



CALL FOR PROPOSALS

RETHINKING CORPORATE STRATEGY IN THE AGE OF PARADOX

PROGRAM CHAIRS

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The world around us is changing in startling ways. We have, arguably, entered an age of paradox – an age of simultaneous, interdependent, and persistent contradictions. Digital disruption and societal turbulence across the globe are putting phenomenal pressure on corporations, and existing paradigms in corporate strategy seems insufficient to provide guidance in these turbulent times. Strategic management, as a field, may have a golden opportunity to reinvent itself.

While the digital disruption in the new economy is well acknowledged, the irony of its interdependencies with the old economy is not so obvious. Amazon is replacing Walmart as a retail leader, and Tesla is emerging as an automotive leader outpacing industry veterans. Yet, Amazon's biggest acquisition ever is not an avant-garde digital enterprise, but the brick and mortar premium grocery chain, Whole Foods. Tesla's promise of clean electric cars is, rather worryingly, dependent on the steady supply of cobalt from the conflict-haunted Republic of Congo. The onset of machine learning and artificial intelligence is driving up the stock value of a few companies, while putting large swathes of middle-class jobs at risk and dismantling the taken-for-granted corporate hierarchies across the world.

Globalization too, in recent years has been through its ups and downs. We live in a time when professional classes of the world's great cities increasingly self-identify themselves as global citizens. The sharing economy, characterized by new age ventures like Airbnb, makes it effortless for us to relax in the homes of strangers in a foreign city. Yet, paradoxically, countries that have been the torchbearers of globalization for decades are showing signs of fatigue. The fading openness is of particular shock to firms from emerging markets, which have been gearing up to enter the global economy, as they suddenly find themselves stalled by a growing sentiment of de-globalization.

The age of paradox, is threatening the very edifice of the contemporary world of business, developed and nurtured over the past several decades. Engaging effectively in the age of paradox demands thinking deeply about these contradictions rather than suppressing or ignoring them, for the benefit of enterprises, societies, and nations. Do we need to radically rethink the mission, scope, structure and governance of the corporation?

The SMS India Special Conference in Hyderabad is aimed at these vital issues, which can potentially change the contours of business and corporate strategy. By bringing together scholars and practitioners in the field of strategic management from across the globe to India, we hope to seed important conversations that should lead us to new discoveries of ideas and frameworks for building the future of strategy. India itself—churned today by a variety of paradoxes—provides an apt location for these deliberations. The conference provides an opportunity to revisit the legacy of late Professor CK Prahalad, who was instrumental in shaping our thinking on corporate strategy and anticipated the age of paradox in his work. Can corporations anchor their strategies on “core competencies,” in the midst of a rapid erosion of industry boundaries, obsolescence of core competencies, and dramatically shifting customer preferences?

While the conference is open to proposals for paper, panel and common ground sessions on multiple topics employing different theoretical perspectives and methodologies, we are keen to explore the themes and questions articulated under the following six tracks.

CONFERENCE THEME TRACKS

Track A: Scope and Structure of the Firm

Track Chairs: Jaya Dixit, *Indian School of Business*
Prashant Kale, *Rice University*

This track focuses on issues related to the scope and organization of the firm that will enable them to pursue growth and performance. Corporate scope has been an elusive topic in strategic management and has become even more elusive in an era of transient advantages, changing industry boundaries, digital disruptions and global turbulence. Exploring the determinants of scope and new ways of organizing to enhance performance are central to strategy. Some of the questions that may address these matters include:

- How do we re-think the question of value creation and capture as new business ecosystems come about that span several industries?
- How are firms transforming themselves into agile organizations that learn quickly and innovate consistently?
- To what extent do changing dynamics in technology, industry and globalization necessitate new organizational forms?
- How are existing organizational forms (M-Form, business groups, family business, etc.) enabling or hindering the pace of innovation and growth?
- How do firms design their resource and capability sourcing portfolios through the use of alliances, M&As, outsourcing and other formal and informal contract structures?
- How can we build organizations that can integrate and deploy resources obtained, as a result of these organizational arrangements, successfully?
- How do we design organizations that can leverage collaborative networks both within and across organizations?
- What challenges and opportunities do firms face in serving the substantial bottom-of-the pyramid market?
- How can the considerable human capital and other resources that reside at the bottom of the pyramid, be leveraged in designing new business ecosystems and successful organizations?
- What are the challenges and opportunities that firms face in structuring their value chains in view of the ever-increasing pace of institutional changes, changing rules and regulations around the world (e.g. demonetization, BREXIT, etc.)?

Track B: Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability

Track Chairs: Olga Hawn, *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*
Sourav Mukherji, *Indian Institute of Management Bangalore*

CSR and Sustainability have emerged as dominant themes in strategy, as they challenge the very notion of firm performance, the focal construct in our field. There are at least four important trends that are shaping the contours of this field. First, significant parts of the growing global supply chains reside in developing countries that face tremendous social and environmental challenges. Second, CSR and sustainability ideas and their adoption vary across countries. Third, we recognize that long-term commitment is critical for beneficiaries that are directly affected by these investments, and we need to study how organizations confront the tension between symbolic and substantive CSR. Fourth, we are witnessing organizations give more focus on “purpose,” bringing societal impact more central to their strategic thinking. Some of the questions that may address these matters include:

- How do organizations achieve stability under these circumstances and ensure that their reputation is protected in the next crisis exposed by the media?
- How does the variance in consumer preferences and demands affect CSR and sustainability, especially for MNEs? Do they converge or diverge in their practices and policies around the world?
- How do organizations ensure the sustainability of their CSR efforts, which may be critical in creating impact?
- How do companies move away from sporadic CSR efforts to build sustained attention over the long term to create impact?
- How do firms balance and overcome the skepticism towards the intent of their CSR and sustainability policies and practices?
- How do they address the concerns of both internal and external stakeholders? Which stakeholders become the priority for organizations in the age of paradox and increasing nationalism around the globe? Which sustainability issues are material to future survival and success, and therefore require substantive engagement?

Track C: Globalization and Emerging Markets

Track Chairs: Snehal Awate, *Indian School of Business*
Anna Lamin, *Northeastern University*
Minyuan Zhao, *University of Pennsylvania*

This track welcomes submissions on global strategies, including the influence of emerging markets on the design and execution of such strategies. The unique characteristics of emerging markets continue to surprise global strategists: witness, the competition faced by the FMCG behemoths, Unilever and Colgate, from an Indian yoga guru-led enterprise, Patanjali. While firms increasingly consider emerging market engagements, some firms that have been active for decades in emerging markets are exiting (e.g., General Motors from India). Meanwhile, the strategy playbooks of established MNCs are often challenged by relatively new emerging market players. Simultaneously emerging market firms are competing on the world stage with locally developed capabilities as well as those attained through partnerships with other firms. Some of the questions that may address these matters include:

- How is the maturation of emerging markets changing the strategies of MNCs?
- What strategies do emerging market firms pursue globally and how do they develop the resources for such competition?
- Additional relevant topics include, but are not limited to, cross-border corporate and business strategy, location strategy, foreign entry, headquarters-subsidiary relations, and global value chains.

Track D: Innovation and Knowledge

Track Chairs: Srivardhini K Jha, *Indian Institute of Management-Bangalore*
Anupama Phene, *George Washington University*

Research in knowledge management and innovation has long grappled with paradoxical situations - the trade-off between knowledge sharing and knowledge protection, the local versus global nature of innovation, the tension between exploration and exploitation in firms, and the tug of war between capability and rigidity in new product development. The tectonic shifts in the technological and socio-political environments of recent times have further accentuated existing challenges and created new ones. We look forward to receiving submissions that will advance the dialogue on these emergent challenges to innovation and knowledge management. We welcome interdisciplinary work and studies undertaken at different levels of analysis - individual, team and the firm. Some of the questions that may address these matters include:

- How are firms planning and managing their innovation activities?
- What are the tensions that firms and teams must deal with as they strive to stay at the forefront of innovation?
- How is the role of the individual innovator changing?
- How do firms balance their traditional strength of deep expertise with the contemporary requirements of rapid response and lean thinking?

Track E: Entrepreneurship

Track Chairs: Suresh Bhagavatula, *IIM-Bangalore*
Pai-Ling Yin, *University of Southern California*

Entrepreneurs have been responsible for some of the biggest disruptions to mature industries dominated by corporations: Airbnb has challenged the hotel industry, Lyft and Uber have upended the taxi industry, and the big car manufacturers have been pushed to innovate by Tesla and Google. This story of startups challenging large corporations is being played out in most parts of the world, including economies such as India and China. Corporations are engaging in many new relationships with entrepreneurs as both competition and partners. Both corporations and entrepreneurs are dealing with the ultimate paradox of being each other's friend and foe. Increased digitization, platform technologies, and connectivity have created a rich environment for creation and disruption both in developed and emerging economies. Some of the questions that may address these matters include:

- How are corporations interacting with entrepreneurs (through investments, partnerships, mentorship, and acquisitions)?
- How are entrepreneurial ecosystems addressing disruption in traditional industries?
- What are the tools, strategies, and environmental conditions that allow small entrepreneurs to compete with big corporations?
- What are new challenges and opportunities presented to entrepreneurs by increasing digitization and social media?
- How do family businesses deal with globalization and entrepreneurship?

Track F: Governance, Leadership and Human Capital

Track Chairs: Palash Deb, *Indian Institute of Management-Calcutta*
Michael Withers, *Texas A&M University*

In an age of paradox, strategic leaders, the top management of organizations, have to face the brunt of the complex challenges in navigating their organizations through the new competitive landscape. Understanding how strategic leaders recognize and adapt to the disruptions that characterize this age to develop corporate strategy, may offer new insights into the upper echelons perspective. Similarly, the changing dynamics within this age may have important implications for the theories of corporate governance. Interestingly, internal and external governance mechanisms also may facilitate and direct the strategic responses to these broader macro-level changes. Both the strategic leadership and corporate governance literatures draw heavily on human capital at their foundations, and the role of human capital in designing corporate governance processes and formulating and implementing corporate strategy in the age of paradox will be a critical consideration. Some of the questions that may address these matters include:

- How do strategic leaders respond to the complexities they encounter and what results from these actions?
- How do strategic leaders contain the ambiguity and uncertainty of the environment and enable their organizations to execute strategy?
- What types of governance structures and mechanisms associate with the strategic responses to these environmental changes?
- How do companies build and retain the necessary human capital in the context of these complex challenges?

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS

Proposals (5-7 pages, for paper and panel sessions)

relating to the conference theme are invited.

Only original, unpublished work is sought.

Deadline for Submission of Proposals: May 8, 2018

To learn more about the
SMS India Special Conference in Hyderabad
and the submission process, please go to:

hyderabad.strategicmanagement.net

Timeline:

May 8, 2018	Submission Deadline for Proposals
May 15, 2018	Co-Author Confirmation Deadline
Early July, 2018	Notifications of Program Review Committee Decisions
August 1, 2018	Early Registration and Presenter Registration Deadline
December 15-18, 2018	SMS India Special Conference in Hyderabad

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The Strategic Management Society (SMS) is unique in bringing together the worlds of reflective practice and thoughtful scholarship.

The Society consists of over 3,000 members representing more than 80 different countries. Membership, composed of academics, business practitioners, and consultants, focuses its attention on the development and dissemination of insights on the strategic management process, as well as fostering contacts and interchange around the world.

The Society is probably best known through the *Strategic Management Journal* (SMJ) published by John Wiley & Sons. This Class A journal has become the leading scholarly publication in the field of Strategic Management and is consistently rated one of the top publications in the management area. In 2007 the Society launched the *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal* (SEJ) and in 2010 the *Global Strategy Journal* (GSJ). The intent is for these quarterly publications to become Class A journals and to promote the development and dissemination of advances in the field by maintaining the highest standards of intellectual thought combined with practical relevance, just as their sister publication SMJ has done for many years.



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