

Preface

Every story has a context, a plot, and an ending. Behind the development of this book, there is a long story with several twists and turns, encounters, dead ends, joys and achievements.

I perfectly remember how it all began. At the time, I was not aware in the slightest that it would take up so much of my time and passion for years to come.

Laurent and I were enjoying coffee. He had just moved back to Ireland to develop a new master's in digital marketing. We had been already working together on one of our first articles on two-sided Internet platforms. In 2012, business models and the way the new companies were making money influenced our conversations and academic debates. Laurent is a professor in Marketing with a background in Political Science, whereas I am a professor in Entrepreneurship with a background in Economics, Strategy, and Innovation. Rather than sundering us, our discussions revealed the benefit of observing digital enterprises from different lenses: marketing, strategy, and entrepreneurship.

Laurent invited me to conduct a course on Digital Business Models in the newly launched MSc. No one seemed to have taught a module such as this one before. I was enthusiastic and started digging frantically for information in books, blogs, and academic articles. I found that knowledge in this area was scarce and disseminated over grey literature. Practitioners mainly focussed on business modelling while researchers seemed to be stuck on the traditional economic considerations.

The course was a success and has now been duplicated in Ireland and France. Needless to say, the Internet context changed; however, it is always challenging to train students and help them see beyond the consumer perspective to assess the strategic risks behind those well-known digital businesses that we admire for their success and the services they provide.

Along the way, we found companions and friends. Deepak, with his vast knowledge in Information Technologies, worked for Trinity Centre for Digital Business and Analytics. The centre, which was launched by Laurent, mirrors our desire for multidisciplinary research. Its goal is to foster multidisciplinary research to create and disseminate knowledge regarding digital business. Further interactions with CEOs and digital leaders fuelled our thoughts and ideas.

Daniel brought his background in Innovation Management as well as his intellectual enthusiasm for digital platform dynamics. He joined Trinity as a visiting PhD scholar from Politecnico di Milano. In the beginning, we were flattered as Daniel approached us regarding our joint paper, which had inspired him. We were then quickly impressed by his dynamism and prolific production on digital platforms. Daniel began several projects and invited us to contribute to some of the papers on the sharing economy, the value drivers behind digital businesses and the future of multi-sided platforms. We nurtured our passions on digital platforms through the *Symplatform*, an industry-academic symposium, which was initiated by Daniel:

Symplatform is the place where academic knowledge meets the practice world to foster a critical discussion on what platforms are, how they work and what they can become for people, organizations and our society.

Symplatform continues to influence a growing community around a yearly event and is now serving as a platform for its participants with different outlets, such as podcasts, books, MOOCs, and other initiatives.

Did I lose you? Why and how did we end up writing this book?

This book is a natural outcome of all the above. The pandemic was the opportunity to recall and realise this. Ultimately, it acted as an accelerator. We realised that we had the content from courses, case studies, conversations with digital leaders, a body of academic papers, and a team of individuals from different backgrounds who worked well together. Finally, we had found the energy and the time to settle our findings and views on Digital Business Models.

This book addresses how ventures design digital services to generate value. We adopt a strategic perspective to surpass the consumer perspective and analyse the business models at work in the digital arena.

The ambition is to give the readers a starting point – and hopefully much more – to address the complexity and a systemic perspective on the characteristics and implications of running a digital business. In addition, a business model as a concept is the perfect layer to recombine the rationales and logic of business actions underpinning a vision and a mission. It is not a listing of digital business models in a normative call. Rather, it is an open-ended perspective and personal thought on how we make sense of specificities and challenges of the best in class. For each chapter, we draw some “key takeaways and further considerations” for entrepreneurs, managers, and future digital leaders.

We hope that the same spark that drives us will touch you through your journey. **Enjoy your trip to Digital Business Models: New Value Creation and Capture Mechanisms of the 21st Century.**

S. Ronteau