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Democratization of Strategic Consulting: Effects of a Data-Driven Micro-Consultant Network

Democratizing Strategy via Data-Driven Micro-Consulting

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Summary

For decades, strategic consulting was associated with high costs, complex contracts, and the concentration of expertise in large multinational corporations. However, the emergence of data-driven networks of micro-consultants is profoundly changing this scenario. This article seeks to analyze the effects of this democratization, structuring the discussion around seven critical dimensions: accessibility as a driver of inclusion, modular scalability, reliability, and legitimacy, technological innovation, cost reduction, impact on decision-making, and development of organizational capabilities. Based on classic and contemporary management frameworks, such as those of Drucker, Mintzberg, Christensen, Nonaka, and Chesbrough, the study argues that the decentralization of consulting knowledge not only expands the reach of this service but also repositions the role of the consultant in the digital economy. It concludes that the democratization of strategic consulting is an irreversible phenomenon, although it depends on validation and regulatory mechanisms to ensure quality and legitimacy.

Keywords: strategic consulting; democratization; networks; data; innovation.

Abstract

Strategic consulting has traditionally been associated with high costs, complex contracts, and expertise concentrated in large multinational corporations. However, the emergence of networks of data-oriented micro-consultants has profoundly altered this landscape. This article seeks to analyze the effects of such democratization by structuring the discussion into seven critical dimensions: accessibility as a vector of inclusion, modular scalability, reliability and legitimacy, technological innovation, cost reduction, decision-making impact, and organizational skills development. Drawing on classical and contemporary management references such as Drucker, Mintzberg, Christensen, Nonaka, and Chesbrough, the study argues that the decentralization of

consulting knowledge not only broadens the reach of such services but also replaces the consultant's role in the digital economy. It concludes that the democratization of strategic consulting is an irreversible phenomenon, although dependent on validation and regulatory mechanisms to ensure quality and legitimacy.

Keywords: strategic consulting; democratization; networks; date; innovation.

1. Introduction

Throughout the 20th century, strategic consulting constituted an elitist field of practice, in which only large organizations had the financial and structural means to benefit from specialized recommendations. This phenomenon was consolidated by the rise of firms such as McKinsey & Company, Boston Consulting Group, and Bain & Company, which became global icons in providing applied knowledge to senior management. Drucker (2016) had already recognized that knowledge is the primary resource of modern capitalism, but its appropriation was restricted, deepening asymmetries between companies. This exclusionary nature made strategic consulting a privilege for the few, constituting a barrier to entry for the competitive development of small and medium-sized organizations.

The digital shift and the explosion of real-time data, beginning in the 2000s, ushered in a new paradigm. Christensen et al. (2015) describe disruptive innovation as a process capable of offering more accessible solutions to historically neglected audiences, transforming entire sectors. In this context, the emergence of networks of micro-consultants, operating in a decentralized and data-driven manner, should be understood as a significant departure from traditional strategic advisory models. These networks not only reduce costs but also expand perspectives and approach local realities, becoming a relevant alternative for companies that previously lacked access to such practices.

The relevance of this phenomenon transcends the economic sphere, also reaching social and political dimensions. Mintzberg (2011) argues that strategy cannot be seen merely as a technical science, but as a social process, constructed through interactions, narratives, and disputes. From this perspective, the democratization of consulting expands the number of actors capable of participating in strategic formulation, fostering more inclusive and pluralistic governance. This transformation indicates that, more than reducing the cost of services, micro-consultant networks inaugurate a new logic of applied knowledge production.

At the same time, the rise of data science and artificial intelligence strengthens the legitimacy of these practices. Davenport and Harris (2017) emphasize that data-driven decisions have become a fundamental requirement in complex environments, replacing intuitive insights with measurable evidence. The incorporation of these tools by independent consultants increases the reliability of deliverables, as it provides accurate and

based on metrics. Democratization, in this sense, is inseparable from technological advancement, which reduces costs without compromising analytical depth.

It is important to emphasize, however, that decentralization also brings tensions. Teece (2010) observes that value capture in knowledge-based economies depends on robust governance mechanisms. While democratization expands access, it also risks generating fragmentation, heterogeneity in quality, and even precariousness in consulting services. This requires the creation of standards, validation protocols, and certification criteria that ensure legitimacy and prevent the trivialization of consulting services.

Another key point concerns the implications for small and medium-sized businesses. Porter (1985) argued that a nation's competitive advantage depends on its actors' ability to continuously innovate. In this sense, by allowing smaller organizations access to sophisticated strategic management practices, micro-consultant networks help to dynamize local economies and reduce structural inequalities. Democratizing consulting is, therefore, a step toward democratizing innovation itself.

Therefore, this article organizes its analysis into seven critical dimensions: (i) accessibility as a driver of inclusion and reduced barriers to entry; (ii) scalability and modular expansion of networks; (iii) reliability and legitimacy of processes; (iv) technological innovation as a driver of transformation; (v) cost reduction and economic reconfiguration of services; (vi) impacts on the rationality and quality of decision-making; and (vii) development of competencies in consulting ecosystems. Each dimension will be explored in depth to understand the structural effects of the democratization of strategic consulting in the contemporary scenario.

2. Accessibility as a Vector of Inclusion and Reduction of Entry Barriers in Strategic Consulting

The dimension of accessibility represents the core of the democratization of strategic consulting, as it directly addresses the breakdown of historical barriers to entry. For decades, small and medium-sized companies were excluded from access to consulting services, which, according to Barney (1991), reinforced the asymmetries of valuable and rare resources that characterize sustainable competitive advantages. The high cost and exclusivity of large consulting firms have solidified an elitist model, reproducing inequalities in the global corporate environment. The advent of digital platforms, coupled with contractual flexibility, reverses this situation, allowing organizations with different levels of maturity to access strategic diagnoses and recommendations.

Financial accessibility is a first aspect to be highlighted. While in the traditional model, contracts were long, expensive, and based on complex structures, the new paradigm allows for more agile and smaller-scale negotiations. Christensen (2013) argues that disruptive innovations thrive by offering simpler and cheaper solutions to neglected audiences, even

become dominant. This reasoning applies directly to the phenomenon of micro-consultant networks, which can offer modular packages tailored to the needs and capabilities of smaller companies, transforming access into a gradual and staggered process.

Territorial accessibility is equally relevant. Previously concentrated in global urban centers such as New York, London, or São Paulo, strategic consulting services left peripheral regions without qualified support. Digitalization breaks down these barriers, allowing micro-consultants to work remotely in any context. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1997) argue that organizational knowledge is the result of social interactions, so including different voices and contexts enriches the strategic process. In this sense, geographic decentralization not only expands reach but also enhances the production of solutions through diversity.

Another element to consider is cognitive accessibility. Traditional consultancies often used technical jargon and lacked transparency in methodologies, which made it difficult for clients to acquire knowledge. Micro-consultant networks, in turn, tend to adopt clearer language and open methodologies, favoring the adoption of recommendations by managers. Mintzberg (2011) warns that management cannot be reduced to hermetic formulas but must engage with the concrete reality of organizations. Democratization, therefore, also implies translating knowledge into accessible formats, promoting decision-making empowerment.

However, it is necessary to recognize the risks associated with this process. Opening the field can attract professionals without adequate training or experience, which compromises the quality of deliverables. Chesbrough (2010) argues that innovation in open systems is only sustainable when validation and trust mechanisms, such as reputation, certifications, and curation, are in place. Therefore, accessibility must be accompanied by regulatory and legitimacy-building mechanisms, otherwise it will weaken the model's credibility.

On the other hand, accessibility expands opportunities for social and economic inclusion. By allowing small businesses access to advanced practices, a virtuous cycle of competitiveness and dynamism is created. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) emphasize that value co-creation emerges when multiple actors participate in the strategic process. Thus, democratization is not only about opening up the market, but also about opening up space for new agents to participate in the formulation of solutions, enriching the innovation ecosystem.

Finally, accessibility must be understood as a dynamic process, constantly challenged by new technologies and regulatory changes. The incorporation of tools such as blockchain for competency certification, or artificial intelligence for automated diagnostics, can further expand democratization, as long as it is accompanied by inclusive digital training policies. Thus, accessibility is not an endpoint, but a continuous vector of transformation, whose impacts reverberate at both the organizational and systemic levels.

3. Scalability and Modular Expansion of Data-Driven Micro-Consultant Networks

Scalability is a key element in understanding the sustainability and impact of data-driven micro-consultant networks in the contemporary competitive environment. Unlike traditional consulting models, based on rigid, hierarchical structures, the logic of digital networks allows for modular expansion, adaptable to the specific demands of each organization served. According to Chesbrough (2010), service innovation is directly linked to the ability to adapt and recombine resources, meaning that scalability must be analyzed not only quantitatively, but above all qualitatively.

The concept of modular scalability implies that the network of consultants can expand according to the complexity of the problems faced by companies, flexibly mobilizing experts from different areas. Teece (2010) argues that dynamic competitive advantage depends on the ability of organizations to constantly reconfigure their capabilities. This perspective also applies to consultancy networks, in which scalability represents the ability to mobilize specialized knowledge quickly and effectively, avoiding overload and optimizing the use of resources.

Another relevant aspect is technological scalability. Digital platforms based on artificial intelligence algorithms and recommendation systems can connect companies with consultants in a personalized manner, ensuring that demand is directed to the most suitable professional. Davenport and Harris (2017) emphasize that predictive analytics and machine learning not only increase process efficiency but also reduce resource allocation errors. This means that scalability is not just a matter of increasing the number of consultants, but of intelligently orchestrating their distribution.

Scalability, however, should not be confused with excessive standardization. Mintzberg (2011) argues that strategic effectiveness depends on adapting to specific contexts, not on applying universal formulas. Thus, the challenge for micro-consultant networks is to balance expansion with customization, ensuring that growth does not compromise the quality of deliveries. This balance refers to the concept of "strategic fit," advocated by Porter (1985), in which expansion must respect the organization's internal and external coherence.

The literature on digital ecosystems offers valuable contributions to understanding consultative scalability. Moore (1993) introduced the concept of business ecosystems to explain how multiple actors interact collaboratively in dynamic environments.
Applied to strategic consulting, this means that scalability depends not only on adding consultants, but on the ability to create interdependent networks sustained by flows of knowledge, trust, and innovation. In this sense, modular expansion should be viewed as a collective process, not simply as an individual multiplication of professionals.

Furthermore, scalability has a direct impact on systemic competitiveness. In emerging countries, where the absence of large consulting firms limits access to knowledge, scalable networks of micro-consultants can play a fundamental role in strengthening the business fabric. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1997) argue that the creation of organizational knowledge requires constant circulation between individuals and groups, which is enhanced in scalable systems. Therefore, scalability transcends operational efficiency and connects to broader economic development.

Finally, scalability must be understood as a dynamic phenomenon, constantly challenged by market uncertainties and technological evolution. The ability of a micro-consultant network to expand modularly depends not only on digital infrastructure but also on qualified human capital and efficient coordination mechanisms. Without these elements, expansion can lead to fragmentation, loss of identity, and a decline in quality.
Therefore, scalability is both a promise and a challenge, the effectiveness of which will depend on the articulation between technology, governance and applied knowledge.

4. Reliability, Legitimacy and Validation Protocols in the Decentralized Provision of Advisory Services

The decentralization of strategic consulting, while representing progress in terms of accessibility and scalability, raises questions about the reliability and legitimacy of the services provided. In the traditional model, the reputation of large firms served as an implicit guarantee of quality, reducing uncertainty for clients. In networks of micro-consultants, this trust mechanism needs to be replaced by more transparent and objective validation protocols. Simon (1997) emphasizes that managers' limited rationality makes them dependent on support systems that reduce ambiguity, which reinforces the need for clear performance metrics.

Reliability, in this context, cannot be reduced to merely delivering reports. It is an ongoing process, in which the value of consulting is measured by its ability to transform information into effective decisions. Mintzberg (2011) warns that management is not just a science, but a social practice that involves negotiation, interpretation, and legitimacy. This means that the reliability of micro-consultants will depend not only on their technical competence but also on their ability to build trusting relationships with clients, based on transparency and ethics.

One of the central mechanisms for ensuring reliability is methodological standardization. Chesbrough (2010) argues that service innovation is only sustainable when accompanied by protocols that ensure consistency and quality. In this sense, the creation of best practice manuals, professional certifications, and digital audits can function as tools for

validation, reducing the risk of heterogeneity in deliveries. These practices resemble corporate governance mechanisms, in which transparency is a prerequisite for legitimacy.

Another crucial factor is building a collective reputation. Micro-consultant networks can benefit from collaborative evaluation systems, similar to those used on digital platforms like Upwork or Toptal, in which reliability is progressively built based on client feedback and performance metrics. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) argue that value co-creation depends on active interaction between suppliers and clients, which implies continuous processes of mutual validation. Thus, legitimacy is not a given attribute, but rather socially constructed.

Furthermore, reliability must be analyzed from the perspective of the risks associated with the information. Davenport and Harris (2017) emphasize that data-driven decisions require rigorous attention to the quality, integrity, and security of the information used. Decentralized networks are at greater risk of data fragmentation, which can compromise diagnostics. Data governance protocols, including independent audits and regulatory compliance, are essential to ensure legitimacy and reduce vulnerabilities.

It is also necessary to consider the ethical dimension of reliability. Decentralization can lead to opportunistic practices, such as the inappropriate use of confidential information or the adoption of methodologies without scientific basis. Porter and Kramer (2011) argue that the legitimacy of organizations in contemporary capitalism depends on their ability to generate shared value, which includes social and ethical responsibility. Applied to consulting, this means that reliability is intrinsically linked to the conduct of professionals and the transparency of their practices.

Finally, reliability and legitimacy should not be seen as obstacles to decentralization, but rather as conditions for its consolidation. Building validation protocols, combined with the use of performance metrics and collective reputation mechanisms, can transform decentralization into a robust and sustainable model. Without these elements, the democratization of consulting runs the risk of being deflated, losing credibility with organizations. Therefore, reliability must be understood as the foundation of legitimacy, being essential for data-driven micro-consultant networks to establish themselves as a real alternative to traditional models.

5. Technological Innovation as a Driver for Transforming Strategic Consulting Practices

Technological innovation emerges as a central axis in the reconfiguration of contemporary strategic consulting, especially when analyzed from the perspective of micro-consultant networks
data-driven. Unlike traditional models, which rely on extensive reports and retrospective analysis, the new paradigm incorporates digital tools capable of providing

real-time diagnostics. Porter and Heppelmann (2015) argue that smart, connected products and services are radically transforming business competition, requiring consulting firms to keep pace with this trend. In this sense, technological innovation is not an accessory, but a fundamental driver of transformation.

The impact of artificial intelligence is perhaps the most visible aspect of this shift. Machine learning algorithms make it possible to identify hidden patterns in large volumes of data, generating previously inaccessible insights. Davenport and Harris (2017) emphasize that data-driven organizations perform better, particularly because they can anticipate trends and adapt strategies quickly. Micro-consultants who master these tools are able to compete with large firms, democratizing access to predictive analytics and market intelligence.

Another relevant element is the use of interactive dashboards and business intelligence platforms, which allow for dynamic and easy-to-interpret visualizations. According to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1997), the creation of organizational knowledge depends on the ability to transform data into information and information into actionable knowledge. By integrating visual reports and accessible metrics, independent consultants can not only deliver diagnostics but also empower managers in decision-making. Innovation, in this case, connects technology and pedagogy, transforming consulting into a continuous learning process.

Technological innovation also favors personalized services. Instead of standardized packages, micro-consultant networks can offer tailored solutions tailored to the specific needs of each organization. Christensen (2013) argues that disruptive innovations thrive precisely by serving specific niches neglected by established models.
Thus, technology enables a more inclusive model, in which small businesses have access to personalized solutions, without the prohibitive costs of traditional consultancies.

It is necessary, however, to recognize the risks associated with technological dependence. Mintzberg (2011) warns that strategic management cannot be reduced to technical calculations, as it involves human, political, and symbolic dimensions. The uncritical use of algorithms can generate biased or overly simplified diagnoses. This requires consultants to maintain a critical approach to the tools, combining technical and interpretative skills. Innovation, therefore, must be mediated by professional judgment and ethical responsibility.

Furthermore, technological innovation expands the potential for integration between different consultants in global networks. Digital platforms allow professionals from different contexts to collaborate in real time, combining diverse expertise. Chesbrough (2010) argues that open innovation depends on the circulation of knowledge across organizational boundaries, which is enhanced in digital ecosystems. This collaboration increases the quality of solutions and reinforces the legitimacy of decentralized networks as a real alternative to traditional consultancies.

In short, technological innovation should be understood as a driver of structural transformation in strategic consulting. It not only democratizes access but also redefines the processes, roles, and outcomes of consulting practice. At the same time, it poses new challenges in terms of regulation, ethics, and professional training. If well-managed, technological innovation can consolidate micro-consultant networks as fundamental agents of competitiveness and inclusion in digital capitalism.

6. Cost Reduction and Reconfiguration of the Economic Structure of Consulting Services

Cost reduction constitutes one of the strongest arguments in favor of democratizing strategic consulting through micro-consultant networks. Historically, the high cost of consulting services served as a nearly insurmountable barrier for small and medium-sized companies. Drucker (2016) notes that the cost of specialized knowledge has always been proportional to its exclusivity, making it inaccessible to most organizations. The new model, on the contrary, repositions the economic structure of services, allowing strategic analyses to be contracted on a specific, modular, and financially viable basis.

This repositioning is made possible by reduced operating expenses. Independent consultants largely work remotely, using digital platforms and low-cost tools. This eliminates physical infrastructure and logistical expenses, typical of large consulting firms. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) argue that creating shared value depends on eliminating inefficiencies in the service chain, which in this case translates into cheaper services without significant loss of quality.

Another aspect is pricing flexibility. While traditional firms operate with fixed, high-cost contracts, micro-consultants can adopt different models, such as payment per project, per hour, or per result. This arrangement benefits companies with limited resources, which can adjust their expenses according to their circumstances. Christensen et al. (2015) emphasize that flexible economic models are essential for disruptive innovations to conquer neglected markets. Therefore, cost reduction is also a result of innovation in contract design.

Furthermore, cost reduction has systemic implications. By allowing smaller companies access to strategic consulting, a more competitive and dynamic environment is created, in which the quality of decisions is not the privilege of a few. Porter (1985) already argued that an industry's competitive advantage depends on its collective capacity to innovate. When the cost barrier is reduced, space is created for greater strategic experimentation and a greater diversity of solutions, strengthening the business ecosystem as a whole.

It is important to highlight, however, that the search for cost reduction cannot compromise the quality of deliveries. Mintzberg (2011) warns that superficial diagnoses, produced only

to reduce prices can lead to misguided decisions and compromise organizational sustainability. In this sense, the economic reconfiguration of consulting needs to be accompanied by quality assurance mechanisms, preventing democratization from translating into precariousness.

Another relevant effect is the redistribution of value within the sector. While large firms concentrate revenues in hierarchical structures, networks of micro-consultants allow for a broader circulation of profits, benefiting independent professionals and local communities.
Nonaka and Takeuchi (1997) argue that organizational knowledge creation is strengthened when it occurs in a distributed, rather than centralized, manner. The logic of cost reduction, therefore, is aligned with a logic of economic redistribution and social inclusion.

Finally, cost reduction should be seen as a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for consolidating the model. If not accompanied by reliability, innovation, and skills development, it can become a structural weakness. Chesbrough (2010) emphasizes that service innovation must balance economic efficiency with quality and legitimacy. Therefore, cost reduction should be understood as part of a broader reconfiguration of strategic consulting, which also includes new governance models and new forms of value creation.

7. Impacts on the Rationality and Quality of the Organizational Decision-Making Process

Decision-making is one of the most critical elements of strategic management, and its quality directly influences an organization's competitiveness. Herbert Simon (1997), when formulating the concept of "bounded rationality," emphasized that managers lack perfect information or unlimited time to analyze all alternatives, making their choices subject to bias and incompleteness. In this context, data-driven micro-consultant networks represent a potential way to mitigate these limitations by providing evidence-based diagnostics and predictive analytics, expanding organizations' practical rationality.

The decentralization of advisory knowledge, combined with the use of data science tools, allows for faster and more informed decision-making. Davenport and Harris (2017) argue that data-driven companies achieve superior performance precisely by reducing reliance on intuition and increasing the reliability of their decision-making processes. For small and medium-sized companies, which have historically made decisions based on personal experience or simplified heuristics, the democratization of consulting means access to a level of rationality previously restricted to large corporations.

Another relevant impact is the pluralization of perspectives in the decision-making process. Mintzberg (2011) emphasizes that strategy is the result of a social and interpretative process, in which different actors dispute and negotiate meanings. By including multiple consultants, coming from different contexts and backgrounds, decentralized networks increase the diversity of views, reducing

reducing the risk of unilateral decisions and increasing the adherence of strategies to local realities. This pluralization is essential in a globalized environment, where complexity demands multiple points of analysis.

The rationality enhanced by micro-consultant networks also impacts corporate governance. Porter (1985) had already argued that competitive advantage depends on the ability to formulate consistent strategies that are coherent with the external environment. By integrating specialized, data-driven consultants, organizations gain more robust input to structure their governance and reduce strategic risks. This translates into greater legitimacy with stakeholders and greater resilience in the face of crises.

It is important to emphasize that improving rationality does not eliminate the political dimension of the decision-making process. As Pfeffer (1992) observes, organizational decisions are shaped by power relations and interests. Thus, even with more reliable data and analyses, disputes between internal narratives and agendas continue to exist. In this scenario, the role of consultants is also that of mediators, capable of translating technical information into understandable arguments and bringing different groups together around viable consensuses.

However, the inclusion of independent consultants in the decision-making process raises legitimacy challenges. In organizations accustomed to centralized decision-making, there may be resistance to accepting external recommendations, especially when they contradict the intuition of senior managers. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1997) point out that creating organizational knowledge requires mutual trust, which involves time and building bonds. Therefore, the positive impact on rationality also depends on the consultants' ability to build credibility.

In short, data-driven micro-consultant networks have the potential to improve the quality of organizational decisions, but this impact isn't automatic. It depends on the integration of technical evidence, diverse perspectives, and political mediation. The democratization of consulting expands access to sophisticated analytical inputs, but its effectiveness only becomes concrete when these inputs are legitimately and strategically incorporated into internal governance processes.

8. Skills Development and Knowledge Transfer in Advisory Ecosystems

The democratization of strategic consulting is not limited to offering diagnoses or recommendations; it also plays a decisive role in developing organizational competencies. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1997) argue that organizational knowledge is
created through the continuous interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge, in a process of socialization, externalization, combination and internalization (SECI model). Micro-networks

Data-driven consultants enhance this cycle by transferring expertise and methodologies in a more direct, accessible, and interactive way.

One of the main impacts of this model is the strengthening of the analytical capabilities of the companies served. By incorporating data analysis practices into their routine, even small organizations develop skills that make them less dependent on future consulting services. Drucker (2016) already predicted that the knowledge worker would be the central figure of the modern economy. In this sense, decentralized consulting networks function as incubators of analytical skills, preparing managers and teams to operate in complex environments.

Knowledge transfer also occurs through the practice of co-creation. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) emphasize that value is generated when companies and clients actively interact, sharing experiences and learning. By working side by side with micro-consultants, managers internalize practices and tools, gradually gaining autonomy.
This process differs from the traditional model, in which reports were delivered unilaterally, with no room for effective organizational learning.

Another important point is the development of digital skills. In an increasingly technology-driven world, companies that interact with data-savvy consultants end up incorporating skills in tools such as business intelligence, machine learning, and interactive dashboards. Chesbrough (2010) argues that service innovation requires the integration of new technologies into everyday organizational life, something that is more easily achieved when there is direct interaction with specialized professionals. Thus, the multiplier effect of consultant networks goes beyond specific problem-solving, contributing to the structural transformation of companies.

Skills development is not limited to client companies, but also affects consultants themselves. By working in networks, these professionals are challenged to constantly update their knowledge, interact with experts from different fields, and adapt their practices to diverse realities. Mintzberg (2011) points out that management is a dynamic practice, built on a daily basis and subject to constant change. Therefore, consultants also benefit from the model, expanding their repertoire and consolidating a path of continuous learning.

This process of skills transfer and development has macroeconomic effects.
In emerging countries, where the gap in management knowledge is wide, the work of micro-consultants can contribute to strengthening the business community and disseminating modern management practices. Porter (1985) argues that a nation's competitiveness depends on its companies' ability to adopt innovative strategies. In this sense, decentralized consulting networks represent a mechanism for inclusion and knowledge dissemination on a systemic scale.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that skills development is only consolidated when accompanied by institutionalization mechanisms. The creation of training programs,

Certifications and communities of practice can transform one-off knowledge transfer into continuous and structured processes. Thus, data-driven micro-consultant networks not only democratize access to consulting services but also the production and dissemination of strategic skills.

9. Conclusion: Future Perspectives and Challenges of the Democratization of Strategic Consulting

The analysis developed throughout this article has allowed us to understand that the democratization of strategic consulting, enabled by networks of data-driven micro-consultants, represents not only an economic transformation, but also a social, political, and epistemological one. The decentralization of knowledge breaks down historical barriers, expands accessibility, and redefines the role of consultants in the digital economy. However, like any disruptive innovation process, it brings with it challenges that must be addressed to ensure its legitimacy and sustainability.

The seven criteria analyzed — accessibility, scalability, reliability, technological innovation, cost reduction, impacts on the decision-making process and skills development — show that the new model has high potential for inclusion and competitive strengthening. However, they also reveal inherent tensions, such as the need for standardization, regulation, and ongoing training. Chesbrough (2010) warns that service innovation depends on mechanisms of trust, without which openness can become fragility. This warning is crucial for the consolidation of consultant networks.

Another key point is that democratization cannot be confused with precariousness. Mintzberg (2011) insists that strategic management requires analytical depth and interpretative sensitivity and cannot be reduced to superficial diagnoses. Thus, the promise of low cost must be accompanied by methodological quality, otherwise it will compromise the model's credibility. This balance between inclusion and excellence will be crucial for the future of consulting.

On the technological front, the expansion of artificial intelligence, blockchain, and predictive analytics tools tends to strengthen the decentralized model. Davenport and Harris (2017) indicate that the adoption of data-driven practices will increasingly be a prerequisite for organizational survival. This means that micro-consultant networks will be in a privileged position to meet new demands, as long as they can integrate technology and human judgment in a balanced way.

The social implications are also relevant. The inclusion of small businesses and individual entrepreneurs in the strategic debate strengthens local economies, generates systemic competitiveness, and reduces inequalities in access to knowledge. Porter (1985)

had argued that the competitiveness of nations is rooted in their companies. Therefore, democratizing consulting also means democratizing societies' capacity for innovation.

In perspective, the consolidation of this model will depend on three main factors: (i) the creation of validation protocols that ensure reliability; (ii) the continuous development of digital and analytical skills by consultants; and (iii) public and institutional policies that promote digital inclusion and ethical regulation. Without these elements, democratization may be weakened or become precarious. With them, it could constitute one of the most significant advances in strategic management in the 21st century.

Thus, we conclude that the democratization of strategic consulting is an irreversible phenomenon, but one that is still evolving. Its future will depend on the ability to balance inclusion with quality, technology with ethics, and innovation with legitimacy. More than just reducing the cost of services, it's about rethinking the ways we produce and disseminate strategic knowledge on a global scale.

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