

Call for proposals

AI and Strategy Workshop

December 13-14th 2019, Indian School of Business, Hyderabad

Developments in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI), in particular Machine Learning (ML) and its increasing use in industry over the last few years provide strategy researchers with many opportunities.

The “AI & Strategy” Workshop intends to bring together a set of researchers who have interests in one or more of the themes described above through an annual meeting, the first of which will be held at Indian School of Business, Hyderabad, India on **December 13th and 14th, 2019**. The conference is jointly sponsored by the Indian School of Business and Microsoft Inc. The three objectives of this conference are

- To provide a focused forum of scholars, students and editors to seed and discuss work in the field of strategy that is contextually or empirically related to AI
- To provide a forum spanning both industry and academia to accelerate learning of how AI can transform organizations and their strategies
- To facilitate inter-disciplinary collaboration between computer scientists who are doing interesting work in the area and strategy scholars especially those who might be interested in applying some of these techniques in their scholarly work.

Through this conference we propose to create an emerging body of knowledge that focuses on how the advent of AI/ML adds to a strategy researcher’s tool, understand how it will shape decision making, firm strategies and alter competitive advantage. Possible topics of interest include but are not limited to the following

- How AI influences organizational learning, decision making
- How the adoption of AI might shape and alter competitive advantage
- How the advent of AI might influence the performance of incumbents in an industry
- New statistical methods that are appropriate for strategy research that utilizes AI or ML
- Management issues including ethics and culture that might influence the adoption of AI or the subsequent performance of firms that adopted AI.

(In the Appendix overleaf, we provide more details on possible themes)

The workshop will include regular paper presentations, master classes with experts who will discuss new approaches to statistical analysis using AI that can be used by Strategy scholars, panel discussions of how to shepherd AI related papers through journal review processes, and also on how to integrate AI and ML related themes into teaching.

Prospective participants are invited to submit extended abstracts (Maximum 7 pages/4000 words all inclusive) - by 15 September 2019. Manuscripts will be selected based on the fit with the topic of the conference and will be notified about the acceptance of their submissions by 1st October 2019. We would also be happy to consider proposals for particular panel discussions or topics. Please note conference participants will have to pay their own airfare and accommodation near campus which we will book. The sponsors will cover local hospitality and there is no registration fee. We also do have a limited number of scholarships for doctoral students to partially cover their travel and accommodation expenses.

Please contact the Conference chairs with any questions or suggestions: Prithwiraj Choudhury (pchoudhury@hbs.edu), Anand Nandkumar (Anand_Nandkumar@isb.edu), Phanish Puranam (Phanish.puranam@insead.edu).

Appendix: Broad research themes at the intersection of AI and Strategy

- How do machines in collaboration with managers influence organizational learning and decision making?

Strategy researchers have been interested in how organizations learn and adapt from unanticipated shocks, successes or failure by rightly focusing on the role of managers, workers and how work is organized on an organization's ability to learn and outperform its competitors. Others study the role of organization design in the effectiveness of decisions made by firms. Yet another stream of work studies the sources of cognitive biases in decision making. The addition of intelligent machines that can also learn and adapt along with humans can influence decision making, competitive advantage and alter the competitive dynamics of industries in ways we have not observed in the past. The advent of ML might profoundly influence whether such biases are exasperated or muted. The nature of collaboration between human managers and machines could also alter the pace at which an organization learns and dynamically adapts to a changing environment. The advent of ML provides strategy researchers an opportunity to understand how collaborative learning between machine and human beings could alter organizational learning, decision-making biases and ways to organize human-machine collaboration for superior organizational performance.

- How does the advent of a powerful technological change such as ML or AI reshape the competitive advantage of firms?

Strategy scholars, especially those that study why some firms are slow to adopt new technologies typically approach the issue of new technology adoption from at least two perspectives. A rich body of work suggests that incentive issues due to firms being held captive by its customer or investor base is one of the constraints that prevent firms from adopting new technologies. The other includes the lack of capabilities to adapt to the new technological regime, or the inability to register the existence of new opportunities or threats. The fact that AI can do more than just automating mundane tasks or creating new business opportunities provide strategy researchers with immense potential to understand the adoption problem in depth including studying the underlying mechanics that provide more insights on the impediments to adopt it and/or benefit from it conditional on adoption.

- How does ML change the way we do research?

The advent of ML implies the availability of statistical techniques along with algorithms that enable strategy scholars to refine prior findings or ask newer questions that were hitherto intractable empirically due to methodological constraints. The immense power of statistical learning models provides researchers with opportunities for unearthing new relationships between variables that were hitherto under-theorized or even ignored by prior work. In this regard, the ability of ML to unearth patterns of correlations that were hitherto unavailable has the potential to provide newer insights across different themes of strategy research.