



**International Journal of Digital Culture and Electronic Tourism**

**Special Issue on: "Digital Processes, Innovation and Family Business"**

*Guest Editors:*

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The phenomenon of the fourth industrial revolution has changed many of our habits, from the way we communicate to how we work. Artificial intelligence, big data, blockchain, Internet of Things, cloud databases and social networks are the tools that have favoured this transformation process (Dal Mas et al., 2020).

Above all, companies have had to change their way of doing business, implementing profound changes at the level of operational processes and in the way in which activities are conducted within industrial value chains (Maresova et al., 2018; Parida et al., 2019).

In a competitive market such as the current one, the adoption of digital technologies is essential to keep company competitiveness unchanged. In order to respond promptly to the continuous changes imposed by the market, companies must develop flexible management policies.

Although in the literature it emerges that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are characterised by greater flexibility from a structural and process point of view, the number of small and medium-sized enterprises that have initiated a digital transformation process is not significant. The main causes include the absence of figures with the professional background necessary for the implementation of digital transformation, the high level of risk aversion and the unavailability of financial resources to invest in innovation (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka & Lal, 2006; Lal, 2007; OECD, 2019; Wang et al., 2020). In fact, companies that make use of the specialized skills of external managers are those that show the highest levels of innovation (Diéguez-Soto et al, 2016).

This special issue is interested in research works that investigate the links between smart technologies and small and medium-sized enterprises, where family businesses are the most representative category. As we

know, today there isn't a definition of family business universally accepted by academics, perhaps due to the fact that they often present differences in terms of size, management and structure.

Certainly, family-controlled companies have their own characteristics, such as the involvement of family members in business management and property or the tendency to pursue objectives that are not strictly economic. Moreover, a further peculiarity concerns the attachment to the traditions of the family, which must be preserved and transferred from generation to generation. This specific feature could be one of the causes that determine the lack of innovation of this type of enterprise, being family firms generally not inclined to changes of any kind (De Massis et al., 2013; Brines et al., 2013). In fact, in companies managed by family members, a greater difficulty was encountered in translating research and development expenses into technological innovation results (Diéguez-Soto et al., 2016).

Given the importance of family businesses for the economic development of different countries, and given their widespread diffusion, we aim to stimulate debate and research on the relationship between family businesses and digital technologies, in order to understand the obstacles and advantages associated with digital transformation process of SMEs, for example in terms of cost and energy savings, reduction of time and errors or creation of sustainable business models (Warren, 2017; Nayak & Dhaigude, 2019).

Topics of digitalisation of processes, innovation and, more generally, of industry 4.0 are extremely current since they represent the tools that allow companies to compete in the market. We believe it is interesting to investigate the use of new technologies by family businesses as they represent, for many countries, the engine of economic growth. The adoption of new technologies, although involving changes in business management, could increase the growth opportunities of these companies, which will thus continue to compete in a constantly evolving market (Moeuf et al., 2017).

Furthermore, it would be interesting to investigate how digital technologies have helped companies to manage the state of crisis caused by the spread of the Covid-19 virus, which has caused a general collapse in consumption and the economy.

Both qualitative and quantitative studies, investigations, behavioural or experimental studies, case studies, theory development are considered suitable for this special issue. Furthermore, studies concerning different contexts and small and medium-sized enterprises operating in all sectors of activity are favoured, allowing to explore the relationship between smart technologies and SMEs.

## **Main References**

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### **Subject Coverage**

Suitable topics include, but are not limited, to the following:

- Smart technologies and family businesses: how emerging technologies (Artificial Intelligence, big data, blockchain, Internet of Things, cloud databases) have transformed the way of doing business
- The drivers that foster innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises and family businesses
- The role of digital technologies in managing the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in SMEs and family businesses
- The role of digital technologies in promoting the creation of sustainable business models in family businesses and SMEs
- Smart business models for SMEs and family firms
- The obstacles to the implementation of smart technologies of SMEs and family businesses compared to large enterprises and non-family businesses
- Digital transformation in SMEs and family businesses
- New trends in interactive decision-making processes in SMEs and family businesses with new digital technologies

## **Notes for Prospective Authors**

Submitted papers should not have been previously published nor be currently under consideration for publication elsewhere. (N.B. Conference papers may only be submitted if the paper has been completely re-written and if appropriate written permissions have been obtained from any copyright holders of the original paper).

All papers are refereed through a peer review process.

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## **Important Dates**

Manuscripts due by: *31 May, 2021*

Notification to authors: *31 July, 2021*

Final versions due by: *30 September, 2021*