustainability of the platform, she discusses possible options for platforms providers in how users are able to present themselves in their profiles and emphasizes the role of (positive) reviews in compensating for possible negative effects arising from the persons’ identifiers.

Paper sixteen links to the customizability of products in online marketplaces as well as to the role of customer reviews. Using transaction cost theory, the authors Mohammad Alamgir Hossain, Shahriar Akter and Shams Rahman recognize the ability to customize websites as a vital element of customer empowerment. In their two-stage survey in the domain of online group buying platforms, they investigate the impact of an increased frequency of use on the transaction cost dimensions uncertainty and asset specificity, which they measure on the one hand with the website’s predictability and with the website’s trust and customizability on the other. They show that increasing the frequency of use is a lever to reduce unpredictability and thereby to increase purchase intention (PI) as well as purchase behavior. In the same vein, they found customization to reduce unpredictability, which they consider as “the most important factor affecting customers’ PI” (Hossain et al., 2022). Besides the recommendation to implement customization features, such as monitoring offerings, marking products or setting alerts, the authors also stress the role of trust-building measures, such as performance after sale or transparency on terms and conditions, in increasing PI. Due to the two-stage study design, the authors were able to differentiate between PI and the ultimate purchase behavior. This revealed that the availability of favorable online reviews positively influenced the purchase decision and may be regarded as a valuable instrument to reduce uncertainty in the decision process.

General research articles 2 – platform participants

Personal characteristics and human-related factors may be conceived as overarching topics of the next twelve papers.

The first connects to the goal of continued use that is formulated in the seventeenth general research article, which is another research on sharing economy platforms.

In the research by Weng Marc Lim, Gaurav Gupta, Baidyanath Biswas and Rohit Gupta, the quality-loyalty relationship is investigated in the case of ride sharing platforms in India such as Ola and Uber. By adopting a mixed-methods approach that comprises interviews, text mining and an empirical analysis, the authors were able to confirm various service quality properties on behalf of the platform, the vendor and the co-sharer. Among other, these include the vendor’s (i.e., the driver’s) and the co-sharer’s empathy, which denotes a “culture of caring”. They find the service quality properties to differ in their influence on customer satisfaction in collaborative consumption (i.e., the sharing economy), which in turn positively impacts a continued use of the sharing platform. The authors therefore conclude that platform providers need to recognize platform, vendor and co-sharer characteristics as determinants of service quality and as levers for customer loyalty (or stickiness). Other critical factors were platform reliability and vendor competence as well as the secure and sensitive handling of personal passenger data (Lim et al., 2022).

Data privacy is the main topic of paper eighteen. It investigates the well-known phenomenon referred to as the privacy paradox whereas “users claim to be very concerned about their privacy, [but] they nevertheless undertake very little to protect their personal data” (Barth & de Jong 2017, p. 1038). In their survey among 1376 users in Brazil, the authors Renata Benigna Gonçalves and Júlio César Bastos de Figueiredo focus on digital services based on wearables for physical activities, which are more valuable to users if data is shared among users. They extend existing approaches to measure the privacy paradox by combining the constructs of perceived benefits and the risk of perceived privacy. The model includes the frequency and habit of using wearables as well as demographic and gender factors. Depending on these factors, the authors suggest that their metric “may be used as a tool for understanding consumers and [in] identifying possible insecurity with technology and psychological tension” (Gonçalves & Figueiredo, 2022). Among the measures proposed are tailored communication strategies for users. For example, users with a more paradoxical than rational behavior could be offered advice on the services’ security enhancement features.

Decision-making on using digital services leads to the nineteenth paper. Here, the authors Maik Dehnert and Josephine Schumann analyze the behavior of consumers when choosing checking account services among banks in Germany. With the rise of Fintech start-up businesses, this industry has experienced not only competition among incumbent banks with traditional branch operations, but also between incumbents and the new purely digital competitors, which has created opportunities for consumers to switch among banking providers. In addition, the checking

account services are known to be commodity banking services, which differ little among competitors and are rather sensitive to cost. In their experiment with 1197 responses, the authors observe that traditional attributes, such as human professional expertise, are still relevant for a large group of customers and that changes towards digital offerings are to be found especially with less trust-sensitive and digitally affine customers (Dehnert & Schumann 2022). Although personal characteristics and cultural values are the most relevant factors for many customers, providing innovative digital hybrid services that augment customer experience are deemed increasingly important to keep as well as to attract customers. The authors also suspect the presence of a cultural element of banking customers in Germany and that the results might differ in other cultures.

The twentieth paper is an invited paper that connects to research published by the same authors in *Electronic Markets* ten years ago. In their 2012 article Marc T.P. Adam and Jan Krämer presented the emotional bidding framework that links the design of electronic auctions with the bidders' emotions to investigate phenomena such as the joy of winning. They now empirically validated this model based on advances in the field of neurophysiology, which also allowed to include measurements such as heart rate and skin conductance. While the previous study primarily relied on questionnaires, the authors were now able to show that bidders experienced heightened emotional states even if they were not aware of these feelings. Based on several studies, the propositions as well as the validity of the original framework were confirmed and biofeedback was added as an additional variable. The insights allow to evaluate the bidders' emotional state in designing appropriate auction mechanisms since "higher arousal may result in higher or lower prices" (Adam & Krämer, 2022).

Another study on the relationship between buyers and sellers in electronic markets is the topic of paper 21. The research compares two agricultural marketplaces for cotton in India, which coordinate transactions in an oligopsony situation, i.e. where a small number of buyers (i.e. larger traders) interact with a large number of sellers (i.e. smaller farmers). One marketplace represents the traditional trading in a physical location and the second an electronic marketplace that handles transactions for the same goods. Following existing research on electronic markets, the authors Aashish Argade, Arnab Kumar Laha and Anand Kumar Jaiswal would have expected transaction costs in the electronic market to be lower than in the traditional setting. However, they find that the farmers reported no perceived reductions in transactions costs although the implementation of the electronic system promised such advantages. Among the factors that serve to explain this seemingly paradoxical situation were on the one hand the specific market structure

where the smaller sellers relied on information from the better informed buyers (e.g. market and price information) and the presence of longer-term personal relationships between buyers and sellers in the physical market (e.g. for additional services such as loans and trustful reciprocal relationships in general) on the other (Argade et al., 2022).

A novel means to embody actors' personality on digital platforms is presented in paper 22 by Kamilla Marchewka-Bartkowiak, Karolina Anna Nowak and Michał Litwiński. Establishing a personal brand in the digital environment has become important for individuals and organizations alike to attract followers, friends, customers or investors as well as to build reputation and trust. In their research, the authors aim to value the so-called personal tokens based on the personal traits of their issuers. As crypto assets they are similar to established payment, security or utility tokens on distributed ledger technologies, such as Bitcoin or Ethereum, and not only serve to convey personality in gaming scenarios, but also support commercial and financial purposes as a basis for personalized offers and prices. Based on data from 26 issuers of personal tokens, common personality tokens and celebrity personality tokens were distinguished and matched to different personality types (e.g., achievers, educators, explorers, fighters). The authors came to the conclusion that for actively interacting types (i.e., educators and fighters) the personal tokens were helpful in positioning the issuers in communities of online users. They describe promising potential future use cases of personal tokens as part of the reputation economy for influencers, freelancers and artists (Marchewka-Bartkowiak et al., 2022).

In paper 23 the role of reputation is visible as a trust-building element when data needs to be shared among actors in an interorganizational collaborative setting. Together with the fear of losing control and of enhanced risks, missing trust is known to impede many potentials (e.g. product innovations, supply chain performance) that are possible when data is shared among actors in value chain and networks. The paper presents multi-party computation (MPC) as a novel technological approach to share data. Similar to cryptocurrencies, MPC is based on cryptography and eliminates the need for a trusted third party that facilitates the sharing of data. To determine the impact of MPC on the perceived control and risks as well as on trust in the context of sharing data among businesses in the automotive industry, the authors Wirawan Agahari, Hosea Ofe and Mark de Reuver conduct a qualitative study with 23 interviews. Their conclusions are ambivalent in the sense that MPC positively influences control, risks and trust, but requires new forms of trust in technology and demands the measures to contain risks regarding the misuse of data (Agahari et al., 2022). For data sharing organizations, the authors call for data-driven mindsets and capabilities, which may be seen as an element

of organizational culture. In addition, recommendations for platform providers are given that accentuate privacy and privacy-related offerings based on MPC.

Paper 24 adopts a different path for sharing information among actors. It investigates microexpressions, which are subtle facial movements that convey meaning in a non-verbal fashion. While this is a well-known mechanism when humans interact, the authors Aliya Tastemirova, Johannes Schneider, Leona Chandra Kruse, Simon Heinzle and Jan vom Brocke ask whether microexpressions are also applicable to digital agents, such as chatbots and conversational assistants. They study digital humans, which are conversational assistants with a digital face and/or body and are able to communicate verbally as well as non-verbally, for example, via gestures and facial expressions. With regard to the use of these digital humans, the research relates to the question how these systems may be designed to be affective, sincere and trustworthy. By conducting two experiments among 292 participants on how microexpressions are perceived and on how they influence decision-making, the authors conclude that microexpressions are helpful in influencing affect, trust as well as sincerity (Tastemirova et al., 2022). Based on the numerous facial expressions of humans, they see an “infinite design space” that should also allow digital humans to be tailored to different cultures.

Another view on user or consumer perception is presented in paper 25, which investigates the perceived fairness in the context of genetic tests, such as lifestyle tests for ancestry, relationship tests for paternity and various medial health tests, that are distributed directly to consumers (DTC). As described by the authors Philipp A. Toussaint, Scott Thiebes, Manuel Schmidt-Kraepelin and Ali Sunyaev, a variety of DTC business models for genetic testing exist, which may be designed more or less fair regarding criteria such as the reselling of genome data, the explanation of how data is processed or the data ownership (with consumers or service providers). In their online experiment with 677 participants the authors take into account a total of 16 attributes that determine fairness and report that consumers in general value privacy-preserving services as fairer, but that price tends to dominate the overall perception of fairness. However, the authors also observe that consumers are often not aware of privacy-preserving practices and would be inclined to pay a premium if service providers would share this information (Toussaint et al., 2022).

Factors impacting behavioural intentions in adopting an electronic marketplace are the topic of paper 26. Contrary to existing research on the adoption of electronic markets, Richa Misra, Renuka Mahajan, Nidhi Singh, Sangeeta Khorana and Nripendra P. Rana focus on the adoption of large electronic markets by small sellers in a developing country. In their sample of 150 participants from non-metropolitan

cities (referred to as tier II and tier III cities), they analyze the motivations to join the leading electronic markets in India, i.e., Amazon, Flipkart and Myntra. Despite these electronic markets were available for a longer time already, most small sellers were reluctant and only joined them as the traditional channels were shut down during the pandemic (Misra et al., 2022). Based on the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT), the authors confirm the role technology attributes such as the expectance to improve business performance and efficiency as well as the positive impact of social influence of other competitors, but also observe that important knowledge regarding the potentials and services of electronic markets were missing. Meeting these shortcomings may also be conceived as a change of established routines in the cultures of the smaller areas in developing countries.

Similar to paper eighteen, general research article 27 examines the use of smart wearable devices (SWD), which have spread in particular for self-health and sports monitoring. In the case of this paper, the authors Juin-Ming Tsai, Shiu-Wan Hung and Guan-Ting Lin highlight the challenge of continued use of these devices, which often need to be worn for longer periods to generate value. To understand continued use, the authors distinguish between factors at the level of the individual (utilitarian and hedonic values) and at group level (bandwagon and conspicuous behavior effects). In their online survey among 253 participants from an online sports community in Taiwan, they ascertain that gamification designs are suitable for increasing continued use of the wearables as well as for the scope of their functionalities over extended periods. The research also reports that individual instead of group factors determine continued usage and deduces that consumers pay more attention to the individual characteristics, such as the rewards in gamification, and in showing their social status and they “do not wear an SWD simply because other people are wearing it” (Tsai et al., 2022).

A different view on gaming is included in paper 28, which studies the growing field of live-streaming online games. On the one hand, digital platforms such as Twitch allow users to follow streams from multiple online games, while videogame providers themselves are offering similar (but often deeper) functionalities for their games on the other. In the first case, for the phenomenon of platform swinging (i.e., using multiple platforms and moving between to understand how these two approaches relate to each other), the authors E. Mitchell Church and Ravi Thambusamy have analyzed data from 5656 Twitch users as well as data from a game retail store. By distinguishing between affordances (i.e., properties that aim to satisfy the specific needs of an individual) of the platform-based and of the game-based model, they conclude that, while both models have their

proponents, the relationship between these models is a moving target and platform providers need to strive constantly for engaging platform participants by augmenting their services (Church & Thambusamy, 2022).

General research articles 3 – platform decentralization

In the third cluster of this general research section, the focus is on various aspects of decentralized technologies, which are also known as distributed ledger technologies and are more commonly linked with blockchain-based systems. Connecting to the use of personality tokens in paper 22, the first paper in this section entails an analysis of how such tokens or coins are launched. The process of initial coin offerings (ICO) has enjoyed wide use as a financing instrument for start-up businesses (e.g. for businesses aiming to issue own coins or other cryptocurrency applications) and combines elements of traditional initial public offerings (IPO) and elements of crowdfunding. Contrary to IPOs, ICOs are mostly used by smaller businesses in an earlier stage, they involve less costs and regulation and may be stronger influenced by the emitting organization regarding the disclosure of information and use of communication channels, such as social media. The main differences of both forms are summarized in the research by Ferdinand Thies, Sören Wallbach, Michael Wessel, Markus Besler and Alexander Benlian. Based on these fundamentals, they present an analysis of 1597 ICOs that were initiated during a time span of 2.5 years. Their objective is to identify the role of signals to investors that may be either influenced by an issuer (endogenous signals, such as the choice of social media channels) or not (exogenous signals, such as expert ratings) (Thies et al., 2022). Among the conclusions are that social media are valuable for investors in reducing information asymmetries as are expert ratings for assessing an ICO's quality and for containing the herding effect that exists due to the (presumably temporary) hype of ICOs.

Paper 30 takes a broader look at the decentralized platform economy and analyzes emerging business models for blockchain-based decentralized platforms. After explaining the phenomenon of platform decentralization, the authors Oscar Lage, María Saiz-Santos and José Manuel Zarzuelo present a structured investigation of a set of 82 decentralized platforms that leads to a taxonomy with 23 characteristics of decentralized platforms (e.g. regarding interaction, openness, tokenomics, market properties and marketing strategy) and the identification of three main archetypes of decentralized platforms (hosted, federated and shared). The taxonomy is helpful in assessing the platforms, which are either directed at leveraging efficiencies within existing

business models (for the hosted model) or at new and more decentralized business models (for the federated and the shared model). The majority of platforms were attributed to the latter category and were associated with significant future business potential due to their disruptive setup (Lage et al., 2022).

Another research on ICOs is paper 31 titled “Tarzan and Chain” by the authors Nina M. Bachmann, Benedict Drasch, Gilbert Fridgen, Michael Miksch, Ferdinand Regner, André Schweizer and Nils Urbach. Based on an in-depth analysis of 131 ICOs collected from diverse sources, they aim at “exploring the ICO jungle” and create a taxonomy that, like the previous paper, comprises 23 characteristics as clustering variables to identify archetypes, in this case the five archetypes visionary, average, liberal, compliant and fundraising ICO. These archetypes are characterized using the taxonomy dimensions and illustrated with an existing ICO example from practice (Bachmann et al., 2022). The research is helpful in understanding the various purposes of conducting an ICO and in navigating as well as mapping the complex field of ICOs. In addition, the taxonomy serves in knowing the key parameters when designing an ICO.

Paper 32 questions the value of coins or tokens that are at the heart of decentralized platforms and asks whether “cryptocurrencies really have (no) intrinsic value?”. It is a position paper that presents a critical discussion on a cryptocurrency's value by conceiving value from a rather philosophical than a financial perspective. Based on framing cryptocurrencies in their historical evolution and on an analogy to the intrinsic and extrinsic value of gold, Horst Treiblmaier depicts the challenges in differentiating between a currency's intrinsic (i.e., value in itself) and extrinsic value (i.e., means for something). For a deeper analysis he presents three dimensions that are helpful in determining value: the individual value system, the societal value system and the situational value system (Treiblmaier, 2022). While he admits that attributing an intrinsic value to cryptocurrencies is not suitable, he proposes to determine intrinsic value based on the properties that make a cryptocurrency useable as a mean of exchange, including the necessary investments in hardware and energy to mine currency units. Ultimately, the discussion in the position paper emphasizes that cryptocurrencies are technologies that have little value if they are not used for value-adding purposes.

Before introducing a second position paper, a novel technology in the context of decentralization will be proposed. Called self-sovereign identities (SSI), these systems enable the management of digital identities on user devices and thus avoid the problem that digital identities need to be shared with different platforms and services. Most SSI initiatives are based on blockchain infrastructures, which are known to safeguard trust among unknown actors, and store

the credentials in digital wallets, for example, on the user's smartphone. In the paper at hand, the authors Simon Feulner, Johannes Sedlmeir, Vincent Schlatt and Nils Urbach present a proof of concept for a SSI system in the case of event ticketing systems. They aim to tackle the problem of scalping, which occurs when fake tickets are created and then resold on secondary markets. Since this scenario might involve multiple actors, tracking a ticket's authenticity with a distributed ledger system would be possible unless data protection regulations prevent the permanent storage of personal data. Based on interviews with eight domain experts, the authors therefore combine the decentralized identities with a centralized exchange that was enhanced by revocation registries that allow for a binding of visitors to their tickets and retains high levels of privacy (Feulner et al., 2022).

The second position paper and the last paper in the general research section links to this inherent privacy problem in blockchain systems. Titled "The transparency challenge of blockchain in organizations", the authors Johannes Sedlmeir, Jonathan Lautenschlager, Gilbert Fridgen and Nils Urbach discuss the fundamental tradeoff between restricting visibility and enhancing efficiency. It occurs when data is on the one hand stored off-chain for privacy reasons, but then prevents smart contracts on the blockchain to access this data to leverage the distributed system's efficiency potential. If, on the other hand, data is stored on-chain, then this data may be mapped to natural persons even if the data is pseudonymized. To meet this trade-off, the authors suggest three feasible approaches, which rely on restricting the participation, on exchanging sensitive data off-chain in combination with digital wallets and on-chain workflows, and, finally, on processing data off-chain together with privacy-enhancing technologies, such as SSIs and zero-knowledge proofs. This leads to a key claim of their position paper, which calls for a base layer for the trustworthy and verifiable exchange of data (Sedlmeir et al., 2022).

Last but not least, at the end of this comprehensive overview on general research articles it needs to be mentioned that this issue rests on many shoulders and yields a convincing witness of the collaborative culture of all participants. These are the guest editors that organized the special issue, the editors that handled the general research papers as well as the reviewers and authors. Many thanks go to all of them!

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