PART IV

Competing for Ranking and Recognition

Part III of the book examined how industry analysts help technology adopters navigate hype by evaluating, visualising, and forecasting technology trends. We now turn to the other side of this dynamic and examine how technology vendors respond to increasing numbers of analyst evaluations. As hype in the digital economy has grown, the number and variety of promissory products, especially rankings-based assessments, have proliferated (Fourcade & Healy, 2024). Vendors now operate in a highly structured environment in which they are routinely asked to articulate their 'vision' and provide evidence of their 'ability to execute' it. This section examines the rise of rankings, and the increasingly sophisticated hype strategies vendors employ to maintain their positions within these rankings.

In Chapter 8, *Managing the Metrics*, we discuss not only a transformation in how hype is produced but also a shift in hype's role. Vendors are compelled to craft substantiated, realistic narratives and invest in specialised expertise – such as analyst relations (AR) – to secure favourable rankings. We will show that hype is now deeply embedded in the digital economy, governed by structured processes and professional actors. AR experts have become instrumental in crafting these narratives, preparing for evaluations, and strategically positioning vendors. As such, hype is redefined as a professionalised, credible process of narrative construction, rather than as mere exaggerated claims. Vendors with sophisticated AR teams engage more proactively with industry analysts, translating naive promissory narratives into ones that directly address industry analysts' concerns. This dynamic aligns with research showing that rankings can encourage 'reactivity' (Espeland et al., 2016). We extend this notion by demonstrating how vendors can gain substantial opportunities by developing

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promissory strategies that industry analysts can readily assimilate and adopt. As we will see in this chapter, vendors are not only learning to respond to rankings but also actively shaping them. They refine narratives to match evaluative criteria, strategically position themselves to stand out in crowded markets, and even lobby for the creation of new market categories.

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