

KNOWLEDGE PLATFORMS  
AND RESEARCH LABS

# RESEARCH REPORT 2023





# THE FUTURE MUST ALWAYS BE IMAGINED AND SOUGHT



The research activity and its continuous dissemination are the destiny and duty of a School of Management. It may seem like a strong statement but this phrase expresses in the most appropriate way the sense of the challenges and times we are experiencing and that allows us to guide to the future with the strength and passion that distinguishes SDA Bocconi.

Higher-education, applied research and the growth of people are closely linked and forward-looking. There is no growth in people's lives if the gaze is not turned to the future and when the gaze is no longer able to grasp the future, growth stops, it no longer affects and it no longer has an impact on the surrounding society. Growth is not a solitary act but a path, which becomes more exciting if done with good travel companions. In this sense, growth, training, applied research, relationships and sharing are closely linked. We must therefore have the desire and ambition to talk about the future every day. This is the ambition of every School of Management, this is definitely the hallmark of our School of Management, SDA Bocconi School of Management.

To understand what it means to speak and plan the future every day, we need to reflect on the two simple words - so simple to seem obvious - that are found immediately after SDA Bocconi, that is "School" and "Management".

The concept of "School" is a concept of community and continuous construction. In a world where research, knowledge and education are seen as an act of consumption, which materializes - and is likely to run out - in the very short moment of a download, the concept of "School" is exactly the opposite in that it is not confused with the learning tool - physical or digital, synchronous or asynchronous - but is clearly above the available tools and offers a meditated synthesis, at the service of the community, and built with the support of diverse interlocutors who interact with each other, from faculty, staff, students, alumni, companies and institutions that meet every day on our campus. The quality and intensity of relations become the quality of the School and the energy to continue on its way.

The concept of "Management" is at its root a concept of responsibility. Management means guiding men and women, resources and organizations. It's an act of responsibility by definition. It is devoid of sectorial affiliation, as it crosses institutions and organizations with profoundly different characteristics: from listed companies to private ones, from small to large, from public to non-profit sector. If responsibility is the deepest nature of management, its attitude today must be that of transversality. Knowledge and therefore management can no longer be placed in predefined areas, in vertical silos that define their own rules and aspire to perfection, which becomes self-referentiality and closure. The marketing silos, the finance silos, the technology silos and so on. Vertical perfection becomes complacency and then only leads to dryness and inability to think about the future every day.

The task of a School of Management is to ensure the highest level of vertical understanding, knowing well that "teaching" or "doing" management actually means destroying vertical silos with the force of creativity, with the courage to always get out of your comfort zone, with the will to always advance those vertical knowledge that are then questioned. But it also means identifying and welcoming new vertical silos, new disciplinary areas that were not even imaginable: from artificial intelligence, to cybersecurity, to the space economy and to what is to come, that today we cannot imagine but that we are certain that it will come. SDA Bocconi in management has always seen the transversality that passes from companies, to public administrations and financial intermediaries. This transversality today is leading the SDA to have a broader spectrum ranging from geopolitics themes to data sciences and AI, because businesses, institutions and financial intermediaries demand this to understand the world and face their challenges.

The knowledge platforms that the School has created go exactly in this direction and are the inexhaustible force that continuously links the drive for innovation, the drive for vertical understanding within the disciplinary field, the push to transversality that is the necessary condition in order to understand the complexity of the scenarios that every business decision-maker must observe. But above all, without research the ability to affect with the activity of higher-education dries up and becomes a ritual. The nature of being a School is to continually strengthen the bridge between the needs of companies and institutions and the ability to always look to the future.

The challenges of the School become the collective challenges, the knowledge that is produced through research is a collective and community act, which then brings initiative, enthusiasm and benefit to individuals but remains a strongly collective act. This is why our School has the task of helping individuals and organizations to think about the future every day. Not to deny the present but to live it more intensely and with greater responsibility. This is the responsibility of the manager and is the hallmark of the leaders, who are formed in our classrooms. It is the perfect link between the School and its community, between the programs that we develop every day with passion and the participants, between the content of our training and the task of the manager. This is why the School does not offer a solution but builds the possible solutions through the extraordinary experience of many colleagues who direct our programs and live every day with those who have or have the ambition to have the responsibility of guiding men and women, resources and organizations.

The space to build the future is vast, and the School is always there whenever there is courage and a desire to design innovative solutions. That's where we have to start if we want to give answers to the people and organizations that choose the SDA. History therefore continues and always evolves, with determination and impact.

**STEFANO CASELLI**

*Dean SDA Bocconi School of Management*

Milan, 30 October 2023





# TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION AND TRANSITION KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM

Technology has always represented the key driver of change for firms, industries, and society at large. Yet, the pace of change we have been facing in the past few years is unprecedented. The digitization and development of Internet of Things, together with a shift in consumer behavior, have favored the production of a huge amount of data. Data are the oil of AI and machine learning, a fundamental technology that is reshaping many of the processes and industries we have known.

Communication, transportation of people and objects, manufacturing, and commercial activities just to mention a few have experienced a deep transformation caused by the changes in technology and in particular by the potential use of data that technology has unleashed.

The Technology, Innovation and Transition Platform of SDA Bocconi aims to provide a common and open ground to study the changing nature of managerial and operational processes in organizations in the light of the above-mentioned opportunities and challenges. By blending theory and practice, cross-sectional and panel data analysis with interviews and observation in companies and institutions, and by integrating the experiences of organizations operating in different industries, both private and public, this platform aims to provide data-based evidence and actionable insights for companies facing relevant challenges brought by the accelerated path of technological change encompassing a diverse set of processes and decisions within firms.

This platform addresses, among others, topics such as:

- Assessing current technologies and estimating their value potential for processes and activities in organizations;
- Investigating and measuring the impact on performance of the adoption of digital tools in the development of new commercial channels;
- Evaluating the impact of specific technologies on the development of sustainable practices across firm in different contexts;
- Understanding the value and organizational impact of machine learning applications on operational activities;
- Identifying the evolutionary trajectories of specific consume needs, such as mobility, housing, and health to name a few, disrupted by digital technology;
- Understanding the economics of space and other alternative resources in shaping the industries of the future.

In order to tackle these relevant issues with a broad perspective and refined analytical keys, the Innovation and Transition Knowledge Platform adopts an interdisciplinary approach, leveraging on the knowledge of top experts in the field of technology and innovation, the evolution of ecosystems, channel/retail and salesforce to commercialize innovation, as well as procurement. The functional expertise is blended with top level competences applied to the world of space economy, mobility, agribusiness, real estate, and to many other contexts, both private and public, where technology is a major driver of change. Through extended collaborations with partners from public and private institutions, by means of open discussions and workshops, and through projects co-designed by academics and research users, we aim to address pressing issues stemming from real-world problems, as well as to advance the current understanding of a complex and interconnected world, like the one we live in.



**Paola Cillo**

Scientific Director of the Technology, Innovation and Transition Knowledge Platform, Associate Professor of Management & Technology at Bocconi University, and Director of the Claudio Dematté Research Division for Corporate and Financial Institutions, SDA Bocconi.



# Channel & Retail Lab

The Channel & Retail Lab, although a single entity, is organized into Key Research Areas (KRA) which constitute various sector-based Observatories:

1. Health, Beauty & Wellness
2. Food & FMCGs
3. Loyalty Promotion & Fashion
4. Home design and building materials
5. Omichannel & Digital Retail
6. Agos Retail Trend  
(furniture, electrical goods and engines)

## 1. The mission of the Channel & Retail Lab

The Channel & Retail Lab is SDA Bocconi's research center dedicated to studying the primary national and international trends and innovations in Trade and Retail Management. Its goal is to create and disseminate knowledge within the vertical channel ecosystem, which comprises manufacturing companies, retailers, e-commerce, and service companies.

Launched in 2021, the Channel & Retail Lab builds on SDA Bocconi's extensive research tradition in Retail, Channel Management, Trade Marketing, Go-to-Market strategies, and the exploration of new technologies in the commercial business. The Lab seeks to integrate the profound academic knowledge of Bocconi's faculty with the experiences and requirements of companies operating in the sector. This objective aligns with the broader mission of Bocconi University, established by one of the prominent commercial entrepreneurs of the early 1900s.

### 1.1

#### The objectives of the Channel & Retail Lab

The objectives of the Channel & Retail Lab include:

- Innovation: Positioned as the central theme, the lab focuses on innovative research.
- Dissemination: Sharing specialized knowledge on Channel Management issues and distribution trends at both national and international levels.
- Research and Development: Engaging in the creation of new interpretative models and managerial applications.
- Expertise Support: Providing support to companies with high added-value expertise.
- Network Creation: Establishing a network comprising leading companies in their respective sectors to foster the development of managerial knowledge.

10

Books and Reports

>30

Articles and papers

219

Managers Enrolled

2011

Launch of the Retail Academy

3

Communities for Continuous Networking

2

Business School Involved in Research Activities

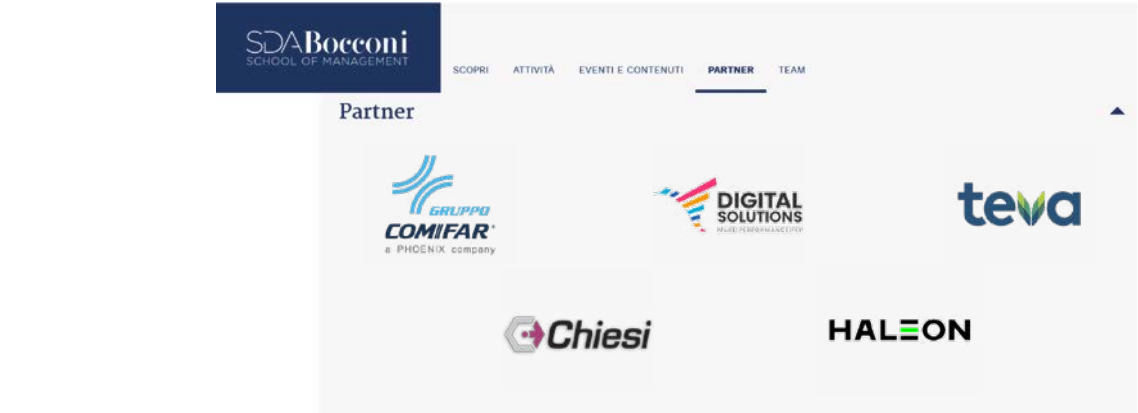
2. Membership model

The Channel & Retail Lab is organized into Key Research Areas (KRAs): Health, Beauty & Wellness, Food & FMCGs, Luxury & Fashion, Home Design and Building Materials, Omnichannel & Digital Retail, and Agos Retail Trend (furniture, electronic goods, and engines).

- **Advisory Boards:** Each KRA has an Advisory Board, comprising no more than five companies associations operating in the same macro-sector. These entities, not in competition with each other, select research topics and actively participate in the lab's activities.
- **Interactions:** Advisory Boards of different KRAs systematically interact with each other, facilitating knowledge exchange, solution comparison, and collaborative efforts to define innovative solutions.
- **Partners:** Companies on Advisory Boards qualify as Partners.
- **Members:** Companies with a lower level of involvement than Partners may participate in the Channel & Retail Lab through Member status.

Category	Benefits	Description
Partners	Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As members of the Advisory Board, they select the lines of research</li><li>• They can focus various areas of research on specific elements of their businesses (e.g. product portfolio, market areas)</li><li>• In addition to the publications, the Partners have access to all research materials (with the authorisation of the entire Advisory Board if they contain sensitive data).</li></ul>
	Networking & Stakeholder Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In the course of the research processes, meetings will be scheduled between the Partners and their main Stakeholders, Opinion Leaders and Experts in a spirit of “idea generation”</li><li>• Partners will be able to discuss ideas with key stakeholders in their market during dedicated events and workshops</li><li>• Partners may invite their Top Clients and Associates (the numbers will depend on the logistics of the event) to the Annual Symposium and to specific workshops which the Advisory Board suggests are held on the new Campus</li></ul>
	Training and Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Company management will be able to actively participate in the implementation of the research activities guided by the professors in order to acquire expertise on the topic, but also be involved in the processes of analysis and the design of Channel &amp; Retail Management tools.</li><li>• Partners may request speeches by the Scientific Committee and researchers at their events.</li></ul>
	Branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Laboratory helps to position the company as having ‘excellence in innovation’ by strengthening its leadership in the market and making it appealing to and building loyalty among talent and managers</li><li>• Partners gain visibility on the SDA Bocconi Site, in publications and through all communication channels.</li><li>• Partners may serve as Guest Speakers and representatives of the Lab at national and international events.</li></ul>

Category	Benefits	Description
Members	Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In addition to the publications, the Members have access to all research materials (with the authorization of the entire Advisory Board if they contain sensitive data)</li></ul>
	Networking & Stakeholder Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Members may invite their Top Clients and Associates (the numbers will depend on the logistics of the event) to the Annual Symposium and to specific workshops which the Advisory Board suggests are held on the new Campus</li></ul>
	Training and Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Members may request speeches by the Scientific Committee and researchers at their events.</li></ul>
	Branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Laboratory helps to position the company as having ‘excellence in innovation’ by strengthening its leadership in the market and making it appealing to and building loyalty among talent and managers</li><li>• Members gain visibility on the SDA Bocconi Site, in publications and through all communication channels.</li></ul>





3. Activities

**Research:** The Partner members of the Advisory Board choose the topics on which the research activities will focus.

**Innovation:** During the research processes, meetings are scheduled between Partners and their key Stakeholders, Opinion Leaders and Experts in a spirit of “idea generation”

**Coaching:** When Partners decide to take an active part in the research activities, faculty members accompany the management so that they acquire the necessary skills.

**Training:** The Channel & Retail Lab organises workshops and events dedicated to the management and key Stakeholders of the Partners and Members.

**Networking:** The Channel & Retail Lab is a place for discussion and sharing the opportunity to forge relationships with other market leaders.



RETAIL INNOVATION



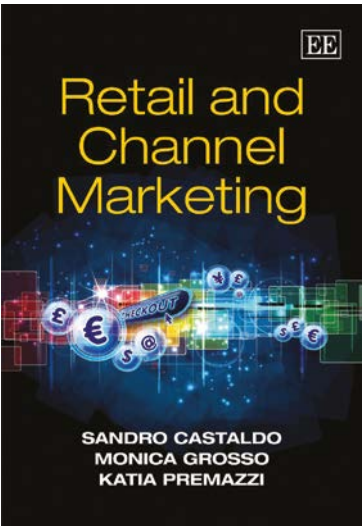
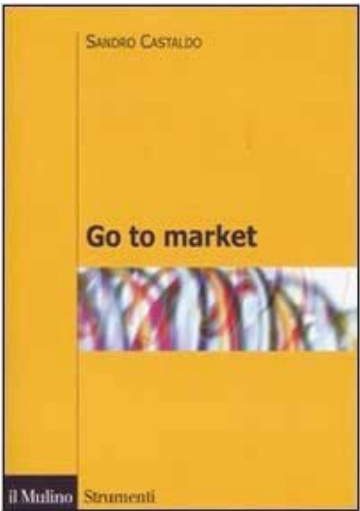
4. Research reports, books, papers, business cases

4.1 Research Reports, Books & Business Cases

The Retailing Series Monitor is a collaboration between Franco Angeli and SDA Bocconi’s Retailing Observatory, both of which are interested in developing and disseminating knowledge within the Retail sector, which has undergone a true revolution in recent years. The series testifies to the aim of the Channel & Retail Lab researchers to contribute actively and continuously to the debate, offering business books which are as much sources of reflection as they are real working tools. The series is divided into two sections: Skills and Research. The first contains essays on wide-ranging topics which are relevant to all sectors of retailing: the common thread running through all the works is the development of knowledge and general skills. The second includes essays devoted to specific topics relevant to certain business sectors or particular types of businesses. The purpose of the series is to disseminate knowledge, so the language is accessible and understandable to a wide audience, yet without sacrificing a rigorous methodological framework.

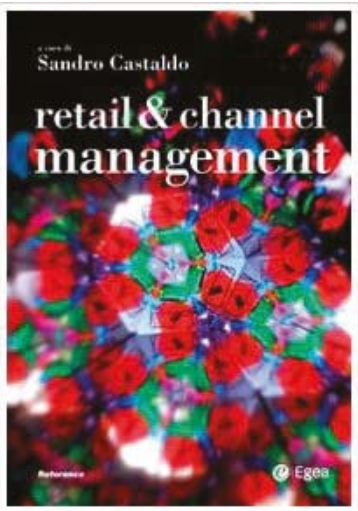
- **Castaldo S., Grosso M., Premazzi K., (2020)** *Channel & Retail Management*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK
- **Castaldo S., Mallarini E.,** (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 2005, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2008, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 2010, 4<sup>th</sup> edition 2017) *Store Management. La gestione delle piattaforme relazionali*, Franco Angeli

- **Mallarini E., (2022)** *Un nuovo paradigma per lo store management della farmacia*, Franco Angeli
- **Castaldo S., Grosso M., Hua L., Lariviere B., (2020)** *What Information do shoppers share? The effect of personnel-, retailer-, and country-trust on willingness to share information*, Journal of Retailing, vol 96, p. 524-547
- **Castaldo S., Grosso M.,Grewal A., (2018)** *How store attributes impact shoppers' loyalty: an investigation in the retail indian sector*, Journal of Retailing & Consumer Services, vol 40, (c), p.117-124
- **Castaldo S., Grosso M., Mallarini E., Rindone M., (2016)** *The Missing Path to Gain Customers loyalty in Pharmacy Retail: the Role of the Store in Developing Satisfaction and Trust*, Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy, 12, p. 699-716





- **Castaldo S., Grosso M.,** (2015) *How store attributes impact shoppers' loyalty: do different national cultures follow the same loyalty building process?*, The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research, 25 (5), p. 503-515
- **Castaldo S., Perrini F., Misani N., Tencati A.,** (2010) *The Relationship between Corporate Responsibility and Brand Loyalty in Retailing: the Mediating Role of Trust*, in C. Smith, C.B. Bhattacharya, D. Vogel, D. Levine (edited by), Global Challenges in Responsible Business: Corporate Responsibility and Strategy, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2010.
- **Castaldo S., Perrini F., Misani N., Tencati A.,** (2010) *The impact of Corporate Social Responsibility Associations on Trust in Organic Products Marketed by Mainstream Retailers: a Study of Italian Consumers*, Business Strategy and the Environment, 19 (8), p. 516-526
- **Castaldo S., Perrini F., Misani N., Tencati A.,** (2009) *The missing link between Corporate Social Responsibility and Consumer trust: the case of Fair Trade products*, Journal of Business Ethics, vol. 84 (19), p. 1-15
- **Costa S., Romao M., Mendes M., Rute Horta M., Teixeira Rodrigues, A., Vaz Caeneiro A., Martins A. P., Mallarini E., Nacig H., Zaheer-Ud-Dinbabar,** (2021) *Pharmacy Interventions on COVID-19 in Europe: Mapping current practices and a scoping review*, Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy
- **Boscolo P. R., Giudice L., Mallarini E., Rappini V.,** (2020) *Le tecnologie nella gestione dell'emergenza: sviluppo e tenuta delle nuove soluzioni*, Cap. 17, Rapporto OASI



## 5. Vertical custom initiatives

The Channel Retail Lab's mission is to develop concrete tools to be made available to the community; therefore, it selects ways of operating which are specific to the goals: from analysing the customer journey in different sectors to assessing digital solutions, from mapping new retail players to setting up incubators, from ethnographic surveys of stores to organising hackathons in order to design sustainable innovations.



**Agos Retail Trends (ART)**  
The Channel & Retail Lab has partnered with Credit Agricole's Agos since 2018 to develop an Observatory dedicated to the analysis of retail companies in the Automotive, Durable Goods and Retail sectors. This led to the creation of the Agos Retail Trend (ART), an incubator dedicated to the dynamic study of the main evolutionary trajectories related to purchasing and consumer behaviours in the markets of reference (national and international), with the aim of gaining useful insights to be shared, both at academic and managerial level, with SDA Bocconi and Agos partners.

### Customer Engagement & Experience in the time of Covid 19

The global health crisis has brought about profound changes in the ways in which consumers shop and companies relate to their customers. SDA Bocconi wanted to delve into several issues to offer Channel & Retail Lab partners an overview of possible evolutionary scenarios in the short to medium term. Specifically, the Observatory conducted a survey on a sample of middle/top managers and entrepreneurs, to share and closely examine their fears, hopes and expectations regarding the 'new normal' in the various sectors of reference, and on the basis of the insights which emerged, it produced several academic analyses, to offer theoretical and practical insights (through the collection and analysis of several case studies from different international players), which are helpful in guiding managers and technicians in this period of uncertainty and transition.



### Telemedicine: business models along the supply chain

The rapid expansion of telemedicine resulting from the pandemic emergency is transforming the relationship between citizens and healthcare. Patient interactions with doctors become more accessible and less restricted to specific professionals, reducing the need to visit a pharmacy for advice. Online product information gains credibility, and drug prescription home delivery and e-commerce are experiencing double-digit growth rates. The Channel & Retail Lab has meticulously mapped the existing initiatives, tools, and their characteristics, exploring the perspectives of pharmaceutical companies, pharmacies, and different categories of citizens, including healthy individuals, chronic disease patients, and those with occasional health issues. Through this comprehensive research, new business opportunities and potential innovations in services, digital relationships along the supply chain, and novel Go-to-Market models have emerged.

### Innovating the Retailing Mix

Analyses conducted by the Channel & Retail Lab have revealed that 73% of Italians have changed their pharmacy shopping habits compared to pre-Covid. Before the pandemic, the average time spent at the point of sale was 7 minutes,

today it is just over 2 minutes: this penalizes not only exposure, but also consulting, the main vehicle of Go to Market for companies in the sector. Thanks to the cooperation of the partner Comifar and the member pharmacies belonging to its Valore Salute network, it was possible to investigate the most effective declinations of the retailing mix through ethnography and experimentation.

### Networks and pharmacy chains: towards a reconfiguration of the sector

Covid has expedited the process of pharmacy aggregation, with Voluntary Unions, Franchises, International, National, and Local Chains of Ownership now comprising about 2,900 pharmacies. The Channel & Retail Lab analyzed the phenomenon from the perspectives of various stakeholders: consumers, pharmacists affiliated with a network, pharmacy store managers, independent pharmacists, as well as the managers of the networks themselves.

In contrast to the pre-Covid period, today, citizens perceive that pharmacies led by Groups have more resources, enabling them to offer more competitive prices, deliver additional services, and/or provide a broader range of products. However, with only a few exceptions, these pharmacies struggle to distinguish themselves among the various networks, often appearing as 'tidier pharmacies.'

Through the diverse research conducted, new business opportunities and potential innovations for services, digital relationship opportunities along the supply chain, and novel Go-to-Market models have emerged.





Cutting edge scientific partners.

