

Orchestration through Empowerment vs. Control: A Comparative Analysis of Value Co-Creation in Alibaba's and Shein's Digital Business Ecosystems

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Abstract

This paper investigates the strategic heterogeneity of digital business ecosystems by conducting a comparative case study of two prominent yet divergent platform firms: Alibaba and SHEIN. While existing literature often treats platforms as a monolithic category, this research responds to calls for a more nuanced understanding of their diverse strategic configurations. By deconstructing the governance mechanisms, data strategies, and value logics of Alibaba and SHEIN, we develop a typology of two distinct “strategic archetypes”. We characterize Alibaba's model as an “Enabling Archetype”, which functions as a form of digital institutionalism, creating a market by providing infrastructure, rules, and data-as-a-service to empower a vast network of autonomous third-party sellers. In contrast, we define SHEIN's model as a “Controlling Archetype”, which operates as a digitally integrated producer, using a proprietary data-driven system to exert tight command over a network of external suppliers, thereby substituting informational control for direct ownership. The analysis reveals how these archetypes represent two different solutions to the core platform paradox of managing distributed value co-creation and centralized value capture. This study contributes a novel theoretical framework for understanding platform heterogeneity, offering insights into the path-dependent logic that drives the evolution of distinct ecosystem strategies.

Keywords: digital business ecosystems; platform heterogeneity; platform governance

1. Introduction

The contemporary business landscape is undergoing a tectonic shift, marked by the ascendancy of digital platforms that have fundamentally altered the logic of value creation and competition. For decades, the dominant organizational model was the linear “pipeline”, a firm-centric structure that controlled a linear sequence of activities to produce and deliver value to consumers (Van Alstyne et al., 2016)^[33]. Strategic management theory evolved in tandem, with frameworks such as Porter's five forces and the Resource-Based View (RBV) focusing on the firm or industry as the primary unit of analysis, where competitive advantage was derived from market structure or control over scarce internal resources (Barney, 1991)^[5]. However, the rise of platform-based firms like Alibaba, Amazon, and Google has rendered these traditional frameworks incomplete. These entities operate not as standalone firms but as “keystone” actors or orchestrators of sprawling “digital business ecosystems”, complex networks of interacting organizations, complementors, and individuals that collectively co-create value (Iansiti & Levien, 2004)^[17]. In this new paradigm, the locus of competition and the engine of value creation have migrated from the internal value chain of a single firm to the external value network of the ecosystem it orchestrates (Gereffi & Korzeniewicz, 1993)^[16]. This shift necessitates a corresponding evolution in strategic theory, one that adopts the ecosystem as its core unit of analysis to comprehend how value is created and captured in a networked, digitally mediated world (Teece, 2018)^[29].

Academic inquiry into platform phenomena has evolved significantly over the past two decades. Initial research, grounded in economics, conceptualized platforms as multi-sided markets that reduce transaction costs and generate powerful network effects, where the value of the platform for one user group increases with the number of users on another side (Katz & Shapiro, 1985; Rochet & Tirole, 2006)^[19, 26]. This perspective provided a robust microeconomic foundation for understanding winner-take-all dynamics. As platforms grew in complexity, the strategic management literature expanded this view, integrating concepts of ecosystem governance, architecture, and the orchestration of external innovation (Gawer & Cusumano, 2014; Tiwana, 2013)^[15, 30]. Despite this progress, a critical gap persists in the literature: a tendency to treat

digital platforms as a relatively homogenous category. Research has often focused on the general principles of platform success, overlooking the profound strategic diversity among them. This has led to calls from scholars to move beyond monolithic descriptions and develop more sophisticated typologies that can account for “platform heterogeneity” (Cennamo, 2021)^[6]. Understanding why some platforms, facing similar market and technological conditions, evolve radically different strategies for organizing their ecosystems remains a crucial and underexplored area. This paper addresses this gap directly by undertaking a comparative analysis of two distinct strategic archetypes, aiming to build a more granular and explanatory theory of platform strategy.

The purpose of this study is to deconstruct and compare two distinct “strategic archetypes” of digital business ecosystems, Alibaba’s “enabling” model and SHEIN’s “controlling” model, to understand how their divergent approaches to governance and data strategy shape the mechanisms of value co-creation and capture. By moving from a firm-centric to an ecosystem-centric analysis, this paper seeks to explain the underlying logic that drives these different strategic configurations. The inquiry is guided by the following research questions: How do platform firms orchestrate digital business ecosystems to enable value co-creation among a diverse set of actors? Why do different platform firms evolve distinct strategic archetypes (e.g., enabling vs. controlling) to govern their ecosystems? How do these different archetypes manage the inherent paradox between distributed value co-creation and centralized value capture? To answer these questions, this paper develops an integrated analytical framework grounded in the literature on platform governance, data-driven innovation, and value creation. It then applies this framework to conduct in-depth analyses of the Alibaba and SHEIN cases. A cross-case comparison follows, which forms the basis for a theoretical discussion on platform heterogeneity. The paper concludes by outlining its primary contribution: a nuanced theoretical framework that distinguishes between two fundamental modes of ecosystem orchestration, empowerment and control, and explains their path-dependent origins and implications for value creation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Evolution of Platform and Ecosystem Theory

The theoretical understanding of digital platforms has progressed through several distinct stages. The foundational stage was dominated by economic theory, which identified platforms as intermediaries in multi-sided markets (Rochet & Tirole, 2003, 2006)^[25, 26]. The critical insight was that platforms do not create value in isolation but by facilitating transactions between two or more distinct groups of users (e.g., buyers and sellers, users and developers). The engine of this value creation is the network effect, which can be direct or indirect, often leading to positive feedback loops and winner-take-all market structures (Katz & Shapiro, 1985; Parker et al., 2016)^[19, 24].

This economic lens was subsequently broadened by strategic management scholars who integrated the concept of the “business ecosystem” (Moore, 1993)^[23]. This perspective shifted the focus from simple transaction mediation to the orchestration of a complex network of actors, including suppliers, complementors, and customers, who co-evolve their capabilities around a central platform. Within this view, the platform owner acts as a “keystone”, shaping the health and productivity of the entire ecosystem (Iansiti & Levien, 2004)^[17]. This expanded understanding reframed platforms not just as markets, but as foundations for innovation and value co-creation, where third-party complementors build upon the platform to create a vast array of complementary goods and services (Gawer & Cusumano, 2002)^[14].

2.2 Ecosystem Governance: The Levers of Orchestration and Control

As the focus shifted to the strategic management of ecosystems, the concept of platform governance became central. Platform governance refers to the set of mechanisms, rules, and decisions that the platform owner employs to steer the ecosystem, manage relationships, and resolve conflicts. Tiwana (2013)^[30] provides an influential framework that categorizes these mechanisms into three key levers: Architectural Governance: This concerns the technical design of the platform, particularly its modularity and openness (e.g., through Application Programming Interfaces). Architectural choices determine the ease with which third parties can connect to and build upon the platform, directly influencing the ecosystem’s capacity for external innovation (Baldwin & Woodard, 2009)^[3]; Data Governance: This involves the rules and strategies for collecting, accessing, using, and sharing data generated within the ecosystem. As data has become a critical strategic asset, a platform’s data governance model, whether it hoards data for internal use or shares it to empower partners, is a key determinant of its competitive strategy and relationship with ecosystem participants; Relational Governance: This encompasses the formal and informal rules, contracts, incentive systems, and norms that structure the relationships between the platform owner and its ecosystem partners (e.g., sellers, suppliers, developers). It addresses issues of access control, behavioral standards, and the distribution of value. A fundamental tension within governance

literature is the strategic choice between openness and control. An open, or “empowering”, approach seeks to maximize participation and distributed innovation by lowering barriers to entry and providing partners with autonomy. A closed, or “controlling”, approach seeks to ensure quality, consistency, and efficiency by tightly managing participation and directing partner activities. This choice is not merely technical but deeply strategic, shaping the entire character and competitive dynamics of the ecosystem.

2.3 Data-Driven Innovation as a Core Capability

In the digital economy, data has transitioned from being a byproduct of business operations to a core resource for value creation. Data-driven innovation refers to the use of data and analytics to significantly improve or create new products, processes, and business models (Sorescu, 2017)^[27]. Digital platforms are uniquely positioned to excel at this, as they serve as central nodes for vast flows of interaction data from millions of users and partners. A platform’s ability to systematically collect, analyze, and act upon this data constitutes a primary source of its competitive advantage (McAfee et al., 2012)^[21]. This capability is not independent of governance; rather, it is a key enabler of a platform’s chosen governance strategy. Data can be used to provide partners with market insights, thereby empowering their autonomous decision-making, or it can be used to generate precise directives, enabling tight, centralized control over ecosystem activities.

2.4 Distributed Value Co-creation vs. Centralized Value Capture

The final and most crucial theoretical lens for this study is the inherent paradox at the heart of platform ecosystems, articulated by Jacobides et al. (2018)^[18]. To succeed, a platform must create a vibrant and generative ecosystem. This requires encouraging a diverse set of independent actors, complementors, sellers, developers, to invest their own resources, innovate, and co-create value. The more value these partners co-create, the more attractive the ecosystem becomes, reinforcing a virtuous cycle. However, for the platform owner to remain viable, it must simultaneously design mechanisms to appropriate a share of this co-created value. Value capture mechanisms can include transaction fees, advertising revenues, data monetization, or sales of premium services. The paradox lies in the tension between these two imperatives: if the platform owner captures too much value, it disincentivizes partners from co-creating, potentially killing the ecosystem. If it captures too little, it may not be able to sustain its own operations. Effectively managing this tension is arguably the most critical long-term strategic challenge for any platform owner.

These three theoretical pillars, governance, data-driven innovation, and the value paradox are not discrete but deeply interconnected. A platform’s governance choices (e.g., open vs. closed architecture) determine its data strategy (e.g., sharing vs. hoarding), which in turn shapes its approach to resolving the value paradox. This integrated logic forms the foundation of the analytical framework used in this study.

3. Analytical Framework

To systematically address these questions and compare the cases of Alibaba and SHEIN, this study employs an integrated analytical framework synthesized from the literature review. The framework is structured in three hierarchical layers, moving from the platform's overarching strategic logic down to its specific governance mechanisms and resulting value dynamics. The framework is shown in the figure 1.

Layer 1: Strategic Archetype: This layer defines the platform's fundamental strategic orientation and logic for organizing its ecosystem. It is conceptualized as a spectrum between two ideal types: The Enabling Archetype: The platform's primary goal is to create value by providing digital infrastructure, tools, and a rule-based market environment to empower a large, diverse set of autonomous third-party partners. Success is measured by the aggregate success of its ecosystem participants. The Controlling Archetype: The platform's primary goal is to create value by tightly integrating and directing a more select set of partners within a centrally managed, data-driven process. Success is measured by the end-to-end efficiency and performance of the system it controls.

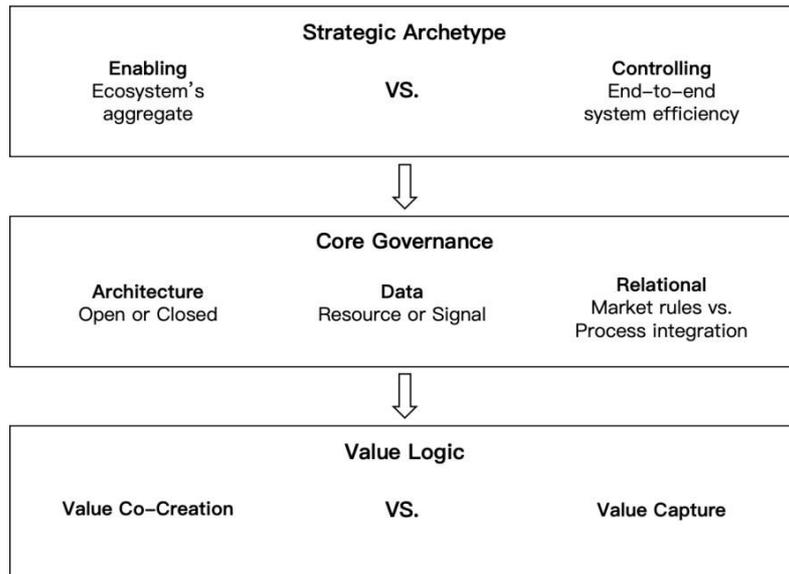


Figure 1. Analytical Method Framework

Layer 2: Core Governance Mechanisms: This layer operationalizes the strategic archetype by examining its implementation across the three key governance levers identified in the literature: Architectural Governance: Analyzed on a spectrum from Open (low barriers to entry, modular design for third-party use) to Closed (proprietary system designed for internal control). Data Governance: Analyzed by its primary function, distinguishing between Data as a Partner Resource (providing data and analytics to empower partner decision-making) and Data as a Command Signal (using data internally to generate precise directives for partners). Relational Governance: Analyzed by its dominant mode, distinguishing between Rule-Based Market Regulation (setting and enforcing the rules of the game for autonomous actors) and Process-Integrated Supplier Management (embedding partners into a centrally controlled workflow).

Layer 3: Value Logic: This layer analyzes the outcomes of the strategy and governance choices, focusing on how the platform manages the core value paradox: Value Co-creation Mechanism: Identifies the primary locus and method of value co-creation within the ecosystem. Value Capture Mechanism: Identifies the primary method through which the platform owner appropriates a share of the co-created value.

This framework provides a structured and theoretically grounded lens for dissecting each case individually before facilitating a rigorous cross-case comparison.

4. Case Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Case 1: Alibaba's "Enabling" Ecosystem

Alibaba's strategic archetype is fundamentally that of an enabler. Its stated mission, "to make it easy to do business anywhere," frames its role not as a direct participant in commerce (i.e., a retailer), but as the provider of the essential infrastructure that allows others to participate. This strategy was forged in response to the specific conditions of the early Chinese internet economy: a highly fragmented market with millions of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that lacked the capital, technology, and market access to compete effectively. Alibaba's solution was to build a comprehensive digital ecosystem designed to lower these barriers.

Alibaba's enabling strategy is operationalized through a distinct set of governance mechanisms designed to manage a massive, decentralized network of autonomous actors. Architectural Governance: Alibaba's platforms are characterized by a relatively open and modular architecture. The core value proposition is providing merchants with the tools to easily create and manage their own digital storefronts, giving them significant autonomy over branding, pricing, and product assortment (Towson & Woetzel, 2017)^[31]. The barrier to entry is low, designed to maximize participation and the diversity of goods available, which in turn drives strong network effects; Data Governance: This is a critical manifestation of Alibaba's enabling archetype. While Alibaba collects vast amounts of transaction and user behavior data, its primary

strategy is to package this data into services and tools that empower its merchants. Tools like Business Advisor, available through Alibaba Cloud, provide sellers with detailed analytics on market trends, consumer search behavior, and competitive performance. Similarly, Quick BI allows merchants to visualize their store's metrics and receive intelligent suggestions. In this model, data is treated as a resource or a service provided to merchants to improve their own autonomous decision-making. Alibaba helps sellers understand the market better so they can compete more effectively, rather than telling them precisely what to do; Relational Governance: Given the impossibility of directly managing millions of independent sellers, Alibaba's relational governance functions like a private regulator of a market. It establishes and enforces the "rules of the game" through a sophisticated system of institutional mechanisms. The most critical of these is Alipay, which began as an escrow service that holds a buyer's payment until the goods are received and confirmed, thereby solving the fundamental lack of trust between strangers in online transactions (Xia, 2024)^[35]. Furthermore, Alibaba has invested heavily in its Intellectual Property Protection (IPP) platform, which uses AI-driven systems to proactively scan for and remove counterfeit goods, a crucial function for maintaining the trust of both consumers and legitimate brands (Chen et al., 2025)^[7]. Governance is not achieved through direct command, but through the creation and enforcement of a trusted institutional environment.

Alibaba's governance model directly shapes its approach to the value creation and capture paradox. Value Co-creation: Value in Alibaba's ecosystem is co-created in a highly distributed manner. It emerges from the collective and largely uncoordinated actions of millions of merchants who innovate in product selection, marketing, and customer service, and hundreds of millions of consumers who contribute data, reviews, and feedback with every interaction. Alibaba's role is not to direct this process, but to provide the digital venue and tools that facilitate these interactions at an unprecedented scale; Value Capture: Alibaba's value capture mechanisms are intrinsically tied to the success of its ecosystem partners. It primarily generates revenue indirectly, reflecting its role as a market facilitator rather than a direct seller. Key revenue streams include commissions on transactions completed on its platforms, fees for advertising and marketing services (through its Alimama platform), and subscription fees for premium data analytics tools and cloud computing services (Xia, 2024)^[35]. This model aligns Alibaba's interests with those of its merchants: the more successful the merchants are, the more transactions they conduct and the more they invest in advertising and tools, driving Alibaba's revenue.

4.2 Case 2: SHEIN's "Controlling" Ecosystem

In stark contrast to Alibaba's enabling model, SHEIN's strategic archetype is one of control. It operates as an "ultra-fast fashion" retailer, built upon a business model predicated on an "on-demand" logic. Whereas traditional fashion companies forecast trends months in advance and "push" large batches of inventory into the market, SHEIN's core competency is its ability to detect emerging micro-trends from online data in near real-time and "pull" small batches of corresponding products through its supply chain in a matter of days (Uchańska-Bieniusiewicz et al., 2023)^[32]. SHEIN's competitive advantage lies not in empowering a market of independent sellers, but in orchestrating a tightly integrated, end-to-end production system that connects trend-spotting, design, manufacturing, and online retail into a single, cohesive, and highly efficient process.

SHEIN's controlling strategy is realized through governance mechanisms designed for centralized command and process optimization. While it does not own its manufacturing partners, it achieves a remarkable degree of control through its digital infrastructure, substituting informational power for hierarchical ownership. Architectural Governance: SHEIN's technology architecture is fundamentally closed and proprietary. Its core is a sophisticated supply chain management (SCM) system that serves as the central nervous system for its entire operation. This system is not an open platform for any supplier to join; rather, select suppliers are integrated into this system. Its main purpose is not to foster open participation but to enable seamless process control from design to delivery. Data Governance: SHEIN's use of data is the clearest expression of its controlling archetype. The company employs big data and AI algorithms to scrape and analyze vast quantities of information from social media, competitor websites, and its own app's user behavior to identify nascent fashion trends. Crucially, this data is not shared with its suppliers as a resource to empower their independent decision-making. Instead, the insights are translated internally into specific design briefs and production orders. Data functions as a command and control signal. The SCM system delivers precise directives to suppliers: what specific item to produce, in what quantity (often as low as 100-200 units), with what materials, and by what deadline. Data sharing with suppliers is minimal, transactional, and purely operational, designed to ensure compliance with the central plan. Relational Governance: SHEIN's relationship with its thousands of small and medium-sized manufacturing suppliers in China's Pearl River Delta is one of directed integration. While SHEIN frames this as "empowerment" by providing suppliers with consistent orders and quick payments, this empowerment operates within a strictly controlled framework. Governance is enforced through a detailed Supplier Code of Conduct, regular and often unannounced audits under its SHEIN Responsible Sourcing (SRS)

policy, and performance metrics that are tracked in real-time through the digital SCM system. Suppliers are not autonomous market actors but are instead integral, albeit external, nodes in a production network directed by SHEIN's central data-driven brain.

SHEIN's controlling model yields a distinct logic for value co-creation and capture. **Value Co-creation:** Value is co-created with suppliers through deep process integration and operational excellence. Suppliers co-create value not by innovating on product designs or business models, but by adhering to SHEIN's demanding on-demand system, executing small-batch orders with extraordinary speed and flexibility. It is a highly collaborative process, but one that is directed toward achieving the central goal of minimizing the time from trend identification to product availability. **Value Capture:** SHEIN captures value directly through the retail margin on the sale of its own branded products. Its profitability is a direct function of the radical efficiency of its integrated model. By producing in small, data-validated batches, SHEIN dramatically reduces inventory risk and waste associated with overproduction, the single largest cost driver in the traditional fashion industry. This immense efficiency gain is the primary source of the value it captures. A portion of this captured value is passed on to consumers in the form of extremely low prices, which in turn drives massive sales volume and market share.

4.3 Cross-Case Analysis and Discussion

The individual case analyses reveal two fundamentally different, yet internally coherent, strategic archetypes for orchestrating a digital business ecosystem. The "Enabling" archetype of Alibaba and the "Controlling" archetype of SHEIN represent divergent solutions to leveraging digital technology to organize economic activity. The key distinctions are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis

Dimension	Alibaba (Enabling Archetype)	SHEIN (Controlling Archetype)
Core Strategic Logic	Empowering a market of independent sellers.	Directing a responsive supply network.
Unit of Analysis	The individual merchant's success.	The end-to-end production cycle.
Architectural Governance	Open, modular platform with low barriers to entry.	Closed, proprietary system for process integration.
Data Governance	Data as a shared resource for partner decision-making.	Data as an internal command signal for directing partners.
Relational Governance	Rule-based market regulation and institutional trust-building.	Process-integrated supplier management and performance audits.
Locus of Innovation	Distributed: product & business model innovation by merchants.	Centralized: process innovation for speed and efficiency.
Value Co-creation	Facilitating interactions between millions of sellers and buyers.	Integrating thousands of suppliers into a seamless production process.
Value Capture	Indirect: commissions, advertising fees, and value-added services.	Direct: product sales margin derived from operational efficiency.

This systematic comparison moves beyond mere description to form the basis of a theoretical argument. “Enabling” and “Controlling” are not arbitrary collections of strategic choices but coherent archetypes, where the decisions regarding governance, data, and value logic are mutually reinforcing. Alibaba’s open architecture necessitates a rule-based governance system and a data-as-a-service model, which logically leads to an indirect value capture mechanism. Conversely, SHEIN’s goal of end-to-end efficiency requires a closed architecture, a data-as-command model, and directive supplier management, which naturally results in a direct value capture model based on retail margins.

The emergence of these distinct archetypes can be explained through the lens of path dependency and the initial conditions each firm faced. Alibaba’s strategy was a direct response to the market structure of early 2000s China: a vast, fragmented landscape of millions of SMEs desperate for access to a national, and later global, market. Building an open, enabling infrastructure was the logical solution to aggregate this fragmented supply and demand. SHEIN, on the other hand, emerged later, building its model upon the hyper-concentrated, digitally mature, and highly flexible garment manufacturing ecosystem of the Pearl River Delta. This dense network of small, specialized factories was uniquely suited to being integrated into a centrally controlled, data-driven production system. The strategies were not chosen in a vacuum, they were shaped by the industrial and institutional contexts in which they were born.

These divergent solutions to the value paradox shape distinct long-term evolutionary trajectories and risk profiles. Alibaba’s enabling archetype fosters a “generative” evolutionary path; by providing open tools and interfaces, it facilitates unforeseen forms of decentralized innovation from its ecosystem partners, endowing the platform with superior resilience and adaptability to market shifts (Yoo, Henfridsson, & Lyytinen, 2010)^[37]. This strategy’s inherent openness, however, creates significant governance risk, as the platform must constantly contend with controlling the behavior of millions of autonomous sellers to mitigate issues like counterfeiting that threaten ecosystem trust. Conversely, SHEIN’s controlling archetype follows an “optimization” path, achieving hyper-efficiency by centralizing innovation on its core data-driven production process. While highly effective, this model’s rigidity limits its capacity to adapt to fundamental changes in market logic, such as a potential shift away from speed towards sustainability. This intense optimization gives rise to systemic risk and fragility, stemming from its dependence on a geographically concentrated supply chain and its acute exposure to mounting Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) pressures (Köksal et al., 2017)^[20].

This finding is a key theoretical contribution. It suggests that there is no single optimal solution to the platform value paradox. Instead, the approach to managing this core tension is contingent upon the platform’s overarching strategic archetype.

5. Conclusion

This paper set out to explore the strategic heterogeneity within digital business ecosystems through a comparative study of Alibaba and SHEIN. The analysis reveals that ecosystem orchestration is not a monolithic concept but can be categorized into at least two distinct strategic archetypes. The Enabling Archetype, exemplified by Alibaba, functions as a market creator, using open architecture and data-as-a-service to empower autonomous partners, and capturing value indirectly. The Controlling Archetype, exemplified by SHEIN, functions as a digitally integrated producer, using a closed, proprietary system and data-as-command to direct external partners, and capturing value directly.

The primary theoretical contribution of this research is the development of this typology. By providing a structured framework that links strategic logic to specific governance mechanisms and value logics, this study offers a more granular and explanatory theory of platform strategy. It directly answers the call for more research on platform heterogeneity and demonstrates that the choice between these archetypes is shaped by path-dependent factors related to the firm’s founding context. Furthermore, it contributes to the literature on value creation by showing how these different archetypes represent coherent, yet divergent, solutions to the fundamental paradox of balancing distributed value co-creation with centralized value capture.

The findings offer several practical implications for managers. For platform entrepreneurs and strategists, this study underscores that there is no “one-size-fits-all” platform strategy. The choice between an enabling or a controlling model should be a deliberate one, aligned with the specific industry structure, the nature of the ecosystem partners, and the firm’s core capabilities. For managers of traditional firms navigating digital transformation, this research illuminates two distinct strategic pathways: one focused on building an open ecosystem to foster external innovation, and another focused on building a tightly integrated digital supply chain to achieve radical operational efficiency.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the findings are based on a qualitative, comparative case study of two firms. While Alibaba and SHEIN are exemplary cases of their respective archetypes, the generalizability of the "Enabling vs. Controlling" framework to all digital platforms across different industries and geographical contexts requires further investigation. Second, the analysis relies primarily on publicly available data. Access to internal company data could provide a more fine-grained understanding of the decision-making processes behind their governance strategies and the precise nature of their data systems. Finally, the digital economy is highly dynamic; the strategies of both firms are in a constant state of evolution. This study presents a snapshot in time, and the long-term resilience and potential convergence or divergence of these archetypes warrant continuous observation.

This study also opens several avenues for future research. First, while this qualitative study provides a rich theoretical foundation, future quantitative research could test the performance implications of the enabling and controlling archetypes across a larger sample of platforms in different industries. Second, researchers could investigate the existence of hybrid models that may blend elements of both archetypes, and under what conditions such models might be viable. Finally, longitudinal studies tracking the evolution of platform ecosystems over time would be invaluable. Understanding if and how platforms might transition from one archetype to another as they mature and as their competitive environments change would represent a significant next step in advancing our understanding of digital strategy.

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