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##### Digital transformation and service innovation: a multidisciplinary approach

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## Digital transformation and service innovation: a multidisciplinary approach

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Digital transformation is redefining how organisations create and deliver value. The integration of technology, data and software is driving new service offerings and business models, affecting both industrial sectors as well as service-intensive areas. As Co-Editors-in-Chief of the Economic Studies Bulletin, we are therefore particularly excited about the publication of a new special issue on innovation in marketing and services in the context of digital transformation.

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*More information about the authors at the end of this article.*

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This topic is particularly relevant for the Economic Studies Bulletin. At a time when companies are facing cultural, organisational and strategic challenges arising from digitalisation, the journal remains committed to disseminating applied knowledge that connects research and practice. In this context, the initiative of guest editors Lorea Narvaiza and Rodrigo Rabetino is particularly valuable, and we would like to thank them for their efforts. Thanks to their work, we have been able to put together a coherent and up-to-date proposal that highlights why innovation in marketing and services is now a key area in the ongoing digital transformation.

The first part of the issue includes several contributions focusing on organisational transformation and digital servitisation. Specifically, the first three articles demonstrate how industrial business models are evolving towards hybrid proposals based on advanced services and data. Leandro Lepratte, María Alejandra Rodríguez and Rafael Blanc, from the National Technological University (Argentina) address this in their work entitled **“How to transform organisational routines and capabilities to innovate in digital services? Lessons from the agricultural machinery sector”** addresses this transition in the agricultural machinery sector. It identifies the necessary adjustments to routines, capabilities and internal structures required for developing digital services. Based on two case studies, the article shows how innovation in digital services requires modularising functions, deploying dynamic capabilities and operating in ecosystems where the co-production of knowledge redefines R&D and marketing practices.

The second article, **“Aranco’s Servitization Trajectory: Successful Adaptations to Punctuated Equilibria”** by Bart Kamp of Orkestra - Basque Institute of Competitiveness, analyses the case of ARANCO as an example of staggered servitisation. The study reconstructs more than three decades of evolution, characterised by periods of stability interrupted by strategic decisions that reoriented the company towards an almost entirely pay-per-use model. The article details how incremental and radical innovations are combined in a trajectory that illustrates the principles of punctuated equilibrium, highlighting the relevance of strategic vision, experimentation and the progressive digitisation of the service.

The third article in this section, authored by Guilherme Sales Smania and Glauco Henrique de Sousa Mendes (Federal University of São Carlos, Brazil), is entitled **“Moving from product-oriented to platform-oriented business models: how automakers become platform providers through connected cars.”** It examines the automotive sec-

tor's transition to platform-oriented business models. Through analysing connected vehicles, the study shows how manufacturers are becoming platform providers capable of offering services, data and software. This evolution redefines the value proposition, opening up opportunities in areas such as personalisation, predictive maintenance and remote updates. It highlights the shift from a traditional product-centric approach to digital architectures that support new ecosystems.

Following these first three articles, this issue addresses digital innovation in relation to specialised knowledge through the following two articles. On the one hand, the research paper **“The mediating role of knowledge-intensive business services in innovation and sales: evidence from Peruvian companies”**, authored by Jean Pierre Seclen-Luna (Pontifical Catholic University of Peru), Jubalt Alvarez Salazar (Pontifical Catholic University of Peru), Christian A. Cancino (University of Chile), and Valentina Gomes Schmitt (Pontifical Catholic University of Valparaíso), examines the mediating role of knowledge-intensive business services in transforming innovation into commercial results. Based on a sample of almost 1,000 Peruvian companies, the study reveals that internal innovation alone does not immediately impact sales. However, collaboration with specialised suppliers can act as a catalyst for the commercialisation of traditional and digital innovations. The work highlights the relevance of these services as facilitators of technology adoption, especially in contexts where internal capabilities are limited.

On the other hand, the article **“What effects does digital servitisation have on the development of online qualitative research? An exploratory approach”** by Lázaro Echegaray (CámaraBilbao University Business School) explores this question. This study analyses how digital servitisation is changing online qualitative research. It analyses the impact of digital tools and platforms on access, interaction, and the quality of qualitative analysis, highlighting both methodological opportunities and emerging limitations. The article shows how digitisation introduces new dynamics of participation and observation, and how these transformations force us to reconsider established practices in social and market research.

This issue then presents two contributions linked to the results of digital marketing strategies in terms of user experience and loyalty. Specifically, the sixth article in this Special Issue, entitled **“Happy with Our Chatbot? Service Innovation, Digital Marketing Performance, and the Role of User Technological Proficiency”**, by Mohammed Salem and Ralf Wagner, both from the German University of Kassel, with Moham-

med Salem also affiliated with the University College of Applied Sciences in Gaza, Palestine. This study analyses the results of a survey of 326 German university students and identifies three key functionalities that influence the success of digital tools in marketing, namely the adoption of *chatbots*, frictionless payment systems and feedback integration systems. In conclusion, the authors emphasise the importance of investing in seamless payment solutions and strengthening customer feedback mechanisms, as well as segmenting the adoption of digital tools according to users' different levels of technological competence.

The seventh article, by Rocío López Muniesa and Eloísa Díaz Garrido from Rey Juan Carlos University, is entitled **“Luxury fashion and digital loyalty: effective strategies for senior management”**. Using the Delphi methodology involving seven experts in digital marketing and luxury fashion the article contributes to the academic literature on luxury marketing by integrating three key dimensions—personalisation, narrative, and sustainability—that should guide digital strategies in this sector. The authors emphasise the importance of maintaining consistency and a balance between digital innovation and the essence of the brand, and identify a series of keys to ensure that the customer experience generates loyalty beyond the transaction in digital environments, through real-time interaction and community building.

Finally, the issue includes contributions that address the emerging topic of artificial intelligence and its use in marketing and communication by exploring innovative approaches. Thus, the eighth article, entitled **“Assessing Integrated Marketing Communication in Innovation-Oriented Organisations: A Diagnostic Approach for Strategic Alignment”**, by Lucia Porcu of the University of Granada and Janire Gordon-Isasi of the University of Deusto, addresses the issue of combining and coordinating organisational communication strategies in today's environments, where various stakeholders, channels, and platforms coexist. The article presents a conceptual framework and a self-diagnostic tool for the Integrated Marketing Communication approach (IMC Audit Tool). This tool goes beyond ensuring consistent messaging to also promote interactivity, a strategic focus on *stakeholders*, and organisational alignment. These are all fundamental elements in a service economy where co-creation, personalisation, and digital responsibility are essential.

Finally, the article **“The marketing revolution through Artificial Intelligence: exploring innovative cases in an emerging market”** by Silvia Cacho-Elizondo of IPADE Business School, Mexico, analyses

how Artificial Intelligence (AI) is becoming an essential catalyst for the digital transformation of marketing in emerging markets such as Mexico. The study proposes a theoretical-practical framework based on the Value Creation Model and the Marketing Cycle (Research, Strategy and Action) and is illustrated with case studies from Arte Capital, CEMEX and Grupo Bimbo. In conclusion, the article emphasises that leaders must adopt AI that combines operational efficiency (mechanical/cognitive AI) with creativity and social responsibility (emotional AI). This means ensuring that implementation is inclusive, ethical and adapted to the cultural context to ensure long-term sustainability. To conclude this section, the article **“From Transactional to Human: How Artificial Intelligence Is Redefining Relationship Marketing in Service Companies in the State of Rio Grande do Sul – Brazil”** by Marlise Alves Silva and João Capelli of ESPM (Brazil), seeks to reflect on how AI can humanize and personalise relationship marketing without compromising its operational efficiency.

This special issue includes with two guest articles that present case studies exploring the practical experiences of two organisations in developing their advanced services. The first article, **“KIBS rooted as agents of territorial development: a case study”**, by Aitziber Larumbe, presents the case of a business marketing consultancy and studies how it has contributed to the development of companies and the territory from its own idiosyncrasy for more than three decades. Secondly, the article **“Innovation in marketing and services in a context of digital transformation: Partnership Relationship Management (PRM) at Salto Wecosystem”**, written by Esteban Salegi Arbizu and Iker Pérez Gastañaga, analyses *Partnership Relationship Management* (PRM), i.e. the relationships cultivated with distributors in the distribution channel. It does so in a context of increasing digitalisation in partner relationships and the development of advanced services for industrial customers, emphasising lessons learned and future challenges.

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