

Editorial for the special issue: “Digital transformation for societal sustainability and human betterment in Asian countries: strategies, challenges, and impact”

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We are honored to present this special issue of the *Journal of Asia Business Studies* titled “Digital Transformation for Societal Sustainability and Human Betterment in Asian Countries: Strategies, Challenges, and Impact.”

The increasing penetration of digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, big data analytics and the Internet of Things has transformed not only industries but also societies across Asia. In a region marked by rapid economic growth, social disparity and sustainability challenges, digital transformation emerges as a critical enabler for achieving human betterment and sustainable development goals.

The aim of this special issue was to capture novel insights into how digital transformation initiatives in Asian contexts can be leveraged to drive societal sustainability, human-centric innovation and inclusive economic development. Specifically, the special issue invited research that addresses questions such as, How does digital transformation contribute to sustainable development and human betterment in Asian countries? What are the strategies and challenges organizations face while pursuing digital transformation in diverse societal contexts? How can emerging technologies like AI, blockchain and IoT reshape societal structures, business models and public governance? In what ways can digital initiatives empower marginalized communities and promote social inclusion? How do regulatory frameworks and cultural factors influence the success of digital transformation initiatives in Asia?

The articles accepted into this special issue offer multidisciplinary perspectives, combining rigorous theoretical frameworks with diverse empirical methods to explore these themes across a range of sectors, technologies and societal contexts.

One contribution explores the role of digital platforms in India’s informal plastic recycling ecosystem. Using actor-network theory and innovation-for-impact framing, the authors illustrate how traceability, stakeholder transparency and platform design enable inclusive and scalable community engagement in marginalized settings.

A timely investigation analyzes the Digital India program’s alignment with Sustainable Development Goals. The research uses a TISM-MICMAC approach to identify how policy support, digital infrastructure and ICT access function as hierarchical enablers of sustainable digital transformation across strategic and operational layers.

Turning to blockchain technologies, one article investigates how social media data – particularly from Twitter/X – can detect challenges in the food supply chain and guide

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blockchain-enabled interventions. By applying big data analytics and text mining, the authors offer a framework that integrates digital sensing with traceability tools for agricultural sustainability.

Complementing this, a U.S.-based study extends the UTAUT2 model to evaluate how perceived transparency mediates adoption of blockchain-based e-voting. Findings confirm that transparency is critical in shaping generational trust and intention, suggesting strong implications for governments in Asia aiming to implement inclusive digital governance.

From a financial performance lens, another paper applies the Ohlson model to examine how CSR practices influence firm valuation. High-sustainability firms, as ranked by Just Capital, outperform their counterparts, demonstrating how digital maturity and socially responsible practices contribute to long-term shareholder value.

In the context of Saudi Arabia's Hajj and Umrah sector, a study evaluates how sustainable Industry 4.0 initiatives and CSR shape environmental decision-making effectiveness. While leadership mindset showed limited direct influence, corporate commitment emerged as a pivotal mediator, offering guidance for SMEs in digital transition.

Artificial intelligence in public health is explored through an Indian case on AI chatbot adoption in health care. Trust in existing health-care systems, beliefs in traditional medicine and awareness levels are found to significantly impact AI acceptance, shedding light on cultural dimensions of digital health innovation.

AI adoption is further studied in the HR context within Vietnam's medium-sized firms. Using the value-based adoption model, the article uncovers how perceived usefulness, cost concerns and readiness of HR leaders influence the adoption of AI in recruitment, offering strategic insights for emerging economies.

Exploring digital transformation in the sharing economy, one article analyzes the implementation of smart contracts using a mixed-method case of Delimobile, a Russian car-sharing firm. The study combines business modeling with a difference-in-differences approach to quantify cost and efficiency gains.

Another contribution focuses on the continued participation of restaurant providers in Vietnam's food delivery apps. It identifies how corporate image, service quality and economic value affect loyalty, offering a grounded perspective on platform engagement in Asia's gig economy.

In education, a longitudinal study assesses how e-learning adoption in India evolved before and after COVID-19 using the UTAUT framework. The shift in influence of ease of use, social expectation and performance value highlights adaptation patterns in higher education.

Another contribution within education field explores how Lebanese higher education institutions build resilience through digital transformation during times of crisis. Drawing on Duchek's resilience framework, the authors identify key capabilities – anticipation, coping and adaptation – that support institutional agility. Based on interviews with faculty and administrators, the study highlights how digital tools enhance collaboration, responsiveness and operational continuity. The findings offer practical insights for crisis-affected organizations in developing countries.

Finally, a cluster analysis investigates employee satisfaction with hybrid work post-pandemic in Italy. Six worker profiles emerge, influenced by digital tool availability, organizational support and demographic context. The findings offer actionable implications for rethinking HR strategies in digitally mediated workplaces.

Through these diverse contributions, this special issue showcases the multifaceted ways in which digital transformation is reshaping economies, societies and institutions across Asia. The research presented here not only advances theoretical discourse but also offers

actionable insights for practitioners and policymakers striving to align digitalization efforts with broader societal sustainability goals.

We would like to express our deepest appreciation to all the authors for their high-quality contributions and to the reviewers for their invaluable feedback and rigorous assessments. We are also grateful to the editorial team at the *Journal of Asia Business Studies* for their support throughout the editorial process.

We hope that the articles in this special issue will inspire future research, inform policy debates and serve as a practical guide for organizations and governments seeking to harness digital transformation for societal betterment and sustainable development across the dynamic and diverse landscape of Asia.