

Call for papers

Advances in Strategic Management

Tradition as Resource or Constraint for Strategic Action

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Submission deadline: **October 1, 2023**

Management and organizational scholars have paid increasing attention to the role of tradition in strategy making (e.g., Dacin et al., 2019; Dacin & Dacin, 2008; De Massis et al., 2016). One exciting trajectory of this literature focuses on how organizations use tradition as a resource and, in particular, how managers leverage tradition to preserve valued rituals, support desired identities, and bolster firm performance (Soares, 1997). From this perspective, tradition includes historically rooted production methods (e.g., craft-based), established (cultural) practices and rituals that shape organizational life in a variety of settings as diverse as opera (Cancellieri et al., 2022), *shinise* firms (Sasaki et al., 2019), musical instruments (Cattani et al., 2017), beer (Mathias et al., 2018; Kroezen, and Heugens, 2019), gastronomy (Rao et al., 2005), sport (Hahl, 2016), and watches (Raffaelli, 2019), among others.

Collectively, these views share an interest in how actors vested in the continuity of traditions proactively, and often strategically, link the past to the future through a “continuous work of interpretation” (Giddens, 1994: 64). Indeed, a major challenge that organizations face in a variety of industries in dealing with cherished traditions is how to best mediate between adherence to a long-lived legacy and pursuit of innovation, how to accommodate renewal without stifling tradition. A common strategy in such industries is to improve customers’ perceptions of value by offering robust interpretations of traditional products that preserve the most familiar aspects of a tradition while departing from it on more peripheral features; however, when the interpretation is more radical—that is, it alters core elements of the tradition—customers are more likely to experience incongruity with their schemas, resulting in a negative perception of value (Cancellieri et al., 2022). On the other hand, Sasaki et al.’s (2019) findings in the context of long-lived Japanese firms similarly suggest that commitment to tradition may impose constraints on the latitude that managers have as they seek to change and innovate, thereby locking firms in the continuation of historical trajectories.

Many organizations operating in domains as diverse as fashion, design, music, performing arts, food, and musical instruments must routinely confront this tension when they attempt to

reconcile the need for renewal with the heavy legacy of a revered past. Strategists are often challenged to make design choices that revive the past by connecting it to the present or future. Alternatively, the value of a neglected or abandoned tradition can be (re)discovered when firms resurrect it (Hahl, 2016), or redefine its cognitive meaning (Raffaelli, 2019) by modifying certain attributes of a tradition or reframing it through the use of digital technologies (Wang, 2002). Introducing this special issue now is timely because there is a clear and emphatic resurgence of interest in the role of tradition to better understand organizations and their behaviour. Although several scholars have begun to address some of the challenges that framing tradition as a ‘resource or constraint’ poses to strategists, several questions merit further investigation, such as (but not exclusively):

- How can firms manage the tension between tradition and innovation?
- To what extent can tradition go hand in hand with innovation?
- How to accommodate the renewal of a cherished tradition without stifling it?
- How to navigate the demands of rapidly changing digital environments without threatening timeless values, norms, and beliefs?
- Does a strong focus on tradition really inhibit innovation? If so, why and under what conditions?
- What is the relationship between tradition and authenticity?
- How do digital technologies enable or constrain the rethinking of traditional products?
- How does the tension between tradition and innovation change over time?

Submission Guidelines

We welcome contributions by strategy, organization theory, and entrepreneurship scholars who are conducting theoretical and/or empirical work on how tradition shapes organizational life, regardless of the methodological approach that is being used. Papers submitted must represent original research not previously published elsewhere.

Full-length papers (no page limit are required) should be sent by email to: Gino Cattani (gcattani@stern.nyu.edu), Simone Ferriani (simone.ferriani@unibo.it), and Innan Sasaki (Innan.Sasaki@wbs.ac.uk) by October 1st, 2023. All submissions will be subject to an in-depth review, and editorial decisions and revision requests will be communicated to authors by November 10th, 2023. The targeted publication date for the volume is September 2024. To ask

questions about the content of this AiSM volume or the editorial process, please contact any of the volume editors.

Special Issue Workshop

To foster momentum for the themes of the SI and help authors advance their manuscripts, we will organize a paper development workshop in the UNESCO world heritage site of Matera (Italy) on December 15-16, 2023. Authors of selected manuscripts will be invited to attend this workshop. Please note that participation in the workshop will not guarantee acceptance of the paper for publication in AiSM. Attending the workshop will not be a precondition for acceptance into the Special Issue.

Further information about the AiSM series is available at:

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