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03/04/2025

To the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Marine Science and Engineering.

Dear Editor-in-Chief,

We are pleased to submit our manuscript, "**Digital Transformation in the Shipping Industry: a Network-Based Bibliometric Analysis**," for consideration for publication in the *Journal of Marine Science and Engineering*.

This paper presents a timely and comprehensive analysis of the rapidly evolving landscape of digital transformation within the shipping industry. Our study employs a **network-based bibliometric approach applied to a large dataset of 2293 scientific publications**, offering a holistic perspective beyond predefined technological or industrial sub-domains, unlike many previous literature reviews.

Our work makes **three key contributions** to the field:

- It conducts a **detailed bibliometric analysis** of digital transformation in the maritime industry.
- It applies **network theory** to define patterns in research collaborations and citation networks.
- It employs **machine learning-based thematic clustering** to uncover emerging research directions in digital shipping technologies.

The findings of our analysis reveal a **significant increase in publications since 2005, with exponential growth after 2015 (and suggest a potential inflection point in 2024)**. We identify **key research areas** such as fuel consumption optimization, safety and risk management, and smart port development, and highlight the **growing importance of AI and cybersecurity**. Furthermore, our co-authorship network analysis indicates extensive national and international collaborations.

This research provides a **robust foundation for academia, industry professionals, and policymakers** to support data-driven decisions in navigating the ongoing digital transformation of the maritime sector.

We believe that the scope and findings of our manuscript align well with the aims and readership of the *Journal of Marine Science and Engineering*.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Prof. Luca Ferrarini, Ph.D.