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# Guest editorial: Innovations and digitalization in a disruptive global environment: business model transformation

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In an age where global uncertainties and unforeseen disruptions are constant companions of businesses, the need for adaptive and resilient business models has never been more evident (Taleb, 2007). The special issue, “Innovations and Digitalization in a Disruptive Global Environment: Business Model Transformation,” seeks to unravel the intricate dynamics of how businesses navigate, evolve and transform in response to exogenous shocks.

The backdrop for this special issue is set by the increasing frequency of disruptive events, often likened to “black swans,” which include environmental challenges, climate change and most recently, the far-reaching effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (Deloitte, 2021; Azevedo, 2020). This relentless wave of disruptions necessitates a re-evaluation of traditional business models, pushing companies towards a strategic imperative – the transition to sustainable and resilient business practices.

At the heart of this transformation lie two catalyzing forces: innovation and digitalization. The fourth industrial revolution, Industry 4.0, marked by technologies like the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence and autonomous robots, is not just a challenge to existing business models but a potent force for their complete reconfiguration (Culot *et al.*, 2020). This special issue asserts that to meet the demands of a rapidly changing global economy, and businesses must harness the power of innovation and digitalization.

Crucially, this special issue emphasizes a need to bridge gaps in our understanding of how different types of firms – whether Multinational Corporations or Small and Medium Enterprises, privately owned or publicly traded – respond to disruptions (Van Tulder *et al.*, 2021). It underscores the urgency of empirical studies to assess the effectiveness of strategies used by these diverse entities in reconfiguring their business models to tackle environmental, technological and health challenges (UNCTAD, 2020).

While commercial innovation is a well-explored realm, the special issue advocates for a nuanced exploration of innovation in the context of disruptive environments, encompassing both profit-driven and socially impactful innovations (Zott and Amit, 2010). This broad perspective acknowledges that in an era of multifaceted challenges, successful business models must address not only economic viability but also social and environmental sustainability.

The goals and topics outlined in this special issue invited scholars to venture into uncharted territories, addressing research questions that lie at the crossroads of business model transformation, innovation and digitalization. By encouraging cross-disciplinary contributions and a mix of qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods research, the special issue aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex processes at play.

In essence, this special issue was a call to action – a call for researchers and practitioners to collectively unravel the mysteries of business model transformation in the face of disruptions (Conz and Magnani, 2020). The insights gained from this exploration promise to be invaluable for businesses seeking not just to survive but to thrive in an era where adaptability is the key to long-term success. Through this collaborative effort, the special



issue aspires to be a guiding light for businesses navigating the tumultuous seas of a disruptive global environment.

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