

Enterprise social media to foster digital maturity: a value-creation perspective

Enterprise
social media

313

Leandro Feitosa Jorge

Business School, Université TELUQ, Montreal, Canada

Elaine Mosconi

MIS Departament, Université de Sherbrooke, Sherbrooke, Canada, and

Luis Antonio de Santa-Eulalia

Business School, Université de Sherbrooke, Sherbrooke, Canada

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Abstract

Purpose – In response to the growing need for organizations to enhance their digital capabilities and the widespread adoption of enterprise social media (ESM) in the workplace, researchers have extensively studied the effects of ESM on various organizational outcomes. Nonetheless, a notable theoretical gap exists regarding the influence of ESM on the development of organizational digital maturity. This paper aims to bridge this gap by conducting a comprehensive literature review to investigate how the utilization of ESM can facilitate the transformation of organizational value-creation processes, thereby contributing to the overall enhancement of digital maturity.

Design/methodology/approach – Using the information technology (IT) value-creation framework developed by Mooney *et al.* (1996) and applying a template analysis methodology as outlined by King (2012), the authors conducted a systematic literature review (Okoli and Schabram, 2010), to investigate the influence of ESM on value creation within the digital business environment.

Findings – The study's outcomes are structured around a theoretical framework that combines the contingency theory and the sociotechnical perspective to provide a comprehensive understanding of digital maturity. This paper also delves into how ESM facilitates the transformation of organizational value-creation processes, ultimately contributing to the overall progress of their digital maturity.

Research limitations/implications – This study adapts existing theoretical models to fit the context of ESM and integrates multiple perspectives to provide a comprehensive understanding of its impact. It identifies a convergence in the definition of ESM and offers insights into its various dimensions and effects on value creation. Hence, scholars can use the identified theoretical frameworks and conceptual convergence to guide future investigations into the impact of ESM on value creation, fostering theoretical development and empirical research. Practitioners can benefit from the insights to develop effective strategies for implementing ESM within their organizations, aligning with broader organizational objectives to enhance performance, streamline operations and drive structural changes. Furthermore, both scholars and practitioners can use the identified limitations of the study to identify areas for further improvement and exploration, thus contributing to the advancement of knowledge and practice in ESM and value creation. Limitations of this research include the exclusion of gray literature, a relatively small sample size of analyzed articles, and the restriction to specific databases as per systematic review guidelines, potentially overlooking valuable contributions from alternative sources.

Practical implications – This paper provides a comprehensive exploration of how ESM can support value-creation processes within organizations. It offers valuable insights to help managers incorporate ESM into their digital strategies and to understand its value-creation effects.



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Originality/value – Adopting a value-creation perspective and integrating the contingency theory and the sociotechnical perspective to build a comprehensive framework, this research introduces an original approach by showcasing how ESM can facilitate shifts in value-creation processes of organizations, paving the way to contribute to the development of their digital maturity.

Keywords Enterprise social media (ESM), Digital maturity, Value creation, Theoretical framework, Contingence theory, Socio-technical perspective, Systematic literature review

Paper type Literature review

Introduction

Enterprise social media (ESM), as a subset of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), is poised to have transformative effects on business, both internally and externally (Aral *et al.*, 2013). However, comprehending the benefits of ICTs in organizations is a complex endeavor, as these technologies are intricately woven into the broader organizational environment, including tools, people and structures (Ciborra, 2006). To bridge this complexity, this research combines the sociotechnical perspective (Bostrom and Heinen, 1977) and the contingency theory (Donaldson, 2001) to propose a theoretical framework. This framework builds upon the results of a systematic literature review, conducted to understand how the use of ESM can facilitate shifts in value creation within organizations in the digital business environment.

The digital business environment is characterized as a combination of digital business ecosystems, forming a sociotechnical network where individuals, organizations and technologies collaboratively create value (Senyo *et al.*, 2019). Given the cultural and sociotechnical nature of digital transformation and the potential impact of ESM on value-creation processes (Archer-Brown and Kietzmann, 2018; Teichert, 2019), using this affordable and user-friendly technology to navigate the challenges of the digital maturity journey appears appropriate, although it remains underexplored in current literature. While previous research has focused on how organizations use social media for customer relationships, strategy, learning, talent recruitment and human resource acquisition in the digital business context (Chong and Duan, 2020; Garmann-Johnsen *et al.*, 2020; Kaplan, 2017; L'Ecuier and Pelletier, 2019; Vardarlier and Ozsahin, 2021; Westernman *et al.*, 2014), the role of ESM in fostering digital maturity has been insufficiently examined.

To address this gap and gain insights into how ESM creates value in the digital business environment, we conducted a systematic literature review guided by Mooney *et al.*'s (1996) information technology (IT) value-creation framework. This framework remains relevant and has been applied to assess the business value created by Industry 4.0 technologies (Lemos *et al.*, 2021; Oberdorf *et al.*, 2021) and analyze the transformation of organizations' value chains (Cho and Jun, 2021; Seufert *et al.*, 2021). It offers a holistic perspective on the business environment, emphasizing creativity, innovation and efficiency. In the following sections, we outline the background, methodology, results and theoretical framework of our research, concluding with implications and limitations for further exploration in this domain.

Background

Characteristics of digital mature organizations

Kane *et al.* (2017) described the five main characteristics related to how digitally mature organizations respond to the pressures of the digital business environment:

- (1) changes in how organizations organize and develop workforces, promoting innovation and working with multidisciplinary and cross-functional teams;

- (2) long-term digital strategies, thinking in a continuous and long-term process;
- (3) scaling small digital experiments into enterprise-wide initiatives that have a business impact;
- (4) becoming talent magnets, creating a digital environment that promotes employee engagement and well-being; and
- (5) engaged digital leadership, responsible for a supportive culture that embraces collaboration, risk-taking and experimentation, with the vision necessary to lead a digital strategy, and a willingness to commit resources.

In the same vein, [Gudergan et al. \(2019\)](#) described that digitally mature organizations focus on (a) developing new competencies and learning, (b) supporting innovation and freedom to work, (c) promoting digital culture, which allows fast failures and experimentation, (d) encouraging efficiency and flexibility to promote new business models and adapt processes and structures, (e) facilitating stakeholder integration by open communication and (f) stimulating investments in personnel.

Complementing these previous results, [Vial \(2019\)](#) performed a thorough literature review on the digital transformation subject and identified the necessity of promoting significant changes in organizations' fabric to engage in the digital transformation journey as follows:

- organizational structure (e.g. agility and cross-functional collaboration);
- culture (e.g. common language, and multimedia mindset);
- leadership (e.g. top managers engaged in a digital mindset development); and
- employee roles and skills (e.g. learning, and developing new skills).

Furthermore, the author also describes the most significant barriers to digital transformation: breaking the inertia to promote digital transformation, and employees' resistance to change.

In line with the cited research chains, [Teichert \(2019, p. 1\)](#), described that the transformation of organizational culture is "a prerequisite and can become a bottleneck for digital transformation, if not adapted properly." [Teichert \(2019\)](#) identified the cultural attributes present in the analyses of 22 digital maturity models and integrated these attributes with the digital culture framework proposed by [Buvat et al. \(2017\)](#) finding several congruences between digital culture dimensions and the main characteristics of digital maturity organizations.

Digital maturity, enterprise social media and value creation

Traditionally, IT value creation is associated with the positive outcomes of IT use on organizational performance ([Mooney et al., 1996](#)). In this research, value creation is related to the positive impacts of ESM use on at least one of the three IT value-creation effects, as described by [Mooney et al. \(1996\)](#): automational effect, informational effect and transformational effect, as described below:

- The automational effect of ESM use is related to efficiency improvements and cost savings, resulting in increased productivity and reduced labor costs. For example, using ESM for project management can reduce the time and cost associated with traditional communication methods, such as email and phone calls.
- The informational effect of ESM use is related to the ability to collect, store, process and distribute information, resulting in improved decision-making, employee empowerment and enhanced organizational effectiveness. For example, using ESM

for knowledge sharing and collaboration can improve decision-making by providing employees with access to relevant information and expertise.

- The transformational effect of ESM use is related to its ability to facilitate innovation and process improvement, resulting in process transformations and organizational structure adaptation. For example, using ESM for idea generation and feedback can facilitate innovation by enabling employees to share and refine ideas in a collaborative environment.

The adoption of this value-creation framework allows studying the synergies that result from the combination of technical and human IT resources, present in the mechanisms by which value is achieved in “a context-contingent set of synergistic combinations of IT and other organizational resources, including workplace practices, change initiatives, organizational structure and financial condition” (Melville *et al.*, 2004, p. 311). This framework is useful in supporting the identification and understanding of the multiple sources of value creation associated with ESM. It guides adoption and usage strategies by understanding how the various elements of the system interact to create value. Based on the analyses of the papers sample, we adapted Mooney *et al.*'s (1996) framework to the context of this research by extending its original three value-creation effects (automational, informational and transformational) to detail dimensions adapted to the context of ESM usage, as summarized in Table 1.

The division into three value-creation effects supported the understanding of the subject and guided the content analysis. However, these effects do not happen in isolation and mutually affect each other.

Theoretical foundations

In the digital business environment, it is crucial to understand how technology, culture, processes and organizational goals affect and are influenced by each other (Gaurav and Kongar, 2021; Sony and Naik, 2020). ESM becomes a key tool for adapting to the dynamic digital landscape. This research combines the sociotechnical perspective and contingency theory.

<i>Automational</i>	Efficiency	Productivity improvement, and cost reduction
<i>Informational</i>	Communication	Facilitated interaction and shared information
	Collaboration	Deep interactions, synergetic results
	Cross-functional collaboration	Collaboration across the organization
	Knowledge sharing	Use the platform to share knowledge
	Knowledge management	Use the platform to store and reuse knowledge
<i>Transformational</i>	Empowerment	Autonomy to accomplish tasks, engagement, network development
	Innovation	Create innovative processes and services
	Digital leadership	Support the actions of a leader that embraces collaboration to lead a digital strategy
	Cultural change	Support a digital culture, which is based on open communication and collaboration
	Structural adaptation	The organization adapts its structures to maximize the technology value-creation forms

Table 1.
IT value-creation
effects (extended)

Source: Mooney *et al.* (1996)

The sociotechnical perspective emphasizes the interconnectedness of social and technical systems within organizations. Achieving peak performance and adaptability requires a balance between these elements, and ESM can aid in achieving this balance (Bostrom and Heinen, 1977). The sociotechnical systems perspective highlights that work systems consist of social and technical subsystems, interdependently influencing each other. This holistic approach focuses on optimizing the entire work system for effective and satisfying work environments (Amelsvoort and Hootegeem, 2017). In the digital environment, this perspective considers social structures and their interaction with technology (Lamb and Kling, 2003).

Contingency theory asserts that organizational management should be context-specific, adapting to external factors. Organizations must identify the appropriate structures for their goals and adjust when necessary. External and internal contingencies influence these adaptations, particularly in unstable digital environments. This theory helps us understand how ESM use relates to IT value creation in the context of a rapidly changing digital business environment (Donaldson, 2001). The contingency theory, driven by adaptive functionalism, underscores the importance of adapting organizational structures to fit changing contingencies. Organizations must balance internal and external factors to satisfy internal needs and adapt to external changes (Donaldson, 2001). In uncertain digital environments, adopting organic structures with teamwork and less formalization is recommended (Burns and Stalker, 1961).

Overall, these theoretical foundations help us explore the role of ESM in achieving digital maturity in a volatile digital business environment by considering the interplay between technical and social elements and adapting to external contingencies.

Research design and protocol

Rousseau *et al.* (2008, p. 7) argued that literature reviews are a “comprehensive accumulation, transparent analysis and reflective interpretation of all empirical studies about a specific question.” Following this perspective, we adopted the guidelines proposed by Okoli and Schabram (2010) to analyze previous empirical studies on our research question:

RQ1. How does ESM create value in the digital business environment?

Okoli and Schabram's (2010) protocol is adapted to the field of information systems research. To conduct the review, we used the following criteria for text extraction:

- objective: understand ESM value-creation in the digital business environment;
- databases: SCOPUS, SCIENCE DIRECT and ABI/INFORM;
- search: empirical peer-reviewed academic journal articles;
- practical screen: journal articles describing at least one value-creation effect (automational, informational and transformational) supported by the internal use of ESM; and
- quality appraisal: meet the established quality criteria.

To extract the data (step 6), we screened the selected papers focusing on identifying internal value-creation effects related to the use of ESM in the digital business environment. The adoption of the internal value-creation perspective excluded the use of ESM for brand management, customer relations, marketing and sales from the analyses. After selecting and studying the sample, we analyzed and synthesized it (step 7) by adopting a template analysis approach (King, 2012). The initial template consisted of the three value-creation effects described in the framework of Mooney *et al.* (1996), i.e. automational, informational

and transformational, and it was further complemented with secondary codes. The classification under the three initial codes provides a detailed categorization of the value created by using ESM in the digital business environment, revealing alignments and synergies between different research streams.

Digital maturity and ESM affect several industries and contexts. Accordingly, we adopted the three multidisciplinary databases that we had access to SCOPUS, SCIENCE DIRECT and ABI/INFORM. The advanced search features of the selected databases allowed the use of the same query stream to search for relevant scholarly journals, standardizing our method. Our search query encompassed various terms related to ESM and digitization to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant research. The search criteria included “Full text,” “English” language and “peer-reviewed” and “academic journals” filters, aligning with the quality appraisal criteria of [Okoli and Schabram's \(2010\)](#) systematic literature review protocol.

In the initial phase, we obtained 1,691 academic journal articles from our query. Subsequently, in the second phase, 66 duplicate articles were removed, resulting in a sample of 1,625 articles. To maintain a focus on quality and highlight the management perspective, we further refined the search in the third phase. We limited our selection to academic journals ranked A*, A and B in the Australian Business Dean's Council journal ranking scheme and/or 4*, 4, 3 and 2 in the Chartered Association of Business Schools journal ranking scheme, reducing the sample to 892 articles. We chose these ranking schemes due to their wide acceptance in the business research community.

In the fifth phase, we meticulously screened the titles, keywords, abstracts and full text of the selected articles to exclude those that did not meet our criteria.

The research involved a strict selection process where articles lacking empirical data or not addressing the value-creation effects (automation, information and transformation) outlined by [Mooney *et al.* \(1996\)](#) were excluded. This process yielded 58 relevant articles. The data analysis involved adapting [Mooney *et al.* \(1996\)](#)'s framework to the context of this research after careful review and refinement. QDA Miner lite © software aided in data extraction and organization into a table, including authors, titles, publication year, research method, theoretical approach, organization size, industry sectors, journal source and identified value-creation effects.

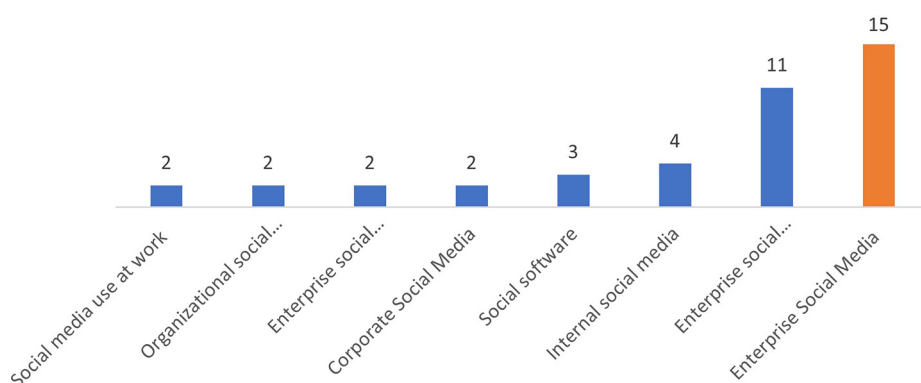
Results

In the workplace, social media takes on various names. In our research, we adopt the classification provided by [Leonardi *et al.* \(2013, p. 2\)](#) and use the term “ESM,” defined as follows:

Web-based platforms that allow workers to (1) communicate messages with specific coworkers or broadcast messages to everyone in the organization; (2) explicitly indicate or implicitly reveal particular coworkers as communication partners; (3) post, edit, and sort text and files linked to themselves or others; and (4) view the messages, connections, text, and files communicated, posted, edited and sorted by anyone else in the organization at any time of their choosing.

As described in [Figure 1](#), the term “ESM” emerges as the most preferred choice among authors, featured in 15 papers. “Enterprise social networks” follows as the second most frequently used term, appearing in 11 papers. Another popular term is “internal social media,” which has been used in four papers.

In addition to identifying commonly used terms for ESM, we also examined the prevalent definitions for the term. We found that 24 papers lacked a clear definition of ESM and instead relied on examples or anecdotal descriptions. In contrast, 34 papers provided a



Source: Authors' own creation

Figure 1.
ESM adopted terms

well-defined explanation of ESM. Notably, the definition presented by [Leonardi et al. \(2013\)](#) has gained substantial traction in academia. This definition is referenced in 11 out of the 58 papers, even when the authors themselves did not use the term “ESM.” This widespread adoption demonstrates a significant degree of agreement and acknowledgment of the term’s definition within the scientific community.

Value-creation effects

Driven by the secondary codes composing the final template, [Table 1](#), we counted the number of articles in our sample describing each one of the identified value-creation effects, as described in [Figure 2](#).

The “informational value-creation effect” (represented in blue) is the most prevalent and is associated with enhancing communication and collaboration, highlighting ESM’s collaborative nature ([Van Osch et al., 2015](#)). Results describe that the “informational value-creation effect” primarily revolves around enhancing communication and collaboration. It plays a critical role in sharing information and engaging in mutual problem-solving to break down organizational silos, foster innovation and improve organizational performance ([Camarihna-Matos and Afsarmanesh, 2008](#); [Kane et al., 2017](#); [Vial, 2019](#)). [Table 2](#) highlights the articles focusing on ESM’s communication and collaboration value-creation effects.

Knowledge is identified as one of the most valuable resources for organizations ([Grant, 1996](#)). Knowledge management represents a systematic approach to fully use an organization’s knowledge base and individual skills ([Dalkir, 2013](#)). ESM provides efficient ways to collect, store, process and distribute information, ultimately improving organizational knowledge sharing and knowledge management ([Mäntymäki and Riemer, 2016](#)), as described in [Table 3](#).

Empowering employees through social media connections with their organizations is discussed in the sample ([Berraies et al., 2020](#)). This empowerment positively affects employee engagement, job satisfaction and overall well-being ([Hannola et al., 2018](#); [Leonardi and Meyer, 2015](#)). Listening to employees’ voices is associated with this value-creation effect, contributing to their engagement and well-being in the work environment ([Deng, 2023](#); [Sudibjo and Sutarji, 2020](#)).

Empowerment, as described in [Table 4](#), is linked to factors such as leadership capacity to create a vision, develop common goals, promote collaborative working arrangements,

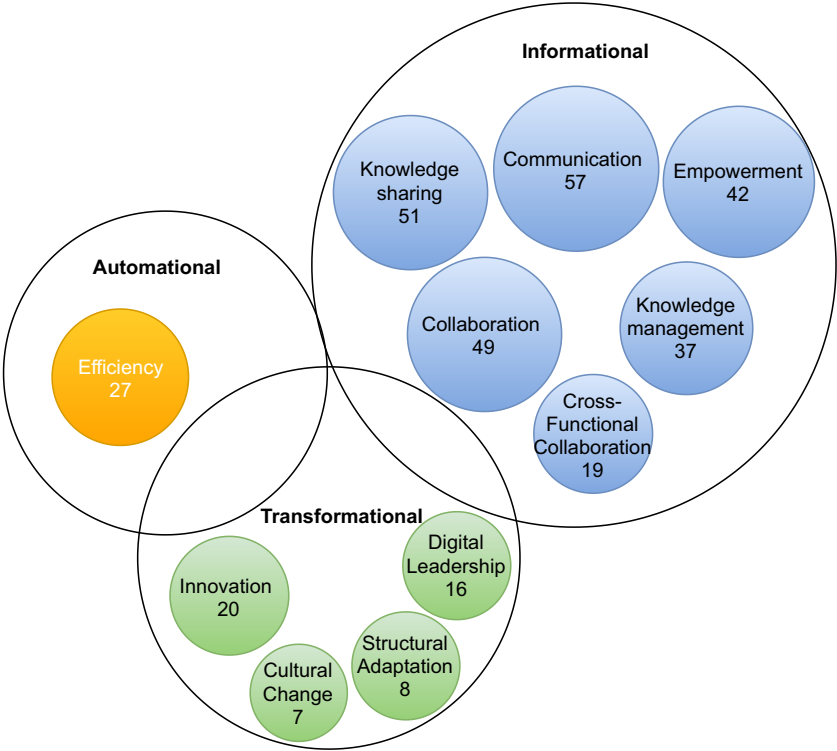


Figure 2.
Overview of the
valuecreation effects

Source: Authors’ own creation

Table 2.
Communication and
collaboration value-
creation effects

Reference	ESM value creation focus
(Elina and Esa, 2022)	Shared vision and collaborative reflection
(Gibbs <i>et al.</i> , 2015)	Promoting cross-boundary communication
(Greasley and Wang, 2016)	Integrating ERP and ESM for communication and collaboration
(Hardwig <i>et al.</i> , 2019)	Impacts linked to the complexity of collaborative tasks
(Ng and Yee, 2020)	ESM enhances internal communication and collaboration
(Deng, 2023)	Feedback-seeking mediates communication visibility and employee voice on ESM
(Deng <i>et al.</i> , 2020)	ESM use positively impacts task performance
(Huang <i>et al.</i> , 2015)	Benefits from effectively handling organization-produced and user-generated content
(Kanagarajoo <i>et al.</i> , 2019)	ESM in project management for effective communication
(Madsen, 2018)	Participatory communication empowers coworkers
(Pitafi and Ren, 2021)	Enhanced communication quality and visibility, contributing to improved employee agility

Source: Authors’ own creation

Table 3.
Knowledge
management and
knowledge sharing
value-creation effects

Reference	ESM value creation focus
(Kaschig <i>et al.</i> , 2016)	ESM fosters individual and organizational knowledge creation
(Mansour <i>et al.</i> , 2020)	Wiki usage positively affects knowledge management
(Mäntymäki and Riemer, 2016)	Work-related and social interactions on ESM are interconnected, with informal discussions acting as a catalyst for utilitarian purposes
(Qi and Chau, 2018)	ESM supports knowledge sharing and knowledge creation
(Stocker <i>et al.</i> , 2012)	Wikis to facilitate organizational knowledge sharing
(Yee <i>et al.</i> , 2021)	Combinations of motivation, opportunity and ability factors as antecedents to ESM knowledge creation and improved task performance
(Azaizah <i>et al.</i> , 2018)	ESM impacts communication and knowledge sharing
(Witschel <i>et al.</i> , 2019)	ESM enhances knowledge exchange and internal communication, creating a direct connection between communication and digitization
(Yang <i>et al.</i> , 2021)	ESM enhances efficiency through knowledge transfer via features like message transparency and network translucency
(Chen <i>et al.</i> , 2021)	Message transparency is positively related to knowledge sharing
(Kalra and Baral, 2019)	ESM for utilitarian and hedonic purposes
(Ma <i>et al.</i> , 2020)	When ESM is used for work-related purposes, employees' motivation to hide knowledge diminishes
(Margaryan <i>et al.</i> , 2015)	ESM fosters virtual team knowledge sharing through storytelling
(Sun <i>et al.</i> , 2022)	ESM to enhance organizational knowledge by promoting transparency in metaknowledge, particularly in terms of "who knows what" and "who knows who"

Source: Authors' own creation

support job autonomy, provide access to information and implement a decentralized organizational structure (Honold, 1997).

The "transformational effect" of ESM, described in Table 5, is a high-level value-creation effect (Mooney *et al.*, 1996). It primarily pertains to organizational flexibility and structural changes, encompassing both formal and informal structures and relationships among organizational members. This transformational value-creation effect can be further broken down into four secondary value-creation effects:

- (1) *Supporting digital leadership* is a crucial aspect, identified in 16 papers. ESM's open and informal nature enables direct communication between hierarchies, allowing managers to establish connections, foster collaboration and simplify access to organizational discussions, as outlined by Dittes *et al.* (2019). It empowers managers to convey a shared vision, cultivate trust and lead the implementation of a digital culture, reshaping power structures and influencing how organizational strategy is developed and communicated. Engaged leadership and a digital mindset are paramount for the success of digital transformation (Jäfvirt and Parnefjord Gustafsson, 2019).
- (2) *Supporting cultural change* is discussed in seven papers. ESM's informal and collaborative characteristics support employee engagement and the integration of the entire company into strategy and innovation, as highlighted by Berraies (2019), Deng (2023) and Hardwig *et al.* (2019). It becomes deeply integrated into organizational practices and culture, blurring the lines between technology and culture, although challenges may arise in directive and rigid cultural environments (Koch *et al.*, 2011).
- (3) *Supporting innovation* is emphasized in 20 papers. ESM is linked to human and social capital, facilitating both exploitative and exploratory innovation, enhancing

Table 4.
Empowerment value-
creation effect

Reference	ESM value creation focus
(Abelsen <i>et al.</i> , 2021)	Matching tasks to technology improves job performance and reduces loneliness
Berraies <i>et al.</i> (2020)	ESM relates to social capital, well-being and knowledge-sharing
Deng (2023)	ESM facilitates knowledge sharing and social capital development
(Ewing <i>et al.</i> , 2019)	Key practices for effective employee engagement using ESM
(Leidner <i>et al.</i> , 2018)	ESM empowering new IT hires to become more productive and comfortable in their new roles
(Louati and Hadoussa, 2021)	ESM positively impacts social capital and knowledge sharing
(Lu <i>et al.</i> , 2015)	Corporate blogs influence job performance and collaboration
(Ma <i>et al.</i> , 2021)	ESM enhances social capital and communication quality
(Martensen <i>et al.</i> , 2016)	ESM is linked to the anticipation of enhanced work performance and offers collaboration, knowledge management and social capital development potential
(Meske <i>et al.</i> , 2019)	ESM encourages hedonic motivations in employees, which notably affects their ongoing use of ESM in comparison to normative motivations
(Olfat <i>et al.</i> , 2019)	ESM enhances job satisfaction by facilitating effective collaboration and knowledge sharing
(Richter <i>et al.</i> , 2020)	ESM enhances social connections on the shop floor
(Sievert and Scholz, 2017)	ESM boosts employee engagement and open corporate culture
(Song <i>et al.</i> , 2019)	Work-oriented social media, such as DingTalk, and socialization-oriented social media, like WeChat, create synergies that empower employees
(Sun and Shang, 2014)	ESM contributes to the enhancement of social capital both directly and indirectly
(Tijunaitis <i>et al.</i> , 2019)	ESM usage correlates with higher overall social capital among employees
(Van Osch and Steinfield, 2018)	ESM allows workgroups to handle various virtual spaces with varying visibility, shaping distinct network structures depending on access levels, either restrictive or open

Source: Authors' own creation

employees' networks and positively impacting innovative and task performance, as discussed by Berraies (2019) and Dittes and Smolnik (2019). ESM's affordances promote creative performance, and an innovation culture plays a moderating role in employees' integration through ESM (Sarooghi *et al.*, 2015; Sun *et al.*, 2020; Ma *et al.*, 2021).

- (4) *Supporting structural adaptation* is observed in eight papers, with ESM supporting informality and efficiency in work routines. It facilitates interaction within teams and across the organization, enabling collaborative leadership and empowering employees to engage in cross-functional knowledge sharing, transparent communication and network development (Mirković *et al.*, 2019). In the digital business environment, supporting structural changes involves variations in organizational setup affecting products, processes and skills, as associated with socioeconomic processes and the accumulation of physical and human capital, as noted by Matt *et al.* (2015). In digital mature organizations, decision-making is decentralized, and employees are empowered to collaborate and innovate, as discussed by Mirković *et al.* (2019).

The analysis of these value-creation effects underscores the interplay and intersection between them, emphasizing the potential of ESM to drive structural adaptation within

Reference	ESM value creation focus
(Offong and Costello, 2017)	ESM enhances trust and collaboration
(Koch <i>et al.</i> , 2013)	ESM reshapes organizational culture through communities
(Ali <i>et al.</i> , 2021)	ESM supports digital leadership and innovation
(Men <i>et al.</i> , 2020)	ESM boosts transparency, organizational identification and employee engagement, while also supporting digital leadership
(Meske <i>et al.</i> , 2020)	ESM resources facilitate cross-functional and hierarchical communication and knowledge transfer, fostering the development of digital leadership
(Berraies, 2019)	ESM influences exploratory and exploitative innovations
(Ding <i>et al.</i> , 2019)	ESM moderates job stressors' impact on employee creativity
(Dittes and Smolnik, 2019)	Improvements in work performance and innovation
(He and Wang, 2016)	ESM for generating ideas, collaborating and disseminating knowledge
(Heredia <i>et al.</i> , 2017)	ESM supports tacit knowledge harnessed for innovation
(Kuegler <i>et al.</i> , 2015)	ESM impacts employee performance by enhancing both task performance and fostering employee innovation
(Schlagwein and Hu, 2017)	ESM can enhance an organization's absorptive capacity, leading to improved performance
(Sun <i>et al.</i> , 2020)	ESM has a positive impact on knowledge acquisition and dissemination, enhancing creative performance
(Wang <i>et al.</i> , 2021)	Different patterns of ESM use moderate the connections between role stress, job satisfaction and employee creativity
(Dittes <i>et al.</i> , 2019)	ESM to support digital work strategies
(Warner and Wäger, 2019)	ESM plays a pivotal role in elevating employees' digital maturity, reshaping internal structures and fostering a transformative shift in organizational culture

Source: Authors' own creation

Table 5.
Cultural change,
digital leadership,
innovation, and
structural changes
value-creation effects

organizations, responding to the challenges posed by the digital business environment. This comprehensive understanding of the transformative potential of ESM informs the development of a theoretical framework for further research.

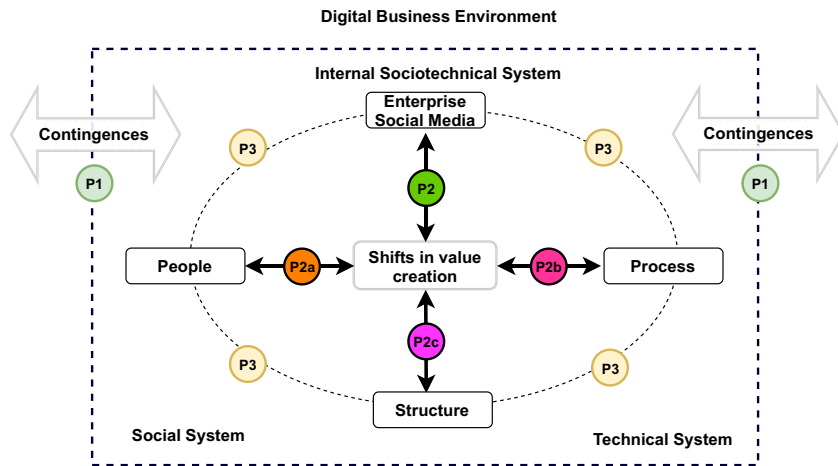
The theoretical framework

The theoretical framework illustrated in [Figure 3](#), integrates the sociotechnical systems (StS) perspective and contingency theory (CT) to understand the role of ESM in the digital business environment. The core of this framework emphasizes that organizational shifts in value-creation processes begin at less complex levels (automation and information) and combine synergistically to promote changes in organizational structures. These changes lead to a more organic and flexible design, enabling organizations to adapt to the challenges of the digital business environment.

In this sociotechnical system, ESM facilitates informal and multichannel communication, fostering autonomy and interactions across organizational hierarchies. This, in turn, encourages innovation, the development of a digital culture and digital leadership, creating a continuous cycle of improvement and adaptation ([Berraies, 2019](#); [Dittes *et al.*, 2019](#); [Meske *et al.*, 2020](#)).

The framework highlights how deeper levels of value-creation effects of ESM support organizations in addressing external contingencies ([Abelsen *et al.*, 2021](#)). It emphasizes the deep integration between people and processes afforded by social technologies, resulting in new organizational structures. This integrated structure continuously drives changes in

Figure 3.
Research framework
and proposals for
future research



Source: Authors' own creation

organizational processes through interactions on the ESM platform, gradually integrating technical and social subsystems.

Succeeding in the digital business environment is not solely a technological challenge; it involves the central role of the human component in advancing the digital maturity journey (Kane *et al.*, 2017) and adapting organizational strategy and structure (Tabrizi *et al.*, 2019).

This framework recognizes that challenges in the digital business environment encompass more than just technological aspects. They are related to the integration of an organization's strategy, people, culture, technology, processes and structure (Kane *et al.*, 2015, 2017). While the sociotechnical system comprises structure, processes, people and technology, it often neglects the cultural component. The cultural component interacts with people and structure to support the adaptation of the social subsystem and plays a crucial role in the turbulent digital business environment (Teichert, 2019).

The theoretical framework outlined in this research incorporates high-level value-creation shifts related to the transformation value-creation effect, encompassing both formal and informal organizational structures, hierarchies and culture, providing a holistic approach to addressing the challenges and opportunities of the digital business landscape.

Proposals for future research

In the ever-changing digital business environment, organizations must be flexible and adaptive. Contingency theory suggests that business strategies are shaped by internal and external factors, requiring each organization to find its own strategy to remain competitive. Organizations, viewed as open systems, need to balance internal needs and adapt to environmental changes (Morgan, 1999). However, in the face of critical events like the fast-paced and turbulent digital business environment, a deep imbalance can occur within organizations. This perturbation challenges the organization's capacity to adapt, necessitating nonlinear transformations, including a rewrite of its fundamental structure (Lyytinen and Newman, 2008).

In this context, the pressures of the digital business environment are a significant driving force behind the development of digital maturity within organizations. Hence, we propose:

- P1.* The pressures of the digital business environment lead to a deep unbalancing of the internal sociotechnical system of organizations, pushing organizations to develop their digital maturity.

The response to digital disruption requires not only technology, but also collaboration, social skills and the development of new competencies (Jorge *et al.*, 2019); and “technology itself is only part of the complex puzzle that must be solved for organizations to remain competitive in a digital world (Vial, 2019, p. 118).” ESM can be seen as an important tool for organizations to achieve digitally mature characteristics and to increase value-creation potential. The deep imbrication between people, technology and process (Leonardi, 2011) fosters human capital development (Berraies, 2019) and superior job performance (Louati and Hadoussa, 2021). The results of our systematic literature review suggest that ESM adoption promotes shifts in the value-creation processes of organizations related to the three value-creation effects described by Mooney *et al.* (1996) and that these shifts in value creation are aligned with the characteristics of digitally mature organizations (Gudergan *et al.*, 2019; Kane, 2019; Kane *et al.*, 2017; Teichert, 2019). Hence, we propose the following:

- P2.* ESM contributes to the development of digital maturity within organizations by supporting shifts in its value-creation processes.

According to Kane *et al.* (2017, p. 1), “people are the real key to digital transformation.” In this context, ESM equips individuals with the complex knowledge necessary for adaptation. ESM supports various aspects such as knowledge sharing, knowledge management, network development and empowering the workforce. These features enable employees to access experts and crowd-sourced support to solve problems, reuse knowledge and foster social relationship building, thereby facilitating shifts in an organization’s value-creation process.

ESM also enhances communication, collaboration and cross-functional collaboration, which is integral to the organization’s adaptation. In addition, learning through ESM platforms enables employees to share experiences and knowledge, aligning with the informational value-creation effect as described in Mooney *et al.*’s (1996) framework.

Hence, we propose:

- P2a.* The informational ESM value-creation effects support digital maturity development by empowering people to communicate, collaborate, share and manage knowledge.

Empowered individuals, who are enabled to collaborate, share, manage and reuse knowledge, exhibit improved task efficiency (Yang *et al.*, 2021). The informal and self-regulated nature of ESM platforms contributes to this efficiency by providing continuous access to content for reuse and allowing users to structure knowledge sharing within organizations (Berraies *et al.*, 2020).

ESM platforms break down organizational silos, allowing users to effortlessly share, discover and engage in discussions, thereby reducing the necessity for formal meetings and traditional communication channels (McAfee, 2009). ESM also aids organizations in promptly identifying and addressing issues, thereby decreasing the time required to resolve problems. In this context, ESM fosters work efficiency within organizations by offering a flexible and informal environment for content creation and management, which, in turn, positively influences collaboration and knowledge management processes, resulting in increased efficiency.

Hence, we propose:

- P2b.* The automational ESM value-creation effects support digital maturity development by improving process efficiency.

The technology adopted by an organization affects its structure and behavior (Woodward, 1980). In the context of this research, ESM is intertwined with social and technical elements (Durkin *et al.*, 2015), and its successful adoption has the potential to reconfigure the dynamics of organizational culture, networks and power relations within organizations (Castelló *et al.*, 2016). Transformational effects are the most complex and high-level value-creation effects, as they involve significant changes in organizational culture and structure (Mooney *et al.*, 1996). The results of the systematic literature review highlight the potential of ESM to support the creation of an organic structure. It has an organizational culture based on the flexibility to adapt to unstable conditions and requires employees and managers to perform their tasks with the overall knowledge of how their actions impact their organizations and the business environment (Burns and Stalker, 1961).

Hence, we propose:

- P2c.* The transformational ESM value-creation effects support digital maturity development by facilitating structural changes.

The holistic perspective of this research infers that deep integration of social media into organizational processes produces a synergistic value that, starting from the less complex effects (automatic and informational), combine themselves to generate more complex effects (transformational), affecting the culture, the structure of the organization and its innovation processes. Hence, we propose:

- P3.* Lower-level value-creation effects related to ESM usage combine themselves to promote shifts in high-level organizational value-creation processes.

Discussion, conclusions and limitations

Discussion

In this paper, we sought to answer the question: “*How does ESM create value in the digital business environment?*” Our investigation emphasized the pivotal role of ESM in fostering a collaborative and innovative environment. The results of our systematic literature review revealed that ESM and its value-creation mechanisms are relevant across diverse industries and contexts, calling for further theoretical and empirical exploration, particularly from a social media perspective in a digital context.

Following Okoli and Schabram’s (2010) protocol, we reviewed 58 journal articles to construct a theoretical framework. These scholarly articles describe ESM as a means to engage employees and promote knowledge sharing, leading to improved knowledge management, collaboration, innovation and financial performance.

The analysis of the sample suggests that ESM is multidisciplinary and cross-industry, with most studies focusing on large organizations. However, there is limited research on small organizations. ESM is portrayed as an affordable and intuitive technology suitable for organizations of all sizes to cope with internal and external contingencies.

In addition, many studies have explored the benefits of ESM for enhancing the internal value-creation effects of organizations, going beyond traditional applications in brand management, customer relations, marketing and sales. The definition proposed by Leonardi *et al.* (2013) is widely accepted in scholarly circles, providing a common foundation for research in this area.

Our paper contributes to the theory by proposing a framework that connects ESM and digital maturity, drawing from contingency theory and the sociotechnical perspective. This framework serves as a hub for knowledge and connections across organizational boundaries, supporting organizational performance and innovation.

While acknowledging the complexity of defining and measuring performance gains and the myriad factors involved, previous research suggests that ESM has the potential to improve performance. However, it is worth noting that the concept of performance in the sample primarily relates to economic outcomes, with limited mention of social responsibility and sustainability dimensions.

Our results emphasize that ESM is not a silver bullet for enhancing value creation within organizations. The role of top management in fostering an open and collaborative environment to support organizational knowledge is vital. Despite some risks and negative outcomes associated with social media usage, the benefits outweigh the downsides, in line with previous research.

Managerial contributions

ESM emerges as a powerful tool for organizations aiming to enhance value creation. It empowers employees to actively participate in digital workplace transformation, fostering connectivity, contribution and innovation. Our systematic review provides empirical evidence and practical insights into how ESM contributes to value creation in the digital business landscape. It showcases examples of how organizations have harnessed these tools to enhance performance, streamline operations and drive structural changes. ESM facilitates coordination and communication across departments and functions, aligning organizations with the evolving needs of the digital age. Practical applications arising from this research can offer valuable guidance to decision-makers as they navigate tool selection and stakeholder engagement tailored to immediate organizational needs. For instance, in a manufacturing setting prioritizing operational efficiency, efforts might be directed toward automating frequently encountered operational queries through an ESM platform or streamlining communication and coordination among production processes to enhance efficiency. This could be achieved through the adoption of collaboration tools that facilitate real-time communication and task management. Similarly, a consulting firm could leverage ESM's informational effect by establishing internal knowledge-sharing channels, enhancing decision-making and supporting employee development across geographic locations. Likewise, a technology startup might use project management tools to replicate successful innovative projects, promoting a culture of collaboration and adaptability essential for rapid growth and market disruption.

These examples underscore the essential connection between ESM strategies and organizational objectives, underscoring their pivotal role in driving value creation and fostering success. They emphasize the significance of aligning an ESM strategy with the broader organizational global strategy, recognizing this alignment as crucial for maximizing impact. Moreover, they highlight that technology alone is not a panacea for value creation; rather, effective utilization hinges on a well-defined strategy and robust managerial support to ensure optimal outcomes.

Theoretical contributions

We have adapted and extended [Mooney et al.'s \(1996\)](#) IT value-creation model to the context of ESM. This adaptation offers a theoretical foundation for understanding how ESM generates value in the digital business environment. Also, integrating the CT and StS in a

comprehensive theoretical framework. This integration considers contextual factors and the interplay between social and technical elements in organizations.

In this research, we identify a significant conceptual convergence in the literature regarding the term “ESM” and the definition proposed by [Leonardi et al. \(2013\)](#). This convergence offers theoretical clarity and a common foundation for future research. Also, we offered a holistic vision of ESM value-creation processes, encompassing various dimensions and value-creation effects, going beyond basic effects to provide a deeper understanding of how value is generated through ESM.

Limitations

Our study faces several limitations that impact its robustness and generalizability. First, we acknowledge the small sample size of articles analyzed, which may limit the breadth and diversity of perspectives represented in our findings. While we prioritized peer-reviewed journals for rigor, excluding conference papers and gray literature could have inadvertently restricted the scope of insights. Second, our literature review was confined to specific databases, potentially overlooking valuable contributions from alternative sources like industry reports or niche journals, introducing database selection bias. Finally, methodological considerations such as criteria for article selection and resource constraints may have influenced the comprehensiveness of our review. These limitations highlight the need for cautious interpretation of our results and underscore avenues for future research to address these constraints and enhance the validity of our findings.

Conclusions

The systematic literature review conducted reveals that the existing body of research on digital maturity often overlooks the incorporation of sustainability and social responsibility aspects into organizational performance ([Bordeleau et al., 2021](#)). To fill this gap, future research could emphasize analyzing and integrating these components as vital criteria for the development of digital maturity.

To overcome the limitations of this study and expand the knowledge base in this area, upcoming research endeavors could explore alternative databases, include gray literature and widen the scope to involve practical literature and conference papers, enhancing awareness and insights into the subject.

Furthermore, there is potential for future research to empirically validate the proposed framework, encompassing various organizational contexts and industries. Researchers may also consider enriching the framework by incorporating different forms of value creation or adopting distinct theoretical perspectives. This approach would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between ESM, value creation and digital maturity. One promising avenue for empirical validation involves conducting comprehensive case studies across a diverse spectrum of organizations. Through meticulous examination of how these entities implement ESM strategies and observing resultant impacts on value creation and digital maturity, researchers can amass qualitative data to authenticate the framework’s real-world applicability. Such case studies can also unveil unique challenges and success factors that may influence the efficacy of ESM initiatives across varying organizational landscapes.

Furthermore, quantitative research methodologies can be used to glean broader insights and validate the framework across a more extensive array of organizations. Surveys can gauge ESM adoption levels, perceived outcomes in value creation and the overall digital maturity of organizations. This approach can encompass variables such as if there is a specific e-sequencing of different forms of value creation to manifest, and consider potential

direct, indirect, mediating and moderating effects of each value-creation effect. Through meticulous analysis of survey data drawn from organizations spanning multiple sectors and geographical regions, researchers can discern prevalent trends and patterns that bolster the framework's validity and generalizability.

The adoption of longitudinal studies offer another invaluable means of empirical validation. By tracking the implementation of ESM strategies within organizations over extended durations, researchers can evaluate the enduring impact and potential transformations in value-creation effects, as well as their influence on digital maturity, including the integration of ESM with other digital technologies such as artificial intelligence and blockchain. Longitudinal studies unveil the evolutionary trajectory of ESM initiatives, their adaptation to shifting organizational exigencies and their sustained ramifications on organizational efficacy.

Moreover, in addition to presenting the results and limitations of this research, our study advocates exploring the social impact of this cost-effective and user-friendly technology. Specifically, we emphasize its role in enabling flexible work arrangements and remote collaboration, which can significantly enhance work-life balance for employees. We posit that organizations with advanced digital maturity are better equipped to leverage ESM in promoting employee engagement, fostering social support networks and initiating mental health awareness initiatives, thereby enhancing overall employee well-being. Furthermore, addressing the digital divide by ensuring equitable access to ESM platforms and providing support for employees with varying levels of digital literacy is imperative. This approach not only fosters digital inclusion but also contributes to societal progress. These discussions offer actionable insights for practitioners aiming to effectively leverage ESM to cultivate a culture of work-life balance, prioritize employee well-being and mitigate socioeconomic disparities within the digital workplace.

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Corresponding author

Leandro Feitosa Jorge can be contacted at: leandro.feitosajorge@teluq.ca

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