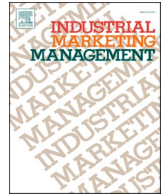




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B2B digital platform capability and sustainable positioning: Do knowledge depth, knowledge breadth, and agility matter?

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ABSTRACT

Given the growing importance of B2B digital platform capabilities for competitive advantage, research on its antecedents and outcomes in the business-to-business context remains scarce. To address this gap, we built on dynamic capability theory to examine how B2B organizations' digital platform capabilities contribute to sustainable positioning. Specifically, we examined the direct and indirect associations (via organizational knowledge depth, breadth, and agility) between digital platform capabilities and sustainable positioning. Additionally, we explored the moderating role of leader boundary-spanning behaviors in the relationship between digital platform capabilities and organizational knowledge depth and breadth. Our study based on two-source survey data from top management in Chinese manufacturing firms. The findings fully support all our proposed hypotheses. Digital platform capabilities significantly enhance sustainable positioning, both directly and through improved organizational knowledge depth, breadth, and agility. Furthermore, leader boundary-spanning behaviors strengthen the impact of digital platform capabilities on both knowledge depth and breadth. These insights offer practical implications for B2B firms seeking to leverage digital platform capabilities to enhance knowledge depth, breadth, agility, and sustainable market positioning.

1. Introduction

Sustainability is a current area of attention for academics, practitioners, and policymakers alike (Gogia, Gupta, & Rathi, 2023; Van Loo et al., 2015). In the business-to-business (B2B) domain, environmental concerns are crucial because the firms involved use more resources and their manufacturing processes place a greater burden on the environment than their business-to-consumers (B2C) counterparts (Kapitan, Kennedy, & Berth, 2019). Due to mounting pressure from the government, environmental organizations, and stakeholders. According to Usman, Del Giudice, Papa, Singh, and Khalid (2025), most consumers consider the environmental consequences of their buying decisions. Therefore—and due to mounting pressure from governments, environmental organizations, and stakeholders—the majority of B2B buyers prefer to buy products and services from organizations that integrate and promote sustainable business practices in their business operations (Casidy & Lie, 2023; Gogia et al., 2023). As such, B2B firms focus more

on sustainable positioning, which has emerged as an important marketing and strategic tool suited to exhibit their commitment to sustainable practices and to differentiate themselves from their rivals (Costa & Azevedo, 2024; Kapitan et al., 2019).

In response to competitive pressure, many B2B enterprises adopt and use digital platforms to achieve market advantage. The literature highlights how digital platforms are integral to firms' value propositions, transforming the way they succeed by providing global reach and enabling connections with customers, partners, and suppliers (Shree, Singh, Paul, Hao, & Xu, 2021). Digital platforms have revolutionized the ways in which organizations function and have enabled the establishment of distinct communities through streamlined online marketplaces (Bonina, Koskinen, Eaton, & Gawer, 2021). Notably, digital platforms—which make it possible for firms to easily communicate with external partners (Cenamor, Parida, & Wincent, 2019)—are key tools for the implementation of sustainable and innovative strategies (Wang, Wan, Ma, Zhou, & Chen, 2023). Prior studies have revealed that digital

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platforms can improve sustainable development by fostering networks, knowledge exchange, and value co-creation (Hellemans, Porter, & Diriker, 2022; Wang et al., 2023). According to Hellemans et al. (2022), digital platforms can assist in striking a balance between environmental goals and economic gains, enabling businesses to optimize their operations in sustainable ways; as such, they serve as channels suited to create awareness about environmental initiatives and help businesses to integrate sustainable practices into their operations, procedures, and processes. Overall, sustainable positioning is important in fostering the growth of platform-based B2B enterprises and in creating long-term value for stakeholders.

Previous studies have made valuable contributions by revealing some of the significant outcomes of sustainable firm positioning. For instance, they have suggested that sustainable positioning influences buyer willingness to pay premium prices and switching intentions (Casidy & Lie, 2023; Casidy & Yan, 2022). Additionally, it enhances brand image, consumer loyalty, and sustainability promotion (Cantele & Zardini, 2018; Casidy & Lie, 2023). Sustainable positioning offers opportunities for firms in relation to developing new product offerings (Costa & Azevedo, 2024; Shashi, Centobelli, Cerchione, & Mittal, 2021) for business success (Lee & Park, 2016). Sustainable positioning plays a key role in the survival and long-term success of firms because it helps them stand out and gain competitive advantage as a result of their sustainable actions (Bocken, Short, Rana, & Evans, 2014; Casidy & Yan, 2022). Studies have also indicated that incorporating sustainable actions and activities into firms' business operations, strategies, and stakeholder communication is important for sustainable positioning (Hu, Chong, & Wang, 2019; Rahman, Bag, Gupta, & Sivarajah, 2023). Contrasting the prevailing scholarly focus on the outcomes of firms' sustainable positioning, relatively little research has hitherto been conducted on the antecedents of sustainable firm positioning in the B2B context. Addressing this gap is important because a lack of understanding of how sustainable positioning can be achieved may impede organizations' competitive advantage (Shashi et al., 2021) and inhibit their endeavors to protect the natural environment (Bocken et al., 2014; Casidy & Yan, 2022). Moreover, without a comprehensive of these antecedents, firms may find it challenging to drive sustainability-focused innovations, enhance resource efficiency, and build stakeholder trust.

Based on the aforementioned knowledge gaps and in response to recent calls (Liao, Chen, Chen, & Song, 2024; Liu, Long, Fan, Wan, & Liu, 2023; Wang et al., 2023), we drew from the dynamic capability theory perspective (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997) to propose a positive relationship between digital platform capabilities and sustainable positioning. Digital platform capabilities refer to the skills whereby organizations build connections with other businesses via online platforms (Cenamor et al., 2019; Liao et al., 2024; Wang, Tian, Li, & Xiao, 2022). According to Cenamor et al. (2019), digital platform capabilities comprise those pertaining to integration and reconfiguration. Digital platform integration capabilities are explained as the skills needed to share distinctive information within and across firms, which, in turn, enhances communication and collaboration (Cenamor et al., 2019; Liao et al., 2024). Digital platform reconfiguration capabilities refer to the skills required to reorganize platform resources using standardized interfaces and modular design in procedures, functions, and applications (Cenamor et al., 2019; Liao et al., 2024).

Specifically, we considered digital platform capabilities (i.e., integration and reconfiguration skills) because dynamic capability theory underlines their strong potential to bring change to current firm resources, external environments, and ecosystems (Barreto, 2010). Additionally, dynamic capability theory posits that firms sense and seize opportunities and reconfigure resources and structures to make market-oriented and timely decisions (Teece, 2007). The main focus of digital platform capabilities (i.e., integration and reconfiguration) is on integrating valuable firm resources to deal with changing market environments, leading to improved firm performance (Cenamor et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2023). As such, we contended that digital platform integration and

reconfiguration capabilities enable B2B firms to respond to customer preferences for green products and to international pressure to reduce their carbon footprints.

Furthermore, in explaining how digital platform capabilities lead to sustainable positioning in the B2B context, organizational knowledge depth and breadth and organizational agility are proposed as mediation mechanisms in the relationship between digital platform capabilities and sustainable positioning. Knowledge breadth is understood as the range of areas or domains within which an organization is knowledgeable, such as target markets, technologies, and customers (Laursen & Salter, 2006; Yao, Li, & Liang, 2021). Knowledge depth is explained as the amount of knowledge held by an organization within the specific domains or fields that make up its key business focus (Laursen & Salter, 2006; Xu, 2015; Yao et al., 2021). We considered knowledge breadth and depth because previous studies have indicated that they complement each other and play a central role in firm performance (Moorthy & Polley, 2010; Yang, Jin, & Sheng, 2017) and innovation (Xu, 2015). Knowledge depth is important because it is deeply ingrained in organizational processes and is hard to decontextualize and emulate, enabling mastery and groundbreaking advancements. At the same time, knowledge breadth widens organizational perspectives, encouraging cross-disciplinary insights and the ability to pivot in evolving market dynamics (Kim, Im, & Slater, 2013). Collectively, knowledge depth and breadth enable the development of robust foundations, allowing firms to navigate complexities, innovate continuously, and remain agile amid ever-changing business landscapes (Claudy, Peterson, & Pagell, 2016; Li & Calantone, 1998; Wang, Yin, Coles, & Chen, 2024).

Organizational agility represents a firm's ability to rapidly change or adapt in response to changing environments and market forces (Tallon & Pinsonneault, 2011; Zahoor, Khan, Donbesuur, Khan, & Rajwani, 2024). More precisely, organizational agility is explained as the close coordination among a business and its stakeholders that enables it to respond to unpredictable and continuously changing market dynamics (Cegarra-Navarro, Soto-Acosta, & Wensley, 2016; Khan, 2020; Khan, Khan, & Knight, 2025; Van Oosterhout, Waarts, & Van Hillegersberg, 2006). We considered organizational agility because it is crucial in enabling organizations to achieve their objectives in uncertain environments (Van Oosterhout et al., 2006). Studies have suggested that organizational agility enables firms to develop superior products and services (Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2016) and enhance their performance (Khan, 2020; Salehzadeh, Pool, Mohseni, & Tahani, 2017) in highly dynamic environments (Nijssen & Paauwe, 2012). Furthermore, organizational agility has the potential to enable firms to efficiently redirect and redeploy their resources, strategies, and structures, ensuring that they remain aligned with any evolving trends and opportunities (Teece, Peteraf, & Leih, 2016). Consequently, firms seize emerging prospects and challenges, such as increasing stakeholder pressure and demands for eco-friendly products and services. As such, we contended that knowledge depth and breadth make firms more agile, ultimately aiding them in positioning themselves as more sustainable and eco-friendlier.

Finally, we contended that the influence of digital platform capabilities on knowledge depth and breadth is contingent on leader boundary-spanning behaviors. Leader boundary-spanning behavior refers to the efforts made by leaders to develop long-term relationships with key external market actors—such as other firms, suppliers, and customers—to the end of obtaining valuable information, resources, and support suited to achieve work unit tasks and objectives (Kim, Lee, & Yun, 2022; Marrone, Tesluk, & Carson, 2007). We considered leader boundary-spanning behavior because individuals highly capable of engaging in them are particularly suited to contribute to creative firm performance (Zheng & Ahmed, 2022) and innovative behaviors (Zhu, Xin, & Li, 2023). Further, as they comprise unique and broad ranges of externally oriented activities, leader boundary-spanning behavior assist firms in acquiring resources (e.g., organizational knowledge), mapping their external environments, and organizing tasks with other entities (Guo, Heidl, Hollenbeck, Yu, & Howe, 2022). Consequently, such

unique behaviors contribute to the survival and overall success of firms (Marrone, Quigley, Prussia, & Dienhart, 2022). Prior research has indicated that leader boundary-spanning behavior yield various positive outcomes such as cross-boundary collaborations, collaborative innovation, and interfirm performance (Liu, Jiang, Chen, Pan, & Lin, 2018). As such, we inferred that, compared to others, leaders capable of engaging in boundary-spanning behaviors may develop and maintain relationships with external entities and acquire any support they need to more effectively use and integrate digital platform capabilities, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of organizational knowledge depth and breadth.

Our study contributes to four important literature streams in the B2B context. First, it offers key insights for research on sustainable firm positioning in the B2B domain. Whereas previous studies have highlighted the intra-firm factors that contribute to sustainable positioning (Gogia et al., 2023; Kapitan et al., 2019), ours shows that digital platform capabilities can play a key role in sustainable firm positioning, extending the literature on its antecedents in the B2B context. Second, the literature on digital platform capabilities has largely focused on how they influence firm innovation performance, sustainability-oriented innovations, and economic outcomes (Cenamor et al., 2019; Jiang, Yang, & Gai, 2023; Liu et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023). However, the role played by digital platforms or inter-firm-related factors has hitherto received little attention (Casidy & Lie, 2023; Casidy & Yan, 2022; Gogia et al., 2023). To the best of our knowledge, prior studies have predominantly neglected to investigate how digital platform capabilities help B2B firms to achieve sustainable positioning. Thus, our study extends the literature on the nomological network of the outcomes of digital platform capability (Casidy & Lie, 2023; Casidy & Yan, 2022). Third, our study highlights the important yet overlooked role played by organizational knowledge depth and breadth and organizational agility as serial mediators in the relationship between digital platform capabilities and sustainable firm positioning. In doing so, it contributes to the literature on organizational knowledge depth and breadth (Claudy et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2017), as well as to that on organization agility (Hoonsopon & Puriwat, 2019; Pulakos, Kantrowitz, & Schneider, 2019). Finally, our study underlines the role played by leader boundary-spanning behavior in enhancing the effectiveness of digital platform capabilities for organizational knowledge depth and breadth. While the literature has demonstrated that leader boundary-spanning behavior is associated with several positive outcomes, such as interfirm collaboration, innovation, and economic performance (Liu et al., 2018), we contribute to it by identifying leader boundary-spanning behavior as a boundary condition in the relationship between digital platform capabilities and organizational knowledge. Our proposed model is depicted in Fig. 1.

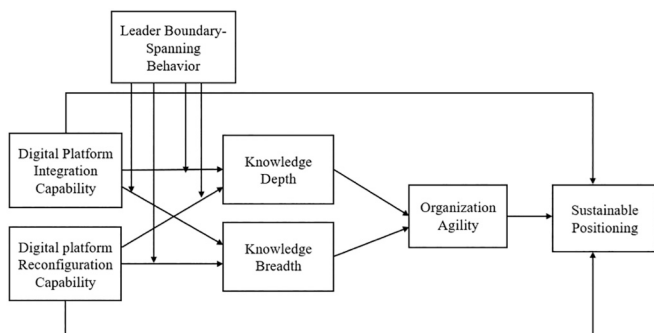


Fig. 1. The conceptual model.

2. Theory and hypotheses development

2.1. Dynamic capability view

To illuminate the relationships proposed in our study, we drew insights from dynamic capability theory (Teece et al., 1997), since it is more robust, strategic, and flexible framework over resource-based view (Wu, 2010). Dynamic capability view is deemed more appropriate in uncertain, complex, and constantly changing settings due to its focus on the firm ability to adapt, reconfigure, and innovate over time (Vogel & Güttel, 2013). It highlights the importance of adaptability, reconfiguring existing resources, developing new expertise and skills to address changing business landscapes (Teece et al., 1997). However, resource-based view is more appropriate in stable settings, where the focus of the firm is more on existing capabilities and resources rather than the ongoing process of transformation (Wu, 2010).

The dynamic capability view underlines the importance of any competencies and capabilities suited to transform a firm's current resources, operations, procedures, and business environment (Ambrosini & Bowman, 2009; Teece et al., 1997); more precisely, a company's capacity to innovate and adjust in response to internal and external changes (Bowman & Ambrosini, 2003; Wu, 2010). Dynamic capabilities emerge from a firm's procedures, practices, and activities intended to integrate, develop, and reconfigure its internal and external competencies to deal with evolving and constantly changing business settings (Bogers, Chesbrough, Heaton, & Teece, 2019; Teece et al., 1997). Barreto (2010) defined a firm's dynamic capabilities as the problem-solving skills that stem from its inclination to identify opportunities and challenges, make timely and market driven decisions, and continuously improve its resource base.

Dynamic capabilities are made up of three fundamental elements: sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring (Teece, 2007). Sensing is viewed as an organization's ability to uncover and recognize opportunities both internally and across its entire business value network and ecosystem. (Teece, 2007). It includes activities such as identifying customers and business needs, developing R&D and technology, staying up to date, and paying attention to any innovations introduced by business partners (Teece, 2007). To attain a competitive edge and foster expansion, companies proactively seek out business prospects across their internal and external networks (Teece, 2007). Seizing, which occurs once a company has sensed an opportunity, is described as the act of realizing that opportunity's potential and value (Teece, 2007). More specifically, it involves determining enterprise boundaries and taking proactive actions aimed at capitalizing new trends, changes in the industry, and evolving business needs (Teece, 2007). Finally, reconfiguring entails the adaptation, modification, adjustment, and reorganization of a firm's resources, capabilities, and structure in response to any changes in external settings (Teece, 2007). Indeed, reconfiguration is required to ensure that a company efficiently takes advantage of any identified opportunities and mitigates any sensed risks. To put it briefly, the dynamic capability view emphasizes the importance of staying updated about opportunities, taking the proactive steps needed to seize them, and modifying the organizational structure, operational procedures, and processes to take full advantage of any identified business prospects.

2.2. Digital B2B platform capabilities and sustainable firm positioning

In this study, we drew upon dynamic capability theory to explain the relationship between digital platform capabilities (i.e., integration and reconfiguration) and sustainable firm positioning. According to dynamic capability theory, firms should identify any opportunities and novel trends that present themselves in both the internal and external settings that support their survival and success, plan proactive strategic initiatives, and make changes to their structures and procedures in order to take advantage of such opportunities (Teece, 2007). Notably, organizational capabilities play a role in creating and delivering the superior

technological value suited to enable businesses to innovate, adapt to changes, and enhance competitiveness and performance to achieve strategic goals in dynamic business settings (Nasution & Mavondo, 2008). In this study, we chose digital platform capabilities because of their suitability to aid firms in achieving sustainable goals by fostering technological innovation, operational efficiency, and sustainability-driven process innovation (Wang et al., 2023). Dynamic capability theory suggests that, to achieve long-term success and a sustainable competitive advantage, a firm must recognize any business opportunities, develop plans to take advantage of them, and adjust and align its procedures and practices with the changing business environment (Ambrosini & Bowman, 2009).

Digital platform integration capabilities encompass seamlessly connecting IT systems, enabling real-time data sharing, and aggregating sustainability-related information (Hellemans et al., 2022). Firms endowed with digital platform integration capabilities successfully develop data-driven decision-making processes, enhance automation, and optimize resource utilization to achieve organizational goals (Liao et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2022). As such, digital platform integration capabilities allow firms to access updated data and precise sustainability-related insights, facilitating their achievement of sustainable positioning. By enhancing internal data integration and streamlining sustainability efforts, businesses can optimize internal resources, reduce inefficiencies, and enhance sustainability outcomes (Inigo, Ritala, & Albareda, 2020; Wang et al., 2023). Digital platform capabilities also strengthen firms' ability to track, coordinate, and respond to sustainability challenges using digital tools, ensuring timely adaptation to environmental opportunities (Hellemans et al., 2022).

Digital platform reconfiguration capabilities, meanwhile, enable firms to continuously adapt and refine their digital resources, ensuring alignment with evolving sustainability demands (Wang et al., 2023). From a dynamic capability perspective, digital platform reconfiguration capabilities empower firms to upgrade IT infrastructure, reconfigure technological resources, and implement new digital solutions in response to emerging market and environmental changes (Hellemans et al., 2022). In other words, technological resource reconfiguration fosters sustainability-driven process optimization, enabling firms to enhance eco-friendly practices and implement energy-efficient digital solutions, thereby driving sustainable firm positioning. Notably, digital platform reconfiguration capabilities allow businesses to deploy and integrate emerging technologies, refine internal workflows, and optimize digital tools (Cenamor et al., 2019) to enhance sustainability efforts. Firms that adopt modular IT applications, implement sustainability tracking tools, and continuously refine their technological infrastructure can position their business as more sustainable (Wang et al., 2023). Indeed, digital platform reconfiguration capabilities assist businesses in rethinking and optimizing internal sustainability operations and processes, contributing to sustainable positioning. Thus, we argue that digital platform capabilities enable firms to integrate technological solutions, optimize sustainability practices, and enhance digital adaptability, thereby improving their sustainable positioning. Based on the above arguments, we formulated the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1a. . There is a positive relationship between B2B digital platform integration capabilities and sustainable positioning.

Hypothesis 1b. . There is a positive relationship between B2B digital platform reconfiguration capabilities and sustainable positioning.

2.3. Digital platform capabilities and organizational knowledge depth and breadth

Using the lens of dynamic capability theory, we explicated how digital platform capabilities (i.e., integration and reconfiguration) contribute to organizational knowledge depth and breadth. According to Teece (2007), dynamic capability theory focuses on an organization's ability to manage, integrate, and leverage resources to successfully

navigate and quickly adapt to changing business situations. Dynamic capability theory posits that digital platform integration and reconfiguration capabilities are significant resources suited to enhance market knowledge and achieve sustainable goals and long-term success. Digital platform capabilities enhance dynamic capabilities by strengthening a firm's ability to acquire, integrate, and apply knowledge. Grounded in dynamic capability theory, businesses with strong digital platform capabilities can identify key knowledge trends through data-driven insights, capitalize on them by analysing and applying domain-specific information, and adapt their knowledge base to sustain expertise in key area. Digital platform integration and reconfiguration capabilities enable firms to access and exploit market data and information from various internal and external sources (Cenamor et al., 2019). By integrating these diverse data, a firm can gain in-depth knowledge in particular areas of expertise and acquire a broader perspective on market trends, customer attitudes and behaviors, and technological advancements, thereby enriching its organizational knowledge depth and breadth. Indeed, digital platform integration and reconfiguration capabilities enable firms to rapidly adapt to evolving business situations, make informed decisions, and collaborate with other firms, thus enhancing the exchange of ideas, expertise, skills, and professional practices that can enhance knowledge depth and breadth.

Prior research has suggested that digital platform capabilities (i.e., integration and reconfiguration) enhance service innovation (Wang et al., 2022) and positively contribute to small and medium-sized enterprises' (SMEs) network capabilities and performance (Cenamor et al., 2019). According to Liu et al. (2023), digital platform capabilities drive organizational, technological innovation and enable firms to respond better to highly changeable market needs. Further, firms can develop or integrate digital platform capabilities to design innovative and novel strategies in fast-changing environments (Liu et al., 2023), which ultimately facilitates them in expanding their knowledge bases. As such, we contended that digital platform integration and reconfiguration capabilities contribute to organizational knowledge breadth and depth.

Hypothesis 2a. . The B2B digital platform integration capability is positively related to organizational knowledge depth.

Hypothesis 2b. . The B2B digital platform integration capability is positively related to organizational knowledge breadth.

Hypothesis 3a. . The B2B digital platform reconfiguration capability is positively related to organizational knowledge depth.

Hypothesis 3b. . The B2B digital platform reconfiguration capability is positively related to organizational knowledge breadth.

2.4. Organizational knowledge depth and breadth and organizational agility

Dynamic capability theory (Teece, 2007) underscores the pivotal role played by organizational adaptation in securing competitive advantages in dynamic environments, suggesting that organizations continuously evolve and adjust to changing circumstances. The theory suggests that organizations develop dynamic capabilities, i.e., processes and routines that enable them to integrate, build, and reconfigure their internal and external competencies in order to address rapidly changing environments (Teece, 2007). Based on the dynamic capability view, we conceptualized organizational agility as a significant dynamic capability suited to enable firms to adapt to changing market conditions and requirements. Scholars investigating dynamic capabilities have acknowledged that knowledge is pivotal in developing them (Easterby-Smith & Prieto, 2008). They have asserted that the foundation of a firm's capabilities (e.g., its organizational agility) is continually formed by its capacity to generate, assimilate, transfer, and apply knowledge (Easterby-Smith & Prieto, 2008; Teece, 2007). Knowledge facilitates the integration, development, and reconfiguration of both internal and external competencies, enabling organizations to effectively respond to evolving

market conditions, technological advancements, and competitive pressures (Easterby-Smith & Prieto, 2008; Khalid et al., 2025). Through the lens of dynamic capability theory, firms with deep domain-specific knowledge can better identify industry trends, anticipate challenges, and adapt to disruptions, enabling informed decision-making, proactive responses, and sustained competitive advantage. Moreover, knowledge depth and breadth enhance a firm's ability to capitalize on opportunities by developing specialized solutions and optimizing resource allocation for greater adaptability. Through continuous learning and expertise refinement, firms can evolve their internal capabilities to sustain agility in dynamic markets. Studies have suggested that the possession of deep knowledge within specific domains enables organizations to refine their processes, enhance efficiency, and capitalize on their core competencies, thereby fostering agility in responding to familiar challenges or opportunities (Moorthy & Polley, 2010; Yang et al., 2017). By continually refining and expanding their depth of knowledge in key areas, organizations can thus develop the capacity to quickly adapt to changes in their operating environments.

Knowledge breadth complements knowledge depth by fostering dynamic capabilities related to exploration and innovation. A broad knowledge base equips an organization with a set of perspectives, insights, and resources that enable it to explore new markets, technologies, and strategic directions (Moorthy & Polley, 2010; Xu & Cavusgil, 2019). Organizations endowed with wide-ranging knowledge can identify emerging opportunities, anticipate potential threats, and adapt their strategies by actively seeking out and experimenting with novel ideas and approaches (Xu, 2015). This capacity for exploration and experimentation enhances organizational agility by enabling organizations to navigate uncertainty, capitalize on new opportunities, and effectively respond to disruptive forces in the market landscape. Indeed, organizational knowledge depth and breadth improve problem-solving skills, encourage creativity and adaptation, facilitate learning, skills, and information exchanges, and shape business processes, procedures, and structures (Claudy et al., 2016; Li & Calantone, 1998). Consequently, organizations can gain the ability to respond to market opportunities and challenges in rapidly changing environments. As such, drawing on dynamic capability theory, we argued that knowledge depth and breadth play important roles in developing organizational agility. Thus, we formulated the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 4a. . There is a positive relationship between knowledge depth and organizational agility.

Hypothesis 4b. . There is a positive relationship between knowledge breadth and organizational agility.

2.5. Organizational agility and sustainable positioning

Dynamic capability theory underscores the pivotal role played by dynamic capabilities as the mechanisms through which organizations continuously evolve and adjust to changing circumstances (Teece, 2007). In the context of dynamic capability theory, organizational agility can be seen as a manifestation of an organization's dynamic capabilities, that assist firms to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external resources in response to changing circumstances. As a key dynamic capability, organizational agility enhances firms' responsiveness to sustainability risks, regulatory changes, and evolving stakeholder expectations. Leveraging agility, businesses can adopt sustainable practices, develop innovative green solutions, and align operations with evolving environmental demands. Organizational agility facilitates the efficient allocation and utilization of resources, enabling firms to understand customer demands, competitive threats, and market disruptions (Felipe, Roldán, & Leal-Rodríguez, 2016; Nijssen & Paauwe, 2012). As such, it enables organizations to sense any external threats and opportunities and quickly align their internal capabilities with external market dynamics, driving innovation and maintaining relevance in ever-changing business landscapes (Felipe et al., 2016). As

such, we contend that organizational agility enables organizations to identify any emerging environmental risks, such as resource scarcity or regulatory shifts, and anticipate evolving demands for eco-friendly offerings. Therefore, agility can expedite an organization's development and deployment of sustainable initiatives—ranging from eco-friendly product designs to renewable energy solutions—that can help it position itself as an eco-friendly business. In essence, it drives continuous transformation, enabling firms to stay resilient and proactive in sustaining their positioning over time.

Organizations need to be agile to become competitive and achieve their goals in dynamic and hyper-competitive environments (Felipe et al., 2016; Ravichandran, 2018). Previous studies have indicated that organizational agility improves business functions, practices, operations, and procedures (Felipe et al., 2016; Nijssen & Paauwe, 2012). Importantly, organizational agility is deemed to be a key factor to firm performance success (Ravichandran, 2018). According to El-Khalil & Mezher (2020), agility is essential to implement and adopt sustainable practices, seize environmental opportunities, and adapt to new business situations. Furthermore, agile firms have the ability to design novel and innovative solutions to manage and mitigate any environmental uncertainties and risks (El-Khalil & Mezher, 2020). Firms that proactively address sustainability challenges are more likely to strengthen their market reputation, regulatory compliance, and stakeholder trust, reinforcing their sustainable positioning. As such, we argued that, by leveraging organizational agility, firms can effectively address any sustainability-related risks and challenges and drive positive changes in their practices and offerings, contributing to their achievement of a sustainable positioning. Thus, we posited:

Hypothesis 5. . Organizational agility is positively related to sustainable positioning.

2.6. Organizational knowledge depth and breadth and organizational agility as serial mediators

Grounded in dynamic capability theory, we understand that organizational knowledge depth, breadth, and agility assist and better equip firms to deal with emerging challenges and respond to market changes (El-Khalil & Mezher, 2020; Moorthy & Polley, 2010; Yang et al., 2017) which in turn contribute to the sustainable positioning. Organizational knowledge depth, breadth, and agility are complementary tools that enable firms to stay ahead of their competitors by driving innovation, streamlining processes, and improving business models to meet market and environmental needs. As such, organizational knowledge depth and breadth enable firms to acquire insights, expertise, capabilities, and information (Moorthy & Polley, 2010; Xu & Cavusgil, 2019) related to sustainability, advanced green technologies, and key stakeholders, while organizational agility enables firms to effectively address sustainability-related risks and challenges, and fostering innovative solutions (El-Khalil & Mezher, 2020) that contribute sustainable positioning. So far, the underlying premise of our arguments has been that digital platform integration and reconfiguration capabilities enable firms to develop, enhance, and acquire the key capabilities and information (i.e., knowledge depth and breadth) that are crucial for them to capture business opportunities and make informed decisions. In turn, organizational knowledge depth and breadth make firms more agile, which ultimately contributes to sustainable positioning. As such, we argue that organizational knowledge depth, breadth, and agility act as serial mediators through which digital platform integration and reconfiguration capabilities influence sustainable positioning in B2B settings. Thus, we posited:

Hypothesis 6a. . Organizational knowledge depth and organizational agility act as serial mediators in the relationship between the B2B digital platform integration capability and sustainable positioning.

Hypothesis 6b. . Organizational knowledge depth and organizational

agility act as serial mediators in the relationship between the B2B digital platform reconfiguration capability and sustainable positioning.

Hypothesis 7a. . Organizational knowledge breadth and organizational agility act as serial mediators in the relationship between the B2B digital platform integration capability and sustainable positioning.

Hypothesis 7b. . Organizational knowledge breadth and organizational agility act as serial mediators in the relationship between the B2B digital platform reconfiguration capability and sustainable positioning.

2.7. The moderating role of leader boundary-spanning behavior

The dynamic capability view suggests that firms recognize opportunities, make timely plans, engage in market-driven actions, and continuously update their resources to meet business needs and address contemporary challenges (Barreto, 2010; Teece, 2007). At the micro level, leaders play a key role in enacting dynamic capabilities by identifying and seizing environmental opportunities and transforming internal operations to support innovation and acquire competitive market position. Studies have suggested that long-term organizational success and continued growth is supported by leaders who perceive, identify, and seize business opportunities by successfully modifying organizational procedures and structures (Usman, Khalid, Boğan, Bani-Melhem, & Olya, 2025). Accordingly, we contend that leaders significantly influence how digital platform capabilities are leveraged for sustainable positioning by enhancing knowledge depth and breadth, and organizational agility. Specifically, we propose leader boundary-spanning behavior as a relevant moderator.

Studies have suggested that leaders proficient in boundary-spanning behaviors are more determined, more capable of building relationships, and more effective in communicating with different external stakeholders, which enables them to gain enhanced access to various valuable resources (Zheng & Ahmed, 2022; Zhu et al., 2023). Leaders who engage in boundary-spanning behaviors, such as networking with external stakeholders, collaborating across functional departments, or promoting knowledge-sharing initiatives, can enhance the firm's ability to reconfigure and integrate digital platform capabilities into existing knowledge systems. By breaking down silos and fostering cross-functional collaboration, these leaders enable the organization to deepen its expertise in specific domains, that align with the reconfiguration and transformation dimensions of dynamic capability view. Similarly, leaders who engage in boundary-spanning behaviors—e.g., by seeking out diverse perspectives, fostering external partnerships, or encouraging employees to explore emerging trends—can broaden their organizations' knowledge bases beyond their existing domains of expertise. By actively promoting cross-disciplinary collaborations and knowledge exchanges, these leaders can ensure that digital platform capabilities contribute to expanding the breadth of their organizations' knowledge. More determined and resourceful leaders engaging in higher levels of boundary-spanning behaviors are likely to be more effective in helping their organizations to benefit from digital platform capabilities and to contribute more to the depth and breadth of their organizations' knowledge. Thus, we formulated the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 8a. . Leader boundary-spanning behavior moderates the association of the B2B digital platform integration capability with knowledge depth such that the association is stronger in the presence of high levels of leader boundary-spanning behavior.

Hypothesis 8b. Leader boundary-spanning behavior moderates the association of the B2B digital platform integration capability with knowledge breadth such that the association is stronger in the presence of high levels of leader boundary-spanning behavior.

Hypothesis 9a. Leader boundary-spanning behavior moderates the association of the B2B digital platform reconfiguration capability with knowledge depth such that the association is stronger in the presence of

high levels of leader boundary-spanning behavior.

Hypothesis 9b. Leader boundary-spanning behavior moderates the association of the B2B digital platform reconfiguration capability with knowledge breadth such that the association is stronger in the presence of high levels of leader boundary-spanning behavior.

3. Method

3.1. Sample and procedure

Although digital platforms are present in both the B2B and B2C markets, we specifically focused on industrial platforms in the B2B setting. We did so for the following reasons: first, in digital environments, the B2B setting actors behave differently from their B2C counterparts (Jankova, Davies, Archer-Brown, Marder, & Yau, 2019), and second, the B2B digital commerce industrial platforms are almost double the size of their B2C counterparts (Jiang, Phang, Tan, & Chi, 2019). To test our hypotheses, we employed a questionnaire to collect data from various manufacturing firms operating in China.

We collected our study's data with the support of alumni of a Chinese public sector university who hold managerial positions in various Chinese manufacturing firms. The sample manufacturing firms operated across diverse industrial sectors, which included automotive, electronics, chemicals, textiles, pharmaceuticals, heavy machinery, precision machinery, renewable energy equipment, leather, food and beverage manufacturing, and ceramics. These sectors are relevant because they rely significantly on organizational knowledge to make them agile to maintain their competitive position in the competitive B2B markets. This sectoral diversity also strengthens the generalizability of our findings across different manufacturing industries.

Through the alumni, we were able to approach the top managers of 600 organizations (CEOs, general managers, and managing directors) to invite them to participate in our study. We provided them with a cover letter containing an assurance of anonymity and a brief introduction to the study. We also asked if they would agree to participate in our study. Out of those 600 senior managers, 476 accepted our invitation.

We collected data on digital platform capabilities, knowledge depth and breadth, leader boundary-spanning behavior, and organizational agility from our sample firms (in three phases) and data on sustainable positioning from their B2B buyers. In the first round, we sent our 476 sample managers a questionnaire related to digital platform capabilities, leader boundary-spanning behavior, and control variables and received 452 responses. After two weeks, we initiated round two, and we received responses from 416 managers. After two further weeks, we initiated round three, and we received responses from 372 managers. To maximize the response rates, we sent several reminders through our contacts working in the sample organizations.

After completing the three data collection phases with our sample firms, we started the process involving their B2B buyers. The alumni also provided the lists of their B2B buyers. We randomly chose five buyers for each of the 372 sample companies, the senior managers of which had responded in our first three data collection rounds. We asked the sample B2B buyers to answer questions pertaining to our sample firms' sustainable positioning. On average, we received three to four responses from the corresponding buyers, which we later aggregated in the analysis stage to match them to our sample firms' responses. After matching the data from our two sample sources and different rounds, the final dataset we retained and used for data analysis pertained to 365 firms.

We employed a time-lagged design to address the issues related to common method bias. Following previous studies (e.g., Bani-Melhem, Akhtar, Zahoor, Khalid, & Usman, 2025; Khalid et al., 2025), we used a two-week time lag, which is considered sufficient to reduce any potential bias (Karatepe, 2013). We analyzed the data using structural equation modeling (SEM) in Mplus (8.8).

3.2. Measures and variables

Unless otherwise stated, we measured all constructs using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

We assessed the digital platform integration capability by adapting a four-item scale ($\alpha = 0.84$) adapted from [Cenamor et al. \(2019\)](#). Sample item: “Our digital platform easily accesses data from our partners’ IT systems.” We assessed the digital platform reconfiguration capability by adapting a four-item scale ($\alpha = 0.85$) developed by [Cenamor et al. \(2019\)](#). Sample item: “Our digital platform can be easily extended to accommodate new IT applications or functions.”

We assessed organizational knowledge depth by using a four-item scale ($\alpha = 0.86$) developed by [Yang et al. \(2017\)](#). Sample item: “The knowledge of our firm in this industry is thorough.” We assessed organizational knowledge breadth by using a four-item scale ($\alpha = 0.84$) adapted from [Yang et al. \(2017\)](#). Sample item: “We effectively acquire market information from a diversified customer portfolio.”

We assessed organizational agility by adapting a four-item scale ($\alpha = 0.87$) developed by [Melián-Alzola, Domínguez-Falcón, and Martín-Santana \(2020\)](#). Sample item: “Our organization has the capacity to respond quickly to changes.”

We measured sustainable positioning (buyer-rated) by adapting nine items ($\alpha = 0.93$) from [Kapitan et al. \(2019\)](#). Sample item: “Our supplier is actively trying to produce less waste.”

We assessed leader boundary-spanning behavior by adapting six items ($\alpha = 0.96$) from [Ancona and Caldwell \(1992\)](#). Sample item: “I reach out to individuals outside of our organization who can offer expertise or ideas.”

3.3. Control variables

We controlled for firm size, firm age, and industry because these factors can influence organizational knowledge and organizational agility, thus potentially confounding our results ([Elsayed, 2006](#)). Indeed, larger firms may have more resources to invest in digital platform integration and reconfiguration, leading to varying levels of knowledge and agility. Likewise, older firms may have more established routines and knowledge management systems, affecting their ability to adapt to digital transformation. Further, different industry sectors may exhibit varying levels of adoption of digital platforms. Together, we understand that firm age, size, and industry sector can confound the results.

4. Results

4.1. Correlations and descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics and correlations among the variables are presented in [Table 1](#). All the correlations between the main variables of the study were found to be in the expected direction.

Table 1
Means and correlations.

Construct	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. DPIC	3.07	0.99									
2. DPRC	3.27	1.04	0.39**								
3. Knowledge depth	3.19	0.99	0.32**	0.24**							
4. Knowledge breadth	3.24	1.00	0.29**	0.35**	0.42**						
5. Organizational Agility	3.15	1.12	0.36**	0.29**	0.47**	0.29**					
6. Sustainable positioning	3.66	0.97	0.31**	0.30**	0.37**	0.28**	0.41**				
7. LBBs	3.48	1.32	0.10*	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.16**	0.02			
8. Firm age	14.68	8.39	0.05	0.04	0.10	0.03	0.12*	0.07	-0.11*		
9. Firm size			0.10	0.10	0.08	-0.02	0.10	0.08	0.03	-0.05	
10. Industry			-0.08	0.05	-0.03	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.02	-0.07	-0.09

Notes. N= 365. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$ level (2-tailed). * $p < 0.05$ level (2-tailed). SD = standard deviation. DPIC = Digital platform integration capability. DPRC = Digital platform reconfiguration capability. LBBs = Leader boundary-spanning behaviors.

4.2. Measurement model

To assess the measurement model—consisting of the digital platform integration capability, the digital platform reconfiguration capability, knowledge depth, knowledge breadth, organizational agility, sustainable positioning, and leader boundary-spanning behavior, we performed a confirmatory factor analysis in Mplus (8.8). All the items we found to be loaded significantly ($p < 0.01$). The fit indices, χ^2 (539) = 1484.45, $\chi^2/df = 2.75$, TLI = 0.90, CFI = 0.90, SRMR = 0.07, and RMSEA = 0.07, were found to show a good fit of the measurement model with the data.

We also calculated the maximum shared variance (MSV), average shared variance (ASV), and average variance extracted (AVE) for all variables ([Table 2](#)). The AVE values were found to exceed 0.50, indicating that more than half of the variance in each construct was explained by its indicators. The square roots of the AVE were found to be greater than the inter-construct correlations, confirming discriminant validity. Furthermore, both the ASV and MSV were found to be lower than the AVE for all main variables, suggesting satisfactory levels of convergent and discriminant validity for the scales used in our study.

4.3. Hypotheses testing

We tested our model with and without controls and found no significant differences between our results in relation to our hypothesized relationships. For the sake of parsimony, we present our results without controls. As shown in [Table 3](#), the digital platform integration capability ($B = 0.31, SE = 0.05, p < 0.01$) and the digital platform reconfiguration capability ($B = 0.28, SE = 0.05, p < 0.01$) were found to be positively related to sustainable positioning. Thus, H1(a) and H1(b) were found to be supported. Further, the digital platform integration capability was found to be positively related to organizational knowledge depth ($B = 0.32, SE = 0.05, p < 0.01$) and organizational knowledge breadth ($B = 0.29, SE = 0.05, p < 0.01$). Thus, H2(a) and H2(b) were found to be supported. Likewise, the digital platform reconfiguration capability was found to be positively related to organizational knowledge depth ($B = 0.23, SE = 0.05, p < 0.01$) and to organizational knowledge breadth ($B = 0.33, SE = 0.05, p < 0.01$). Thus, H3(a) and H3(b) were found to be supported. In addition, we found positive associations between knowledge depth and organizational agility ($B = 0.45, SE = 0.05, p < 0.01$) and between knowledge breadth and organizational agility ($B = 0.23, SE = 0.05, p < 0.01$). Thus, H4(a) and H4(b) were found to be supported. Organizational agility was also found to be positively related to sustainable positioning ($B = 0.28, SE = 0.06, p < 0.01$). Thus, H5 was found to be supported.

Additionally, we found a significant indirect positive association between the digital platform integration capability and sustainable positioning via organizational knowledge depth and organizational agility ($B = 0.03, SE = 0.01, p < 0.01$). Likewise, we found a significant indirect positive association between the digital platform integration capability and sustainable positioning via organizational knowledge

Table 2
Discriminant validity and convergent validity.

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	AVE	MSV	ASV
1. DPIC	0.75							0.57	0.20	0.12
2. DPRC	0.45	0.77						0.60	0.20	0.11
3. Knowledge depth	0.37	0.27	0.77					0.60	0.31	0.15
4. Knowledge breadth	0.34	0.39	0.47	0.76				0.58	0.22	0.11
5. Organizational Agility	0.41	0.33	0.56	0.32	0.79			0.62	0.31	0.15
6. Sustainable positioning	0.33	0.32	0.42	0.29	0.45	0.77		0.59	0.20	0.11
7. LBBs	0.11	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.18	0.02	0.91	0.83	0.03	0.01

Notes. N = 365. AVE = average variance extracted. MSV = maximum variance shared. ASV = average variance shared. Bolded values on the diagonals of columns 2 to 8 are the square root values of AVE. DPIC = Digital platform integration capability. DPRC = Digital platform reconfiguration capability. LBBs = Leader boundary-spanning behaviors.

Table 3
Hypotheses results.

	B	SE	95 %CI	
			LL	UL
<i>Total effects</i>				
DPIC → Sustainable positioning (H1a)	0.31**	0.05	0.21	0.40
DPRC → Sustainable positioning (H1b)	0.28**	0.05	0.19	0.37
<i>Direct Paths</i>				
DPIC → Sustainable positioning	0.16**	0.05	0.06	0.25
DPIC → Knowledge depth (H2a)	0.32**	0.05	0.22	0.41
DPIC → Knowledge breadth (H2b)	0.29**	0.05	0.19	0.39
Knowledge depth → Organizational agility (H4a)	0.45**	0.05	0.35	0.56
Knowledge breadth → Organizational agility (H4b)	0.23**	0.05	0.12	0.34
Organizational agility → Sustainable positioning (H5)	0.28**	0.06	0.13	0.36
DPRC → Sustainable positioning	0.15**	0.05	0.06	0.24
DPRC → Knowledge depth (H3a)	0.23**	0.05	0.13	0.32
DPRC → Knowledge breadth (H3b)	0.33**	0.05	0.24	0.43
<i>Indirect Paths</i>				
DPIC → Knowledge depth → Organizational agility → Sustainable positioning (H6a)	0.03**	0.01	0.01	0.06
DPRC → Knowledge depth → Organizational agility → Sustainable positioning (H6b)	0.03**	0.01	0.01	0.05
DPIC → Knowledge breadth → Organizational agility → Sustainable positioning (H7a)	0.02*	0.007	0.01	0.03
DPRC → Knowledge breadth → Organizational agility → Sustainable positioning (H7b)	0.02*	0.008	0.01	0.04
<i>Moderated Paths</i>				
DPIC *LBBs → Knowledge depth (H8a)	0.14**	0.03	0.07	0.21
DPIC *LBBs → Knowledge breadth (H8b)	0.12**	0.03	0.05	0.19
DPRC *LBBs → Knowledge depth (H9a)	0.11**	0.03	0.04	0.17
DPRC *LBBs → Knowledge breadth (H9b)	0.17**	0.03	0.10	0.23

Sample N = 365. B Unstandardized coefficient, SE Standard error, Bootstrapping specified at 5000 with 95 % confidence interval. DPIC = Digital platform integration capability. DPRC = Digital platform reconfiguration capability. LBBs = Leader boundary-spanning behaviors. CI = Confidence interval. LL = lower limit. UL = Upper limit.

breadth and organizational agility ($B = 0.02, SE = 0.007, p < 0.05$). Thus, H6(a) and H6(b) were found to be supported. Further, we found a significant indirect positive association between the digital platform reconfiguration capability and sustainable positioning via organizational knowledge depth and organizational agility ($B = 0.03, SE = 0.01, p < 0.01$). Likewise, we found a significant indirect positive association between the digital platform reconfiguration capability and sustainable positioning via organizational knowledge breadth and organizational agility ($B = 0.02, SE = 0.008, p < 0.05$). Thus, H7(a) and H7(b) were found to be supported.

We tested H8 and H9 by adding the interaction term of and digital platform capabilities to the indirect effects model. The moderation results (Table 3) were found to show that the effect of the interaction of leader boundary-spanning behavior and the digital platform integration capability on knowledge depth is significant ($B = 0.14, SE = 0.03, p < 0.01$). The precise nature of this moderated path is depicted in Fig. 2.

The simple slope plots at two conditional values of the moderator show that the association between the digital platform integration capability and knowledge depth was found to be significant ($B = 0.49, SE = 0.06, p < 0.01$) in the presence of high levels of leader boundary-spanning behavior, while the relationship was found to be non-significant ($B = 0.12, SE = 0.07, ns$) in the presence of low levels of leader boundary-spanning behavior. Thus, H8(a) was found to be supported.

The moderation results (Table 3) show that the effect of the interaction of leader boundary-spanning behavior and the digital platform integration capability on knowledge breadth was found to be significant ($B = 0.12, SE = 0.03, p < 0.01$). The precise nature of this moderated path is depicted in Fig. 3. The simple slope plots at two conditional values of the moderator show that the association between the digital platform integration capability and knowledge depth was found to be significant ($B = 0.44, SE = 0.07, p < 0.01$) in the presence of high levels of leader boundary-spanning behavior, while the relationship was found to be non-significant ($B = 0.12, SE = 0.07, ns$) in the presence of low levels of leader boundary-spanning behavior. Thus, H8(b) was found to be supported.

The moderation results (Table 3) show that the effect of the interaction of leader boundary-spanning behavior and the digital platform reconfiguration capability on knowledge depth was found to be significant ($B = 0.11, SE = 0.03, p < 0.01$). The precise nature of this moderated path is depicted in Fig. 4. The simple slope plots at two conditional values of the moderator show that the association between the digital platform reconfiguration capability and knowledge depth was found to be significant ($B = 0.36, SE = 0.06, p < 0.01$) in the presence of high levels of leader boundary-spanning behavior, while the relationship was found to be non-significant ($B = 0.08, SE = 0.07, ns$) in the presence of low levels of leader boundary-spanning behavior. Thus, H9(a) was found to be supported.

The moderation results (Table 3) show that the effect of the interaction of leader boundary-spanning behavior and the digital platform reconfiguration capability on knowledge breadth was found to be significant ($B = 0.17, SE = 0.03, p < 0.01$). The precise nature of this moderated path is depicted in Fig. 5. The simple slope plots at two conditional values of the moderator show that the association between the digital platform reconfiguration capability and knowledge depth was found to be significant ($B = 0.55, SE = 0.06, p < 0.01$) in the presence of high levels of leader boundary-spanning behavior, while the relationship was found to be non-significant ($B = 0.10, SE = 0.06, ns$) in the presence of low levels of leader boundary-spanning behavior. Thus, H9(b) was found to be supported.

5. Discussion

The underlying goal of our study was to understand how and when digital platform capabilities (i.e., integration and reconfiguration) contribute to sustainable firm positioning in the B2B context. For this purpose, taking a dynamic capability perspective, we developed a model pertaining to digital platform capabilities (i.e., integration and reconfiguration), organizational knowledge depth and breadth, organizational

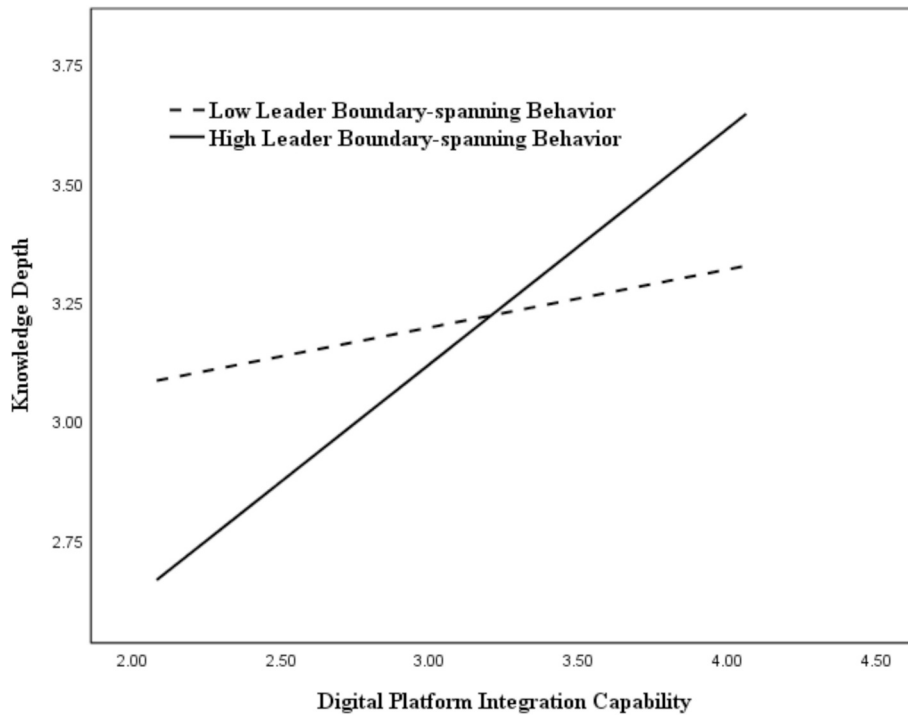


Fig. 2. Leader boundary-spanning behaviors as a moderator in the relationship between the digital platform integration capability and knowledge depth.

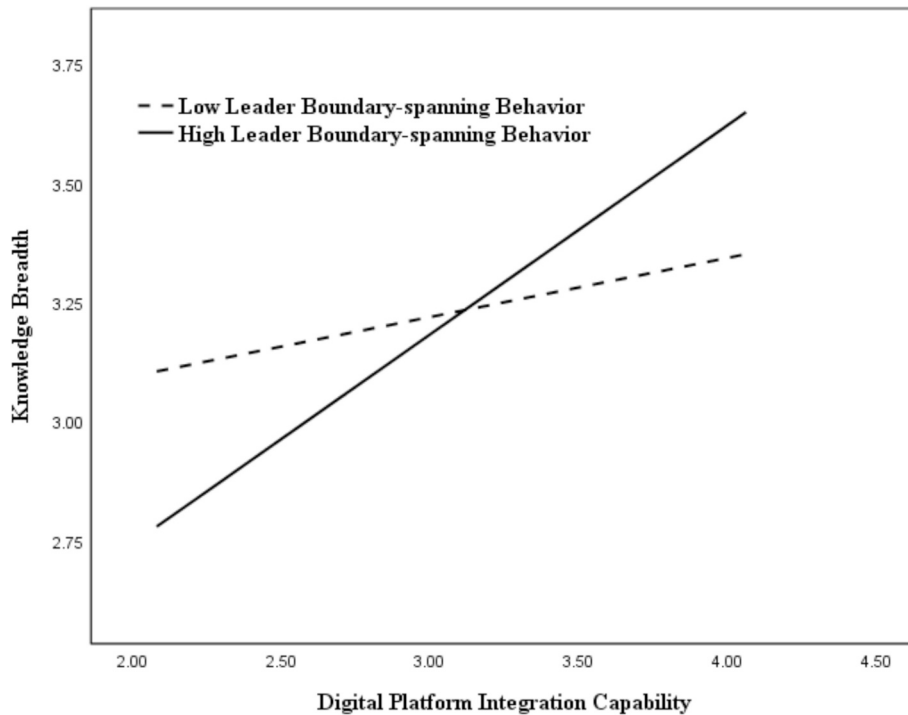


Fig. 3. Leader boundary-spanning behaviors as a moderator in the relationship between the digital platform integration capability and knowledge breadth.

agility, leader boundary-spanning behavior, and sustainable positioning. Notably, we examined the direct and indirect (via organizational knowledge depth, breadth, and organizational agility) associations between digital platform capabilities (i.e., integration and reconfiguration) and sustainable positioning. We also tested the moderating role played by leader boundary-spanning behavior. Data were collected using a time lagged design from the top management of various manufacturing organizations. The results demonstrate a direct

positive association between B2B digital platform capabilities (i.e., integration and reconfiguration) and sustainable positioning. Additionally, the research demonstrated that B2B digital platform capabilities (i.e., integration and reconfiguration) drive sustainable positioning via (Organizational knowledge depth, breadth, and agility), which act as serial mediators of the digital platform capabilities (i.e., integration and reconfiguration)- sustainable positioning link. The study also revealed that significantly moderated the influence of digital platform

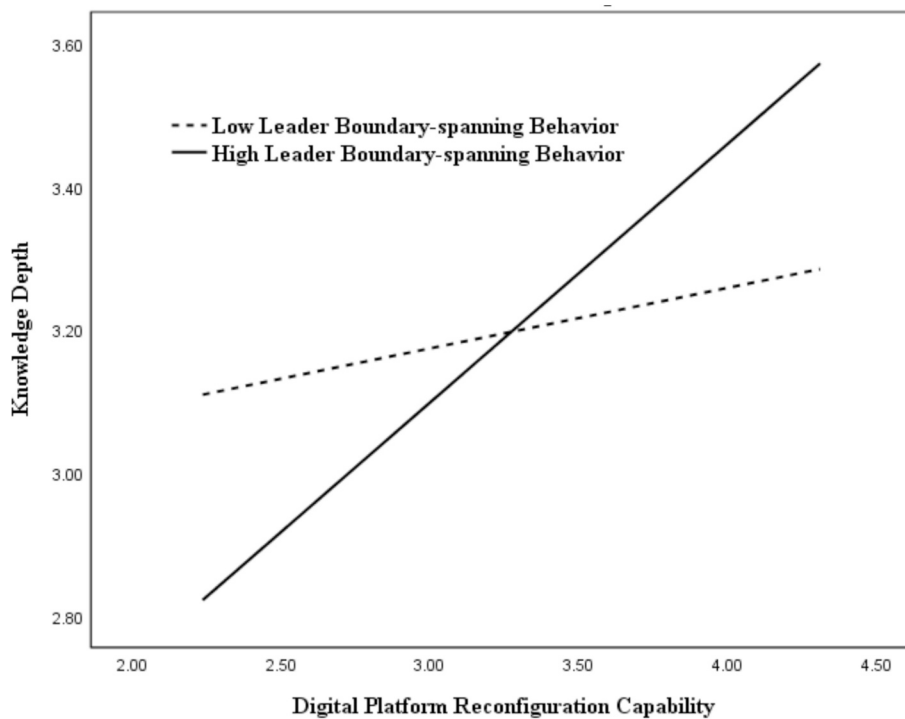


Fig. 4. Leader boundary-spanning behaviors as a moderator in the relationship between the digital platform reconfiguration capability and knowledge depth.

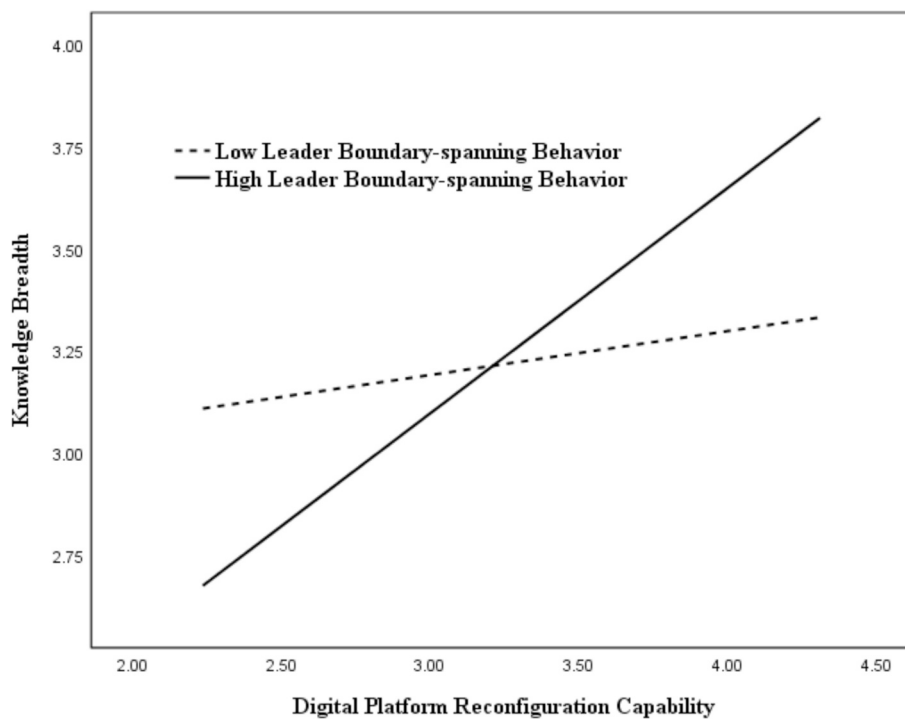


Fig. 5. Leader boundary-spanning behaviors as a moderator in the relationship between the digital platform reconfiguration capability and knowledge breadth.

capabilities (i.e., integration and reconfiguration) on knowledge depth and breadth.

5.1. Theoretical contributions

Our research findings contribute to various literature streams in the B2B context. First, our research adds to the literature on the antecedents of sustainable positioning (Bocken et al., 2014; Casidy & Yan, 2022).

Existing literature has offered valuable insights, bringing to the fore several antecedents of sustainable positioning, such as environmental actions, strategies, and stakeholder communication (Hu et al., 2019; Rahman et al., 2023). While the existing research has offered valuable insights, our study significantly extends it by revealing another critical yet hitherto overlooked antecedent of sustainable positioning. Specifically, this study identifies digital platform capabilities (i.e., digital platform integration and digital platform reconfiguration) as a critical

factor that contributes to sustainable positioning in B2B context.

Second, our study contributes to the growing body of literature focused on examining the firm-related outcomes of digital platform capabilities (i.e., the digital platform integration and digital platform reconfiguration) (Cenamor et al., 2019; Jiang et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023; Xiao, Tian, & Mao, 2020) in B2B context. The pertinent literature has pointed at several outcomes of digital platform capabilities, such as improved entrepreneurial SME performance (Cenamor et al., 2019), service innovation (Wang et al., 2022), technological innovation (Liu et al., 2023), sustainability-oriented innovation (Wang et al., 2023), and firm value co-creation (Jiang et al., 2023). Although literature has offered key insights, our research notably broadens it by highlighting the role played by the digital platform capabilities (i.e., integration and reconfiguration capabilities) in driving and strengthening the sustainable positioning of B2B businesses.

Third, our study provides evidence of the key role played by organizational knowledge depth, breadth, and organizational agility as imperative mediators in the relationship between digital platform capabilities (i.e., integration and reconfiguration) and firm sustainable positioning. Prior studies have suggested that knowledge depth and breadth contribute to firm success (Moorthy & Polley, 2010; Yang et al., 2017) and foster innovative behavior (Ko & Liu, 2019; Xu, 2015). Similarly, previous research has highlighted how organizational agility advances business operations and procedures (Felipe et al., 2016; Nijsen & Paauwe, 2012) and empowers firms to implement sustainable practices, capture emerging market opportunities, and adapt to new business settings (El-Khalil & Mezher, 2020). Our study contributes to the literature on organizational knowledge depth, breadth, and organizational agility by highlighting the significant, yet hitherto overlooked roles played by organizational knowledge depth, breadth and organizational agility as serial mediators in the relationship between digital platform capabilities (i.e., integration and reconfiguration) and sustainable firm positioning in the B2B context. By highlighting the significant role of organizational knowledge depth, breadth, and organizational agility as a mechanism underlying the digital platform capabilities-sustainable positioning link, we extend the literature on organizational resources, skills, and capabilities in the B2B context (Bouguerra, Hughes, Rodgers, Stokes, & Tatoglu, 2024; Kapitan et al., 2019; Zahoor et al., 2024) and goes some way in addressing the call made for research on the role of inter-firm factors in driving and strengthening sustainable firm positioning (Casidy & Lie, 2023; Casidy & Yan, 2022; Gogia et al., 2023).

Last, our study integrates leader boundary-spanning behavior —as an important leader-related individual factor—into our framework and shows how it moderates the direct effects of the digital platform capabilities (i.e., integration and reconfiguration) on organizational knowledge depth and breadth. Owing to their individual characteristics, leaders may exhibit different levels of determination, flexibility, resilience, grit, creativity, and ingenuity to meet the evolving business needs (i.e., achieve sustainable firm positioning). Prior studies have indicated that boundary-spanning behaviors enhance a firm's creative performance (Zheng & Ahmed, 2022), innovative behaviors (Zhu et al., 2023), and job satisfaction and performance (Liu et al., 2018; Zhang & Li, 2021). Our study is the first to incorporate the leader boundary-spanning behavior construct in the B2B and sustainable positioning context.

5.2. Practical implications

First, our research findings provide insights into how B2B firms can seize environmental opportunities and contribute to sustainable positioning by developing digital platform capabilities. The findings indicate that the development of digital platform capabilities (i.e., integration and reconfiguration) plays a key role in driving, implementing, and strengthening a firm's sustainable positioning. To this end, firms can invest in activities and initiatives aimed at building and enhancing their

digital platform capabilities (Wang et al., 2023) — for example, by hiring skilled professionals and acquiring essential technology, infrastructure, and tools. To develop and effectively leverage these capabilities, firms can collaborate with relevant stakeholders, participate in shared industry development and technical training programs, and join open innovation initiatives that facilitate the sharing of knowledge, resources, structures, best practices, and procedures (Bani-Melhem et al., 2025). Managers of B2B firms can contribute to sustainable positioning by aligning investment in digital platforms with long-term environmental goals and incorporating sustainability metrics into digital decision-making frameworks. They can also foster a culture that promotes digital experimentation and assist in developing digital capabilities focused on eco-innovation and resource efficiency.

Notably, our findings highlight the key role of organizational knowledge depth and breadth in contributing to sustainable positioning. Managers of B2B firms should emphasize acquiring and developing organizational knowledge depth and breadth. They should do so because market and industry-related insights and information have the potential to empower B2B firms to make informed and timely decisions in response to emerging environmental and business needs, thus driving sustainable positioning (Kapitan et al., 2019). Indeed, capitalizing on organizational knowledge depth and breadth can assist firms in identifying emerging trends, shifts in customer preferences, and capturing market opportunities. It also enables a broader understanding of industry dynamics, which in turn supports and strengthens sustainable positioning in the B2B context. In this regard, managers should actively promote the development of systems and processes that enable firms to acquire, retain, and apply deep expertise in core areas while also exposing organization to diverse external knowledge sources (Im, Vorhies, Kim, & Heiman, 2016). By encouraging structured knowledge sharing practices including cross-functional teams, collaborations, and digital knowledge databases, managers can ensure that valuable information flows across the organization, mitigating market risk and improving responsiveness. Additionally, managers should contribute to organizational agility by integrating continuous learning practices, promoting rapid feedback, and enabling flexible decision-making structures (Khan, 2020). B2B firms should foster a learning culture suited to aid them in becoming more agile and responsive to changing market conditions and emerging business needs, ultimately contributing to sustainable positioning. Managers can assist and support firms in cultivating more agile mindsets and cultures, enabling them to innovate, adapt and prosper in rapidly changing business landscape (Bani-Melhem et al., 2025). Moreover, managers should integrate sustainability-related learning objectives into employee development programs, ensuring that teams not only develop knowledge but implement it through sustainability lens. By linking knowledge development with environmental goals, managers can effectively position the firm by meeting both regulatory and stakeholders demands. In doing so, they turn organizational knowledge depth, breadth, and agility into dynamic assets that contribute to the firm sustainable positioning and long-term success.

Our findings regarding the moderating role of leader boundary-spanning behavior also have key managerial implications. The findings indicate that B2B firms should consider leaders' individual characteristics. Leaders inclined to engage in high levels of boundary-spanning behaviors are more responsible, committed, adaptable, and flexible in leveraging networks and mobilizing resources (Khan, Hसनain, Ullah, & Khalid, 2018). Therefore, they are more likely to achieve shared and organizational environmental goals. Such leaders can thus have an impact on the development of digital platform capabilities in relation to building and developing organizational knowledge, ultimately contributing to sustainable positioning. Thus, it is important for B2B firms to employ managers endowed with higher boundary-spanning behavior aptitudes. B2B firms could adopt leader boundary-spanning behavior scale to investigate boundary-spanning behavior levels among their current and potential business leaders or managers. Assessing the boundary-spanning behavior aptitudes of their current

leaders and managers would enable B2B firms to develop appropriate and more effective interventions aimed at shaping the activities of their business leaders or managers while bearing in mind their boundary-spanning behavior aptitudes. Additionally, such leaders can assist build knowledge depth by incorporating digital platform insights into key business activities and expand knowledge breadth through strategic collaborations. Their ability to promote agility across diverse departments assists in effective learning and adaptive responses to sustainability-related market changes.

5.3. Limitations and future research directions

Our study has various strengths that should be emphasized. As we developed our model employing a multi-respondent sample, we considered favorability bias and common method variance. Despite our study's design strength, it is nevertheless affected by potential drawbacks. First, although we did address the possibility of common method bias in our data collection, we could not draw causal inferences. Thus, we would encourage scholars to employ longitudinal designs to uncover strong causal inferences. Second, we collected data from B2B manufacturing firms operating in China. Thus, caution should be exercised in generalizing our findings to other business domains and countries. Based on this, future studies could explore whether our findings hold in other key industries such as service-based or high-tech sectors where market dynamics and strategic priorities may be different. Future studies could also examine how institutional and cultural variations impact firm sustainable positioning, offering a broader perspective on international business strategy. Importantly, AI and big data capabilities, (Bani-Melhem et al., 2025; Cenamor et al., 2019), can also drive sustainable positioning. Thus, researchers could focus on comparing various organizational capabilities in terms of their influence on sustainable firm positioning to offer further insights into the phenomenon and facilitate B2B firms in the formulation of more efficient and market-oriented strategies. Future research could explore how the leadership style including responsible and ethical leadership facilitate the sustainable positioning in B2B context. Finally, due to increasing emphasis of firms on environmental, social, and governance criteria, future research could explore the interplay between environmental strategies and regulatory pressures.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Adeel Khalid: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Investigation, Conceptualization. **Muhammad Usman:** Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Validation, Software, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Huda Khan:** Writing – review & editing, Validation, Project administration, Conceptualization. **Muhammad Waheed Akhtar:** Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Validation, Formal analysis, Conceptualization.

Appendix A. Scale Items

A.1. Digital Platform integration capability

DPIC1. Our digital platform easily accesses data from our partners' IT systems.

DPIC2. Our digital platform provides a seamless connection between our partners' IT systems and our IT systems (e.g., forecasting, production, manufacturing, shipment, etc.).

DPIC3. Our digital platform has the capability to exchange real-time information with our partners.

DPIC4. Our digital platform easily aggregates relevant information from our partners' databases (e.g., operating information, business customer performance, cost information, etc.).

A.2. Digital Platform reconfiguration capability

DPRC1: Our digital platform is easily adapted to include new partners.

DPC2: Our digital platform can be easily extended to accommodate new IT applications or functions.

DPRC3: Our digital platform employs standards that are accepted by most current and potential partners.

DPRC4: Our digital platform consists of modular software components, most of which can be reused in other business applications.

A.3. Knowledge depth

KD1: We are highly familiar with this industry.

KD12: We have acquired a great deal of experience about this industry.

KD3: The knowledge of our firm in this industry is thorough.

KD4: We have in-depth knowledge about the technology in this industry.

A.4. Knowledge breadth

KB1: We effectively acquire market information from a diversified customer portfolio.

KB2: We have accumulated knowledge from multiple market segments.

KB3: We effectively acquire technological information from various sources.

KB4: Our R&D expertise consists of knowledge from a variety of backgrounds.

A.5. Organizational agility

OA1: Our organization is capable of adapting to changes.

OA2: Our organization has the capacity to predict and identify changes.

OA3: Our organization has the capacity to respond quickly to changes.

OA4: Our organization has the capacity to respond flexibly to new demands for services that arise, adapting them to the resources and means available.

A.6. Leader boundary-spanning behavior

LBBs1: I absorb outside pressures so that organizational members can work free of interference.

LBBs2: I persuade outsiders (e.g., clients, stakeholders) to support organizational decisions.

LBBs3: I prevent outsiders from overloading organizational members with too many requests.

LBBs4: I reach out to individuals outside the organization who can provide expertise or ideas.

LBBs5: I proactively seek advice and support from external experts or consultants.

LBBs6: I acquire resources (e.g., money, new members, equipment) from outside to support the organization.

A.7. Sustainable positioning

SP1: Our supplier clearly takes care of its carbon footprint.

SP2: Environmental concerns are high on our supplier's priorities.

SP3: Our supplier is actively trying to produce less waste.

SP4: Our supplier is leading initiatives to offset energy use.

SP5: Our supplier is actively trying to lower emissions caused by the company.

SP6: Our supplier is leading initiatives to lower emissions.

SP7: Our supplier considers environmental impacts as part of their mission.

SP8: Our supplier is concerned with the environmental impact of their products.

SP9: Our supplier is concerned with the environmental impact of the production process, usage, and disposal of their products.

Right retention statement

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Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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