Kerstin Bätz
ISM International School
of Management
44227 Dortmund, Germany
kerstin.baetz.2019@student.ism.de

Patrick Siegfried
ISM International School
of Management
44227 Dortmund, Germany
patrick.siegfried@ism.de

FROM CANVAS TO PLATFORM: REFLECTING ON THE DIGITAL PLATFORM CANVAS

Abstract

Purpose: In this article, the canvas used to simplify business modeling of a platform and its visual depiction are put into the entrepreneurial context, and critically reflected accordingly. Furthermore, it is discussed to what extent the canvas is advantageous, disadvantageous, applicable, not applicable, or even contradictory.

Methodology: The analysis is based on theoretical research. Additionally, qualitative interviews with business founders were conducted.

Results: The results conclude that the canvas employed to ease the business model sharpening process supplies founders with essential aspects to cover, yet they are part of a large set of factors that play in.

Conclusion: The limitations of this study are rooted in the chosen research design based on the conceptual review.

Keywords: Business model, entrepreneurship, Digital Platform Canvas, ecosystems, digitalization

1. Introduction

The currently prevalent COVID-19 pandemic catalyzes innovation, as it can be identified as an economic megatrend that is forcing entire industries to innovatively restructure their economic core (cf. Lubin & Esty, 2010) and develop crisis-resistant business models (McKinsey & Company, 2020a; 2020b; Tidd & Bessant, 2013). Emerging startups should leverage this push of changing needs to develop businesses aligned with the economic demands of the future, with a focus on digitized ecosystems resilient to crises (McKinsey & Company, 2020c; 2020d; Siegfried, 2015). In this sense, this study aims to provide critical thinking on business models to help startups design and sharpen their business models that are platforms to be.

In the structure of this study, addressing aims and objectives comes first. After that, there follows analysis of the conceptual background. A detailed reflection critically examines von Engelhardt and Wangler's (2019) Digital Platform Canvas (DPC). Subsequently, a delineation of implications for the canvas value added and its pitfalls are shown. That output comprises qualitative interviews with business founders.

The study aims to identify critical aspects and advantages that need to be considered when creating a digital platform business model. The overall objective is thus to identify promising parameters that are advantageous for prospective business founders. To achieve the respective goals, pitfalls in the application of the method are to be identified as well as the application of the method, critically evaluated in its authenticity and transferable conclusions and implications derived.

To identify the barriers in the application of the method, literature is consulted to provide a holistic view with valid information.

Overall, the objectives underlying this research will result in a chronological sequence that sheds light on the application of the canvas, which can be both beneficial and detrimental to a company in its early stages.

The potentially resultant generation of competitive advantage underpins the significance of that education on the methods (Kim & Mauborgne, 2015; McKinsey & Company, 2020b; cf. Lubin & Esty, 2010; Siegfried, 2014). Beyond that, businesses and particularly innovative startups that build and shape the next decades' platform economy should be equipped with the implications (McKinsey & Company, 2020a; 2020b). Consequently, the following indicative research question is intended to contribute to the filling of existing academic literature gaps in the context of building digitized platform business models:

Can digitized startups transfer knowledge to their platform business model applying solely the Digital Platform Canvas?

Throughout this study, the question above will be answered to clarify the feasibility and appropriateness of the methods in the contextual sector.

2. Theoretical and conceptual background

In the following chapter, the conceptual background is dedicated to the analysis of the subject method. Hence, in what follows, a critical reflection on the feasibility and effectiveness of the DPC (von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019) is elucidated.

A critical reflection of the Digital Platform Canvas

"[Digital platform economies] link players who would not be able to interact with each other, or only with difficulty, without the platform. The interaction of the various players thus creates digital ecosystems." (von Engelhardt & Wangler, 2019, p. 13). The realization of an ecosystem is intended to be simplified with the DPC designed by von Engelhardt and Petzolt (2019). Leveraging this canvas is especially topical, while the global economy is still exposed to the COVID-19 pandemic that pushes industries towards a high rate of occurrence of business digitization (McKinsey & Company, 2020c; 2020d). The objective of the DPC is to sharpen a digitized ecosystem according to its key drivers that foster success and guide the founders through the market entry phase. The expected result is hence to refer to a consistent and convincing prototype ecosystem that is at least in its state of proof of concept (cf. Klein, 2013; Maurya, 2016; Ries, 2012; von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019).

The DPC calls to reflect on current revenue models and sheds light on future developments of the subject platform. In this way, the creation of revenue forecasts is leveraged as far as possible by considering changing external conditions such as the prevailing pandemic and the growing presence of digitization (cf. Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Frederick, O'Connor & Kuratko, 2016; Pressfield, 2012; Ries, 2012; Travis & Hodgson, 2019). Besides, generating potential revenue projections allows for creating initial prototypes that can validate customer demand and the planned proof of concept (cf. Bhargava & Herman, 2020; Kaplan, 1966; Ries, 2012; Siegfried, 2012; Voloshinov et al., 1973). The following expectations that founders may have of this multi-dimensional canvas are as follows (Figure 1):

Figure 1 DPC expectations

DIGITAL PLATFROM CANVAS
EXPECTATIONS

|	Key drivers	Simplicity	Understanding	Reflectiveness
Platform's market entry strategy V + F	✔	✘	✔	✔
Accurate knowledge transfer V + F	✔	✔	✔	✔
Strategic validation V + F	✔	✔	✔	✘
Structure & guidance V + F	✔	✔	✔	✘
Uncertainty avoidance F	✔	✘	✔	✔

V: Viewers' point of view
F: Founders' point of view

Source: Authors

The DPC template differs vastly in the visual design and composition from the Business Model Canvas designed by Osterwalder (2011). The Business Model Canvas consists of nine building blocks, while the von Engelhardt and Petzolt's (2019) DPC consists of six, where the upper five represent the success factors of the digital platform, and the bottom represents the respective dynamic strategy to plan the market entry deliberately (see Figure 2; cf. Chesbrough, 2006; Kim & Mauborgne, 2015; Osterwalder, 2011; Rumelt, 2011; Siegfried, 2017).

Figure 2 DPC
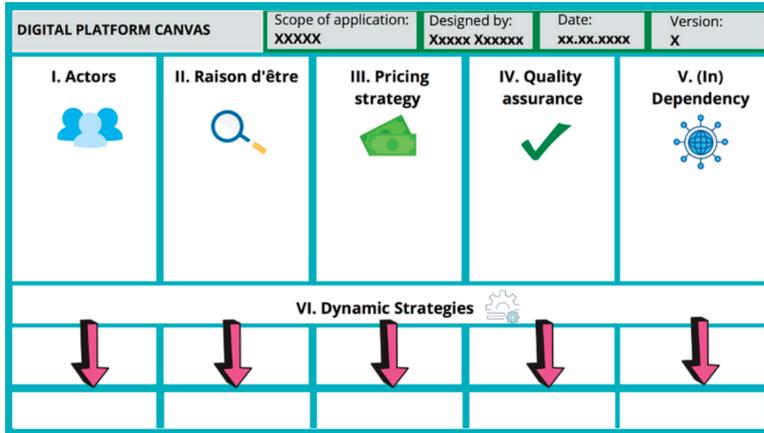
Source: Adapted from von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019

However, these possible amendments towards developmental trends are invalidated hypotheses only. Thus, it is uncertain whether the platform founders cover enough potential scenarios to be prepared for upcoming, even unforeseen, events and external business-environmental changes and challenges (cf. Bennett & Lemoine, 2014). A potential time loss driven by a human being's psychological subjectivity that can guide the founders due to their bias of persuasion in relation to their business must be considered in this context as it is impossible to separate the mind from individual thought patterns completely (Nisbett, 2003; Düsing, 2006). Hence, it is appropriate preparatory work for flexible minds of the founders to go through diverse scenarios, but as they cannot be proven immediately, the consideration of different scenarios can still result in the unexpected. Here too, Stähler's (2019) approach of consulting expert opinions could be beneficial to evade the risk of unpleasant event emergences.

A higher risk emanates from the steps to be taken before filling out the DPC. Von Engelhardt and Petzolt (2019) recommend using an existing and completed Business Model Canvas (Osterwalder, 2011; cf. Stähler, 2019) to complement their DPC.

The controversial point here is the subsequent recommendation to use the DPC because the subject canvas is to be understood merely as a tool that relies on additional tools. That has an increased degree of uncertainty, as an error-filled ecosystem can emerge within the application of the DPC based on consequential errors with roots in an earlier completed Business Model Canvas. That can lead to setting incorrect parameters and choosing respective complementary tools or methods (cf. Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Stähler, 2019; versus Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019). Furthermore, the DPC does not require validation of customer needs, which in the worst case could end in disinvested time, money, and efforts (cf. Ries, 2012; Voloshinov et al., 1973; Kaplan, 1966).

In contrast, the validation of customer needs and desires could be perceived as an entrepreneurial duty (cf. Drucker, 2006) that von Engelhardt and Petzolt (2019) could recommend exercising as axiomatic since other dedication without validation would miss the point of creating a digitized ecosystem. Nonetheless, cognitively strong and strategically affine founders should engage in building a digitized ecosystem since they can determine the most cru-

cial parameters themselves and emancipate their minds from predetermined patterns if necessary and since an ecosystem requires a founder's ability to execute and capitalize multiple revenue models similarly. It should be kept in mind that an overly present and consecutively repeated error ratio is not welcome among investors, accelerators, or incubators, especially in Western cultures, as it discredits the strategic and economic holistic caliber of the founders with regard to the subject business model's succeeding potential (Hofstede, 1980; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997; cf. Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; versus Frederick et al., 2016; Primecz et al., 2009; Ries, 2012; Bätz & Siegfried, 2021). However, a positively practiced error culture is yet welcome, even among big corporate companies, as it accelerates the internal innovation culture.

Examining the conceptualization of the DPC, it is apparent that each building block is complemented by its dynamic strategy, which lowers the risk of disregarding crucial aspects while building a complex, multi-layered ecosystem. As the complexity increases from building block to building block and since one is built upon the prior, von Engelhardt and Petzolt (2019) recommend filling out the DPC in its given order:

1. With the first building block - actors, company founders who employ the DPC must critically reflect on who they aim to attract (cf. Ries, 2012; Maurya, 2016) and connect to their platform. That addressing of target groups is another subliminal objective of the canvas, as it allows the founders to logically derive synergies. The knowledge acquired on the platform users allows for creating novel value added and increases the UX, thus the likelihood of returning users and daily active users, which fosters ecosystem growth (cf. Deutscher, 2010; Grove, 2009; Hartson & Pyla, 2012; Kim & Mauborgne, 2015; Klein, 2013; Stull, 2018; Tidd & Bessant, 2013; Travis & Hodgson, 2019).

   Furthermore, the respective dynamic strategy of which target group to acquire first must be defined, similarly to Ries's (2012) and Maurya's (2016) approach with the LS and the associated Lean Canvas, where research must be conducted to identify the early adopters. For a digital platform, it is essential to identify those that are likely to recommend the platform as these users are a vital component of the ecosystem (cf. Bhargava & Herman, 2020; Greve, 2010; Hart-

son & Pyla, 2012, Reichheld & Seidensticker, 2006; Stull, 2018). Hence, it is imperative to satisfy these users' needs and respond to their user behavior and feedback for further development and commercial success of the platform. In this way, the well-known chicken-and-egg problem of what should be done or who should be attracted first is supposed to be resolved, which is intended to generate the first user traffic on the platform and favor the anticipated scaling (cf. Alpar et al., 2015; Herzberger & Jenny, 2017; Hoffmann & Yeh, 2018; Kaplan, 1966; Voloshinov et al., 1973). However, as there is neither a strategy nor a tool that promises validation that the founders have identified the right group(s) of early adopters (cf. Bennett & Lemoine, 2014), time to rethink the attraction of new early adopters must be considered, which can be detrimental to a young venture as time is a valuable resource, especially in a market that is fast-paced driven by trends.

2. The second building block - raison d'être - deals in greater detail than the first building block's actors with the goals to identify problems and needs of the target groups, which is noticeably important. That applies not only to the aspect of a deeper understanding of the platform users but also to necessary growth, which can be reflected in the increasing net promoter score enabled through the understanding of users (Greve, 2010; Reichheld & Seidensticker, 2006; cf. Hoffmeister & Von Borcke, 2017). By applying the DPC in this stage, platform founders are encouraged to focus on the value-adding unique selling proposition that justifies platform existence. Knowledge of that kind can favor the inherent competitive advantage (cf. Kim & Mauborgne, 2015; Osterwalder, 2011; Ries, 2012).

   To determine the desired raison d'être, von Engelhardt and Petzolt (2019) recommend asking and answering the following four questions:

   • Which actors would miss the platform if it no longer existed?

   • What function and role does the platform perform to create value for the platform users?

   • What is the (competitive) unique selling proposition of the platform?

- What services must the founders of the platform offer to fulfill the platform functional role?

According to von Engelhardt and Petzolt (2019), after answering these questions, the next step is to determine what other requirements the platform has to deliver for long-term success. For example, they mention user-friendliness of the platform and its security. While they are right that such requirements can be derived, it is not foreseeable for most ecosystem founders what dynamics their platform will take on. Dynamics is community-based, and the digitized socially constructed genre among users is unpredictable and human-made instead of controllable (Bazerman, 1995; Pearce & Conger, 2002; Swales, 1990; versus Hall, 1959; von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019). A lot of customer needs and their user behaviors are served through monitoring and extraction of data, similarly to the LS created by Ries (2012), in which a company goes through numerous iteration loops and repeatedly adapts its business model to customer needs and desires (cf. Travis & Hodgson, 2019). Subsequently, a precise definition of services with the respective target groups is intended to follow (von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019).

In the best case, the milestone proof of concept is reached using this canvas, which is indicative of a validated raison d'être (Bhargava & Herman, 2020) and user demand. Nonetheless, it could be disadvantageous to the platform if the founders decide to rely on one service for too long or too short. The appropriate time frame to test the presumably most exciting service intended to generate initial platform traffic is not covered in this canvas; yet, it is relatively impossible to be determined beforehand. Again, the presence of jeopardizing uncertainty (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014) must be considered in the creation of an ecosystem.

3. The third building block - pricing strategy - is vital for external financial sources. Von Engelhardt and Petzolt (2019) broke this complex building block down into the following four w-questions that should help platform founders reflect on their future revenue streams:

- Which platform do users pay for, how much, for which services, and at what time?

- What is the level of the respective willingness to pay?

- Which actors of the platform are the most significant for the other (complementary) target groups and should therefore be subsidized?

- Which actors of the platform could be exposed to the fear of undesired dependency or lock-in effects?

This actively demonstrates that the interdependencies and the interactions of the target groups present in a digital platform must be considered. Here, too, the relevance of the network effect comes into play. "This makes pricing and pricing strategy on digital platforms more complicated, but also more interesting than on classic linear platforms [as holistic analysis of the platform's target groups and their interaction is required]." (von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019, p. 140). A significant benefit is transferred to the participating parties on the platform. That can further be leveraged for the conduction of personal market research purposes.

It is more beneficial for different actors of the target groups to pursue an asymmetric pricing strategy: different actors of the target groups pay different prices (cf. von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019).

Nevertheless, it must be kept in mind that those potential daily active users could be exposed to the fear of undesired lock-in effects such as monthly account fees. The fear of financial exploitation can harm a brand's reputation (cf. Page & Parnell, 2019; Smith, 2013). According to von Engelhardt and Petzolt (2019), that risk of undesired lock-in effects should resultantly be evaded.

Moreover, referrals leverage the word-of-mouth and serve, according to Ries (2012), as a viral growth engine, complementing the occurrence of a network effect and creating beneficial economic symbiosis (cf. Kaplan, 1966; Kaplan & Norton, 1992; Rumelt, 2011; Voloshinov et al., 1973; von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019).

By shedding light on the nature of the ecosystem's complex pricing strategy, already here at building block 3, there is a chance that many prospective platform founders may start faltering based on the delicate execution plan. How-

ever, this is more due to the complexity of an ecosystem than the concept of the DPC, as it renders highly complex numerical issues with simple questions. Founders of a platform business should therefore beware that it requires extensive research, iteration cycles, expert opinions, strategic analysis (cf. Stähler, 2019), and cognitive flexibility to succeed with their idea (cf. von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019; Ries, 2012; Klein, 2013). Furthermore, the complexity of the pricing strategy does not end with the previously posed four w-questions, but moves into its dynamic pricing strategy. Here, the questions to be asked are whether the pricing strategy is adjusted with community growth or not (cf. Greve, 2010; von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019; Kaplan & Norton, 1992; Kaplan, 1966; Voloshinov et al., 1973; Rumelt, 2011), and what the construction of the financial design looks like at the beginning and at a later point of an operational activity (von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019).

Even if only prognostic assumptions can be made here, platform founders should devise a diverse set of forecasts. While neither Osterwalder's (2011) Business Model Canvas nor Maurya's (2016) Lean Canvas deals with deep pricing complexity, the DPC calls for that entrepreneurial sanity (Drucker, 2006). Even though there is a risk here that platform founders can quickly feel overwhelmed, the DPC guides them through the economical execution of their multi-dimensional platform business idea, with potential pitfalls to consider.

4. The fourth building block of the DPC - quality assurance - was designed to ensure that platform founders can deliver their unique value proposition (von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019; cf. Maurya, 2012; Osterwalder, 2011; Osterwalder et al., 2014; Ries, 2012) to various platform stakeholders. That building block serves as a probing block to ensure adherence to the associated values despite deliberate planning (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985; Rumelt, 2011) of the envisioned business model (cf. Berg, 2006; Gray, 2004). Furthermore, quality assurance is a key element for a digital platform as it is defined by von Engelhardt and Petzolt (2019) as one of the vital elements for the success of monetizable platforms since they bring together a versatile set of (commercial) target group aspirations.

If platform founders devote themselves to the DPC and reach this building block, the first step is to define the platform central quality elements. That reinforces the answer to the question of the raison d'être again – it becomes clear why actors use the platform (von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019). Nonetheless, the raison d'être must be kept under constant review as the market competitors and their economic interests may use copycatting to undermine a company position in the market. Platform founders should pay attention to such changes that could cause the worst-case scenario to occur with the help of this building block as they can act reactionarily and preventively.

The next step is to reflect on the individual components that enhance the value proposition from the stakeholders' perspective. In this step and in the previous step of identifying key quality elements, similarly to the DT (Lewrick et al., 2018), it is helpful to put oneself in the role of different actors. Quality-enhancing elements can be of any nature, e.g., psychological, technological, or organizational. The goal of this step is to analyze the interaction of different quality requirements and to bring about a harmonious interaction of miscellaneous quality enhancing aspects appropriate to the platform (von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019). For example, a technically well-designed platform can significantly limit the UX, which in turn would affect the ratio of daily active users, thus platform growth (cf. Alpar et al., 2015; Herzberger & Jenny, 2017; Kaplan, 1966; Voloshinov et al., 1973).

After that, subsequent concrete implications for measures to ensure and increase quality and the value proposition resulting from the previous analysis must be derived. Thus, platform founders have to highlight what measures they will take. In the best case, platform founders manage to integrate a tool into the platform that invites and implements a culture of constant feedback and interaction of various actors, similarly to the concept of innovation (Chesbrough, 2003; cf. Medinilla, 2014; Weinberg, 2019). Applying that approach, a company generates strategic and profitable innovations through interaction with users to improve the platform by extracting valuable data (cf. von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019).

Hence, the dynamic strategy takes place under the points of which quality assurance measures and elements should be present from the beginning and whose requirements will be adapted in the future. In managing this building block, it is advisable to perform multiple iteration loops or even continuous improvement – the Kaizen principle (cf. Medinilla, 2014; Weinberg, 2019). In this way, the quality and value proposition are sharpened continuously (cf. Ries, 2012; Maurya, 2016) and maintained competitively (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; Kim & Mauborgne, 2015; cf. Tidd & Bessant, 2013).

However, it is impossible to make a generic statement as to which aspects must be strictly subjected to quality assurance. In each case, it depends on the identified raison d'être. Although that is logically justifiable, since every business model is not 100% like any other, it does imply the risk of divergent definitions and interpretations (cf. Deutscher, 2010; Nickerson, 1998; Nietzsche, 1888). Besides, business founders are often biased, unable to take a detached, critical and reflective perspective on their business model intrinsically, as enthusiasm for their idea prevails. Thus, the presumably existing cognitive dissonance – colliding insights that are not compatible with the conditions of the external detached world – of the founders (Festinger, 1957; Schmidt & Hunter; 1977) can emerge. That can be caused by enthusiasm, resulting in the undesirable reality-less completion of the DPC quality assurance, leading to the commercial failure (DeAndrea, 2015; versus Voloshinov et al., 1973; Kaplan, 1966).

Under the aspect of inevitable quality assurance, there is another jeopardy, i.e., another kind of familiarity bias; according to the case that founders seek further expert opinions to reconfirm the business model and identify weaknesses, as suggested by Stähler (2019), founders still run the risk of only asking for help from experts with expertise that they have sympathy for, agree or identify themselves with (cf. Fox & Levav, 2001; versus Stähler, 2019).

5. The fifth building block - (in)dependency - addresses the existing dependencies that result from the joint activities of various groups of actors in the platform through their dynamic economies. This dynamic economy that pre-

vails is conditioned by indirect network effects (von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019; cf. Greve, 2010; Kaplan & Norton, 1992; Reichheld & Seidensticker, 2006), that contribute to the platform value added in the first place. Only with the active and frequent use of different target groups is a benefit to all parties present (von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019). Thus, the goal of that building block is to identify and analyze (in)dependencies between diverse target groups and design them in a targeted manner, adapted to the individual actor groups. That enables creating novel dependencies that can be leveraged to reduce dependencies that create little value added and strengthen those that are more promising.

As a first step, it is advisable to identify which actors of the platform rely on whom. The group that is relied on is responsible for generating a critical set of users that favor the network effect and a correspondingly high net promoter score, thus economic growth and scaling (von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019; cf. Greve, 2010; Hoffmeister & Von Borcke, 2017; Reichheld & Seidensticker, 2006). In the next step, it should be analyzed how these dependencies occur. As it tends to be rather unlikely to present the optimal solution in the first attempt, here, too, similarly to the LS method (Ries, 2012; cf. Maurya, 2016), it is advisable to pivot and revisit the findings of this building block (cf. Drucker, 2006). Furthermore, changing environmental conditions requires constant adjustment of value-added measures that strengthen and facilitate the establishment of a venture (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; Kim & Mauborgne, 2015).

By employing the DPC and the (in)dependencies, platform founders should not (only) look at classic factors such as large suppliers' reputation or market power (von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019). Founders are recommended to focus on factors that add novel value or have solid potential to enhance the platform through interdependencies that might not be established.

According to von Engelhardt and Petzolt (2019), novel platforms would be successful if positive expectations of the stakeholders were satisfied, provided that the previous building blocks of the DPC have been filled out correctly and reflectively. In this case, the self-fulfilling prophecy (Jussim, 2012) designed by public external

expectations would set in (von Engehlhardt & Petzolt, 2019; cf. Greve, 2010; Kaplan & Norton, 1992; Reichheld & Seidensticker, 2006). Nevertheless, it must be noted explicitly that dependencies can be reciprocal (von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019; cf. McKinsey & Company, 2020c; 2020d).

Considering the complexity of the DPC and multidimensional pros and cons, it is up to the founders if their strategic caliber refers to sufficient maturity to master that canvas. The following Figure 3 reflects the features of the DPC, which can help founders decide in favor of or against this canvas.

Figure 3 *The DPC after reflection*

DIGITAL PLATFROM CANVAS
AFTER REFLECTION

	Key drivers	Simplicity	Understanding	Reflectiveness
Platform's market entry strategy **V + F**	✔	✘	✔	✔
Accurate knowledge transfer **V + F**	✔	✔	✔	✘
Strategic validation **V + F**	✘	✘	✘	✔
Structure & guidance **V + F**	✔	✔	✔	✘
Uncertainty avoidance **F**	✘	✘	✘	✔

V: Viewers' point of view
F: Founders' point of view

Source: Authors

However, if founders find themselves faltering here, they should critically reconsider whether creating a highly complex and multilayered ecosystem with several revenue models matches the individual economic skill set.

3. Results

The research results highlighting the canvas above are presented below.

3.1 Discussion

The DPC (von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019) meets the needs of plenty currently nascent business models and their founders, as the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic acts as a catalyst for digitization (cf. McKinsey & Company, 2020a; 2020c; 2020d). Since digital platforms are predominantly multilayered with several revenue models and respective groups of actors (von Engelhardt & Wangler, 2019), which can expose ecosystem founders to over-

whelm, the DPC helps them to rethink the essentials when and how to launch and establish the prospective platform. In particular, it helps solve the well-known chicken-and-egg problem as to which features to introduce first to the users to scale the platform. Accordingly, the DPC gives founders food for thought in which form the platform's profitability (cf. Habermann, 2008; Voloshinov et al., 1973; Kaplan, 1966) can be exercised first. It is, therefore, helpful for understanding the incremental building of the platform. Consequently, the DPC is a strategic device for internal guidance (cf. Schallmo, 2013) regarding the incipient revenue streams that can be illustratively used and introduce external parties.

Nonetheless, the DPC is not a canvas that platform founders should initially engage with, as von Engelhardt and Petzolt (2019) acknowledge. Rather, this canvas requires clarity about the desired business model intended to be used additively to another less specified canvas such as the Business Model Canvas (Osterwalder, 2011). Thus, although the DPC

provides simplified guidance for complex matters, it requires its practitioners to employ it with caution, mindfulness, strategic awareness, and reflectiveness instead of intuitively filling out the building blocks. It must be considered that the DPC shows a higher degree of complexity which can be confusing or demotivating for founders (cf. von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019). Nevertheless, a digital ecosystem, in general, is a highly complex case; only those founders of sufficiently strategic caliber and patience should venture into an endeavor of that kind.

Answering the research question, employing solely that one canvas implies an increased risk of failure, which founders should disapprove of. A canvas serves as a means to record the status quo and the corresponding available resources. However, only the DPC (von Engelhardt & Petzolt, 2019) provides information on the extent to which the individual building blocks are connected, what possible obstacles need to be considered when connecting them, or a strategic relationship.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned, the intellectual resource of creating linkages between what is ostensibly not connectable remains the entrepreneurial art that every founder has to learn themselves. None of the canvas supplies business founders with predetermined building blocks that display the business model in its entirety and its unique features but indispensable core elements. Summing up, no canvas should be used alone; the most promising output will be generated through the composite output of plenty. Even though it is not mandatory to incorporate the canvas practice, establishing the method and miscellaneous canvas approaches confirmed the advantages of combining the facilitated visuality with the key components of the business, which requires further elaboration.

3.2 Limitations

Each study has a limited research quota, this study also encounters limitations that call into question the validity of research findings. It can be criticized that the article was solely based on the conceptual review of the canvas as opposed to additive qualitative research. Qualitative research would clarify other angles of research or could even support the above analysis.

4. Conclusion

In summary, the methods presented provide a helpful guide to the core elements of starting a digital platform business, but their validity and appropriateness for a company's particular product/service are not set in stone. In addition, the digital boost hype enjoyed by the method presented is not entirely applicable, as the method has weaknesses in its overall concept. However, the method arguably serves as a starting point, where business flexibility and the ability to adapt the methods should be considered. Thus, it can be expected that the established core principles will increasingly be brought together, while being expanded to include new and contemporary dimensions to approach the creation of a platform business model of the new era and market entry with fresh perspectives. The prospect of digitized business models and ecosystems gaining importance is therefore not only justified but necessary, as these terms will be an integral part of the future management jargon.

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