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GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR ENTERPRISE PLATFORMS

Short Paper

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Abstract

This ongoing study aims to explore the implications of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) for enterprise platforms. Adopting a grounded theory approach, we focus on the Salesforce platform ecosystem. Data collection spans all stakeholder groups within the Salesforce platform ecosystem, providing a comprehensive perspective on GenAI's implications. Our current findings shed light on the significant benefits of GenAI along with their associated challenges within the realm of enterprise platforms. Furthermore, our preliminary insights point to GenAI's implications in three major areas, namely platform capabilities, platform architecture, and platform governance. Through this study, our goal is to contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding both the transformative value of GenAI for digital platforms and the evolution of enterprise platforms into their next generations.

Keywords: Generative AI (GenAI), Enterprise Platforms, Digital Platforms, Grounded Theory.

1 Introduction

The surge of interest in generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) within society is evident. ChatGPT, for instance, attracted one million users within just five days of its late 2022 launch. This surge has prompted research disciplines to explore the unique characteristics, use cases, benefits, and challenges of this technology across various domains. There is a simultaneous rise in interest within the information systems (IS) field. Researchers in this domain adopt a sociotechnical stance in their investigations of GenAI (e.g., Feuerriegel et al., 2023; Susarla et al., 2023). This approach transcends a binary technical-social viewpoint, delving into the wider ramifications of GenAI within organizational contexts. Adopting this comprehensive stance, the current study scrutinizes the *implications of GenAI for enterprise platforms*.

Indeed, the digital platform technology has recently transformed *enterprise platforms* (e.g., SAP Business Technology platform, Oracle platform), from "product" platforms to "innovation" platforms (Haki et al., 2024; Schreieck et al., 2022). Initially, enterprise software vendors like SAP and Oracle offered core enterprise software, such as ERP systems, along with extensions from complementor firms (Ceccagnoli et al., 2012; Sarker et al., 2012), resulting in costly and interdependent installations. To tackle these challenges, vendors reshaped the product platform into an innovation platform. This involved separating the core from complementary extensions, enabling the convenient integration of reusable applications (Haki et al., 2024; Schreieck et al., 2022). With this ongoing transformation in mind, GenAI is viewed as another disruptive technology that will shape the next generation of enterprise platforms (Wessel et al., 2023). The study at hand investigates *what the implications of GenAI are for enterprise platforms*. This exploration of GenAI's implications for enterprise platforms holds promising

prospects for theoretical advancements and practical insights, as it delves into the organizational use cases, potentials, and challenges associated with GenAI.

2 Research Background

2.1 Generative AI

GenAI refers to AI algorithms that "generate" original content, which closely resembles content produced by human experts but at a much larger scale, faster pace, lower cost, and presumably higher creativity. In contrast to other AI algorithms that focus on pattern recognition and prediction from the given datasets, GenAI synthesizes its training data and generates "original" content. Modern GenAI solutions, including ChatGPT, DALL-E, MidJourney, and Stable Diffusion, are extensively trained models that empower users to create a wide range of AI-generated content, including text, audio, videos, and images.

A prevailing application of GenAI is large language models (LLMs) that focus on generating human-like text. The remarkable capabilities of LLMs were recently demonstrated through ChatGPT. This chatbot adeptly addresses user queries, showcasing its versatility by adapting its writing style to generate content in various contexts and even generate or review programming code. LLMs, such as the Generative Pretrained Transformer (GPT), are swiftly proliferating across diverse industries and academic circles (Feuerriegel et al., 2023; Susarla et al., 2023).

Although GenAI has recently started gaining momentum, it will experience faster growth. As very few examples, Gartner (2023) predicts that by 2025, 30% of outbound marketing messages from large organizations and 90% of the material in quarterly reports will be synthetically generated, and 50% of drug development initiatives will use GenAI.

Despite the indisputable advantages provided by GenAI, it presents several challenges, such as generating hallucinations, inheriting ethical biases from training data and propagating them to downstream tasks, or potentially infringing upon copyrights (e.g., Bender et al., 2021; Kariyawasam, 2020; Zhou et al., 2019).

2.2 Enterprise platforms

Digital platforms are defined as a set of digital resources facilitating value-creating interactions between complementors and customers (Constantinides et al., 2018). Digital platforms (e.g., iOS) serve as the nexus of platform ecosystems, in which the *platform owner* (e.g., Apple) furnishes the platform, *complementors* (e.g., app developers) augment the platform's technology and functionalities through complementary add-ons, and *customers* (e.g., app users) derive certain values from the collective offerings of the platform owner and complementors (Cennamo and Santaló, 2019; Jacobides et al., 2018). In a platform ecosystem, the platform owner assumes the role of orchestrator, aligning the interests of diverse ecosystem actors toward the attainment of collective objectives (Selander et al., 2013).

Digital platforms have emerged as a significant area of inquiry within IS research and other disciplines (e.g., Cennamo and Santaló, 2019; Rietveld and Schilling, 2021; Tilson et al., 2010). While IS research predominantly concentrates on B2C platforms, there is a growing emphasis among IS scholars on *enterprise platforms* (e.g., SAP Business Technology platform, Salesforce platform, Oracle platform) originating from the enterprise software industry in a B2B context (e.g., Ceccagnoli et al., 2012; Foerderer et al., 2019; Haki et al., 2024; Schreieck et al., 2022).

Over the last decade, the enterprise software industry has been experiencing a transformation from "product" platforms to "innovation" platforms (Haki et al., 2024). The term "product" platform is associated with the traditional technological configurations of enterprise platforms (Haki et al., 2024). Traditionally, the core enterprise software (e.g., ERP) were offered by the vendors (e.g., SAP, Oracle) as "product" platforms that included numerous extensions by complementor firms (Sarker et al., 2012).

Product platform vendors thereby made alliances with complementor firms associated with extending the product platform and implementing it in customer firms (Ceccagnoli et al., 2012; Sarker et al., 2012). Customer firms deploying the product platform and its set of extensions dealt with many custom-built installations that were costly to maintain (Staehr et al., 2012). Further, complementor firms struggled with the expansion of customer base for their enterprise software extensions (Ceccagnoli et al., 2012).

To overcome these difficulties, vendors have started offering the product platform as an extendable platform and decoupled the core from complementor firms' complementary extensions (Benlian et al., 2018; Ceccagnoli et al., 2012)− transforming the "product" platform into an "innovation" platform (Haki et al., 2024). In addition, vendors granted access to the "innovation" platform to complementor firms enabling them to offer their extensions as more conveniently pluggable (on the platform) and reusable (across customer firms) applications (Benlian et al., 2018). Thus, customer firms were enabled to get access to a myriad of easily integratable enterprise applications offered on the innovation platform. This exploitation of *digital platform* technology has transformed enterprise software and changed the role of an enterprise software vendor *from* a mere provider of the product platform *to* the innovation platform owner and the orchestrator of innovation (Haki et al., 2024; Schreieck et al., 2022). Considering the current transformation in enterprise platforms thanks to the digital platform technology, in this study we posit that GenAI is yet another disruptive and game-changer technology that will transform enterprise platforms into their next generation (Wessel et al., 2023).

2.3 Generative AI for enterprise platforms

Considering the distinct benefits, challenges, and implications of GenAI, it will be a disruptive technology to digital platforms and impact all the actors (owner, complementors, and customers) in a platform ecosystem (e.g., Lysyakov and Viswanathan, 2022). For platform owners, GenAI offers improved governance and ecosystem orchestration, fostering vitality (Cram et al., 2022). However, it introduces new challenges (e.g., privacy, copyright, unethical applications), demanding new governance mechanisms to navigate ethical concerns and business implications (Chatterjee et al., 2015). Complementors benefit from GenAI's hyper-personalization, catering to individual customer needs (Nripendra et al., 2023). Yet, challenges arise as GenAI may replace existing offerings, intensify competition, and prompt shifts in complementors' business models (Lysyakov and Viswanathan, 2022). Customers experience enhanced content creation capabilities with GenAI (Noy and Zhang, 2023) but face trust issues and negative reactions to generated content (Raj et al., 2023).

Notwithstanding the distinct implications of GenAI on digital platforms, this topic has not yet been the focus of existing research. First, due to the novelty of GenAI, we are only at the outset of understanding the transformative value of GenAI for digital platforms (Wessel et al., 2023). Although GenAI promises to be a game-changer technology, the potentials (and inherent challenges) and implications of using this technology in digital platforms require systematic research. Second, compared to a great deal of existing research on B2C platforms (e.g., Cennamo and Santaló, 2019; Eaton et al., 2015), research on enterprise platforms has not yet gained momentum. Specifically, although few recent studies have scrutinized how enterprise platforms are transformed from "product" to "innovation" platforms (Haki et al., 2024; Schreieck et al., 2022), we still lack knowledge on how GenAI technology transforms enterprise platforms to their next generation. As such, the focus on GenAI for enterprise platforms caters to promising theoretical and practical contributions because an enterprise platform is where the organizational use cases, potentials, and challenges of GenAI are manifest.

3 Research Method

Investigating the implications of GenAI requires a research approach that provides an in-depth understanding of enterprise platforms in their real-world contexts. Therefore, we opt for a single case-study research design (Yin, 2009) and adopt a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Wiesch et al., 2017), incorporating concurrent data collection and analysis steps. We select Salesforce on the grounds of its revelatory nature (Yin, 2009), as a prime example of a thriving enterprise platform and a pioneer in offering GenAI on its platform. While our primary focus is on Salesforce as a single

case-study, we collect data from all ecosystem participants, including the platform owner (Salesforce), complementor firms (major players), and customer firms (multinational corporations). This approach enables us to triangulate data from various perspectives, providing a comprehensive understanding of the platform.

We gather primary data through semi-structured interviews with key informants within the Salesforce platform ecosystem. We craft interview questions based on our current understanding of Salesforce (Staub et al., 2022; Staub et al., 2021a; Staub et al., 2021b) and the ongoing discourse on GenAI in the literature. We have developed common questions to be asked from all interviewees alongside variations of distinct questions for each interviewee type (platform owner, complementors, and customers). Therefore, a detailed interview guideline has been created to maintain consistency in data collection.

Each interview will be conducted by two researchers and all interviews will be recorded (with consent) and transcribed verbatim. Currently, 17 interviews have been conducted (with an average duration of 60 minutes), with plans to continue until reaching saturation. Our interviewees include six individuals from Salesforce, ten from complementor firms, and one from a customer firm. The limited number of customer interviews is attributed to the novelty of GenAI, as organizations are still in the early stages of exploring its applications. The interviewees hold various roles, including chief technology or business officers, project managers, technology or business architects, and data scientists. In addition to primary data, we collect supplementary secondary data (public and internal documents) to deepen our comprehension of the case.

The data analysis will be executed using ATLAS.ti and follow the steps outlined in grounded theory. The analysis starts with open coding, where we code the data line-by-line to extract initial categories, subcategories, and properties. Open coding opens new themes for which we need to collect more data in the parallel process of data collection and analysis. We also use secondary data at this step of analysis. It then moves on to axial coding, identifying connections among categories and subcategories. Here, we conduct triangulation to compare responses across the ecosystem actor types (platform owner, complementors, and customers). The final step is selective coding, unifying all categories as core categories and deriving the targeted theory. Theoretical saturation gives rise to the identification of core categories. In addition, the research team meets to record memos immediately after each interview session. Furthermore, following each series of interviews, the team engages in discussions and documents key insights to monitor the evolving ideas and connections between theoretical categories. These discussions may lead to adjustments to the interview guide, fostering simultaneous data collection and analysis. The ultimate outcome of the analysis will be a coherent theory elucidating the implications of GenAI for enterprise platforms.

4 Preliminary Results and Next Steps

In this stage of the study, we have identified the key benefits of GenAI for enterprise platforms and their associated challenges, drawing from data collected from all ecosystem actors. As summarized in Table 1, although GenAI presents substantial benefits for enterprise platforms and their surrounding actors, it also entails an extensive array of challenges and risks.

The identified benefits and challenges shed light on the major areas of GenAI's implications for enterprise platforms. As illustrated in Figure 1, the ongoing data collection and analysis stage enables us to outline initial implications of GenAI in three key areas: *platform capabilities*, *platform architecture*, and *platform governance*.

To integrate GenAI into enterprise platforms, platform owners must extend their existing offerings with GenAI features, provide predefined GenAI use cases for customer firms to select from, and offer tools for customers to configure their unique use cases. Additionally, incorporating GenAI entails adding new cross-layer architecture components to ensure the trustworthiness of "generated" content, along with implementing prompt engineering techniques for efficient content generation and retrieval. Furthermore, various governance mechanisms are required to manage the new dynamics within the ecosystem, acquire the necessary technological capabilities, and consult customer firms to achieve tangible outcomes from GenAI.

Benefits	▪ **Fast implementation**: GenAI can be conveniently integrated into the owner's existing platform as an additional service layer. This allows incorporating GenAI functionalities without overhauling the current infrastructure. ▪ **Broad application spectrum and use case diversity**: GenAI can be applied to a wide range of business areas for customers, allowing platform owner and complementors to enhance existing functionalities and explore new capabilities. ▪ **Assist app developers**: GenAI acts as a copilot and reasoning engine for technical staff in all ecosystem actors (owner, complementors, customers) to detect and explain code errors, generate codes, and document coding logics in natural languages. ▪ **Empower domain experts in app development**: GenAI enables business experts without extensive technical knowledge to develop and test applications using low-code or no-code capabilities. This specifically enables customer firms to independently develop applications on the platform. ▪ **Increase productivity and innovation**: GenAI automates tasks, reduces errors, and drives innovation with intelligent insights. Its prompts streamline data handling and user interactions. Platform owners and complementors gain a competitive edge through GenAI-powered solutions, while customer firms achieve personalized digital interactions with their customers, like customized emails and product descriptions.
Challenges	▪ **Hallucination detection**: GenAI models can generate inaccurate, false, or nonsensical information, especially when dealing with customers' complex or nuanced topics. ▪ **Accuracy and explainability**: The complex nature of GenAI models can make it hard to trace how a particular output was generated and whether their processes can be transparent and understandable to users of customer firms. ▪ **Biases, unethical results, and copyright issues**: GenAI models may amplify biases in training data, generating unethical content and unintentionally violating copyrights. Adhering to legal standards, regulatory compliance, and ensuring data processing aligns with jurisdictional laws are key challenges for customers intending to adopt GenAI. ▪ **Data privacy and ownership of generated data**: Due to using common third-party GenAI model providers (e.g., Open AI), there is a risk of customers' sensitive data being exposed or misused, either through security breaches or competitors. Also, there are concerns about who owns the rights to content created by GenAI. ▪ **Uncertainty in GenAI's use cases**: The broad range of applications for GenAI is overwhelming for all ecosystem actors. Deriving the relevant and industry-specific applications and prioritizing them is challenging for the platform owner, complementors, and specifically for customers. ▪ **Lack of transparent pricing models**: GenAI' services should be integrated into current offerings of the platform owner and complementors. The platform owner and complementors struggle with providing clear pricing structures, making it difficult for customers to budget for these services. ▪ **Lock-in effect**: Only big tech companies can provide GenAI models like LLMs. The resource-intensive nature of developing and maintaining LLMs means that only large companies can realistically sustain them, potentially monopolizing the market and creating a lock-in trap for customer firms. ▪ **Fast evolution of GenAI and lack of expertise**: GenAI's swift evolution poses challenges in training upkeep. Complementors and customers may hesitate to fully adopt GenAI, fearing obsolescence or replacement by advanced solutions. Additionally, a shortage of experienced professionals hampers GenAI strategy and implementation. ▪ **Adoption by customer firms**: Customer firms are hesitant to adopt GenAI solutions due to concerns about trust, reliability, security, and the overall maturity of the technology.

Table 1. Benefits and Challenges of Generative AI for Enterprise Platforms.

Our focus thus far has been on exploring the current state of GenAI advancements within the case, along with associated initiatives, benefits, and challenges. Following a grounded theory approach, we are currently in the process of conducting interviews with additional informants and simultaneously analyzing data. Subsequent data collection efforts will concentrate on gathering more information on each implication area (i.e., capabilities, architecture, and governance) to delve into their constituent sub-aspects. Specifically, our next steps involve reaching out to more informants from Salesforce and additional customer representatives to get a balanced view on GenAI's implications from all the ecosystem actors' vantage point.

To address our research question regarding the implications of GenAI for enterprise platforms in transforming them to their next generation, our approach involves theorizing specific actions. These actions aim to help platform owners effectively leverage GenAI technology while overcoming its inherent challenges. To achieve this, we first aim to establish a clear link between the benefits and challenges of GenAI (Table 1) and its implications (Figure 1). This will enable us to derive a theory that specifies the necessary actions to address particular challenges or capitalize on specific benefits of GenAI.

Second, we seek to uncover the interrelationships between different areas of GenAI's implications (i.e., capabilities, architecture, and governance). That is, while each area holds its unique implications, there exists a cross-area relationship necessitating coordinated efforts. For instance, a platform owner must develop and implement both generic and industry-specific use cases of GenAI (platform capability). Additionally, educational and consultation packages are essential to elucidate business-specific GenAI use cases for customers (platform governance), focusing on tangible business outcomes rather than merely showcasing GenAI's technological capabilities.

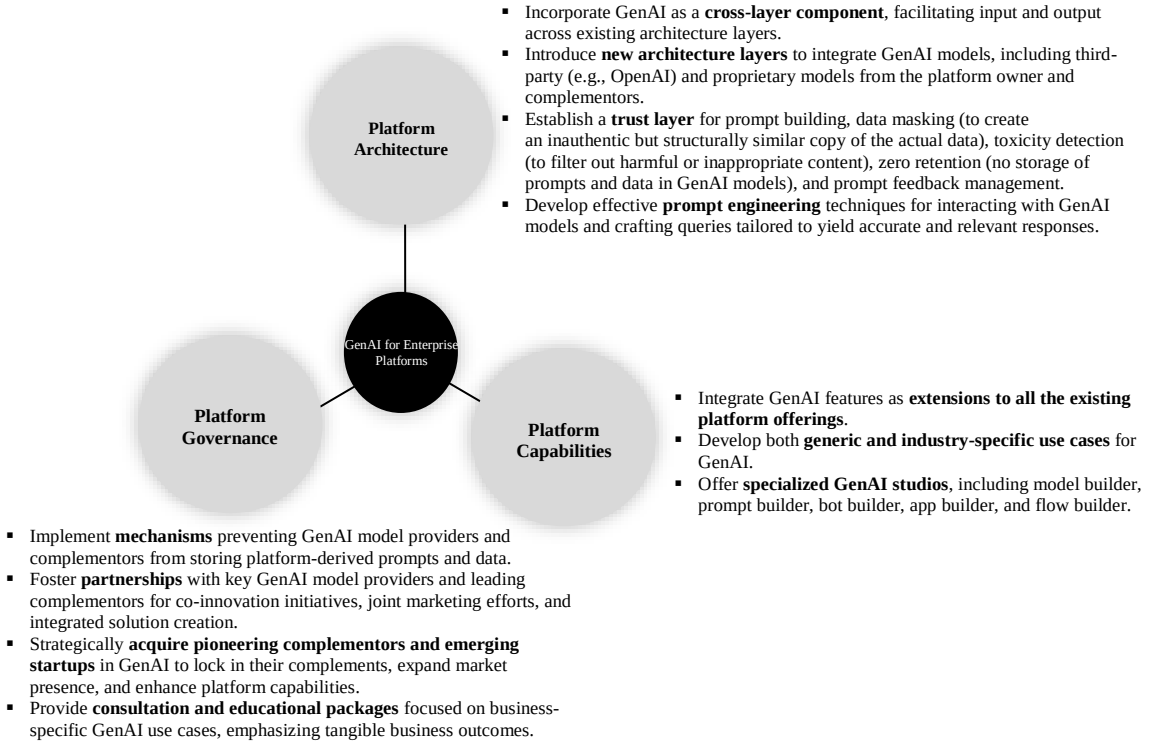

Figure 1. Implications of Generative AI for Enterprise Platforms.

5 Conclusion

The recent surge in attention to GenAI, exemplified by the popularity of ChatGPT, has prompted various research disciplines to explore the benefits, challenges, and implications of this technology across different domains. Within the IS discipline, the sociotechnical approach to emerging technologies offers a compelling opportunity for leading research on GenAI as recently called in flagship IS journals (Grover et al., 2023; Wessel et al., 2023), especially within the context of digital platforms.

This study specifically focuses on enterprise platforms, closely examining the implications of GenAI for enterprises. The ultimate goal is to formulate a theory on the implications of GenAI for enterprise platforms, paving the way for their next generation. The theory will specify actions required by platform owners to address challenges of GenAI while taking advantage of its phenomenal capabilities. The targeted theory will be developed through data triangulation, drawing insights from various actors in the ecosystem, resulting in a multifaceted approach to investigating GenAI's implications.

By doing so, we aim to contribute to the ongoing discourse on both the transformative value of GenAI for digital platforms (Wessel et al., 2023) and the transition of enterprise platforms to their next generations (Haki et al., 2024; Schreieck et al., 2022). Recognizing that organizations are still in the exploratory phase of GenAI, the outcomes of this study will offer firsthand insights to practitioners. Specifically, enterprise platform owners will gain valuable insights into the implications of GenAI and associated actions.

While we adopt a multi-actor perspective to collect data from various ecosystem actors, insights will be derived solely from one enterprise platform ecosystem. Including other enterprise platform ecosystems may adjust or expand some aspects of the theory. In addition, given the novelty and rapid growth of GenAI technology, continued investigation of the same case is essential for a comprehensive understanding of how GenAI transforms enterprise platforms.

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