

JSIS Special Issue on Platform Partnerships

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Over the last years *platform partnerships* between independent third-party developers (complementors) and providers of software platforms (platform owners) have become the prevailing model for developing and delivering software products and services (Fürstenau et al. 2023; Jacobides et al. 2024). Platforms are strategic in enabling value co-creation through boundary resources—such as software development kits (SDKs) and application programming interfaces (APIs)—which provide complementors with the tools needed to seamlessly integrate their offerings into the core platform infrastructure (Eaton et al. 2015; Ghazawneh and Henfridsson 2013; Mann et al. 2022; Schrieck et al. 2022; Zapadka et al. 2022).

Novel and creative uses of technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), low-code/no-code platforms, and distributed ledger technologies (DLT) like blockchain are redefining how organizations interact, collaborate, and compete. AI and IoT enable real-time data analytics and predictive insights, allowing platforms to coordinate relationships and optimize sourcing decisions by anticipating demand, managing risks, and adjusting partnerships (Gregory et al. 2020; Shollo et al. 2022). IoT enhances this by providing continuous data streams from connected devices, enabling more responsive, data-driven collaborations in logistics and inventory management (Pauli et al. 2021). Low-code/no-code platforms reduce entry barriers for participants, enabling organizations to develop solutions independently (Bock and Frank 2021; Viljoen et al. 2024). Blockchain and smart contracts automate partnership agreements through self-executing code, reducing transaction costs and fostering trust, particularly in complex, cross-border environments (Ellinger et al. 2023).

Together, these technologies have strategic implications on partnerships in platform ecosystems, potentially reshaping established practices in value co-creation and appropriation (Li and Tuunanen 2022), and sourcing arrangements (Oshri et al. 2015). While they offer complementors opportunities to innovate and gain leverage, they also equip platform owners with new tools to reinforce their dominance. Whether these new tools will benefit complementors or increase platform owners' control remains an open question. For example, as decentralized, real-time decision-making becomes more common, will these technologies empower complementors to innovate and operate autonomously, or will they reinforce existing power imbalances, allowing

platform owners to strengthen centralized control and dictate terms of value appropriation and collaboration (Cutolo and Kenney 2021; Huber et al. 2017; Hurni et al. 2022)?

As dominant platform owners like Apple, Google, Amazon, and Microsoft in Western markets, and Alibaba, Tencent, and Baidu in China, continue to control key sectors of consumer and business markets (Chatterjee and Sarker 2024), complementors face growing challenges in navigating the advantages of platform participation against the risks of dependency and lock-in, both undermining complementor autonomy (Kude and Huber forthcoming; Engert et al. 2023; Cutolo and Kenney 2021; Engert et al. forthcoming; Hurni et al. 2022). Meanwhile, the evolving regulatory landscape, such as the European Union's (EU) Digital Markets Act¹, seeks to address these power imbalances by imposing restrictions on platform gatekeepers that reshape partner strategies and value co-creation.

Indeed, platform partnerships are undergoing significant strategic transformations (Zapadka et al. 2022). Advancements in technologies such as AI, IoT, and blockchain, along with shifts in political and regulatory environments, are influencing how partnerships within platform ecosystems evolve (Kude and Huber forthcoming; Schrieck et al. 2024). In this rapidly changing landscape, critical questions arise about the future dynamics of partnerships in platform ecosystems. How will the balance between value co-creation and value appropriation shift as AI, DLT, and IoT become more integrated into platform partnerships? Will these technologies empower complementors to innovate and capture a fair share of the value they create, or will they enable platform owners to centralize control, deepening dependencies and shifting value appropriation in their favor? And as platform ecosystems often nature sourcing relationships, how and in what ways sourcing relationships between a platform owner and complementors affect the platform ecosystem? Ultimately, how can both platform owners and complementors strategically navigate these changes to ensure mutual benefit in an increasingly complex ecosystem?

This call for papers invites research that explores how these strategic shifts are reshaping platform partnerships, including changes in the strategies and business models of platform owners and complementors (Böttcher et al. 2022), and the governance of these partnerships and ecosystems (Huber et al. 2017; Wareham et al. 2014). We welcome empirical, conceptual², design, and simulation research. Any methodologies and theoretical perspectives are encouraged as long as they contribute to the theoretical understanding of platform partnerships, along with practical insights.

Below, we list potential topics for this Special Issue along several themes, but we are not strictly limited to these topics³.

Platform Partnerships and Emerging Technologies

¹ https://digital-markets-act.ec.europa.eu/index_en

² While "conceptual" studies also refer to literature reviews, given that JSIS is running an annual Review Special Issue, we suggest that reviews are submitted to the Review Special Issue.

³ If unsure about the fit, potential authors are welcome to contact guest editors to clarify if their research fits with the focus of this Special Issue.

- The role of AI/machine learning and predictive analytics in managing platform partnerships.
- The impact of AI platforms' unique characteristics, such as learning abilities and non-deterministic behaviors, on platform partnerships.
- The role of IoT in real-time coordination and dynamic management of platform partnerships.
- Effects of distributed ledger technologies on platform partnerships.
- Impact of low-code/no-code platforms on the role of complementors within these platforms.

Platform Partnerships, Platform Power, and the Regulatory Environment

- Strategies for complementors to manage power asymmetries within platform partnerships.
- The role of regulatory interventions in addressing the increasing power of platform owners.
- Strategies for complementors and platform owners to adapt to regulatory changes, such as new laws and antitrust decisions.
- Managing regulatory trade-offs between restricting powerful platform owners and fostering innovation.

Governance of Platform Partnerships

- Impact of emerging technologies on managing tensions in platform governance, such as control versus autonomy.
- The impact of changes in the platform core on platform partnerships.
- The heterogeneity of complementors in digital platform ecosystems and its implications for governance.
- The impact of scaling platforms/ecosystems on platform partnerships

Platform Partnerships and the Evolution of Sourcing Arrangements

- The role of AI, real-time analytics, and DLTs in shaping sourcing strategies, decisions, and governance.
- The influence of platforms in managing evolving sourcing relationships.

Important dates:

Date	
December 5 th 2024	Online information session
December 15 th 2024	Informal meet the SI Editors, SIG digital sourcing, platforms and ecosystems (DSPE) Pre-ICIS workshop
Mid-late January 2025 (exact date TBC)	Online information session
August 14-16, 2025	Informal meet the SE editors, SIG DSPE track - AMCIS 2025

September 15 th 2025	Full paper submission
December 15 th 2025	First round decisions
March 15 th 2026	Deadline to submit revised paper
June 15 th 2026	Second round decisions
September 1 st 2026	Deadline to submit revised paper
October 1 st 2026 (tentative)	Final decisions

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