



Towards export success: The role of inter-cultural B2B relationships, immigrant managers and cultural distance

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ABSTRACT

Building on structural and cognitive social capital theories, cultural distance and immigrant manager literature, this study postulates a new conceptualization to demonstrate how interactions of inter-cultural B2B relationships with the customers and suppliers (top executives' interpersonal relationships with the counterparts of their host market's customers and suppliers), perceived cultural distance (PCD) and immigrant manager affect firms' export performance. By examining 230 Australasian firms exporting to Greater China region, we found out that customer relationships have a significant effect on export performance while supplier relationships do not have such effect. To better understand development of B2B relationships, we examined the role of immigrant manager in building of such relationships to confirm that the interaction of customer relationships and immigrant manager has a positive impact on export performance whereas the interaction of supplier relationships and immigrant manager does not have a positive effect on performance. We also included PCD into the conceptual model to explore its influence on the interaction between customer and supplier relationships and immigrant manager and how it affects the export performance. This inclusion demonstrated the importance of immigrant manager in developing customer relationships when PCD is high, however the interaction between supplier relationships, PCD and immigrant manager does not have any significant effect. The results of our study therefore have important implications of when and how immigrant managers can be employed to positively influence development of B2B relationships and improve export performance. This study also makes a significant theoretical contribution to B2B relationships and export performance literature by closing gaps in understanding of the role of PCD and immigrant manager in building of efficient inter-cultural B2B relationships and making a distinction between B2B relationships customer and supplier effects.

1. Introduction

Business-to-business (B2B) exporting firms operating internationally often use the relationships with their overseas business partners (customers and suppliers) to develop and improve their knowledge base about the host markets their firms operate in (e.g., Chung & Kuo, 2018; Forkmann, Mullins, Henneberg, & Baker, 2022; Li, Poppo, & Zhou, 2008; Pinho, 2016). An inter-cultural B2B relationship denotes the home country firms' top executives' (e.g., chief executive officer) interpersonal ties with the counterparts of their business customers (buyers and distributors) and suppliers in the host market (Chung, Wang, Huang, &

Yang, 2016; Kingshott, Sharma, Sima, & Wong, 2020; Li, Zheng, & Shao, 2009; Peng & Luo, 2000). Research suggests that structural and cognitive social capital theories are often used as a theoretical foundation to explain the effect of inter-cultural B2B relationship in exporting management (Filiari, McNally, O'Dwyer, & O'Malley, 2014; Pinho, 2016). According to structural social capital theorists, inter-cultural B2B relationships assist firms to acquire essential comprehensive knowledge that is important for establishing competitive advantages in the host markets (Chung & Kuo, 2018; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Pinho, 2016; van den Butte & Wuyts, 2007). The cognitive social capital researchers further suggest that the resources provided by inter-cultural B2B

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relationships are often reinforced by the establishment of obligations among the parties in business networking system (exporters, customers and suppliers) (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). The cognitive social capital development indicates that inter-cultural relationships embrace person-related intangible skills and competences that are embedded in organizations (Westerlund & Svahn, 2008). Consequently, the key personnel of the organizations are likely to play an important role in fostering the development of inter-cultural B2B relationships (Chung & Kuo, 2018; Claridge, 2018).

Building on structural and cognitive social capital research, we have focused on the role of immigrant managers in building the firms' top executives' interpersonal ties and links with their business customers and suppliers (inter-cultural B2B relationships) in the host market (Campbell, 1998; Peng & Luo, 2000). The role of immigrant managers has been previously established as an important factor in exporting and international business (IB) development (e.g., Tung & Chung, 2010, see Table 1). Despite this, it is still unknown *when* and *how* the interactions between critical export and IB factors such as cultural distance and the immigrant manager (to be explained further below) can enhance the influence of inter-cultural B2B customer/supplier relationships on export performance (Table 1) (e.g., Chung & Kuo, 2018; Marchal & Nedoncelle, 2019; Shao, Bouzdine-Chameeva, & Lunardo, 2020).

Details concerning extant research gaps are discussed below.

Cross-cultural distance denotes the home and host market cultural difference (e.g., customs and traditions) (Katsikeas, Samiee, & Theodosiou, 2006; Shao et al., 2020; Xu & Shenkar, 2002). Cross-cultural distance has a significant impact on international marketing strategies selection such as standardization and competitive strategies (e.g., Chung, 2003; Chung & Ho, 2021; Ipek, 2019; Katsikeas et al., 2006; Schmid & Kotulla, 2011). In the extant literature, some studies have used a more objective way to measure cultural distance (e.g., Hofstede cultural index; Jia, Wang, Xiao, & Guo, 2020) while others have used a subjective/perceptual measurement for cultural distance (Katsikeas et al., 2006). Consistent with the practice reported in the extant literature, this study has mainly focused on the perceptual/perceived cultural distance of top executives (Chung, 2003; Ipek, 2019; Jia et al., 2020). According to cognitive social capital research, inter-cultural B2B relationships' effectiveness is often associated with the home-host market cultural differences (Elliot, Xiao, & Wilson, 2015; Pinho, 2016). Exporting literature indicates that the role of B2B relationships is particularly important when the home (e.g., Australia) and host market (e.g., China) cultural distance is high (Chung & Tung, 2013; Li et al., 2008; Shao et al., 2020). Despite this development, cognitive social capital research has still been silent on uncovering when and how

Table 1
Key recent empirical immigrant manager research.

Authors	Hypotheses	Immigrant manager measurement (Yes = categorical No = non-categorical)	Examination of cultural distance (Yes/No)	Examination of inter-cultural B2B relationships (Yes/No)	Key Findings of immigrant manager (Yes = significant effect, No = no significant effect)
Chung & Enderwick (2001)	Immigrant effect ⁺ → Foreign direct investment mode	Yes (owned/controlled by Taiwanese immigrants)	No	No	• Yes (immigrant effect has an effect on foreign direct investment mode)
Chung (2003)	Immigrant effect → Performance	Yes (hire immigrant manager to manage operation in the host market)	Yes (cultural difference has a significant effect on immigrant effect)	No	• No (immigrant effect has no effect on profit, sales growth & market share)
Tung and Chung (2010)	Immigrant effect → Market entry mode (low vs high) Immigrant effect → Performance	Yes (hire immigrant manager to manage operation in the host market)	No	No	• Yes (immigrant effect has an effect on high resource market entry mode) • No (immigrant effect has no significant effect on profit, sales growth & market share)
Vaaler (2011)	Immigrant remittance → Capital availability, new business creation & economic internationalization	No (per capita sum of immigrant workers' remittance)	No	No	• Yes (immigrant remittance has an effect on capital availability) • No (immigrant remittance has no effect on new business creation) • Yes (immigrant remittance has an effect on economic internationalization)
Chung et al. (2012)	Immigrant effect → Performance	Yes (hire immigrant manager to manage operation in the host market)	No	No	• No (immigrant effect has no effect on market share) • No (immigrant effect has no effect on profit)
Chung and Tung (2013)	Immigrant effect → Foreign direct investment	Yes (employed immigrant manager to manage foreign market entry in the host market)	No	No	• Yes (immigrant effect has an effect on FDI) (Greater China) • Yes (immigrant effect has an effect on FDI) (European Union)
Neville et al. (2014)	Immigrant enterprise- > Export	Yes (a firm is owned by recent immigrant)	No	No	• Yes (immigrant-owned firms are more likely to be exporters)
Jiang et al. (2016)	International new venture → Immigrant-started new ventures survival International new venture x immigration status → Immigrant-started new ventures survival	Yes (immigrant-started new ventures = business whose primary owner is foreign-born) Yes (whether owner is naturalization (immigration status))	No	No	• Yes (international new venture is positively associated immigrant-started new ventures survival) • Yes (international new venture x immigration status is positively associated with immigrant-started new ventures survival)
Marchal and Nedoncelle (2019)	Immigrants → Export performance	Yes (employment of no immigrant worker vs at least one immigrant worker)	No	No	• Yes (employing immigrants in low- and high-skilled occupations is at worst harmless and at best positive for export outcomes)
Chung (2021)	Immigrant employee effect → Adaptation strategy	Yes (immigrant employee employment)	No	No	• Yes (immigrant employee effect has an effect on product and price adaptation)

Note: This summary is conducted, based on the review method that is adopted in Forkmann et al. (2022). +: Immigrant effect refers to the contributions of a firm's immigrant manager to the firm's business operation in the immigrant manager's COO (Chung et al., 2012).

cultural distance matters in the inter-cultural B2B relationships-export performance conceptualization (Claridge, 2018; Muniady, Mamun, Mohamad, Permarupan, & Zainol, 2015; Pinho, 2016). Such B2B relationships, cultural distance and export performance framework is pivotal as it provides the imperative strategic direction for exporters on whether they should utilize their inter-cultural B2B relationships to overcome the home-host market cultural differences, which can negatively affect the firm's operation in the host market (Pinho, 2016; Shao et al., 2020; Singh & Gaur, 2021).

Moreover, recent literature on social capital and immigrant manager suggests that an immigrant manager with bilingual and bicultural background may also have a vital role in the expansion and deployment of inter-cultural B2B relationships (e.g., Chung, 2021; Hatzigeorgiou & Lodefalk, 2016, 2019). Extant literature findings can also help the development of the cognitive social capital research which reports that networking resources require shared meanings and shared interpretations among the parties in the network system (Muniady et al., 2015). Recent research indicates that immigrant managers possess the key attributes such as sound cultural knowledge and linguistic capabilities which can help top executives to form shared meanings and interpretations in the inter-cultural network system (Chung, 2021; Kunczer, Lindner, & Puck, 2019; Marchal & Nedoncelle, 2019). Extant research findings suggest that an immigrant manager's cultural and linguistic knowledge may help their top executives (non-immigrant managers) to develop the most effective personal relationships with their business customers in the host market (e.g., Chung & Tung, 2013). Encouraged by these findings, this study also intends to explore when and how an immigrant manager matters in the inter-cultural B2B customer/supplier relationships-export performance conceptualization (Kingshott, Sharma, Sima, & Wong, 2020).

Further, the literature is still silent on whether the interaction of cultural distance and immigrant manager plays a significant role in the inter-cultural B2B customer/supplier relationships-export performance framework (Table 1) (e.g., Tung & Chung, 2010). The rationale behind this conceptualization is that an immigrant manager's rich networking capabilities can significantly aid their firm's top executives in identifying an appropriate local business partner, particularly in situations where there is a high cultural distance between the home and host markets (Chung & Tung, 2013; Pinho, 2016; Rauch, 2001; Sheng, Zhou, & Li, 2011). By exploring the influence of integration of cultural distance, immigrant manager and inter-cultural B2B relationships on export performance, our study may provide highly targeted guidance on where firms should deploy their immigrant manager resources in the B2B customer/supplier relationships-export performance paradigm, with consideration given to the extent of cultural distance (Pinho, 2016; Shao et al., 2020). The exploration of B2B relationships, cultural distance and immigrant manager is important because it goes beyond the boundaries of contemporary research on immigrant manager resources (e.g., market entry mode selection, adaptation strategies, remittances, Table 1) by providing specific guidance on the cultural variance condition when firms should use an immigrant manager to enhance their firm's export performance (Chung, Rose, & Huang, 2012; Chung & Tung, 2013; Marchal & Nedoncelle, 2019; Vaaler, 2011). This new finding can significantly enhance the theoretical development of immigrant manager and export management literature (e.g., Chung, 2021; Hatzigeorgiou & Lodefalk, 2019; Pinho, 2016).

Lastly, though B2B inter-cultural relationships often included both customers (buyers and distributors) and suppliers (Campbell, 1997, 1998; Chung & Kuo, 2018), existing literature has mostly grouped varied business networking participants (e.g., buyers, distributors, suppliers) together as a common construct and have not specifically explored the individual roles of customer and supplier relationships in the host market (e.g., Wang & Chung, 2020; see Table 2 for literature review summary). Without specific examination of each relationship's effect, it is still unknown whether customers and suppliers' relationships have played an equal role in achieving exporting firms' performance

objectives in the host markets (Table 2) (e.g., Campbell, 1997, 1998; Yang, Su, & Fam, 2012). The outcomes concerning these two individual relationships will provide specific guidance on whether export firms should provide equal resources to develop relationships with their host markets' customers and suppliers (Campbell, 1998; Chung & Kuo, 2018; Pinho, 2016). The outcome of this study can contribute to the development of structural social capital research, a research stream suggesting that the resources can be derived from the network relationships (Filiari et al., 2014; Forkmann et al., 2022; van den Butte & Wuys, 2007).

Our study intends to contribute to the extant social capital theory, cultural distance and immigrant manager literature in four focus areas (Marchal & Nedoncelle, 2019; Pinho, 2016; van den Butte & Wuys, 2007; Xu & Shenkar, 2002). First, by exploring the individual roles of exporter-customer and exporter-supplier relationships in the host markets, our study significantly enhances recent research that highlights the need to examine the individual effect of B2B firms' customer and supplier relationships in exporting (Campbell, 1997, 1998; Korsakienė & Tvaronavičienė, 2012). By postulating and empirically examining the individual role of exporter-customer and exporter-supplier relationships in the inter-cultural relationship, cultural distance, immigrant manager and export performance conceptualization, our study provides specific guidance on when and how exporters should manage their customer and supplier relationships concerning their operations in the host markets (Jia et al., 2020). These findings can significantly remedy the drawback of the extant research that has not explored the individual effects of exporter-customer and exporter-supplier relationships (e.g., Peng & Luo, 2000) (Table 2). Second, by revealing whether exporting firms should equally commit to the development of their customer and supplier relationships in the host markets, our study can offer new insights required to further develop the structural social capital research, which tend to provide guidance on the overall network relations and the overall patterns of connections between parties in the network system (Claridge, 2018; Muniady et al., 2015; Pinho, 2016). In light of this study's findings, extant structural social capital research can determine whether customer and supplier relationships should be considered as separate factors or as a group construct for achieving export performance objectives (Chung & Kuo, 2018; Filiari et al., 2014; Forkmann et al., 2022; Muniady et al., 2015; van den Butte & Wuys, 2007). Third, our study offers a new direction for the development of the cognitive social capital research (Muniady et al., 2015). In particular our study extends extant literature understanding by specifying the moderation role of cultural distance and immigrant manager in the customers/suppliers relationships-export performance framework. By revealing these new roles, our study offers guidance on whether cognitive social capital research should consider important moderation factors such as cultural distance and immigrant manager in their research conceptualization (Pinho, 2016; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998; Westerlund & Svahn, 2008). Lastly, our research offers guidelines on when and how immigrant managers should be utilized in the B2B customer/supplier relationships-export performance paradigm (e.g., customer/supplier relationships x immigrant manager; customer/supplier relationships x immigrant manager x perceived cultural distance). This new finding can extend existing literature research which has already revealed the functions of immigrant managers in exporting and IB research (Table 1) (e.g., market entry mode selection; Chung & Tung, 2013; Enderwick, Tung, & Chung, 2011; Hatzigeorgiou & Lodefalk, 2019). Based on this study's outcomes, researchers can consider whether exporters should employ immigrant managers to assist their firm's choice of international marketing strategies (e.g., adaptation, market entry mode) as well as use them to help develop inter-cultural relationships and overcome perceived cultural distance (Chung et al., 2012; Jia et al., 2020). Our study's conceptual framework is listed in Fig. 1.

Table 2
Key recent empirical business ties research.

Authors	Hypotheses {Business ties as a common construct (Yes/No)}	Separation of customer ties and supplier ties (Yes/No)	Business ties at interpersonal level (Yes/No)	Business ties' effect (Yes = significant effect, No = no significant effect)
Peng and Luo (2000)	Business ties (Yes: top managers at buyer, supplier & competitor firms as a construct) → Performance	No	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (business ties has an effect on market share) • No (business ties has no effect on ROA)
Acquaah (2007)	Ties with top manager of other firms (Yes: top managers at other firms) → Performance	No	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (Ties with top manager of other firms has an effect on performance)
Campbell (1998)	Customer ties (host market) → innovation Supplier ties (home market) → innovation	Yes (customer ties and supplier ties are separately examined)	No (firm's relationship with supplier and customer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (customer ties (host market) has an effect on innovation) • Yes (Supplier ties (home market) has an effect on innovation)
Gu et al. (2008)	Guanxi (Yes: personal relationships with important people, obtain valuable and important information and so on as a construct) → Brand market performance	No	Yes (personalized relationships with important people)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (Guanxi has an effect on brand sales growth and market share) • Yes (Guanxi has an effect on channel and responsive capability)
Li et al. (2008)	Ties (Yes: top managers at buyer, supplier and competitor firms as a construct) → Performance, linear for domestic firms Ties (Yes: top managers at buyer, supplier and competitor firms as a construct) → Performance, U-shaped for foreign firms	No	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (Ties has an effect on performance, liner for domestic firms (S)) • Yes (Ties has an effect on performance, curvilinear for foreign firms(S))
Li et al. (2009)	Business ties (Yes: top managers at buyer, supplier and competitor firms as a construct) → Performance	No	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (business ties has an effect on performance)
Sheng et al. (2011)	Business ties (Yes: top managers at buyer, supplier, competitor firms, market-based & technological collaborators, as a construct) → Performance	No	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (business ties has an effect on performance)
Chung (2021)	Business ties (Yes: managers at buyer, supplier, competitor firms & other key firms in the industry, as a construct) x Export market orientation (EMO) (intelligence generation, dissemination) → Responsiveness	No	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (EMO intelligence generation x business ties has an effect on responsiveness (S)) • Yes (EMO dissemination x business ties has an effect on responsiveness)
Boso et al. (2013)	Business ties (Yes: firms' ties with suppliers, customers, distributors & competitors, as a construct) x Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) x Market orientation (MO) → Performance	No	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (Business tie x EO x MO has an effect on performance)
Chung et al. (2016)	Business ties (Yes: top managers at buyer, supplier, distributor & other key firms in the industry, as a construct) x management capabilities → Performance Business ties x technology capabilities → Performance	No	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (Business ties x management capabilities has an effect on performance) • Yes (Business ties x technology capabilities has an effect on performance) • No (Business ties x technology capabilities →Performance (Refuted))
Chung and Kuo (2018)	Business ties (Yes: managers at buyer, supplier, distributor, competitor & other key firms in the industry, as a construct) x Competitive strategies (differentiation, low cost) → Performance (financial, strategic)	No	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No (Business ties x differentiation has no effect on financial performance) • Yes (Business ties x differentiation has an effect on strategic performance)
Presutti and Odorici (2019)	Business networks (Yes: put efforts in relationships with customers, suppliers and competitors in last two years, as a construct) x entrepreneurial orientation (EO) → Performance Business networks x market orientation (MO) → Performance	No	Yes (respondents to establish close relationships with customers, suppliers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No (Business tie x EO has no effect on performance) • No (Business tie x MO has no effect on performance)
Chung et al. (2020)	Business ties (Yes: top managers at buyer, supplier & distributor firms, as a construct) x EO (entrepreneurial orientation) → Innovation	No	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (Business ties x EO has an effect on innovation)
Wang and Chung (2020)	Business networking (Yes: top executive's ties with counterparts in buyers, suppliers and distributors, as a construct) x formal institutional distance → Innovation (+) Business networking x informal institutional distance → Innovation (-)	No	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (Business networking has an effect on innovation) • Yes (Formal institutional distance x Business networking has an effect on innovation) • Yes (Informal institutional distance x Business networking has an effect on innovation)

Note: This summary is conducted, based on the review method that is adopted in Forkmann et al. (2022).

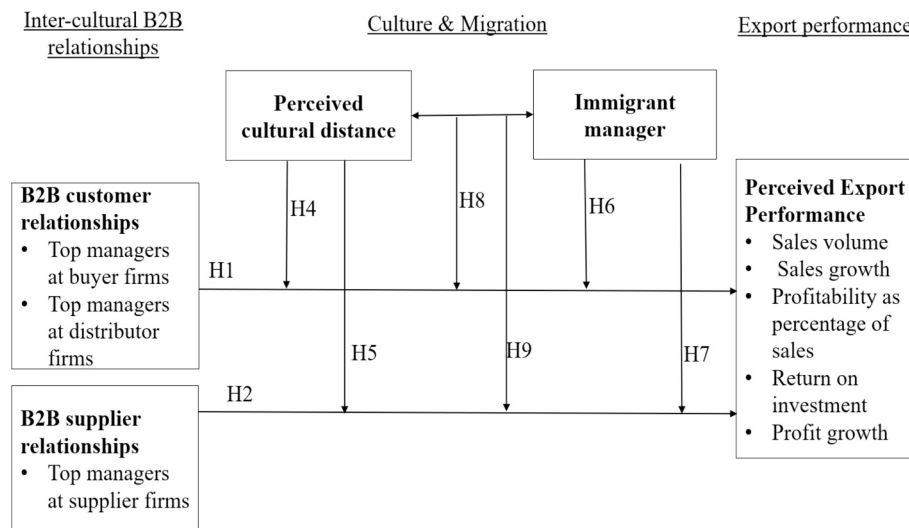


Fig. 1. Inter-Cultural B2B relationships, perceived cultural distance, immigrant manager and perceived export performance.

2. Theory and hypotheses

Research indicates that home-host market cultural distance may affect firms' performance in the host market (Chung, 2003; Jia et al., 2020; Katsikeas et al., 2006). In environments characterised by high cultural distance, firms may rely on frequent B2B relationships to reduce the cultural distance's negative effect (Chung et al., 2012; Jia et al., 2020; Shao et al., 2020). Thus, it is possible that the B2B relationships and cultural distance interaction might lead to a superior performance (Li et al., 2008).

Research that focuses on individual-level knowledge in extant IB literature highlights the contributions of bilingual capabilities and the possession of bicultural mindsets of selected managers such as immigrant managers (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002; Harzing, Pudelko, & Reiche, 2015; Marchal & Nedoncelle, 2019). Managers who possess these capabilities appear to have greater access to global information networks that can be converted into useful knowledge, which enables their firms to amend products and services for customers' needs in the target market (Hatzigeorgiou & Lodefalk, 2019; Un, 2016). In other words, managers with these capabilities often act as knowledge carriers (Chang, Gong, & Peng, 2012; Harzing et al., 2015) and knowledge transmitters (Reiche, Harzing, & Kraimer, 2009) of firms in their international business expansion.

Moreover, through interactions with the overseas customers, immigrant managers can help their top executives synthesize the knowledge acquired from overseas customers and, in the process, transform it from tacit to explicit knowledge (Chung et al., 2012; Hatzigeorgiou & Lodefalk, 2019; Marchal & Nedoncelle, 2019). These managers' interactions can help strengthen the ties that are established by top executives between the exporting firms and their overseas customer and supplier firms (Chung et al., 2012; Gu, Hung, & Tse, 2008; Sheng et al., 2011). As such, extant research has shown that immigrant manager's social interactions can contribute to the exporting firms' international competitive advantage in the host market (Hatzigeorgiou & Lodefalk, 2016; Nonaka, 2007) including the provision of valuable intelligence for new product innovations (Un, 2016).

To build on the extant research on immigrant managers (e.g., Chung, 2021; Harzing et al., 2015; Tung & Chung, 2010), our study posits that these attributes seem to be more prevalent among immigrant managers. Extant research reports that immigrant managers often hold key decision-making roles such as export marketing managers or international marketing managers. The immigrant managers are often in charge of the firms' host market operations (Chung et al., 2012; Chung & Tung, 2013). Prior research has also reported that the characteristics of

immigrant managers are likely to be valuable, rare, and unique (Chung et al., 2012). This focus on immigrant managers fits well in the context of Australasian firms operating in the Greater China market (e.g., Chung & Tung, 2013; Tung & Chung, 2010; Vaaler, 2011). Extant research has used the term of country of origin (COO) to represent the home country that immigrant managers originally come from and the term of country of residence (COR) to represent the host country that immigrant managers are currently residing (e.g., Chung, Yen, & Wang, 2020; Tung & Chung, 2010). Consequently, the focus of this study is on immigrant managers in Australia and New Zealand (Australasia) who were born and worked in their COO (e.g., China) before emigrating to their COR (Australia/New Zealand). Following the approach of the extant research, immigrant managers are permanently based in their COR, although they travel frequently to their COO for work reasons (Chung et al., 2012; Tung & Chung, 2010). The head office at the COR is the permanent base of the immigrant managers. Literature suggests that immigrant managers have special knowledge of their COO such as languages, culture and customs, customer purchasing behaviour, business activities, regulations, social networking, distribution, and other aspects (Chung & Tung, 2013; Marchal & Nedoncelle, 2019; Rauch, 1999). In other words, immigrant managers possess knowledge and characteristics that are critical to their firms' international operations (Chang et al., 2012; Harzing et al., 2015). Though prior research indicates that non-immigrant managers such as expatriate managers who have experience in working with the foreign host market might also help their top executives to build their interpersonal relationships in the host market (e.g., Chang et al., 2012; Harzing et al., 2015), our study is unable to include this type of managers in our study's conceptualization, due to lack of this information in our data set. This important limitation will be addressed in the final section of the paper.

Extant research on immigrant managers and their effect are summarized in Table 1. As shown, existing research on immigrant managers (some researchers use the term *immigrant effect*, Table 1) has provided directions for future research which echoes the gaps that are identified above (e.g., the interactive effect of cultural distance, immigrant manager and inter-cultural B2B customer/supplier relationships is still unknown). First, immigrant managers can be determined by a categorical classification of the employment of an immigrant manager (Yes or No) (e.g., Chung & Tung, 2013). Though this measurement can be improved (to be addressed further in the final section of the paper), this is a common guidance provided by extant literature. Second, though possible, extant research has not explored how immigrant managers can enhance top executives' interpersonal relationships building with their counterparts in the host market (e.g., Tung & Chung, 2010). This

omission weakens the understanding of a function of immigrant manager (Table 1) and the further theoretical development of the business ties research (Table 2, to be discussed below). Third, though prior research has indicated that immigrant managers can be valuable in high cultural difference environments, researchers have not included the effect of cultural distance factor in their research design (e.g., Jia et al., 2020; Vaaler, 2011). As such, it is still unclear whether immigrant manager can help their top executives to achieve their firm's performance objective in a high cultural distance environment (e.g., Marchal & Nedoncelle, 2019).

2.1. Inter-cultural B2B relationships and firm performance

An inter-cultural B2B relationship denotes the home country firms' top executives' interpersonal ties and relationships with the counterparts of their business customers and suppliers in the host market (Campbell, 1998; Chung et al., 2016; Kingshott, Sharma, Sima, & Wong, 2020). Extant research has shown that managerial ties often occur at interpersonal level (e.g., Peng & Luo, 2000; Wang & Chung, 2020) (see Table 2 for summary). Recent research suggests that exporting firms would need to treat customers and suppliers ties differently as they are associated with different forms of knowledge and intelligence for the exporting firm's operation in the host market (Campbell, 1997, 1998; Francioni, Pagano, & Castellani, 2016).

Despite this call, existing research tends to view a firm's manager ties as a common construct of an export venture which includes ties with buyers, distributors and suppliers (Chung & Kuo, 2018) (Table 2). The former two ties are classified as customer ties while the latter is viewed as supplier ties (Campbell, 1998; Peng & Luo, 2000). Social capital (and organizational networking) theory suggests that, in general, a firm's business top managerial ties can enhance its performance, because such ties enable it to obtain valuable market information and intelligence (Chung & Kuo, 2018; Davies, Leung, Luk, & Wong, 1995), acquire resources and permits from governments (Acquaah, 2007; van den Butte & Wuyts, 2007), and leverage the business experience achieved by other firms (Geletkanycz & Hambrick, 1997; Wang & Chung, 2020). Li et al. (2008) and Chung et al. (2016) specify that top executives' personal connections and ties with external entities can help firms that operate in China and Taiwan achieve their financial objectives. These benefits can be acquired from business ties (Li et al., 2009; Peng & Luo, 2000; Wang & Chung, 2020). Top managerial ties with buyers, distributors and suppliers can facilitate firms' adaptation to local business systems. Top managerial ties help firms attain their strategic objectives. Also, top managerial ties can also help foreign firms enhance their legitimacy by being more "desirable, proper or appropriate" entities in the target market (Li et al., 2008: 385).

We summarize recent studies of managerial ties in Table 2. As shown in Table 2, prior research has identified two key gaps that need to be fulfilled. These gaps echo those identified above (e.g., separation of customer ties and supplier ties). First, most of the prior studies have not explored the effect of individual factors of business ties in their conceptualization (e.g., Acquaah, 2007; Sheng et al., 2011), though, some have revealed the importance of individual business tie (customers and suppliers) in export management (e.g., Campbell, 1998). Considering that B2B customers and suppliers relationships are suggested to bring different trading relationships and values to exporters (Campbell, 1998), the lack of attention to the role of individual business ties in the literature becomes a significant issue. By examining the specific role of B2B customers and suppliers individual ties in the export management can significantly enhance our understanding of the business relations within inter-cultural contexts (e.g., Ahearne, Lam, & Kraus, 2014; Li et al., 2008). Second, the findings on the effect of business/managerial ties on output variables (e.g., performance, innovation) are not entirely conclusive; with some studies have revealed a significant effect (Table 2) (e.g., Chung et al., 2020; Chung & Kuo, 2018) while others have reported a non-significant effect (e.g., Presutti & Odorici, 2019).

Therefore, further research on the relationship between business ties (customers and suppliers) and performance is still needed.

2.1.1. Inter-cultural B2B customer relationships and export performance

The structural social capital theory is often used to explore the effect of B2B customer relationships and firm performance (Filiari et al., 2014; Pinho, 2016). The main theoretical rationale of the structural social capital theory is that strong social interaction ties with foreign intermediaries provide important channels for market intelligence and resources flow. Structural social capital theorists suggest that social interaction ties are determined by the strength of relationships, the amount of time spent together, the emotional intensity as well as the frequency of the communication between the exporters and the intermediaries (Dyer & Singh, 1998; Maltz & Kholi, 2000; Pinho, 2016; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998). As such, inter-cultural B2B customer relationships are expected to lead to a superior export performance in the host market.

Our study is grounded in structural and cognitive dimensions of the social capital theory rather than more commonly used relational governance theory (Granovetter, 1985; Heide, 1994; Uzzi, 1997). The rationale behind this choice is that the role of the functions underpinning relational governance, such as trust and cooperation is well established in the study of managerial ties (Chung & Kuo, 2018; Sheng et al., 2011) and therefore applying relational governance to our research problem is unlikely to provide new insights or extend our knowledge in the context of inter-cultural B2B relationships. This new knowledge can be obtained by looking at the problem through a different lens of structural and cognitive elements of the social capital theories allowing to explore factors such as social networks, reciprocity and bonding. By applying social capital theory to the customer/supplier-export performance conceptualization (Forkmann et al., 2022; Heide & John, 1992; van den Butte & Wuyts, 2007), researchers have an additional choice of the theoretical concepts for their research of business ties and performance (Chung et al., 2020; Li et al., 2009). Using social capital theory framework in the business ties and performance research provides a broader view on the problem and the findings of the study can be more complete as a result. Furthermore, our choice is also justified because social capital theory has been widely applied in sociology, economics, public health, and management research to highlight the importance of social networks and norms in facilitating cooperation and collective action within communities. It emphasizes the value of relationships, trust, and shared norms as assets that enable individuals, groups, and organizations to achieve common goals (Dubos, 2017). However, relational governance theory focuses specifically on the role of relationships in economic transactions in inter-organizational contexts, examining how the quality of relationships influences the choice of governance mechanisms and the outcomes of cooperation (Cao & Lumineau, 2015; Ndubisi, Ehret, & Wirtz, 2016). Though both theories shed light on the significance of relationships, their scopes and the emphasis on the governance mechanisms are different. Since our study mainly investigates the individual impacts of managerial ties, B2B customer and supplier relationships respectively, on perceived export performance, instead of delving into the governance structures of such relationships (i.e., contractual versus relational ones), social capital theory is to provide better theoretic justifications on the value of managerial ties on export performance.

The findings of the extant structural social capital and relationship marketing literature suggest that the interaction patterns between actors in the network can provide both business opportunities and ability for information exchanges (Ahearne et al., 2014; Forkmann et al., 2022; van den Butte & Wuyts, 2007). Extant research findings provide important directions concerning the relationship between inter-cultural B2B customer relationships and export performance (e.g., Chung et al., 2012; van den Butte & Wuyts, 2007). This investigation suggests that the critical knowledge obtained by the exporters from their external alliances enables them to improve coordination, access to and control of

resources and thus attain performance objectives (Ju, Zhao, & Wang, 2014; Pirolo & Presutti, 2010; Shao et al., 2020; van den Butte & Wuyts, 2007). Studies focusing on Chinese guanxi networking also indicate that firms may use their B2B customer relationships in the host market to obtain knowledge which can be used to achieve their performance goals there (e.g., contemporary consumption trends) (Chung et al., 2016; Kingshott, Sharma, & Nair, 2020; Sheng et al., 2011). As a result, it is possible that inter-cultural B2B customer relationship is likely to lead to a superior performance in the host market. Extant research provides two key reasons for the postulation of this effect.

The first reason why B2B customer relationships can enrich enterprises' performance in the host market is associated with the fact that crucial knowledge is often available only to members in a business network but not to parties in the open market (Campbell, 1998; Powell, Koput, & Smith-Doerr, 1996). The crucial knowledge can provide business opportunities and information sharing (Ahearne et al., 2014; Forkmann et al., 2022; van den Butte & Wuyts, 2007). Market knowledge such as special product information, events and business opportunities, and the reputations of business partners can only be acquired via a business network (Campbell, 1998; Chung et al., 2012; Chung et al., 2016). This knowledge positively affects the performance of an enterprise's operation in the target marketplace (Sheng et al., 2011). Extant structural social capital research further suggests that the strong ties with external organizations can help enterprises to obtain advanced production know-how from a network consisting of users and manufacturers (Chung & Kuo, 2018; Forkmann et al., 2022; Pinho, 2016). Additionally, firms with a production network that utilizes abundant knowledge-transfer mechanisms in the users and manufacturers can create more innovations than their counterparts who engage in a lower level of knowledge-sharing (Von Hippel, 1988). Powell et al. (1996) support this view by reporting that, in the industries in which know-how is vital, enterprises need to be expert in internal research and collaborative research with external entities, such as business associates, skilled competitors and university scientists. Such networks can provide access to intelligence that is otherwise unavailable, thus resulting in a competitive advantage.

Furthermore, close social interactions and communications with customers (buyers, distributors) in the host market can also stimulate learning and communal amendment among business collaborators, and boost knowledge transfer and technology acquirement (Chung et al., 2016; Forkmann et al., 2022; Rindfleisch & Moorman, 2001; van den Butte & Wuyts, 2007). By adding new intelligence to existing expertise, an enterprise can lift up its absorptive capacity, resulting in enhanced knowledge utilization concerning its operation in the host market (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Dyer & Singh, 1998). This knowledge advantage may also improve an exporting enterprise's performance in the target market. Taken together, top executives' inter-cultural B2B relationships with host market customers may help exporting firms attain their performance goals in the host market.

Hypothesis 1. Inter-cultural B2B customer relationships have a positive effect on export performance in the host market.

2.1.2. Inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships and export performance

The structural social capital theory may also be used to investigate the effect of host market B2B supplier relationships and firm performance (Campbell, 1998; Filieri et al., 2014; Pinho, 2016). It is reported that strong social interaction ties with host market suppliers may provide advantages such as legitimacy for exporters' operation in the host market (Campbell, 1997, 1998; Korsakienė & Tvaronavičienė, 2012). Extant research on the relationship between exporters and their suppliers have revealed two key rationales which may help to theorize the effect of exporters-suppliers relationships on export performance in the host market. These two theorizations are associated with trust and relationship-specific investment in international supply chain management (Campbell, 1997, 1998). Based on the findings and theorization of

extant literature, we postulate that top executives' inter-cultural relationships with their counterparts in the host market suppliers may also help exporters to obtain their performance objectives in the host markets.

First, the relationships between exporter and their host market supplier can enhance export performance in the host market which is usually associated with the difficulty of obtaining a mutual trust in the international supply chain (Galdeano-Gómez, Pérez-Mesa, & Giagnocavo, 2015). Due to the high cultural difference, it is often difficult for Western firms operating in the Asian market to gain a full trust from their supply chain in the host market (Chung et al., 2016; Li et al., 2008; Li et al., 2009). In such situation, host market suppliers may help foreign exporters to build up such trust and credibility in the host market supply chain. For instance, the Chinese supply chain may prefer a clan culture, that honours consensus, tradition, long-term trust and commitment while foreign firms may be more market and competitive oriented and adopts a short-term, results-oriented culture (Ralston, Terpstra-Tong, Terpstra, & Ergi, 2006). The strong interpersonal relationships with the host market suppliers may help reducing the differences in mutual value system and obtaining strong commitment from their host market local supply system to the exporters' operation in the host market (Campbell, 1998; Pinho, 2016; van den Butte & Wuyts, 2007). Top executives' close personal relationships with the host market suppliers can, thus, help exporters to obtain key benefits such as development of long-time relationships, identification of business opportunities and access to market resources that are identified in extant structural social capital research (e.g., Forkmann et al., 2022; van den Butte & Wuyts, 2007).

Two, the exporter-host market supplier relationships may facilitate a superior export performance as it is related to the theoretical foundation of relationship-specific investment (Campbell, 1997). The extant research has reported that relationship-specific investments are often occurred for a particular purpose and are unique to a specific relationship (Campbell, 1998). The findings of the existing research indicate that conducting specialized investments may trigger firms to perform cooperative exchange to protect their investments (van den Butte & Wuyts, 2007; Williamson, 1985). This theorization is evidenced in some recent research on exporters and their supplier relationships. As outlined in prior research, a main reason for exporters to conduct personal relationship with host market supplier is mainly for the reason of legitimacy (Yang et al., 2012). In other words, to have used a host market supplier would bring a positive image for the exporter's operation in the host market. In a rapid environmental change, it is vital for the suppliers of exporters to participate in the underlying processes and work arrangements. This cooperation will enable exporters to deliver products or services faster than their competitors do in the host market (e.g., Forkmann et al., 2022). Due to their time pressure to the market, exporters may commit relationship-specific investment with their host market suppliers in order to market their products and services promptly (Campbell, 1997, 1998). As such top executives' close relationships with host market suppliers can result in a superior performance in the host market.

Hypothesis 2. Inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships have a significant effect on export performance in the host market.

2.1.3. Inter-cultural B2B customer vs supplier relationships

Though exporting firms can use both inter-cultural B2B customer and supplier relationships to help them achieve their export performance objectives (Campbell, 1997, 1998; Chung et al., 2020; Sheng et al., 2011), the effect of these two forms of B2B relationships on export performance might vary. It is possible that the effect on export performance of the former relationships is to be higher than that of the latter, due to the nature of business and collaboration (Heide & John, 1992; Jap & Ganesan, 2000). Two possible reasons might be behind this postulation.

First, as outlined in the exporter-supplier relationship research,

exporters are likely to rely on their both customer and supplier cooperation to fulfil their commitments for rapid innovation (Campbell, 1998; Galdeano-Gómez et al., 2015). Due to their nature of their business (e.g., distribution vs production), the market intelligence provided by the customers (buyers and distributors) is likely to be easier implemented than the intelligence provided by the supplier. For example, it is usually easier for the exporters to respond to the intelligence provided by the customers in terms of distribution related matters (Chung & Kuo, 2018). Adjustments to distribution needs such as timing for delivery that is suggested by B2B customer relationships are normally easier to implement than making adjustments based on the production intelligence suggested by B2B supplier relationships. Due to the industry operational process requirements, exporters and suppliers often face more challenges to implement the change on the supply side of business, such as production and manufacturing adjustments that are demanded by the market (Chung et al., 2020; Sheng et al., 2011). As such, a quicker response to the market demand would allow exporters to better satisfy customers' needs; therefore the effect of B2B customer relationships on export performance is to be higher than that related to B2B supplier relationships.

Second, the collaboration with host market suppliers may be more demanding than that with the customers. The cost of maintaining a strong relationship with suppliers is usually higher than that with the customers. In order to make a supply chain work (e.g., production, components), exporters need to closely monitor the products and services provided by the host market suppliers. An exporter's product quality is closely related to the product quality of their suppliers; as such it is likely to be more costly to maintain a strong relationship with the suppliers (Battaglia & Neirotti, 2022; Korsakienė & Tvaronavičienė, 2012). A higher maintenance costs might suggest that exporting firm's need a longer time to transform the supplier's relationship onto performance in the host market (Chung et al., 2016). This is supported by cognitive social capital theory research which poses that collaborations with the suppliers are critical for the development of innovative products and services (Campbell, 1998; Chung & Kuo, 2018). In order to produce and market innovative products and services promptly, extensive communications and cooperation are needed. More frequent communications are associated with higher costs. Consequently, the effect on export performance of exporters and host market suppliers' relationships is to be lower than that relating to exporters and customers.

Hypothesis 3. The effect of inter-cultural B2B customer relationships on export performance is greater than the effect of inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships on export performance in the host market.

2.2. Inter-cultural B2B customer relationships, perceived cultural distance and export performance

Cognitive social capital is frequently used to explore the moderation factors between inter-cultural B2B customer relationships and export performance (Filiari et al., 2014; Pinho, 2016). The cognitive dimension of social capital refers to the resources that provide shared values, representations and norms which are reinforced by the establishment of obligations among parties (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Due to their mutual benefits, host market customers may enable the foreign exporters to access to critical resources in the host market and this assistance can enhance the firms' competitive advantage and performance in the host market (Schurr & Ozanne, 1985; Wu, 2011). Host market's customer assistance is likely to be more important for exporting firms operating in a high cultural distance environment (Jia et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2012).

An inter-cultural distance is also related to the home-host market cultural differences in areas such as linguistics, traditions and social customs (Katsikeas et al., 2006; Xu & Shenkar, 2002). Although cross-market cultural distance is generally suggested to have an adverse effect on export performance, this negative effect may be reduced by the

top executive's inter-cultural B2B relationships with their host market customers. In other words, when the cultural distance is high, firms tend to commit to a larger extent of interactions with the firms' host market customers in order to minimize the effect of cultural distance (Li et al., 2008; Yang et al., 2012). Frequent personal interactions can help firms to understand cross-market cultural differences (Li et al., 2008; Shao et al., 2020). In a culturally similar environment, there is less need for firms to conduct frequent B2B customer relationships with their host market counterparts. In such a culturally similar environment, firms can use an uniformed strategy for cross-market operation (Chung & Kuo, 2018; Katsikeas et al., 2006; Schmid & Kotulla, 2011). Therefore, the interplay between the extent of inter-cultural B2B customer relationships and cultural distance can result in a higher export performance (Chung & Ho, 2021).

Furthermore, as outlined in the cognitive social capital researchers, one of the key successful factors in international supply chain is related to the co-existence in network system (Filiari et al., 2014; Pinho, 2016). Research suggests that the success of an export distribution channel requires the full cooperation of its marketing channel associates. That is, the key channel members such as exporters, buyers and distributors must all contribute to complete the export business transaction in the host market (Galdeano-Gómez et al., 2015; Sheng et al., 2011; Yang et al., 2012). In turn, the channel members need to transmit clear, accurate information or market intelligence to their exporting counterparts to avoid misunderstanding or miscommunication within the channel. In a high cultural distance context, frequent B2B customer relationships would help reduce any misunderstanding between the enterprise and its customers in the host market (Shao et al., 2020). Consequently, the interaction of B2B customer relationships and perceived cultural distance (PCD) is likely to lead to a better performance in the host market.

Hypothesis 4. The interaction of inter-cultural B2B customer relationships and perceived cultural distance has a positive effect on export performance in the host market.

2.3. Inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships, perceived cultural distance and export performance

Cognitive social capital theory may also be useful for investigating the integrative effect of top executives' inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships and cultural distance on export performance (Campbell, 1998; Filiari et al., 2014; Pinho, 2016). As outlined in the exporter-supplier relationship research, exporters are likely to rely on their supplier cooperation to fulfil its commitments for rapid innovation (Campbell, 1998; Galdeano-Gómez et al., 2015). The relationships between exporter and their host market suppliers may be affected by the host market's reciprocity practice. Research indicates that this practice is likely to affect exporters to conduct in-depth interactions with their host market suppliers (e.g., Chung et al., 2016). Based on prior research findings and guidance, the interplay of top executives' inter-cultural B2B relationship with host market suppliers and cultural distance is likely to have a significant effect on export performance in the host market. Details concerning this theorization are analyzed below.

Cognitive social capital theory research indicates that collaborations with suppliers are critical for the development of innovative products and services. In order to produce and market innovative products and services promptly, frequent informal communications and cooperations are needed. Under this situation, top executives of exporting firms may decide to cooperate more with host market suppliers in order to obtain easier and quicker communications (Campbell, 1997). This is supported by extant exporting research which has revealed host market suppliers can help foreign exporters to overcome home-host cultural distance and this assistance is a key successful factor for exporter's innovation capabilities (Battaglia & Neirotti, 2022; Korsakienė & Tvaronavičienė, 2012). As a result, exporters-host market suppliers' relationships are t

likely to be related to high cultural distance.

Moreover, unlike those relating to customer relationships, extent research suggests that the effect of the rule of reciprocity may also help the relationships between exporters and their host market suppliers (Chung et al., 2016). According to cognitive social capital theory research, a reciprocity practice may be stronger when cultural distance is large. When operating in a high cultural difference environment, host market suppliers may return favours to their foreign exporters more in order to secure their trust. By returning their exporter's favour such as access to advance technologies intelligence, host market suppliers may be more willing to fully commit to their exporter-supplier relationship and a close exporter-supplier relationship may help the achievement of export performance (Chung et al., 2012; Chung & Kuo, 2018). Research has provoked a strong link between trust and commitment in a supply chain management (Forkmann et al., 2022; Wang & Chung, 2020). With strong mutual commitment, exporter's relationships with host market suppliers can help overcome cultural distance related issues (e.g., production methods for culturally related goods) (Campbell, 1998). Thus, the interaction of top executives' B2B relationships with host market suppliers and PCD is to have a significant effect on performance in the host market.

Hypothesis 5. The interaction of inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships and perceived cultural distance has a positive effect on export performance in the host market.

2.4. B2B customer relationships, immigrant manager and performance

The cognitive social capital researchers indicate that inter-cultural relationships embrace person-related intangible skills and competences that are embedded in organizations (Westerlund & Svahn, 2008). This stream of the research suggests that key personnel of the organizations are likely to play a key role in the inter-cultural B2B customer relationships building (Chung & Kuo, 2018). Based on the cognitive social capital and immigrant manager literature, our study postulates that the interplay of top executives' B2B customer relationships and immigrant manager is likely to result in superior export performance in the host market.

As outlined in the literature, an immigrant manager would be classified as a source of knowledge creation in the B2B customer relationships-export performance paradigm (Chung, 2021; Chung & Tung, 2013). As such, the integration of B2B customer relationships and immigrant manager can enhance the exporting firms' performance in the host markets. A number of factors may contribute to this postulation.

First, prior research on the advantages of immigrant managers suggests that immigrant managers can help exporting firms formulate a proper international business strategy in the host market (e.g., adaptation, market entry and technology) (Chung, 2021; Chung et al., 2012; Marchal & Nedoncelle, 2019; Tung & Chung, 2010; Vaaler, 2011). Therefore, a suitable combination of immigrant manager and business strategy formulation appears to enable exporting firms to achieve their performance objectives in the host markets (Chung, 2021; Chung et al., 2012). The interactive effect of immigrant manager and exporting firms' choice of business strategies may also extend to B2B customer relationships of top executives. Cognitive social capital researchers indicate that the valuable contacts and knowledge of the host market arising from an immigrant manager (e.g., languages, business practices, networking, culture and customs) can aid exporting firms in verifying and interpreting the information they receive from the channel networks (Chung & Kuo, 2018; Hatzigeorgiou & Lodefalk, 2019; Hiller, 2013). It is cited that the information received from inter-cultural B2B customer relationships in the host market tends to be less clear or transparent, which renders its interpretation more difficult than that provided by the former, i.e., network of business ties (Filiari et al., 2014; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Pinho, 2016). Under such circumstances, immigrant managers can use their contacts and knowledge to help their top

executives to swiftly and correctly understand the timely intelligence provided by their channel sources, as such the immigrant manager can help to effectively moderate the effect of inter-cultural B2B customer relationships on export performance (Chung et al., 2016; Hatzigeorgiou & Lodefalk, 2016; Un, 2016). In other words, by utilizing their knowledge on the COO, immigrant managers can help their top executives to transmit the timely intelligence they have acquired from their COO back to the COR. This assistance can positively moderate top executives' action in the host market, such as adjusting production procedures to meet new regulatory requirements, as such the moderating role of immigrant manager in inter-cultural B2B customer and export performance relationship can be expected. The interaction of immigrant manager and inter-cultural B2B customer relationships can lead to a superior export performance (Li et al., 2008; Marchal & Nedoncelle, 2019; Wang, Noe, & Wang, 2014).

Second, the special knowledge of the target market associated with an immigrant manager can help top executives of exporting firms to locate alternative B2B customers once the original ones have decided not to continue their obligations or have ceased their business operations (Chung et al., 2016; Sheng et al., 2011). This moderation role is important as the consistency of support from B2B customers can ensure top executives continuously acquire prompt and accurate industry-related information that is vital to their firms' competitive position in the host market (Zhao & Hsu, 2007). Expressing differently, continuing top executive's relationships with the host market B2B customers relies on the support of their immigrant manager. Therefore, the effect of the top executives' B2B relationships with the host market customers on export performance is expected to be moderated by immigrant manager. As such, the interaction of immigrant manager and top executives' B2B relationships with the host market customers may help exporting firms obtain greater export performance in the host market.

Hypothesis 6. The interaction of inter-cultural B2B customer relationships and immigrant manager has a positive effect on export performance in the host market.

2.5. B2B supplier relationships, immigrant manager and performance

The cognitive social capital theory may also be useful for the postulation among B2B host market supplier relationships, immigrant manager and export performance in the host market (Westerlund & Svahn, 2008). In light of the findings of the cognitive social capital and immigrant manager literature, our study postulates that the interaction of top executives' B2B host market supplier relationships and immigrant manager is to result in superior performance in the host market. Prior research indicates that this postulation is likely to be related to the host market supplier's knowledge and experience in the relationships (Saleh, Ali, & Mavondo, 2014).

As reported in the cognitive social capital literature, knowledge and experience from international business involvements are the primary means of increasing commitment because they increase trustworthiness between the parties in a relationship development. Internationalization theorists suggest that firms are often more knowledgeable when they conduct business with other firms from countries which have different cultural background (Johanson & Vahlne, 2006). It is also suggested that host market suppliers' increased knowledge of dealing with foreign exporters allows them to obtain exporters' trustworthiness in the relationships (Johanson & Vahlne, 1990; Saleh et al., 2014). For example, in order to cater for an effective exporter-host market supplier relationship, both Australasian exporters and Greater China host market suppliers may try their best to make communications error free. Under this circumstance, the services and knowledge of immigrant manager (e.g., understanding of legal regulations on products) in the exporter's top executive relationship building with their host market suppliers may facilitate mutual communications between top executives of exporting firms and suppliers in the host market (Chung et al., 2012; Chung &

Tung, 2013). An error free communication can help exporters to obtain superior performance in the market.

Moreover, cognitive research findings may also provide useful guidance on the interactive effect of B2B supplier relationships, immigrant manager and export performance. It is suggested that a reason why host market suppliers' team up with foreign exporter is likely to be their motivation for entering international market (Battaglia & Neirotti, 2022; Cubillo & Cerviño, 2004). It is reported that the principal motivation for small business owners, such as those based in the Greater China region to become suppliers of foreign exporters is to gain information on how to conduct exporting and to learn from other business-people experience. As outlined, information and resources access are critical to a firm's performance (e.g., Ahearne et al., 2014; Forkmann et al., 2022). Thus, it is likely that top executives of host market suppliers would try their best to facilitate all information transmission they have received from the exporter's counterparts (Henderson, Kuncoro, & Turner, 1995). By having the assistance of the immigrant manager in the top executives and host market suppliers relationships in terms of cultural understanding and language capabilities would facilitate the knowledge transfer from the exporters to the supplier firms in the host market.

Hypothesis 7. The interaction of inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships and immigrant manager has a positive effect on export performance in host market.

2.6. Inter-cultural B2B customer relationships, perceived cultural distance, immigrant manager and export performance

Based on cognitive social capital and immigrant manager literature, our study also postulates that a three-way interaction of inter-cultural top executives' B2B customer relationships, cultural distance and immigrant manager may positively affect export performance. In light of the findings of prior research, it is postulated that immigrant manager may be more effective when the cultural distance is higher (Enderwick et al., 2011; Wang & Chung, 2020). Expressed differently, the use of immigrant manager can also enhance the integrative effect of B2B customer relationships and cultural distance on export performance. Several reasons may contribute to this result.

First, an immigrant manager may help to determine the correct type of B2B customers relationships when the cultural distance is high. In a high cultural distance environment, it is hard for the top executives to know the vital features and characteristics of their host market customers, which may affect the enterprise's operation in the host market (Jiang, Kotabe, Hamilton III, & Smith, 2016; Wu, 2011). For instance, it is difficult for Western top executives to know the dark side practices of buyers and distribution channel institutions in the Asian host markets due to the cross-cultural variances (e.g., channel maintenance cost, information flow; Chung et al., 2016; Gu et al., 2008; Sheng et al., 2011; Wang & Chung, 2020). Therefore, the risk of choosing a distribution channel institution that is affiliated with the dark side features is often higher when the home-host market cultural distance is high (Li et al., 2008; Shao et al., 2020). The selection of inadequate host market distribution channel institutions is suggested to have a long-term effect on the exporting firm's operation in the host market (Czinkota, Ronkainen, Sutton-Brady, Beal, & Stegemann, 2019). With the assistance of an immigrant manager, top executives of exporting firms may minimize the negative effect of the features of the host market's distribution channel practices and operational uncertainty by selecting distribution channel institutions which are not affiliated with the dark side influences, such as those outlined in the extant literature (e.g., Chung et al., 2016).

Second, as innovative ideas frequently flow in members' information exchange networks within the B2B supply chain, an enterprise's innovativeness may hinge on the degree that managers obtain and react on market information through the enterprise's customer ties (Jia et al., 2020; Lee, Tang, Yip, & Sharma, 2018; Wang & Chung, 2020). Moving

to an Asian host market from a Western market, whereas the informal and cultural institutions are vastly different, an immigrant manager can help their firm's top executives to promptly acquire and interpret crucial market intelligence that provides insight for creating the firm's competitive and innovative advantages in the host market (Cain & Spoonley, 2013; Chung & Tung, 2013; Li et al., 2008; Pio & Dana, 2014; Shao et al., 2020; Wang & Chung, 2020). This view is supported by Sharma (2019) and others (e.g., Kimber, Guesalaga, & Dickmann, 2022). This research stream suggests that the top executives' success in managing the home-host market institutional difference is mediated through the quality of relationships with their counterparts in the host market. The quality of these cross-market relationships depends on the top executive's cultural intelligence (denoted as "interact effectively with culturally different individuals", Thomas et al., 2015, p.1100) and understanding of inter-cultural environmental differences. The immigrant manager may, therefore, play a crucial role in the establishment of their top executive's cultural intelligence and know-how through the manager's rich sources and intimate knowledge of the host country norms, values and expectations (Chung & Tung, 2013; Jiang et al., 2016). This assistance can also help the top executives to achieve their financial performance goals in the host market as the firm's immigrant and international sales employee's cultural intelligence can affect the enterprise's adaptive behaviour and its performance in the host market (Kimber et al., 2022; Parsons & Winters, 2014).

Lastly, the immigrant manager may also help their firm to enhance the enterprise's learning capability and knowledge establishment on contemporary technologies which are vital to the enterprise's operations in the Greater China host market (e.g., Chung et al., 2016; Marchal & Nedoncelle, 2019; Shao et al., 2020). Research on B2B operation indicates that technology usage is especially vital for foreign firms operating in a high cultural distance host market as it can increase home-host B2B communication efficiency (Agnihotri, Dingus, Hu, & Krush, 2016; Ardito, Raby, Albino, & Bertoldi, 2021). In the Greater China markets, the two major forms of social media technology are WeChat and Line (Asia New Zealand Foundation, 2019; Plantin & de Seta, 2019; Sima, 2022). Businesses in the Greater China markets use these social media platforms almost on a daily basis. Though English is also used in these social media platforms, Chinese can probably better reflect the actual cultural environmental conditions in the host markets. Under this circumstance, immigrant managers can play a vital role in assisting their firm's top executives to better understand the cultural differences of their customers in a digital technology era (e.g., social-custom and taboos differences) (Katsikeas et al., 2006; Marchal & Nedoncelle, 2019; Sima, 2022; Yang et al., 2012). With the assistance of their immigrant manager, the top executives of the Western firms may be able to conduct bilingual online social media communication with their B2B customers in the host market (e.g., using the immigrant manager as a transmitter and conveyor) (Marchal & Nedoncelle, 2019). This digital communication may therefore help the Australasian top executives to improve their decision-making process and better respond to the host market's customer needs, particularly during and post-pandemic period (Brouthers, Chen, Li, & Shaheer, 2022; Luo, 2022). Collectively, the integration of top executives' B2B customer relationships, PCD and immigrant manager is likely to present a match which can lead to an excellent export performance in the host market.

Hypothesis 8. The interaction of inter-cultural B2B customer relationships, perceived cultural distance and immigrant manager has a positive effect on export performance in the host market.

2.7. Inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships, perceived cultural distance, immigrant manager and export performance

The relationship and networks may play a pivotal role in a firm's international expansion because it is affiliated with a number of distinctive features which may help the effectiveness of the interplay of

inter-cultural top executives' B2B supplier relationships, cultural distance and immigrant manager (Hilmersson & Jansson, 2012). Based on cognitive social capital and immigrant manager literature, our study postulates that the three-way interaction of inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships, cultural distance and immigrant manager is to be positively associated with export performance. This is mainly related to the advantages that might derive from being embedded in networks while conducting operations internationally (Ellis, 2011; Francioni et al., 2016). These advantages, as elaborated below, often occur in the form of credible supplier ties and compatibility of management capabilities of exporters and host market suppliers (Chung et al., 2016). It is reported that with the assistance of an immigrant manager, the effect of these advantages might be inflated.

First, as outlined in existing cognitive social capital and organisational networking research, credible B2B supplier chain often takes a long time to develop; especially in exporting business where inter-cultural relationships often occur in an international supply chain (Barnes, 2005; Campbell, 1998; Villena, Revilla, & Choi, 2011). Once a supply tie is established, firms in the network tend to stick to each other for a long period of time (Kiong & Kee, 1998) and it is difficult for an outsider to break into an existing supply chain network (Wang, 2007). This feature may become an asset to exporting firms which do not have a strong foothold in the host market due to their foreignness to the host market and strong cultural differences between home and host market (Battaglia & Neirotti, 2022; Chung, 2003). Under this circumstance, when using the assistance of immigrant manager (e.g., prompt responses to suppliers' needs, cultural and customs familiarity), top executives' long term inter-cultural B2B relationships with host market suppliers would be stronger. In other words, immigrant manager can promote the integrative effect of top executives' cultural B2B supplier relationships and cultural distance on export performance due to the long-time relationship between top executives and host market suppliers (Chung et al., 2016).

Furthermore, recent cognitive social capital research also indicates that the effect of exporters and their host market suppliers relationships might be embraced by the compatibility of management capability between these two organizations (Chung et al., 2016; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Management capability is often related to a firm's managerial and organizational skills (Park & Luo, 2001), including the firm's managerial skills in employee motivation, internal communication, decision-making and conflict resolution. In order to make the supply chain work, exporters and their host market suppliers are likely to have come up with a common view on the management capability in their supply chain (Battaglia & Neirotti, 2022). This management capability sharing is likely to affect the effectiveness exporters-host market suppliers relationships. As a result, top executives-host market suppliers relationships are useful in overcoming the issues related to cultural distance as their differences are rooted with each other's culture. Because an immigrant manager has a sound host market knowledge (e.g., production process) (Enderwick et al., 2011; Tung & Chung, 2010), their assistance in the inter-cultural supplier relationship, cultural distance and export performance framework may assist top executives of both exporting and supplier firms to overcome the cultural distance between exporters and their suppliers in the host market. Consequently, it is theoretically justified to postulate the interaction of top executives' B2B host market supplier relationships, PCD and immigrant manager is to lead to a superior export performance in the host market.

Hypothesis 9. The interaction of inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships, perceived cultural distance and immigrant manager has a positive effect on export performance in the host market.

3. Methodology and measurement

3.1. Data collection

This research employs the product market approach that is offered by Cavusgil and Zou (1994), Morgan, Kaleka, and Katsikeas (2004), and Chung and Kuo (2018). To gather primary data, we administered the survey questionnaire to the top executives (the managing directors, chief executive officers, presidents and general managers) in our sample of exporting firms in Australasia. These respondents possess extensive knowledge of their firms' exporting operations in Greater China. The questionnaire contained items pertaining to the respondent firms' most important products and/or services in their most important Greater China market. Our study focused on the Greater China markets as they represent the most important export destinations of Australasian exporters (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020; Statistics New Zealand, 2020). Our population is Australian and New Zealand exporting firms to the Greater China region that are listed in the Kompass and Dun & Bradstreet's business databases. As reported in the literature (Cadogan, Paul, Salminen, Puumalainen, & Sunqvist, 2001; Chung, 2003; Chung & Kuo, 2018), most of the exporting firms operating in the region were listed in these commercial databases. These databases are widely used by academic researchers and business executives. Based on these two databases, it was revealed that 3125 exporting firms operated in the Greater China region. As our study aims to focus on the behaviour of exporting firms in the B2B context (e.g., exporters vs buyers, suppliers and distributors), we have used this as our respondent's selection criteria (Chung et al., 2020). Based on this criteria, 2350 exporting firms were confirmed to operate in the B2B sector. From this B2B population, we have used a random sampling technique to form our sampling frame. Following the guidance of extant literature (e.g., Cadogan et al., 2001; Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010), we have randomly selected 950 sampling firms from the Kompass and Dun & Bradstreet commercial databases. A total of 156 firms were dropped because they had either closed or withdrawn from exporting operations, or were no longer operating in the target markets. Thus, the sampling frame was therefore adjusted. In total 230 useful firms completed the survey, suggesting a 29% response rate. This result is in line with other exporting and managerial ties research (e.g., 22% in Lages, Jap, & Griffith, 2008; 31% in Li et al., 2009). Following the wave practice of Armstrong and Overton (1977), we assessed the non-response bias by comparing key variables (e.g., performance, business ties) in the study from a sample of the earlier-responding firms to those of a sample of the later-responding firms (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004). It was established that no significant difference existed in the earlier and later groups of respondents. Further, by following the guidance of recent exporting and B2B research (e.g., Chung & Kuo, 2018), we conducted a comparison analysis between our respondents and the non-respondent firms by using company size and international business experience (number of years operating in international business) variables. To accomplish this task, we randomly chosen 150 non-respondent firms in our sampling frame and conducted a comparison analysis on their firm size and international business experience with the information of our respondent firms. Our findings revealed a non-significant difference between these two groups of firms (firm size: 344 vs 497; international business experience: 24 vs 23). This analysis further indicates that our research does not have a non-response bias issue.

3.2. Measures

As a pretest, we conducted interviews with representatives of ten exporting firms and used their feedback to evaluate the survey items for clarity of instructions and response format. As a result of the pilot testing, revisions were made to our survey questions to ensure greater clarity for respondents. The survey questionnaire was also evaluated by five academics based in Australasia and Greater China who are familiar

with the research area. Following the feedback obtained, the survey items were adjusted accordingly.

Export performance. Past research suggests that export performance can be measured along the dimensions of financial performance (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Lages et al., 2008; Morgan et al., 2004; Yang et al., 2012). Following this guidance, we used a *perceived* and comparative measure of a firm's performance relative to its main local competitors in the host market, in the aspect of volume of sales, growth of sales, percentage of sales as profit, ROI and profit growth (1 = “much worse”; 7 = “much better”) (Morgan et al., 2004; Sheng et al., 2011).

Inter-cultural B2B customer/supplier relationships. To measure B2B customer relationships, we used items that have been validated in prior studies (e.g., Chung & Kuo, 2018; Geletkanycz & Hambrick, 1997; Peng & Luo, 2000). Following this guidance, we measured the respondent firms' top executives' B2B relationships with their counterparts in customers in the host market (buyers and distributors) on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = “very little”; 7 = “very extensive”). Inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships were also measured by the respondent firms' top executives' B2B relationships with their counterparts in suppliers in the host market (Campbell, 1998). This item is also measured by a 7-point Likert scale (1 = “very little”; 7 = “very extensive”).

Immigrant manager. We measured whether firms employed an immigrant manager to manage their exporting operations in the market (Chung et al., 2012; Marchal & Nedoncelle, 2019; Rauch, 1999; Tung & Chung, 2010), using a binary item (1 = “yes”, 0 = “no”). If there is more than one immigrant manager in the firm, we focus on the most important one (Chung & Tung, 2013). This practice is widely recommended in extant literature (Table 1). As discussed previously, immigrant managers are defined as managers who were born and worked in the Greater China region before emigrating to Australia or New Zealand permanently (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020; Statistics New Zealand, 2020). To control the effect of multiple COR, Australia and New Zealand were the only COR of immigrant managers. The immigrant manager has not worked or lived in any other country besides their country of origin and Australia/New Zealand. Thus, in this study the network ties and knowledge of immigrant managers are only related to their COO and COR. We checked if the firm has only hired more than one immigrant manager to manage their exporting operations in the market (Chung & Tung, 2013) and if respondents have a local office in the host market – none of them did. Thus, our study excludes immigrants that have returned to their COO and reside/work there. Likewise, we also excluded managers who were born in Australasia but whose ancestors were originally from the host market. We also checked and confirmed that the immigrant manager is a middle-level manager and they do not hold the top executive position at the firm. The immigrant manager reports to the top executive of the firm. Consistent with those of prior research, the immigrant manager holds key decision-making roles such as export marketing manager or international marketing manager. The immigrant manager is also in charge of the firm's host market operations (Chung et al., 2012; Chung & Tung, 2013). Similarly, immigrant manager construct is also determined by the number of years the immigrant manager lived away from their country of origin. As shown in Table 1, immigrant managers in our study have lived in the Australasia region for about six years on average. This result suggests that our respondents are recent immigrants, which is similar with what is reported in recent literature (Jiang et al., 2016; Neville, Orser, Riding, & Jung, 2014). Because these two immigrant manager items have used a different measurement scale (1/0 vs number of years), it is decided to use the year of length of immigrant manager away from their country of origin item as a control variable in the analyses models.

Perceived cultural distance. The perceived cultural distance comprises the inter-cultural aspects that have been validated in prior research (understanding of advertisements, literacy and education level, linguistic and connotation, sociocultural customs and taboos) (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Katsikeas et al., 2006; North, 1990); in each case, they gauge the extent of difference between the home (COR) and host (COO)

markets on a seven-point scale (1 = “very similar”; 7 = “very different”).

Control variables. The firm-related factors are firm size and international business experience {years in international business, amount of host countries in which the firm has a presence (scope of operation), and number of years in the host market} (Lages et al., 2008). To measure industry sector, we determined whether the focal product was a manufacturing product or service (1 = “manufacturing product”, 0 = “service”) (Chung & Kuo, 2018; Li et al., 2009). More, we have also included climate environmental difference and natural resource environmental differences as our control variables, due to their possible effect on export performance in the host market (1 = very similar; 5 = very different) (Chung & Ho, 2021). We have also included a Hofstede cultural distance variable (Hofstede, 1980; Jia et al., 2020) as our control variable, due to its potential effect on export performance. In addition, as mentioned above, year of length of immigrant manager away from their country of origin is also listed as a control variable. The variables' measurement details are listed in Table 3. We also summarize our research profile information in Table 4.

3.2.1. Validity and reliability

All the constructs in the model exhibit high validity and reliability. The values of Cronbach's alpha and construct reliability were both greater than 0.7. The average variance extracted was greater than 0.5

Table 3
Measurement scales.

Construct and Source	Description	Factor loadings
Inter-cultural B2B customer relationships (1 = “very little”; 7 = “very extensive”), (Chung & Kuo, 2018; Peng & Luo, 2000; Sheng et al., 2011) (CR = 0.872; AVE = 0.695, Alpha = 0.938)	Top managers at our firm utilize personal ties, networks and connections with:	
	Top managers at buyer firms Top managers at distributor firms	0.944 0.941
Inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships (1 = “very little”; 7 = “very extensive”), (Chung & Kuo, 2018; Park & Luo, 2001; Sheng et al., 2011)	Top managers at our firm utilize personal ties, networks and connections with: Top managers at supplier firms	1.000
	Cultural distance (1 = “very similar”; 5 = “very different”), (Chung, 2003; Johnson & Arunthanes, 1995; Lages et al., 2008) (CR = 0.939; AVE = 0.795, Alpha = 0.922)	Understanding and interpretation of advertisement Consumer literacy and education level Linguistic and connotative implications Sociocultural customs and taboos
Perceived export performance (1 = “much worse”; 7 = “much better, compared with main local competitors in the host market”) (Katsikeas et al., 2006; Morgan et al., 2004; Sheng et al., 2011) (CR = 0.946, AVE = 0.778, Alpha = 0.959)	Sales volume	0.914
	Sales growth	0.926
	Profitability as a percentage of sales	0.933
	Return on investment	0.916
	Profit growth	0.948

Table 4
Profile information.

Construct and Source	Results
Immigrant manager measurement: Hiring immigrant manager to manage operations in immigrant manager's COO (1 = Yes, 0 = No) (Chung et al., 2012; Gould, 1994; Tung & Chung, 2010)	Yes = 49% No = 51%
Immigrant manager measurement: Average number of years of immigrant managers away COO (i.e., in the COR) (this variable is listed as control variable in the regression model)	6 years
Average number of years of immigrant managers in the firm	4 years
Firm size, average number of employees (control variable) (Chung et al., 2012; Lages et al., 2008)	497
Most important host market	China = 76%, Hong Kong = 14%, Taiwan = 10%
Average number of years in the host market	11 years
Industry* (1 = manufacturing product; 0 = service) (Chung & Kuo, 2018; Peng & Luo, 2000)	Manufacturing product = 64%, Service = 36%
Nationality	Australia = 51%, New Zealand = 49%

Notes

COO: Country of origin. COR: Country of residence. * Manufacturing products included meat, dairy, food, juice and beverage, wine, wool, automotive, aviation, building, plastics, computer, textiles, furniture, bedding, boat and ship making, mining, construction, and so on. Services included consultancy, education, design, engineering, finance, training, and research.

(cf. informal institutional environment) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2010). Moreover, the confirmatory fit analysis for the constructs used in our study displayed good fit (Overall: $\chi^2(45) = 74.628$ ($p = .004$), NFI = 0.96, CFI = 0.98, IFI = 0.98, TLI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.05). All the variance inflation factors (VIF) were lower than the suggested cut-off values (4.0) (see discussion below), indicating this research has no multicollinearity problems (Hair et al., 2010; Li et al., 2009).

3.2.2. Common method bias

We adopted several procedures that are suggested to control for possible common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003; Tourangeau, Rips, & Rasinski, 2000). First, the marker variable (MV) practice, as suggested by Lindell and Whitney (2001), was employed for exploring the common method bias. With this practice, we selected a MV that is not theoretically related to at least one key variable in the model. The topography difference (e.g., surface features) between the home and host market (1 = very similar; 5 = very different) is selected as the MV. The rationale for choosing the topography difference as the MV is because this variable is unlikely to be associated with key variables such as a firm's choice of managerial ties (customer, supplier) and immigrant manager (Chung & Tung, 2013; Neville et al., 2014) – e.g., the choice of managerial ties is more likely to be related to institutional distance (Ju et al., 2014). As shown in our correlation coefficient results (Table 5), our MV is not significantly correlated with most of the study's factors. Following prior research, we amended our coefficient and levels of significance adopting the lowest positive coefficient value (Lindell & Whitney, 2001; Sheng et al., 2011). As displayed in Table 5, the adding MV has no influence on coefficient values and the related significance values, thus indicating the non-existence of a common method bias.

Second, the measurement of our predictor and criterion variables is parted, as guided by Podsakoff et al. (2003), by placing the related questions in varied parts of the survey. Following the guidance of the extant literature, we also used a variety of response formats for our predictor and criterion variables (e.g., binary, Likert scales) (Podsakoff et al., 2003). This practice allows respondents to reply to the model variables under different conditions. Third, no right or wrong input procedure minimized the effect of common method bias because it

“should reduce people's evaluation apprehension and make them less likely to edit their responses to be more socially desirable, lenient, acquiescent, and consistent with how they think the researcher wants them to respond” (Podsakoff et al., 2003, p.888). Lastly, we also followed recommendations that suggest that common method biases can be achieved by careful construction of the research measurement items (Tourangeau et al., 2000). In light of this suggestion, we only adopted those items that were validated from key sources in the related research (e.g., Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Johnson & Arunthanes, 1995; Peng & Luo, 2000; Tung & Chung, 2010).

3.2.3. Endogeneity tests

Although inter-cultural customer/supplier relationships are suggested as exogenous variables to affect export firms' behaviours and outcomes in the host market, omitted variables and measurement errors might also still create endogeneity problems (Jia et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2012). To minimize the endogenous issue, we adopted an instrumental variable (IV) method by including two IVs, ties with chamber of commerce in the second host market and ties with professional conferences in the industry, in the second host market (ideal) (Johnson & Arunthanes, 1995) (see Appendix A). We measured these two variables by a five point scale (1 = very little; 5 = very extensive) (Peng & Luo, 2000). These two IVs meet the two requirements of a valid instrumental variable that is suggested in the literature (Jia et al., 2020). First, these two IVs are correlated with inter-cultural customer and supplier relationships. Second, these two IVs are not correlated with error terms in the model. We list our two-stage least squares (2SLS) regression results in Appendix A. The outcomes indicate that endogeneity is not likely to be an issue in our study.

4. Results

We employed hierarchal regression analysis to investigate our research hypotheses (Table 6). This method is widely used and appropriate for testing a model with interaction effects (Hair et al., 2010). Consistent with prior literature, we employed a mean-centering method for the constructs in the interaction terms to help minimize the effect of multicollinearity when explaining the interaction outcomes (Aiken & West, 1991). We have followed extant literature to conduct hierarchal regression analysis (e.g., Chung & Ho, 2021; Chung & Kuo, 2018; Wang & Chung, 2020). In the regression analysis, we first investigated the effect of control variables (M1). With this model, our theorization is based on prior research suggesting that firm, export market environmental factors and Hofstede cultural distance are likely to be related with firm performance in the host market (e.g., Chung et al., 2012; Jia et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2012). After M1, prior structural social capital and immigrant manager research also suggests that cross-cultural business networking (customer, supplier), perceived cultural distance, immigrant manager may also be associated with export performance (Boso, Story, Cadogan, Micevski, & Kadić-Maglajlić, 2013; Campbell, 1997, 1998; Chung et al., 2012). Guided by extant research, we have examined the effects of these variables in our M2. Following M1 and M2, we have employed the theorization that the interactions of inter-cultural business networking, perceived cultural distance and immigrant manager may also influence export performance (Chung & Kuo, 2018; Kogut & Singh, 1988; Vaaler, 2011). For example, extant cognitive social capital and immigrant manager literature has theorized that the interplay of inter-cultural customer relationships and cultural distance (Li et al., 2009) and inter-cultural customer relationships and immigrant manager are likely to be associated with export performance (Pinho, 2016). This entry forms our M3. Lastly guided by the literature which suggests that the interaction of business networking, organizational strategies (immigrant manager) and perceived cultural distance (Chung et al., 2020; Chung & Tung, 2013; Lee et al., 2018) may also be associated with export performance, we have examined the interaction of cross-cultural customer/supplier networking, perceived cultural

Table 5
Correlation matrix and marker variable testing.

	Mean	S.D.	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
Export performance (A)	3.82	1.99	1.000	0.140*	-0.113	0.171*	0.099	0.145**	0.004	0.171**	-0.080	-0.037	-0.060	-0.106	-0.045	0.121*	-0.060
Immigrant manager (B)	NA	NA	0.142*	1.000	0.019	0.080	0.105	0.060	-0.051	0.044	-0.030	-0.324**	0.181*	-0.045	-0.030	0.821**	0.105
Perceived cultural distance (C)	3.94	1.03	-0.111	0.021	1.000	0.041	0.011	0.149*	0.050	0.129*	-0.067	-0.003	0.273**	0.133*	0.275**	-0.020	0.194**
Inter-cultural B2B customer relationships (D)	4.39	1.54	0.173**	0.082	0.043	1.000	0.556**	0.008	-0.060	-0.029	-0.048	-0.071	0.041	0.030	0.070	0.095	0.043
Inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships (E)	4.03	1.75	0.101	0.107	0.013	0.557**	1.000	0.009	-0.033	-0.012	-0.089	-0.080	0.002	-0.012	0.035	0.116*	0.077
Firm size (F)	497	1603	0.147**	0.062	0.151**	0.010	0.011	1.000	0.281**	0.414**	0.143**	0.128*	-0.058	-0.027	0.063	0.026	-0.034
International business experience: years in international business (G)	23	29	0.006	-0.049	0.052	-0.058	-0.031	0.282**	1.000	0.357**	0.462**	0.133*	-0.040	-0.032	0.069	-0.022	0.005
International business experience: scope of operation (H)	15	20	0.173**	0.046	0.131*	-0.027	-0.010	0.415**	0.358**	1.000	0.165**	0.075	0.014	-0.026	0.074	0.024	0.000
Year in the host market (I)	11	8	-0.078	-0.028	-0.065	-0.046	-0.087	0.145**	0.463**	0.167**	1.000	0.141*	-0.028	-0.017	-0.093	-0.041	-0.105
Industry (J)	NA	NA	-0.035	-0.322**	-0.001	-0.069	-0.078	0.130*	0.135*	0.077	0.143*	1.000	-0.087	-0.009	-0.249**	-0.267**	-0.107
Climate environmental difference (K)	3.59	1.08	-0.058	0.183**	0.274**	0.043	0.004	-0.056	-0.038	0.016	-0.026	-0.085	1.000	0.605**	0.098	0.136*	0.650**
Natural resource environmental difference (L)	3.71	1.26	-0.104	-0.043	0.135*	0.032	-0.010	-0.025	-0.030	-0.024	-0.015	-0.007	0.606**	1.000	0.056	-0.060	0.514**
Hofstede cultural distance (M)	43.54	6.84	-0.043	-0.028	0.276**	0.072	0.037	0.065	0.071	0.076	-0.091	-0.247**	0.100	0.058	1.000	-0.048	0.117
YIMAFCCO (N)	6	4	0.123*	0.822**	-0.019	0.097	0.118*	0.029	-0.020	0.026	-0.040	-0.265**	0.138*	-0.059	-0.047	1.00	0.087
Marker variable (MV)-topography difference (O)	3.48	1.02	-0.058	0.107	0.196**	0.045	0.079	-0.032	0.007	0.002	-0.103	-0.105	0.651**	0.515**	0.119	0.087	1.000

Notes: YIMAFCCO=Year immigrant manager away from country of origin. Adjusted correlations for potential common method variance (marker variable) is listed above the diagonal (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). NA: not applicable. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

distance and immigrant manager employment on export performance in our M4. A key theorization on this model is that immigrant managers might help their top executives to select a proper distribution channel in the host market and help their top executives to properly understand key information ideas in a B2B supply chain, when the home-host perceived cultural distance is strong. A high cultural distance would compound the difficulty of information sharing and obtaining proper distributors and buyers in the host markets (Jia et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2018; Wang & Chung, 2020; Yang et al., 2012).

Our findings support H1. Inter-cultural B2B customer relationships have a positive effect on export performance ($\beta = 0.367, p < .01$). Our findings cannot confirm H2 because inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships have no significant effect on export performance ($\beta = -0.155, p > .1$). Our results show evidence to support H3, which posits that the effect of inter-cultural B2B customer relationships on export performance is greater than that of relating to inter-cultural B2B supplier and export performance ($\beta = 0.367 > \beta = -0.155$).

H4 was not supported as the interaction between inter-cultural B2B customer relationships and perceived cultural distance exerted a non-significant effect on export performance ($\beta = 0.099, p > .1$). The interplay between inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships and perceived cultural distance also has no significant effect on export performance ($\beta = 0.121, p > .1$), suggesting H5 is also not supported. The interaction of inter-cultural B2B customer relationships and immigrant manager has a significant positive effect on export performance ($\beta = 0.320, p < .01$). This result suggests that H6 is supported. However, the interplay of inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships and immigrant manager has a significant but negative effect on export performance ($\beta = -0.311, p < .01$). This result indicates that H7 is refuted.

The three-way interaction of inter-cultural B2B customer relationships, perceived cultural distance and immigrant manager has a positive effect on export performance ($\beta = 0.280, p < .05$), thus supporting H8. That is, the influence of inter-cultural B2B customer relationships and immigrant manager can help firms to gain superior export performance in a higher cultural distance environment. On other hand, the three-way interaction of inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships, perceived cultural distance and immigrant manager does not have a significant effect on export performance ($\beta = 0.171, p > .1$). This result indicates that, the influence of inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships and immigrant manager cannot help firms to gain superior export performance in a higher cultural distance environment. This latter result does not support H9.

To explore the consistency and robustness of these results, we conducted a robustness regression analysis of two subsamples (Marchal & Nedoncelle, 2019); exporting firms operating in a low vs high competitive environmental difference (home-host market competitive environmental difference) (Cavusgil et al., 2004; Chung & Kuo, 2018; Katsikeas et al., 2006). The reason for this exploration is to explore whether the effect of inter-cultural B2B customer/supplier relationships, cultural distance and immigrant manager occurs in a particular type of competitive environment (Chung & Ho, 2021). Our robustness testing results suggest that there is no clear pattern on inter-cultural B2B customer/supplier relationships, perceived cultural distance and immigrant manager occurring in a particular type of competitive environment (e.g., Inter-cultural B2B customer relationships \times perceived cultural distance \times immigrant manager and Inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships \times perceived cultural distance \times immigrant manager). It is thus decided to draw our results conclusions based on the overall sample models (Table 6).

5. Discussion and implications

Building on structural and cognitive social capital theory, cultural distance, and immigrant manager literature (e.g., Jia et al., 2020; Marchal & Nedoncelle, 2019; Pinho, 2016), our study postulates a new conceptualization consisting of inter-cultural B2B relationships (top

Table 6
Statistical analysis results: export performance.

	Export Performance							
	M1	VIF	M2	VIF	M3	VIF	M4	VIF
<i>Control variables</i>								
Firm size	−0.018	1.553	0.057	1.620	0.057	1.632	0.044	1.634
International business experience: years in international business	0.290	4.324	0.205	4.448	0.197	4.532	0.322+	4.714
International business experience: scope of operation	0.155	1.272	0.129	1.311	0.200*	1.394	0.157+	1.415
Year in the host market	−0.277	3.066	−0.269	3.100	−0.341*	3.279	−0.366*	3.294
Industry	−0.031	1.437	0.116	1.688	0.106	1.737	0.065	1.758
Climate environmental difference	0.008	1.369	0.086	1.490	0.084	1.505	0.094	1.508
Natural resource environmental difference	−0.111	1.309	−0.107	1.346	−0.088	1.557	−0.154	1.600
Hofstede cultural distance	0.140	1.258	0.120	1.392	0.072	1.440	0.069	1.443
Year immigrant manager away from country of origin (YIMAFCCO)	0.142	1.068	−0.114	2.129	−0.091	2.185	−0.033	2.221
<i>Independent variables</i>								
Immigrant manager			0.368**	2.448	0.326*	2.639	0.217+	2.776
Perceived cultural distance			−0.124	1.306	−0.122	1.389	−0.220*	1.518
Inter-cultural B2B customer relationships (H1, S)			0.367**	1.458	0.195	2.171	0.247*	2.228
Inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships (H2, NS)			−0.155	1.487	−0.015	1.932	0.056	1.985
<i>Interactions- two way</i>								
Inter-cultural B2B customer relationships × perceived cultural distance (H4, NS)					0.099	1.818	0.101	2.259
Inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships × perceived cultural distance (H5, NS)					0.121	2.092	0.074	2.151
Inter-cultural B2B customer relationships × immigrant manager (H6,S)					0.320**	1.810	0.203+	2.043
Inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships × immigrant manager (H7, R)					−0.311**	1.795	−0.243*	1.965
Immigrant manager x perceived cultural distance					−0.091	1.224	−0.129	1.252
<i>Interactions- three way</i>								
Inter-cultural B2B customer relationships × perceived cultural distance x immigrant manager (H8, S)							0.280*	2.091
Inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships × perceived cultural distance x immigrant manager (H9, NS)							0.171	1.942
F value	1.597		2.901*		3.150**		4.156**	
R ² value	0.136		0.302**		0.409*		0.510**	
ΔR ² value			0.166**		0.106*		0.101**	

† $p < .1$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. S: supported; NS: not supported. R: refuted.

executives' relationships with their host market's customers/suppliers), perceived cultural distance, immigrant manager and export performance. Specifically, we explored the interactive effect of customer/supplier relationships x perceived cultural distance, customer/supplier relationships x immigrant manager, and customer/supplier relationships x perceived cultural distance x immigrant manager on export performance. Following cognitive social capital and immigrant manager literature, we postulate that immigrant managers may conditionally help top executives to build relationships with their host market's customers/suppliers (Chung & Tung, 2013; Vaaler, 2011). By building on the extant research scope (Ju et al., 2014; Kogut, 2000; Yang et al., 2012), our study is among the early group to individually explore the exporter-customer and exporter-supplier relationships in export management (Table 2) (Campbell, 1997, 1998; Chung & Kuo, 2018). By examining 230 Australasian firms exporting to the Greater China region, our study has found that customer relationships have a significant effect on export performance while supplier relationships do not have such effect. The interplay of customer/supplier relationships and perceived cultural distance does not have a significant effect on export performance. The interaction of customer relationships and immigrant manager has a positive impact on performance whereas the integration of supplier relationships and immigrant manager does not have a positive effect on export performance. The interplay of customer relationships, cultural distance and immigrant manager has a positive effect on export performance but the interaction between supplier relationships, cultural distance and immigrant manager does not have such effect. In this study, we uncovered that the immigrant manager can possibly deliver advantages, such as helping the top executives of exporting firms to better comprehend the B2B channel intelligence and establish a mechanism for long-term cooperation with their host market B2B customers, when the perceived cultural distance is high. Our findings provide constructive guidance on *when* and *how* the exporting enterprises should deploy their immigrant manager concerning their firms' B2B operation in foreign host markets (Chung, 2021; Hatzigeorgiou & Lodefalk, 2019). Our study

has generated a number of important implications, both theoretical and practical for future research. These implications are discussed and concluded below.

5.1. Theoretical contributions

Our research offers a number of key conceptual contributions to the extant social capital and immigrant manager literature and its sub-theme of immigrant manager research. Our study has provided a set of new explanatory theoretical foundations pertaining to immigrant manager, cultural distance, top managerial ties and export performance, thus offering a new lens to help conceptualizing the relationships among the key variables in export management that may possibly extend to firms' international operations.

First, by exploring the individual role of exporters' relationships with the host market customers and suppliers in the conceptualization, our study significantly enhances recent research that indicates the need to examine the separate effect of B2B firms' customer and supplier relationships in exporting management (Campbell, 1997, 1998; Galdeano-Gómez et al., 2015; Korsakienė & Tvaronavičienė, 2012). As outlined in the literature, prior research has explored the effect of exporter-host market customer and exporter-home market supplier relationships in their research conceptualization but that of exporter-host market supplier relationships is not examined (e.g., Campbell, 1997, 1998). To fulfil the research gaps, our study examines the effect of exporter-host market customer and exporter-host market supplier relationships in our conceptualization. By confirming the significant effect of exporter-customer relationship on export performance in the host market, our study extends existing exporter-customer research scope from emerging market exporters (e.g., Thai exporters) to developed market exporters (e.g., Australia and New Zealand) (Campbell, 1997, 1998). This extension suggests that exporting research may need to consider the effect of exporter-customer when conducting research on emerging and developed market exporters as this relationship may commonly result in a

superior export performance and/or innovation in both markets. However, by revealing the non-significant effect of exporter-host market supplier relationship on export performance, our study indicates that exporters may be better off by building stronger relationships with the home market suppliers, as suggested by extant research (Campbell, 1997, 1998). The benefits to have a strong relationship with the home market suppliers including produce and market innovated products and services to the market promptly, frequent informal communications and closer exporter-supplier cooperations. Taken together it is needed for future research on exporting and international supply chain to explore the effects of the individual relationships between exporters and their business counterparts (host market customers, host market suppliers and home market suppliers) so a more complete picture on these factors' impact on export performance can be obtained (Francioni et al., 2016).

Second, our results on the individual effect of exporters' relationships with their customers and suppliers relationships in the host markets provide a solid new guidance on the development of structural social capital research (Claridge, 2018; Forkmann et al., 2022; Muniady et al., 2015; Pinho, 2016). Though prior structural social capital research tends to focus on the overall network relations and the overall patterns of connections between parties in the network system, our study suggests that structural social capital research may need to view exporters' relationships with their customers and suppliers relationships separately due to their different effect in the export ventures. Together with those revealed in extant literature (e.g., Pinho, 2016), our study has clearly revealed the key differences among exporters' relationships with their customers and suppliers in the host market. In light of this study's findings, extant structural social capital research should consider to separately examine customer and supplier relationships in the B2B exporting business as they may offer a different effect on export performance achievement (Filieri et al., 2014; Muniady et al., 2015).

Third, our study offers a new direction for the development of the cognitive social capital research (Muniady et al., 2015). In particular our study extends extant literature by specifying the moderating role of PCD and immigrant manager in the customer/supplier relationships-export performance framework. By revealing the interactive effect of immigrant manager and inter-cultural customers relationships on export performance, our study expands extant cognitive social capital research by revealing the new role of a key organizational personnel such as immigrant manager in the exporter-customers relationships. This new result suggests that cognitive social capital research can include the actors mentioned in the literature (e.g., entrepreneurs, Jonsson, 2015), as well as immigrant manager which has been covered in our study, to build cognitive social capital in the host markets. Our study also points out that inter-cultural customers relationships alone may not be sufficient to help overcome the impact of cultural distance on export performance. The interactive effect of inter-cultural customers relationships and cultural distance becomes significant when an immigrant manager is added. This result further strengthens the role of personnel in the cognitive social capital research. Immigrant manager is useful for helping top executives to develop inter-cultural customers relationships whereas immigrant manager's assistance is even stronger when the home-host market cultural distance is high (Jia et al., 2020; Jonsson, 2015; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998).

Fourth, our research offers guidelines on when and how immigrant managers should be (and should not be) utilized in the B2B customer/supplier relationships-export performance paradigm. Thus, our study makes new contributions to extant immigrant literature. As outlined, our study suggests that the function of immigrant manager is evident in the establishment of inter-cultural customer relationships and the integrative effect of immigrant manager and inter-cultural customer relationships is larger when the home-host market cultural distance is strong. However, the usage of immigrant manager is not evident in the establishment of inter-cultural supplier relationships, regardless the extent of perceived home-host market cultural distance. These new findings clearly extend existing literature research which has already

revealed the functions of immigrant managers in exporting and IB research (Table 1) (e.g., market entry mode selection; Chung & Tung, 2013; Enderwick et al., 2011; Hatzigeorgiou & Lodefalk, 2019). In light of this study's outcomes, researchers can now consider immigrant managers when formulating their international marketing strategies (e.g., adaptation, market entry mode) as well as use them to help develop top executive's inter-cultural customer relationships in the host markets (Boso et al., 2013; Jia et al., 2020; Kingshott, Sharma, Sima, & Wong, 2020). Nevertheless, researchers may also need to consider the areas where immigrant managers may not be helpful in exporting and IB research (e.g., profit performance; Chung et al., 2012 and inter-cultural supplier relationships, as outlined in this research).

Lastly, prior research on the effect of inter-cultural B2B relationships and export performance tends to focus on the West-East combinations (e.g., France-China) (Shao et al., 2020) that are different from our study. Our research expands the scope of this group by focusing on Australasian exporting firms in the Greater China region. Consequently, our study boosts existing research by providing a wider home-host combination. Consistent with that of existing research (i.e., France-China dyad; Shao et al., 2020), our interactive effect of the B2B customer relationships, cultural distance and immigrant manager are revealed to have a significant effect on export performance in the Australasian-Greater China combinations. This consistency suggests that research on B2B customer relationships, cultural distance, immigrant manager and export performance might be generalizable across Europe and Australasian exporting firms that are operating in the Greater China region. This confirmation may advance existing social capital research (structural and cognitive) that intends to explore their theoretical conceptualization from a different home-host market perspective (Chung & Kuo, 2018; Ju et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2012).

5.2. Managerial implications

Our results may offer clear managerial implications for Australasian, and possibly other Western firms, which intend to export to the Greater China region (e.g., Denmark, France, Sweden) (Hatzigeorgiou & Lodefalk, 2019; Hiller, 2013; Shao et al., 2020). Executives of Western exporting firms should explore B2B customers relationships, cultural distance and the immigrant manager when conducting business in the Greater China host markets, as the interaction of these key factors can facilitate export performance in those markets (Chung & Ho, 2021; Chung & Kuo, 2018; Lee & Miller, 1996). Our study suggests that the top executives of Western exporting firms should develop B2B inter-cultural relationships with their customers (buyers, distributors) in the Greater China host markets as this investment can help their firms to improve their export performance in the host markets. Western exporting firms may also consider hiring an immigrant manager to assist and facilitate their top executives' and firms' operation in the immigrant's county of origin (Marchal & Nedoncelle, 2019; Parsons & Winters, 2014) when exporter-customers relationship is vital to their operation. Our study reveals that immigrant managers may help these firms to strengthen and facilitate their top executives' ties and relationships with their host market's customers; especially when the home and host market cultural distance is large. Extending the findings of those suggesting the employment of immigrant managers (Chung, 2021; Hatzigeorgiou & Lodefalk, 2016; Marchal & Nedoncelle, 2019), our finding is consistent with prior research that has established the role of immigrant managers as a knowledge conveyor and carrier (Harzing et al., 2015; Hiller, 2013; Parsons & Winters, 2014). Taken together, Western firms may now use the special knowledge of their immigrant managers when making critical international strategic decisions like market entry mode (Chung & Enderwick, 2001; Chung & Tung, 2013), adaptation and standardization strategy (Chung et al., 2012), international trade (Rauch, 2001), international remittance (Vaaler, 2011), international new ventures (Jiang et al., 2016), as well as inter-cultural B2B customer relationships development. By saying this, executives of Western exporting firms

would need to be cautious about the interaction of B2B supplier relationships, cultural distance and the immigrant manager as this alliance does not result in a superior export performance in the host markets (Campbell, 1997, 1998). Our study's findings suggest that exporters may not need to consider building a stronger relationship with their host market suppliers (Campbell, 1997, 1998; Francioni et al., 2016). Research indicates that a large physical and cultural distance may prevent the usage of exporters' relationship with their host market suppliers (Galdeano-Gómez et al., 2015; Korsakienė & Tvaronavičienė, 2012) as the speed to market new products and services is a key for export business success.

6. Limitations and future research

Though this research has generated new knowledge concerning the impact of B2B customer/supplier relationships, cultural distance and immigrant manager, it does have several limitations. These limitations require further examination of the findings to provide directions for future research. First, our study has adopted a single item measurement for our B2B supplier relationship construct. Though this is a common practice in the extant literature (Table 2), it is important for future research to add more measurement items for this construct (e.g., number of years working with suppliers). This adding can increase the validity of the supplier construct. Likewise, though we have adopted two items for our immigrant manager variable (whether hiring an immigrant manager and number of years immigrant manager lived away from their country of origin), future research can also improve this construct by using more measurements (e.g., immigrant manager's education level, gender, etc.) (Tung, Chung, Jou, & Rowley, 2024). Second, our study has only investigated the effect of immigrant manager knowledge in the COO, but not manager knowledge in the COR. As an immigrant manager is based in the firm's head office in the COR (Chung & Tung, 2013; Tung & Chung, 2010), its knowledge may be beneficial when formulating strategic plans for the domestic (i.e., COR) operation. Thus, future studies could also explore the effect of immigrant manager knowledge in their firms' domestic operations (Un, 2016), particularly in light of the growing cultural diversity of customers in many home countries such as the U.S., Canada and European countries (Hiller, 2013; Marchal & Nedoncelle, 2019). It would be useful to know if this type of manager knowledge can make equal contribution to the innovation and performance in the host and home markets (Un, 2016). Similarly, as noted in extant literature (e.g., Harzing et al., 2015), exporting firms may use their non-immigrant managers such as expatriates who have knowledge about the host market when conducting business in the market. Therefore, it is also important for future research to undertake an analysis on whether the employment of expatriate managers can also help their top executives to achieve what has been examined in this study (e.g., customer relationships x perceived cultural distance x immigrant manager - > export performance). It is vital to confirm whether and how the expatriate managers' cultural knowledge compares to the immigrant managers' knowledge. The results of this new analysis could provide

significant implications for the future inter-cultural B2B relations research (Harzing et al., 2015; Hatzigeorgiou & Lodefalk, 2019; Tung & Chung, 2010). Moreover, our study has explored B2B customer and supplier relationships that are associated with structural and cognitive social capital and organizational networking literature (Boso et al., 2013; Pinho, 2016). Though B2B customer/supplier relationships are important, the extant literature indicates that managerial ties also consist of other important linkages, such as those with professional organizations (e.g., lawyer, accountant, banks, industrial associations) (Chen & Tan, 2009; Geletkanycz & Hambrick, 1997; Sima, 2022). To broaden the findings, future studies should explore whether the contributions of immigrant manager can be equally applied to other important ties. Only then we can arrive at more definitive conclusions about the relationship between B2B relationships and immigrant manager.

Further, our sample is limited to Australasian firms that export to Greater China. Our rationale for focusing on firms from these countries is based on the importance of exporting to the respective economies' GDP. In turn, our primary reason for selecting Greater China stems from the fact that these markets represent the key source of immigrant managers to Australasia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020; Statistics New Zealand, 2020). While the focal regional market studied may share some common features with other emerging markets (e.g., Russia; Hoskisson, Eden, Lau, & Wright, 2000; Peng, 2003), there are also substantial environmental differences in Greater China vis-à-vis other emerging markets. Such variations can affect the generalizability of the managerial ties-export performance paradigm that is posited in this study. Thus, further research should examine whether these findings are also applicable to other emerging economies (Hoskisson et al., 2000).

Lastly, future research might benefit from including qualitative methods in research design as these methods may provide insights in the role of immigrant manager in the inter-cultural customer/supplier, cultural distance and export performance conceptualization. Qualitative research methods have been gaining importance in the recent B2B studies (e.g., Chung et al., 2016) because they can significantly enhance the quantitative methods design.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Henry F.L. Chung: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Visualization. **Herbert Sima:** Writing – review & editing, Funding acquisition. **Mia Hsiao-Wen Ho:** Writing – review & editing, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis. **Dmytro Pichugin:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Conceptualization.

Data availability

The authors do not have permission to share data.

Appendix A. Endogeneity testing – Two Stage Least Squared Analysis

Variables	Export performance (1st stage)	Export performance (2nd stage)
<i>Control variables</i>		
Firm size	0.044	0.107
International business experience: years in international business	0.322+	0.165
International business experience: scope of operation	0.157+	0.203
Year in the host market	−0.366*	−0.358*
Industry	0.065	0.044
Climate environmental difference	0.094	0.140
Natural resource environmental difference	−0.154	−0.266*

(continued on next page)

(continued)

Variables	Export performance (1st stage)	Export performance (2nd stage)
Hofstede cultural distance	0.069	0.027
Year immigrant manager away from country of origin (YIMAFCOO)	−0.033	−0.012
<i>Independent variables</i>		
Immigrant manager	0.217+	0.165
Perceived cultural distance	−0.220*	−0.215+
Inter-cultural B2B customer relationships	0.247*	0.220+
Inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships	0.056	0.121
<i>Interactions- two way</i>		
Inter-cultural B2B customer relationships × perceived cultural distance	0.101	0.181
Inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships × perceived cultural distance	0.074	0.034
Inter-cultural B2B customer relationships × immigrant manager	0.203+	0.227+
Inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships × immigrant manager	−0.243*	−0.284*
Immigrant manager x perceived cultural distance	−0.129	−0.120
<i>Interactions- three way</i>		
Inter-cultural B2B customer relationships × perceived cultural distance x immigrant manager	0.280*	0.315*
Inter-cultural B2B supplier relationships × perceived cultural distance x immigrant manager	0.171	0.176

Note.

a: Instrumental variables: ties with chamber of commerce in the second host market and ties with professional conferences in the industry, in the second host market (ideal) (Johnson & Arunthanes, 1995).

b: Ties with chamber of commerce in the second host market is positively significant with ties with customers in the first host market but it not significant with export performance in the first host market.

c: Ties with professional conferences in the industry, in the second host market is significant with ties with suppliers in the first host market but it not significant with export performance in the first host market.

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