

IT affordance, organizational learning, business networking and B2B performance: A multi-channel networks perspective

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ABSTRACT

IT affordances are increasingly employed to increase the efficiency and outcome of live streaming e-commerce. Despite this, research on the relationship between IT affordances and Business-to-Business (B2B) performance in Multi-Channel Network (MCN) businesses is still unknown. Our study is one of the pioneering efforts to investigate the integrative effect of dynamic capability (DC) theory and IT affordances in B2B research. By analyzing the experience of 229 MCN organizations in China, our results reveal the positive effect of IT affordances on channel and economic performance. Our research also successfully identifies the contingent role of organizational learning and business networking in the IT affordance-B2B performance dyad. By integrating organizational learning theory and organizational networking theory with DC theory, we provide a comprehensive framework that explains how MCNs can adapt and sustain competitive advantage in B2B live streaming environments. The findings show that business networking and exploratory learning positively enhance the effect of IT affordance strategy on B2B performance, while exploitative learning has a negative contingent effect in an IT affordance-B2B framework. These findings offer both theoretical contributions and practical implications, guiding MCN managers in leveraging IT affordances for sustained growth and competitive advantage.

1. Introduction

The emerging development of B2B (business-to-business) live streaming offers a promising new business model for enhancing customer engagement and driving business success in e-commerce (Ayu et al., 2022; Liao et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2020). Recent research concerning B2B e-commerce has investigated the structure of B2B live streaming and has identified three primary components of B2B live streaming structure: upstream suppliers (e.g., manufacturers, vendors, and factories), midstream organizations, and downstream customers (e.g., wholesalers, retailers, and resellers) (iiMedia, 2022; Wang et al., 2022; Xue & Liu, 2023). Within this research stream, Multi-Channel Networks (MCNs) are vital midstream players that collaborate with content creators, such as streamers and influencers, to enhance their operations and expand their reach in the B2B live streaming industry (CIW, 2022; Si, 2021). Acting as intermediaries, MCNs connect content creators with advertisers, sponsors, and other business opportunities (Mao et al., 2022; Shi et al., 2020). While MCNs do not directly own the

content, they leverage their ability to manage multiple channels of interaction between creators, platforms and customers, facilitating engagement and purchases for their principals (upstream suppliers) (Wang et al., 2022). Consequently, MCNs function as midstream intermediaries. Their unique position in the B2B digital ecosystem, namely Principals-MCNs-B2B customers, enables them to play a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics of content production, distribution, and monetization in today's rapidly evolving media landscape (iiMedia, 2022). Despite the growing significance of MCNs in B2B live streaming, empirical research on their B2B performance remains limited (Liao et al., 2023). In this study, we conceptualize B2B performance as a multidimensional construct encompassing both channel performance and economic performance (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Morgan et al., 2004). Channel performance reflects the effectiveness of MCNs in managing B2B relationships, including customer satisfaction, intermediary coordination, loyalty, and brand reputation within the digital distribution ecosystem (Gensler et al., 2007; Sheu & Hu, 2009). This is particularly relevant in live streaming commerce, where real-time interaction and

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relationship quality directly affect engagement and conversion (Sima et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2022). Economic performance, by contrast, captures financial outcomes such as sales growth, profit, return on investment (ROI), return on assets (ROA), and market share (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Morgan et al., 2004). In dynamic environments like B2B live streaming, such outcomes are increasingly driven by a firm's ability to leverage digital affordances and create immersive, personalized experiences for B2B customers (Dong & Wang, 2018; Sun et al., 2018). By examining these aspects, this study provides new insights into the strategic role of MCNs in digital commerce and B2B live streaming ecosystems.

Among the strategies presented in the extant literature, IT affordances represent valuable strategies in live streaming activities (e.g., Dong & Wang, 2018). The concept of affordances originally described how users perceive opportunities for action in their environment (Gibson, 1977). In the context of IT systems, IT affordances are the features or characteristics of the organizations or platforms that enable users to take specific actions or make certain decisions (Volkoff & Strong, 2013). These affordances include elements such as visibility, meta-voicing, and guidance shopping (Dong & Wang, 2018). Prior studies have predominantly examined IT affordances in B2C settings, linking them to consumer engagement, live streaming interactivity, and purchasing behavior (e.g., Dong & Wang, 2018; Moon, 2020). However, as B2B transactions undergo increasing digital transformation, IT affordances can gain relevance in B2B business models, as they facilitate knowledge engagement and transactional efficiency (Wang et al., 2022; Xie & Luo, 2021). IT affordances, such as visibility affordance (enhancing product transparency), meta-voicing affordance (enabling real-time business communication), and guidance shopping affordance (streamlining decision-making for B2B buyers), have the potential to optimize B2B interactions, improve transaction efficiency, and strengthen buyer-supplier relationships. Given MCNs' central role in the B2B live streaming ecosystem, exploring how IT affordances affect their performance in the B2B live streaming industry is critical (Hua et al., 2024; Naik et al., 2020). Addressing this gap, our study extends the conceptual and empirical understanding of IT affordances in B2B markets. The purpose of the study is to demonstrate their strategic role beyond B2C applications and reinforce their relevance to digital B2B marketing and organizational performance.

Although IT affordances can potentially result in superior MCN B2B performance, existing research indicates that IT affordances alone may not be sufficient to generate a sustainable competitive advantage in the B2B model (e.g., Mata et al., 1995). Recognizing this limitation, prior affordance literature has incorporated dynamic capability (DC) theory as a foundational perspective. These researchers highlight the role of IT-related affordances in enabling firms to adapt, integrate, and reconfigure resources in response to dynamic market conditions (e.g., D'Ambra et al., 2022; Jacobsen & Nielsen, 2019; Zhu & Jin, 2024). As DC theory stresses the need for firms to sense, seize, and transform capabilities to maintain competitiveness in dynamic markets, IT affordances can function as enablers of this process (Schreyögg & Kliesch-Eberl, 2007). For example, visibility affordance can enhance market sensing by providing advanced product displays and analytics; meta-voicing affordance can strengthen opportunity-seizing through real-time engagement and feedback; and guidance shopping affordance can support business transformation by streamlining purchasing processes through AI-driven personalized shopping experiences (e.g., Sun et al., 2019; Volkoff & Strong, 2013). Through these mechanisms, IT affordances can enable MCNs to adjust to volatile market conditions and sustain long-term competitiveness. This approach is consistent with the DC perspective, where IT affordances can act as a reconfigurable capability that supports organizational adaptation and competitive advantage (D'Ambra et al., 2022; Zhu & Jin, 2024). Building on this perspective, our study adopts a DC lens and conceptualizes IT affordances from an organizational perspective. Our research focuses on how MCNs leverage these mechanisms to enable business transactions and

drive performance in B2B live streaming markets (Strong et al., 2014).

In addition to IT affordances, organizational learning can play a critical role in supporting dynamic adaptability (Do et al., 2022; Martelo et al., 2013). As emphasized in organizational learning theory, organizational learning, including exploratory and exploitative learning, refers to a firm's ability to acquire, process, and apply knowledge to decision-making and performance (March, 1991). In the digital environment and MCNs' operations, exploratory learning helps organizations engage with emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR), and enhances their ability to leverage IT affordances. In contrast, exploitative learning supports incremental improvements but may limit flexibility in volatile digital markets (Hindasah & Nuryakin, 2020). From a DC perspective, these internal learning mechanisms influence organizations' ability to dynamically adjust to environmental changes and seize new opportunities (Hindasah & Nuryakin, 2020; Santos-Vijande et al., 2005). Therefore, working synergistically with IT affordances, these organizational learning processes either enhance or hinder firms to continuously reconfigure their operational processes and drive competitive performance in dynamic B2B live streaming markets (Do et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2001). In this study, we conceptualize organizational learning along these two key dimensions, recognizing their respective roles in enabling MCNs to effectively leverage IT affordances in dynamic B2B environments. Further, when integrated with organizational networking theory and DC, this framework provides insights into how external relationships contribute to dynamic adaptability of IT affordances (Rothaermel & Hess, 2007; Salvato & Vassolo, 2018). Business networking refers to a firm's external ability to establish and maintain external relationships that facilitate knowledge exchange, resource access, and market intelligence (Burt & Soda, 2021; Mitrega et al., 2012). In the MCN context, business networking allows organizations to build trust-based partnerships with upstream suppliers and downstream B2B customers, helping them co-create value through live streaming campaigns. These external ties also provide MCNs with timely insights into market trends, technological advancements, and customer preferences, enabling them to refine their IT affordance strategies to better serve B2B clients (Mao et al., 2022; Zhang & Wu, 2017). From a DC perspective, business networking functions as an externally embedded resource orchestration mechanism that enhances a firm's flexibility and responsiveness in dynamic environments (Vrontis et al., 2020). Despite these theoretical insights, existing studies have not fully explored how IT affordances interact with organizational learning and business networking to improve MCN B2B performance (Dong & Wang, 2018; Shi et al., 2020). To address this gap, this study integrates DC theory, organizational learning theory, and organizational networking theory to develop a framework. This integrated theoretical framework aims to explain how MCNs can leverage IT affordances as a specific type of dynamic capability and align them with organizational learning and business networking to achieve superior B2B performance (Chung & Ho, 2021; Do et al., 2022).

Our study makes theoretical contributions in four key areas. First, existing research has largely explored the effect of IT affordance in the B2C context (e.g., Dong et al., 2016; Sun et al., 2019). We broaden the scope of IT affordance research by applying it to the B2B sector. By successfully exploring the effect of IT affordance in a B2B and MCN setting, our research offers valuable and new theoretical insights concerning the usage of IT affordances (Liao et al., 2023; Volkoff & Strong, 2013). Second, through a DC lens, our study positions IT affordances as a dynamic capability of MCNs that enables them to reconfigure resources and sustain competitive advantage in B2B live streaming commerce. This expands the theoretical application of DC theory by contextualizing it in the B2B live streaming and MCN environment. While prior studies have often focused on competitive live streaming strategies, we extend its scope to examine IT affordance implementation and MCN strategic operations (Dong & Wang, 2018; Mao et al., 2022). Third, by emphasizing the integration of DC with organizational learning theory and organizational networking theory, our research contributes to the

theoretical advancement of these frameworks, particularly in the context of IT-driven B2B ecosystems (Santos-Vijande et al., 2012). Specifically, we highlight the contingent roles of organizational learning and business networking in the relationship between IT affordances and B2B performance (Chung & Ho, 2021; March, 1991). Lastly, we propose a comprehensive framework for understanding how MCNs can strategically leverage these managerial mechanisms to enhance B2B success when implementing IT affordance strategies (Santos-Vijande et al., 2005; Vrontis et al., 2020). While the study is grounded in the MCN and B2B live streaming context, the theoretical framework and core mechanisms have broader relevance across digitally enabled B2B marketing environments. Thus, the findings offer practical guidance for MCNs and B2B digital firms on leveraging IT affordances alongside exploratory learning and business networking to drive superior performance in B2B live streaming commerce.

2. Literature review

2.1. B2B live streaming and the role of MCNs

Live streaming e-commerce expands the market for business-to-business (B2B) online shopping (Liao et al., 2023). B2B live streaming provides businesses with an interactive and compelling medium to engage with their customers, build stronger connections, and promote performance growth (Liao et al., 2023; Ripton, 2016). According to the report from Convertlab (2020), B2B live streaming in China is projected to reach a market size of ¥19,126.9 million by 2024, indicating a substantial growth in the number of enterprises entering this sector. Leading Chinese e-commerce giants like Alibaba, JD, and PDD have pioneered the development of B2B live streaming services (Cortese, 2020). For instance, Alibaba, as the largest e-commerce platform in China, has successfully entered the B2B live streaming marketplace by launching 1688.com, focusing on specialized B2B services (Liao et al., 2023). Additionally, JD, another key player in live streaming, is implementing a New-Channel strategy to connect brand owners with B2B customers (Huakui, 2020). These examples highlight the rapid expansion of B2B live streaming, with an increasing number of enterprises leveraging this digital marketing method to enhance engagement, streamline transactions, and drive business growth.

Multi-Channel Networks (MCNs), originally emerging in consumer-facing platforms like YouTube, now serve as key intermediaries in B2B live streaming. In this context, MCNs connect upstream suppliers with downstream intermediaries such as wholesalers and retailers (Mao et al., 2022; Si, 2021; Xue & Liu, 2023). While they do not own the content produced by creators, MCNs act as intermediaries, connecting creators with advertisers, sponsors, and other business opportunities (TOPKLOUT, 2023). Their role involves managing multiple channels of interaction between content creators, platforms, and customers, leveraging these connections to generate mutual benefits for all involved (iiMedia, 2022). MCNs assist collaborators to do online business, in terms of producing, programing, funding, partnering management, audience development, digital rights, intellectual property and monetization (Statista, 2023). Therefore, MCNs are characterized by their ability to scale content distribution and engagement across diverse digital ecosystems, making them key players in the modern media landscape.

In the B2B live streaming context, MCNs are intermediaries between upstream businesses (i.e., principals) and B2B buyers (i.e., wholesalers, resellers) (Lobato, 2016; Xue & Liu, 2023). Thus, MCNs operate in a B2B marketing model as Principals (i.e., upstream organizations) – MCNs (i.e., midstream) – MCNs customers (e.g., downstream customers: wholesalers, retailers, and resellers) (Chen et al., 2024; Pu et al., 2021). In the Principals–MCNs relationship, MCNs receive a link fee and a commission proportional to the live streaming sales sold by their principals (Li et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023). In the MCN–B2B customer mode, MCNs connect and interact with their customers (e.g., intermediaries, retailers,

and resellers) to facilitate B2B business activities such as live streaming item purchases (He et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023). Therefore, MCNs can assist their principals to attain profits and build strong relationships with B2B customers by operating effective and efficient live streaming campaigns (Li, 2021; Mao et al., 2022).

2.2. Dynamic capabilities view of IT affordances

Initially rooted in ecological psychology, the concept of affordances describes the perceptual attributes of an object to describe the relationships between individuals and the cognitive environment, emphasizing how individuals interact with their surroundings (Gibson, 1977). While the original conceptualization of affordances emphasizes the user's experience (e.g., customers), recent advancements have extended the applicability of affordances to organizational contexts (e.g., Li et al., 2023; Lin et al., 2022). As affordances are context-specific, this concept has evolved to include applications in information and communication technology (ICT) and information systems (IS) research (Norman, 1988; Sun et al., 2021). Volkoff and Strong (2013) introduce the concept "IT affordance" to describe how a user perceives and utilizes the IT characteristics provided by an informational and technological system or platform to achieve a particular action or goal. At an organizational level, IT affordances are conceptualized as potential actions enabled by technological systems, contingent on how organizations design and implement them (Chatterjee et al., 2021). Existing research reports three key components of IT affordances, namely visibility affordance, meta-voicing affordance, and guidance shopping affordance (Dong & Wang, 2018; Sun et al., 2018). Visibility affordance enables products, services, information, and images to be clearly presented to customers, such as displaying products comprehensively (Dong & Wang, 2018). Meta-voicing affordances allow customers to voice their comments and feedback about products during the interaction process with sellers (Moon, 2020). Guidance shopping affordance refers to the customization service in the e-commerce environment to help customers easily find the desired products (Dong et al., 2016; Xie & Luo, 2021).

Despite its growing application, the concept of affordances has faced significant critique for its ambiguity and lack of consensus in definition and application (e.g., Oliver, 2005). Some scholars argue that affordances are not inherent in technological features but emerge from the interaction between an actor and their environment, challenging the notion of affordances as static properties (Oliver, 2005; Stoffregen, 2018). Others highlight the inherent subjectivity of affordances, as their perception and utility can vary widely depending on the actor and context (Davis & Chouinard, 2016). In addition, debates about the ontological status of affordances, their relationship to actions, and their connection to environmental factors add to the conceptual complexity (Michaels, 2003). In the field of organizational studies, these critiques highlight the tension between affordances as user-perceived versus affordances as organizationally enabled. To address these critiques, we adopt a supply-side perspective (Frambach et al., 1998), focusing on how MCNs design and implement IT affordances in the B2B live streaming platforms to facilitate specific actions (Dong et al., 2016). In this study, IT affordance will be defined as the actionable possibilities enabled by MCN organizations that allow MCNs to enhance strategic decision-making, business interactions, and operational efficiency (D'Ambra et al., 2022; Volkoff & Strong, 2013). This perspective focuses on the role of MCNs in designing, enabling, and deploying affordances through online platforms. In this aspect, MCNs can utilize visibility affordance to enhance product clarity by employing advanced visualization tools, meta-voicing affordance to foster real-time interactivity through live chat and feedback systems, and guidance shopping affordance to offer personalized recommendations and seamless purchasing processes (Dong & Wang, 2018; Sun et al., 2021). The MCN's role in crafting IT affordances aligns with its capabilities to influence B2B customers' actions and outcomes, such as customer engagement and purchasing behavior (Li, 2021; Mao et al., 2022). Therefore, this

approach emphasizes the capability of MCNs to design and operationalize IT affordances effectively, enabling strategic outcomes within the B2B live streaming ecosystem.

Dynamic capabilities (DC) theory emphasizes the importance of a firm's ability to reconfigure, build, and integrate capabilities to respond effectively to changing market conditions and achieve sustained competitive advantage (Teece et al., 1997). Recent research has begun to explore the integration of affordance concepts with DC, emphasizing their role in enabling organizational adaptability and strategic outcomes in dynamic environments (e.g., D'Ambra et al., 2022; Jacobsen & Nielsen, 2019). For instance, D'Ambra et al. (2022) demonstrate that affordance actualization enabled by IT artifacts can facilitate engagement and goal-oriented outcomes in digital transformation contexts. D'Ambra et al. (2022) reveals how IT-related affordance aligns with DC's core processes of sensing, seizing, and transforming capabilities, positioning affordances as relational properties that evolve dynamically to enhance organizational performance. Building on this foundation, we conceptualize IT affordances as the dynamic capability that enables organizations to adapt to fast-changing environments and achieve strategic objectives. IT affordances can be aligned with DC's processes by empowering organizations to sense emerging opportunities, seize them through strategic resource deployment, and transform operations to maintain competitiveness (D'Ambra et al., 2022; Volkoff & Strong, 2013). For instance, visibility affordance enhances transparency and clarity in product presentations, enabling MCNs to identify shifting market trends (Dong et al., 2016). Meta-voicing affordance facilitates real-time interaction and feedback collection, allowing MCNs to refine their strategies and meet evolving client needs (Dong & Wang, 2018; Moon, 2020). Guidance shopping affordance streamlines purchasing processes, MCNs can adapt their business models to align with customer demands (Sun et al., 2019). Through these mechanisms, IT affordances can serve as tools that directly support the dynamic capability framework, functioning as organizational enablers of sensing opportunities, seizing them effectively, and transforming resources to thrive in dynamic business environments (Teece et al., 1997). By positioning IT affordances as dynamic capabilities, our study aims to explore their strategic importance in driving superior performance within the B2B live streaming ecosystem, bridging critical gaps in the IT affordance literature, and extending the understanding of their role in organizational adaptability (D'Ambra et al., 2022; Schilke, 2014).

2.3. Integrated theoretical lens: organizational learning theory and organizational networking theory in dynamic capability theory

DC theory provides a foundational theoretical lens to understand how firms continuously adapt, renew, and strategically reconfigure their resources in response to rapidly changing digital environments (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Teece et al., 1997). In this study, we conceptualize IT affordance enactment as a dynamic capability that enables MCNs and B2B firms to sense digital opportunities and reconfigure their operations to enhance performance (Do et al., 2022). Within the DC framework, organizational learning and organizational networking theories offer distinct yet complementary mechanisms for developing these critical dynamic capabilities. Specifically, organizational learning represents an internal foundation of dynamic capabilities, comprising exploratory and exploitative learning processes (Do et al., 2022; Hansen et al., 2019). Simultaneously, organizational networking theory constitutes the external dimension of dynamic capabilities, emphasizing how firms leverage relationships with external factors, such as platform providers, distributors, and customers, to gain access to strategic resources, market knowledge, and collaborative opportunities (Mitrega et al., 2012; Vrontis et al., 2020). Such external networks enable firms to effectively seize and reconfigure resources, complementing internal learning capabilities to better enact IT affordances.

Taken together, this integrated perspective positions organizational

learning and business networking as complementary antecedents of dynamic capabilities (Burt & Soda, 2021; Forkmann et al., 2018). Their interplay provides the foundation through which firms can strategically enact IT affordances in ways that enhance adaptability, innovation, and ultimately B2B performance in digital markets (Teece et al., 2016).

2.3.1. Organizational learning theory

Do et al. (2022) and Santos-Vijande et al. (2005) define organizational learning as a crucial internal organizational perspective for firms to adapt and thrive in dynamic environments. Organizational learning theory emphasizes the importance of developing exploratory and exploitative learning (Chung & Ho, 2021; March, 1991). Exploratory learning refers to the acquisition and creation of new knowledge, including the implication of exploration, experimentation, and innovation. Exploratory learning is essential for firms to adapt to new technologies and market trends (Atuahene-Gima & Murray, 2007; Chung & Ho, 2021). As such, the rapid advancement of IT-based technologies (e.g., AI and VR), has significantly affected the live streaming industry. This requires MCNs to utilize exploratory learning to capture innovative knowledge (Shi et al., 2020). Conversely, exploitative learning is essential to improving existing knowledge based on accumulated experience, such as selection, productivity, and implementation (Burt & Soda, 2021; March, 1991). Exploitative learning can help firms improve their operational efficiency and respond effectively to the sustainable market (Do et al., 2022; Kor & Mesko, 2013). However, considering the highly dynamic nature of the MCN and B2B live streaming industry, exploitative learning providers may struggle in such volatile environments (Ha, 2019; Hansen et al., 2019). As organizational learning and DC theorists suggest, the ability to balance exploratory and exploitative learning is essential for sustained adaptability and competitive performance in dynamic contexts (Do et al., 2022; Kor & Mesko, 2013; March, 1991). Our study builds on this framework, proposing that exploratory learning and exploitative learning may play distinct moderating roles in enhancing business performance in the rapidly evolving MCN industry (Santos-Vijande et al., 2005). By integrating these organizational learning approaches with IT affordances, MCNs can reconfigure their capabilities to achieve superior outcomes in B2B live streaming operations.

2.3.2. Organizational networking theory

Organizational networking theory highlights the role of external relationships, such as business networking, in providing firms with access to critical knowledge, collaborative opportunities, and market intelligence (Chung et al., 2016; Zhang & Wu, 2017). Building on this foundation, DC theory can be further extended as business networking, enabling organizations to shape their relationships with business partners and reallocate important resources (e.g., investment) (Mitrega et al., 2012). From a DC viewpoint, external networking enhances a firm's flexibility and responsiveness, enabling it to capitalize on IT affordances and improve performance in dynamic environments (Burt & Soda, 2021; Gulati et al., 2000). As the MCN industry is influencing by rapidly evolving technologies and market dynamics, business networking enables MCNs to adapt and thrive (Shi et al., 2020). Thus, our study examines the potential moderating effect of business networking in the relationship between IT affordances and B2B performance. By exploring this contingent effect, we expand the theoretical scope of DC and organizational networking theory by demonstrating how business networking enhances the impact of IT affordances on business performance in dynamic environments (Burt & Soda, 2021; Forkmann et al., 2018).

2.4. Business performance in the B2B live streaming ecosystem

Business and marketing scholars often divide business performance into economic and non-economic aspects (Guthrie & Neumann, 2007). In a B2B context, well-conducted live streaming activities can enhance

MCNs' sales (i.e., economic performance) and benefit all members of the live streaming e-commerce chain and distributors (i.e., non-economic performance) (Liu et al., 2022). However, research on non-economic performance remains fragmented (Shi et al., 2020). Cavusgil and Zou (1994) and Morgan et al. (2004) emphasize the importance of channel performance in a multi-channel business environment. This research stream provides novel insights into the channel performance of the MCN industry. Morgan et al. (2004) emphasizes the importance to organizations of assessing channel and economic performance. Channel performance is essential for the flexible operation of distribution channels and for meeting the needs of channel distributors and customers (Gensler et al., 2007; Morgan et al., 2004). Economic performance pertains to the effectiveness, efficiency, and adaptability of a business, such as the percentage of economic results (Morgan et al., 2004). Given the lack of research on MCNs' business performance (Shi et al., 2020), our study evaluates both channel and economic performance in the research conceptualization to provide new and original insights into MCNs' B2B performance.

3. Research hypotheses

DC theory emphasizes the importance of integrating organizational capabilities to navigate change (Salvato & Vassolo, 2018). Within this framework, IT affordances can act as dynamic capabilities that enable MCNs to adapt to environmental changes and achieve strategic goals (D'Ambra et al., 2022; Teece et al., 1997). Complementing DC, organizational learning theory highlights the importance of different types of organizational learning (e.g., exploratory learning and exploitative learning) in influencing adaptability (Atuahene-Gima & Murray, 2007; Kor & Mesko, 2013). Furthermore, organizational networking theory underscores the role of business networking in providing access to critical resources and enhancing flexibility (Burt & Soda, 2021; Mitrega et al., 2012). Taken together, this study investigates the mechanisms by which IT affordances interact with organizational learning and business networking to support MCNs in navigating the challenges of the B2B live streaming ecosystem (Santos-Vijande et al., 2012; Schreyögg & Kliesch-Eberl, 2007).

Our study postulates that IT affordances (i.e., visibility, meta-voicing, and guidance shopping affordance) positively influence MCNs' business performance, in terms of both channel and economic performance. More, our study also theorizes the contingent role of organizational learning (i.e., exploratory learning and exploitative learning) and business networking in the IT affordances-MCNs B2B performance conceptualization. The hypotheses' details and the

conceptual framework are postulated in Fig. 1.

3.1. IT affordances and channel performance

According to DC theory, firms must continuously sense, seize, and transform their capabilities to sustain competitive advantage in dynamic markets (Teece et al., 1997). In this context, IT affordances serve as reconfigurable capabilities that enable MCNs to enhance customer engagement and satisfaction, thereby improving channel performance. For instance, meta-voicing affordance can increase real-time interaction between live streamers and customers (Dong & Wang, 2018). Effective interactions can generate emotional supports for customer loyalty and interactive customer experiences. These advantages help MCNs to improve customer satisfaction (Dong & Wang, 2018; Saffanah et al., 2023). Likewise, visibility affordance (e.g., visible cues) and guide shopping affordance (e.g., customized service) have also been suggested to promote customer satisfaction (Sun et al., 2018; Xie & Luo, 2021). By reducing customer anxiety and minimizing uncertainty in the B2B model, these affordances contribute to customer trust and satisfaction, thereby reinforcing a firm's ability to adapt and sustain its market position, which is a central objective of DC theory (Leeraphong & Sukrat, 2018). Furthermore, guide shopping affordance may also provide a customized service that can fully address customer requirements and needs. As a result, customer satisfaction can be maximized (Sun et al., 2018). In sum, by continuously adapting IT affordance strategies, MCNs can dynamically reconfigure their digital capabilities to enhance channel performance.

Similarly, brand reputation management, as a form of dynamic capability, plays a vital role in MCNs' ability to sense and seize new business opportunities (Krzakiewicz & Cyfert, 2015). Brand reputation significantly impacts cooperation with B2B partners such as principals, distributors, and customers. Research suggests that IT affordances can help MCNs to increase their firms' reputation in the live streaming industry and this competitive advantage can enhance the channel performance of MCNs (Dong et al., 2016; Leeraphong & Sukrat, 2018; Morgan et al., 2004). Research shows that IT affordances can improve brand reputation by leveraging tools such as meta-voicing for ratings and feedback because these methods can increase social status and enhance customer perception (Dong & Wang, 2018; Sun et al., 2018). Likewise, guidance shopping affordance offers personalized guidance to customers in real-time, whereas visibility affordance provides persuasive cues to B2B customers (e.g., different usage of the products) (Dong & Wang, 2018; Mao et al., 2022). In a B2B context, such dynamic capabilities improve communication efficiency and responsiveness

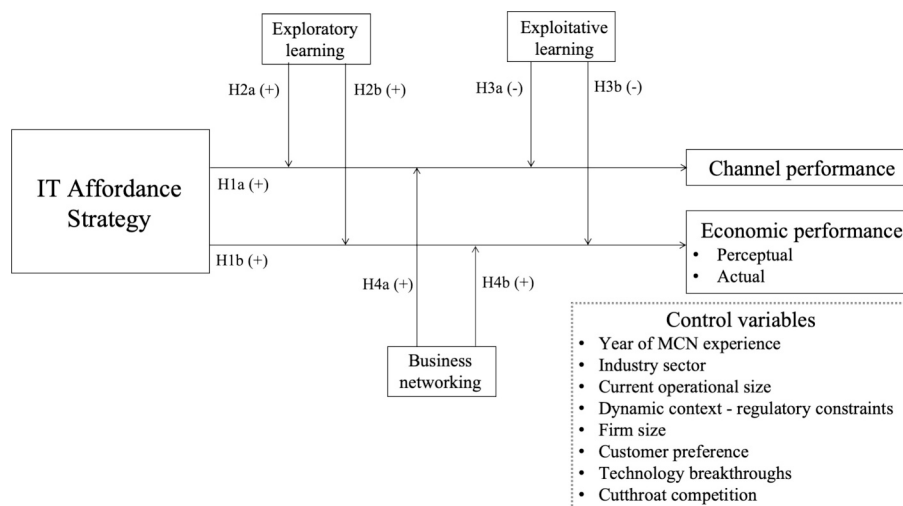


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework.

between MCNs and their customers, aligning with DC theory's emphasis on continuous adaptation and resource orchestration (Kotler & Levy, 1969; Teece et al., 1997). Collectively, a strong brand reputation can contribute to channel performance because this sustainable competitive advantage (SCA) can increase the confidence of channel members on MCNs and acquire full cooperation and satisfaction from their channel members (Gensler et al., 2007; Sheu & Hu, 2009). By integrating IT affordances as dynamic capabilities, MCNs can continuously refine their strategies, respond to evolving market demands, and enhance channel performance through increased customer satisfaction, loyalty, and industry reputation (Krzakiewicz & Cyfert, 2015; Morgan et al., 2004). Therefore, this study hypothesizes:

H1a. IT affordances have a positive effect on the channel performance of MCNs.

3.2. IT affordances and economic performance

Researchers focusing on the conceptualization of affordances suggest that utilizing affordances can enhance buying intentions, as this can help organizations to obtain their economic performance goals, such as an increase in sales volume, profit, ROI, and ROA (Lee & Chen, 2021; Saffanah et al., 2023). An increase in sales volume, profit, ROI, and ROA is an important element of economic performance for MCNs (e.g., Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Morgan et al., 2004). The reasons for the growth in economic performance can be seen in two aspects related to IT affordances.

First, DC theory posits that firms must leverage external signals to reduce uncertainty and enhance decision-making (Teece et al., 2016). IT affordances, such as visibility affordance and meta-voicing affordance, enable MCNs to enhance digital transparency and real-time engagement, minimizing customer uncertainty and strengthening purchase confidence (e.g., Dincelli & Yayla, 2022; Dong et al., 2016). This advantage can improve the economic outcomes of organizations (Ulaga & Kohli, 2018). For example, IT affordances are suggested to positively influence customer purchase intention, thereby increasing business transactions in live streaming campaigns (Xu et al., 2020). In particular, meta-voicing affordances enable MCNs to enhance the electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) to reduce customers' uncertainty (Wang et al., 2023). In this aspect, IT affordance technologies, such as online reviews, can reduce buyer uncertainty and increase sales volume in online retail settings (Chen et al., 2019). It is suggested that informational support from IT affordances, such as visual information, individual recommendations, and real-time replies, can increase the relationship between customer certainty and the pricing strategy of MCNs (Mao et al., 2022). From a DC perspective, this ability to create a responsive and transparent purchasing environment strengthens firms' ability to capture business opportunities and sustain long-term relationships (Kim & Wemmerlöv, 2015).

Second, according to DC theory, firms must continuously transform their operational processes and strategic capabilities to remain competitive in dynamic markets (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Teece et al., 1997). Existing research has reported that MCNs may achieve this transformation through IT affordances, as this strategy enhances customer immersion (Saffanah et al., 2023; Yan et al., 2023). It is reported that the majority of customers in B2B e-commerce seek product information and demonstration (Xu et al., 2020). Visibility and meta-voicing affordances can help B2B customers seek additional product information and demonstration (Dong et al., 2016). A higher product information and demonstration can stimulate customers' quick purchasing behaviors and subsequently result in superior economic performance (Wang et al., 2022). Moreover, IT affordances may also lower customers' risk perception of MCNs as transparent product information and demonstration can help customers fully understand MCNs and their product offering (Zhang et al., 2020). Consequently, a lower risk may enhance MCNs' economic performance because customers are more

willing to conduct business transactions with trustworthy firms (McGuire et al., 1988). By supporting this view, Xu et al. (2020) and others have discovered that MCNs often provide guidance shopping affordances through a chat room. It is suggested that customization services can enrich the interaction between live streamers and B2B customers (Li, 2021). This customer engagement can also create a sense of immersive experience and reduce customers' risks of misunderstanding MCNs and their products (Dong & Wang, 2018; Sun et al., 2019). Thus, from a DC perspective, IT affordances act as the dynamic capability that allow MCNs to adjust their business strategies and enhance B2B economic performance in a rapidly evolving market.

H1b. IT affordances have a positive effect on the economic performance of MCNs.

3.3. IT affordances, organizational learning and B2B performance

3.3.1. IT affordances, exploratory learning and B2B performance

Building on the organizational learning theoretical conceptualization of March (1991), exploratory learning refers to an organizational learning containing the employment of heterogeneous knowledge and ideas. This organizational learning process is crucial for MCNs as it allows them to leverage cutting-edge technologies (Santos-Vijande et al., 2012). As IT affordances are highly technology dependent, the integration of novel technologies enhances MCNs' ability to realize and utilize the potential of IT affordances (Dong et al., 2016).

As outlined in organizational learning theory research, exploratory learning can assist MCNs to better capture intelligent technologies (Atuahene-Gima & Murray, 2007; Chung & Ho, 2021). It is suggested that live streaming activities embracing novel technologies can significantly improve service quality, customer engagement, and customer satisfaction (e.g., Hu & Chaudhry, 2020; Liao et al., 2023; Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020). As service quality and customer elements are key indicators of channel performance, we propose that exploratory learning can positively moderate the relationship between IT affordances and MCNs' channel performance (Chung & Ho, 2021; Morgan et al., 2004). This proposition can be supported by extant IT affordances research (Chen et al., 2022; Sun et al., 2018). For instance, MCNs employing exploratory learning are more likely to access updated and cutting-edge technologies, such as AI, multifunctional bullet-screens, and virtual trials (TOPKLOUT, 2023). These technologies can advance the implementation of IT affordances (Dong & Wang, 2018). Further, AI visual technologies, as a visibility affordance, offer three-dimensional visualizations that can be used to enhance the customer experience (Sun et al., 2018; Wilson, 2025). Multifunctional bullet-screens (i.e., incorporating a meta-voicing affordance) can help live streamers capture customers' questions and give timely feedback, thereby improving interaction quality (Chen et al., 2022; Li, 2021). Likewise, MCNs can utilize virtual trial technology to simulate the user experience of the product (Lin et al., 2022; Wilson, 2025). This technology may also help MCNs build guidance shopping affordance with personalized service (Sun et al., 2018; Wilson, 2025). Taken together, the advancements affiliated with exploratory learning may not only enhance the implementation of IT affordances, but also lead to strong customer engagement, service quality, and customer satisfaction (Wang et al., 2023). As such, the integration of IT affordances and exploratory learning can lead to superior channel performance for MCNs (Wang et al., 2023).

H2a. Exploratory learning positively moderates the relationship between IT affordances and MCNs' channel performance.

Concurrently, by continuously facilitating the acquisition and use of new technologies, MCNs' exploratory learning process may also stimulate the effect of IT affordances on economic performance (Morgan et al., 2004; Sima et al., 2024). Organizational learning theory suggests that exploratory learning enables organizations to stay ahead in the dynamic digital environment by experimenting with cutting-edge personalized

solutions (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). By providing effective solutions, customers' purchasing decisions and behavior can be stimulated (Ismagilova et al., 2021). In particular, the integration of IT affordances and exploratory learning allows MCNs to use their novel technologies to influence customer purchasing behavior. As positive purchasing behavior is directly linked to economic outcomes such as sales volume, profit, ROI, and ROA, the interplay of IT affordances and exploratory learning relationship denotes a crucial factor in driving MCNs' economic performance (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Sima et al., 2024).

Likewise, building on organizational learning theory (March, 1991), our study highlights the moderating role of exploratory learning in enhancing the economic outcomes of MCNs by fostering the continuous acquisition of new technologies. Research indicates that customers are increasingly willing to conduct online transactions and pay premium prices for engaging novel e-commerce technological experiences (Gregory et al., 2019; Wang, 2020). Exploratory learning enables MCNs to effectively leverage IT affordances and improve their competitive position in the dynamic e-commerce landscape (Ismagilova et al., 2021; Lo et al., 2022). In this aspect, affordance technologies (e.g., multi-functional bullet screens, immersive visual information, chat rooms) enable real-time interaction between live streamers and customers (Dincelli & Yayla, 2022; Wang et al., 2022). Through exploratory learning, this interactive feature allows MCNs to respond to customer queries and address customer needs promptly. A supportive and engaging environment can encourage customers to commit to larger purchases (Wang et al., 2022). Taken together, exploratory learning can assist MCNs to provide novel technological foundations that can deliver contemporary IT affordances to their B2B customers (Lo et al., 2022; Volkoff & Strong, 2013). This delivery can significantly stimulate customers to complete their online transactions (Gregory et al., 2019; Sun et al., 2018). A positive purchase behavior can enhance MCNs' economic performance (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Sima et al., 2024).

H2b. Exploratory learning positively moderates the relationship between IT affordances and MCNs' economic performance.

3.3.2. IT affordances, exploitative learning and B2B performance

Organizational learning theorists denote exploitative learning as the process that focuses on existing competencies. This learning nature may limit MCN's ability to innovate and adapt (e.g., March, 1991; Santos-Vijande et al., 2012). Considering the fast-changing nature of the MCN industry (Mao et al., 2022), technological innovation and customer engagement are of vital importance. Reliance on established approaches may prevent MCNs from exploring and integrating new solutions (i.e., IT affordances) for service customers (Atuahene-Gima & Murray, 2007; Chung & Ho, 2021). Hence, we postulate the negative moderating role of exploitative learning in the IT affordances-B2B performance framework.

Expressed differently, exploitative learning may inhibit MCNs in implementing IT affordances effectively (Tippins & Sohi, 2003). For example, visibility affordance and meta-voicing affordance are proven to rely on novel visual cues and new meta-voicing ideas (Dong & Wang, 2018; Sun et al., 2018). The passive and status quo characteristics of exploitative learning may result in MCNs failing to deliver newly released IT affordances to their B2B customers (Su et al., 2011). Moreover, Si (2021) reported that MCNs focusing on exploitative learning may neglect the emerging demand for customization services in the live streaming industry. This negligence prevents guidance shopping affordance from meeting their evolving needs (Li, 2021; Si, 2021). Consequently, the overall customer experience may suffer as they are unable to access innovative services (e.g., AI visibility affordance and bullet-screen meta-voicing affordance) or personalized interactions (i.e., guidance shopping affordance) that align with their expectations (Sun et al., 2019; Volkoff & Strong, 2017). Taken together, these barriers lead to diminished service quality and lower overall customer satisfaction (Morgan et al., 2004). As such, the channel performance can be harmed

(Chung & Ho, 2021; Tippins & Sohi, 2003).

Furthermore, the B2B live streaming industry is driven by real-time interactions and communications (Liao et al., 2023). The effectiveness of the real-time communications directly influences channel performance metrics such as customer satisfaction, loyalty, and firm reputation (Chung et al., 2015; Sima et al., 2024). To enhance the quality of real-time communications, MCNs must adopt the latest technologies that facilitate efficient real-time interactions (Sadreddin & Chan, 2023). However, exploitative learning may hinder the MCN's ability to keep pace with these advanced techniques (Santos-Vijande et al., 2012; Yang et al., 2020). As a result, MCNs may not be able to provide real-time services and cutting-edge IT affordances to their distributors (Dong & Wang, 2018; Sun et al., 2018). Such omissions in acquiring new knowledge may also turn away customers who seek novel visual support, feedback, and personalized service (i.e., IT affordance strategies; Moon, 2020). These disadvantages may reduce the quality of service and impair the channel performance of MCNs (e.g., reputation of firm, customer loyalty, and satisfaction of product/service offerings) (Chung et al., 2015; Morgan et al., 2004). Consequently, we propose that exploitative learning plays a negative role in the relationship between IT affordances and channel performance.

H3a. Exploitative learning negatively moderates the relationship between IT affordances and MCNs' channel performance.

The results of extant organizational learning research may also indicate that exploitative learning can negatively affect economic performance in general contexts (e.g., Chung et al., 2015; Hansen et al., 2019). The negative effects of exploitative learning on economic outcomes have also been noted in the e-commerce industry (e.g., Hua et al., 2024; Hughes et al., 2007). For example, Hughes et al. (2007) point out that exploitative learning impairs the market share and sales turnover in the e-commerce industry. Despite this, its specific impact on the IT affordances-economic performance relationship has not been extensively examined. Thus, we hypothesize that exploitative learning negatively influences the relationship between IT affordances and economic performance.

Explicitly, MCNs focusing on exploitative learning tend to ignore broad knowledge exchange processes and miss out on marketing opportunities (Atuahene-Gima & Murray, 2007; Collls, 1994). This oversight limits MCNs' ability to adapt to evolving customer needs (Atuahene-Gima & Murray, 2007). This shortfall negatively impacts MCNs' competitive advantage and reduces their economic performance (Kim & Wemmerlöv, 2015; Mahmoud et al., 2020). These disadvantages are consistent with extant research that reports exploitation weakens the search for novel knowledge and technologies (Atuahene-Gima & Murray, 2007). As the success of IT affordance applications is reliant on keeping abreast of the latest IT techniques, MCNs that rely on exploitative learning may fail to capture novel knowledge exchange with live streaming platforms (Li, 2021; Wang et al., 2022). In addition, MCNs with exploitative learning patterns may also focus on their established IT affordance approaches. This tendency may lead MCNs to neglect opportunities to obtain new technologies such as VR for visual cues (i.e., visibility affordance) and interactive chat rooms (i.e., guidance shopping affordance) (Dong et al., 2016). As such, exploitative learning may limit MCNs' ability to obtain novel knowledge that is available in the marketplace. Customers may become less likely to engage with MCNs due to their outdated or suboptimal technologies (Liao et al., 2023; Wongkitrungrueng & Assarut, 2020). Low customer engagement may result in the reduction of sales purchases and lower repurchasing intentions (Ho & Chung, 2020; Hu & Chaudhry, 2020). As such, a reduced level of customer engagement often leads to fewer sales and diminishes economic performance in ROI, ROA, and profit growth. Consequently, the overall economic performance of MCNs may be negatively impacted by the integration of exploitative learning and IT affordances (Morgan et al., 2004; Sheu & Hu, 2009).

H3b. Exploitative learning negatively moderates the relationship between IT affordances and MCNs' economic performance.

3.3.3. IT affordances, business networking and B2B performance

Research suggests that organizations can enhance their competitive advantage through extensive interactions with their external business networking institutions, such as principals, distributors, customers, and competitors (Jeong, 2016; Lee et al., 2001). These B2B interactions allow organizations to reallocate resources and capabilities more effectively (Zhang & Wu, 2017). Such interactive business networking supports strategic actions such as IT affordance strategies (Park & Luo, 2001). Existing studies have confirmed that effective business networking can lead to positive channel performance (Gensler et al., 2007) and increased financial revenue (i.e., economic performance) (Jeong, 2016; Lee et al., 2001). As such, we propose that by fostering strong business networking, MCNs can better implement IT affordances, leading to enhanced channel performance and economic performance (Jeong, 2016; Lee et al., 2001).

Strong business networking can enable MCNs to communicate more effectively with business partners. This advantage facilitates frequent exchanges that lead to a better alignment of IT affordances and enhanced channel performance (Lee et al., 2001; Zhang & Wu, 2017). This is because desirable business networking improves communication efficiency and information transparency among channel members, such as B2B customers and principals (Gregory et al., 2019). For example, frequent channel communications with B2B customers allow MCNs to access customer needs (Mao et al., 2022; Sheu & Hu, 2009). This can be used to generate additional and efficient value for tailor-made personal services (i.e., guidance shopping affordance) (Dong & Wang, 2018). By staying informed about current customer needs through business networking, MCNs can refine their live streaming content using IT affordances to address their requirements. Such a process can significantly improve customer satisfaction (Sun et al., 2021). This, in turn, can serve as a crucial metric for enhancing the channel performance of MCNs (Morgan et al., 2004). In addition, strong business networking with principals can help MCNs access more transparent information related to their product offerings (Mao et al., 2022; Zhu, 2004). Product transparency offers customers better, and more comprehensive, access to detailed product information. MCNs can employ it to deliver better service in relation to visual cues (i.e., visibility affordance) and offer timely responses to customer inquiries (i.e., meta-voicing affordance) (Dong et al., 2016; Mitrega et al., 2012). Improved service quality can lead to increased overall satisfaction, thereby further enhancing the channel performance of MCNs (Morgan et al., 2004; Verhoef et al., 2015). As such, strong business networking enables MCNs to effectively conduct their IT affordance strategies, subsequently leading to higher customer satisfaction and superior channel performance (Chaker et al., 2022; Dong & Wang, 2018; Mao et al., 2022).

H4a. Business networking positively moderates the relationship between IT affordances and MCNs' channel performance.

In addition to its role in facilitating the effect of business networking on channel performance, DC researchers also confirmed that business networking is essential for external knowledge acquisition, such as IT affordance related techniques (Lee et al., 2001; Zhang & Wu, 2017). Furthermore, extant studies, such as Lee et al. (2001) and others, report the influence of business networking on sharing external knowledge and its subsequent economic benefits (Burt & Soda, 2021; Mitrega et al., 2012). Based on these theoretical insights, we hypothesize that strong business networking can positively moderate the relationship between MCN's IT affordances and economic performance.

MCNs can obtain external intelligence from business networking, such as consumption trends (Li, 2021; TOPKLOUT, 2023). By collaborating with business partners, MCNs can gain information about the fashion cycle and popular trends. Such external knowledge allows MCNs to provide better guidance and customized services to customers,

enhancing their ability to deliver guidance shopping affordances (Yan et al., 2023). Taking advantage of this, customers are more likely to impulsively engage in personalized (i.e., guidance shopping affordance) live streaming events (Lo et al., 2022). Furthermore, external knowledge regarding visual technologies (i.e., visibility affordance) and communication skills (i.e., meta-voicing affordance and guidance shopping affordance) helps MCNs optimize the use of IT affordances (Saffanah et al., 2023; Sun et al., 2018). As signaled by previous research, IT affordances can promote customer engagement and positively influence purchasing behavior (e.g., Li et al., 2023; Sun et al., 2019). As such, effective business networking can facilitate external knowledge acquisition to enhance the operation of IT affordances. This advantage can heighten customer engagement, strengthen connections with MCNs, and lead to increased repeat purchase intentions (Ho & Chung, 2020). Hence, by establishing effective business networking, MCNs can drive higher live streaming sales (e.g., Wang & Chung, 2020). An increase in sales volume can contribute to revenue growth, and increased ROI and ROA, and drive the overall economic performance of MCNs (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994). Taken together, strong business networking enables MCNs to successfully implement their IT affordance strategies and achieve superior economic performance goals (Wang & Chung, 2020).

H4b. Business networking positively moderates the relationship between IT affordances and MCNs' economic performance.

4. Research method

4.1. Data collection

Our study adopts a quantitative method to test hypotheses. This methodology is chosen because it allows for data collection from a large sample of MCNs, providing empirical insights into the relationships between IT affordances, organizational learning, business networking, and B2B performance (Bell et al., 2018). Given that B2B live streaming is an emerging industry, the survey approach enables the collection of firm-level data to analyze the strategic impact of IT affordances within the MCN industry. This method also facilitates the examination of interorganizational dynamics, allowing us to capture key mechanisms driving MCN B2B performance (Majchrzak et al., 2015).

The unit of analysis in this study is the MCN organization. MCNs were selected based on their active engagement in B2B live streaming and their intermediary role in facilitating transactions between upstream principals and downstream B2B customers (e.g., wholesalers, resellers, and retailers) (Liao et al., 2023). This focus allows for an organizational-level investigation into how MCNs leverage IT affordances to enhance B2B performance. China's MCN market, comprising approximately 4000 registered MCNs, provides an ideal sampling frame for this study (iiMedia, 2022; Statista, 2023). The sampling frame of MCNs was obtained from credible databases such as Taobao Live Streaming Ecological Development Report, the State Administration of Radio MCN research report (SVA, 2020), the White Paper on the development of China's MCN industry (TOPKLOUT, 2023), and assessable backend data resources of Chinese live streaming platforms (i.e., TikTok, Taobao, and KWAII). These data sources have been used extensively in existing research and have a reputation for accuracy and comprehensiveness in providing continuous updating and accurate information on MCNs (Mao et al., 2022; TOPKLOUT, 2023). The databases include MCNs from all major regions of China, as well as varied types of MCNs (Bell et al., 2018). This allows our study to have a representation of MCNs in different regions and industrial sectors.

A random sampling frame method was used to select the MCNs in the study. This method helps to minimize selection bias and increase the representativeness of the sample (Bell et al., 2018; Liao et al., 2023). Given that there are around 4000 MCNs in China, we have randomly selected 1000 MCNs as our sampling frame (iiMedia, 2022). After selection, the sampling firms were contacted via email and WeChat. This

study employs a dual-respondent survey design to mitigate any common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Specifically, the survey was to be completed by two senior staff members (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The first senior executive (e.g., CEOs, General Managers, Managing Directors) completed the profile/background information and independent variables questions (i.e., IT affordances, organizational learning, and business networking). The second senior executive (e.g., CFOs, financial managers, marketing managers) were tasked to complete the dependent variables questions in terms of business performance (economic and channel performance). All questions are related to MCNs' current operations. As specified in the cover letter accompanying the questionnaire, the two respondents were explicitly instructed to provide both subjective assessments (e.g., perceptual measures) and business performance data within a single response.

Guided by extant literature, the survey was initially developed in English based on validated scales from previous research (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Chung et al., 2015; Dong & Wang, 2018; Morgan et al., 2004; Sun et al., 2018). To ensure linguistic and conceptual accuracy, a back-to-back translation method was employed to develop the Chinese version (Lee & Chen, 2021; Sun et al., 2018). First, the English questionnaire was translated into Chinese by a bilingual expert with domain expertise in marketing and live streaming commerce. Then, a second independent bilingual expert, who was unaware of the original English version, back-translated the questionnaire into English. The two English versions were compared, and discrepancies were resolved through discussions among researchers and translators to ensure conceptual equivalence. After completion, a pilot study was conducted where five marketing scholars and ten MCN managers were employed to validate the research items and offer feedback on wording, construction, readability, and so on (Lee & Chen, 2021). Based on their feedback, minor refinements were made to improve wording and ensure that the questionnaire was well-adapted to the MCN industry context.

This research used several tactics to increase the response rate. These included follow-up emails, recommendations from renowned industry leaders, and Q&A services pertaining to our findings (e.g., Chung & Kuo, 2018; Podsakoff et al., 2003). These efforts resulted in 255 responses from MCNs, of which 26 questionnaires were deemed unusable due to issues such as incomplete questionnaires, lack of responses from two senior staff within the MCN, or unreasonable actual performance data. Ultimately, 229 valid questionnaires were collected. The response rate is approximately 22.9%. This response is consistent with that found in the existing literature, which is sufficient for statistical analyses (Bell et al., 2018; Blunch, 2012). The data covers a wide range of industries, including beauty, groceries, beverages, apparel, electronics, education, banking, real estate, manufacturing, horticulture, medical products, skincare, videography, and online-to-offline (OTO) services. In line with earlier studies (Lee & Chen, 2021; Liao et al., 2023), our MCN respondents conducted B2B live streaming on social media platforms (e.g., RED and TikTok), e-commerce platforms (e.g., Taobao, PDD, and JD) and online B2B trading platforms (e.g., 1688.com).

4.2. Measurement scales

The research measurements were developed in accordance with the guidelines of existing literature (e.g., Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Chung et al., 2015; Dong & Wang, 2018; Morgan et al., 2004; Sun et al., 2018). All research variable items have been validated by previous studies and demonstrate high reliability and validity. Our measurement scales show a strong reliability and validity, as demonstrated below. Details concerning the measurement scales are listed in Table 2.

IT affordances: Consistent with the extant literature, IT affordance measurement items are measured by visibility affordance, meta-voicing affordance, and guidance shopping affordance (Dong & Wang, 2018; Saffanah et al., 2023; Sun et al., 2018). IT affordances are measured by a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree).

Business performance – channel performance and economic performance:

The study adopts two forms of performance measurement scales, including a self-evaluation seven-point Likert scale (1 = not satisfied at all; 7 = completely satisfied) and a comparison seven-point Likert scale (1 = much worse; 7 = much better as compared to main competitors), as a comparison to the main direct competitors (Morgan et al., 2004). Channel performance is measured by the quality of the relationship between MCNs and distributors, reputation of the firm, distributor loyalty, and overall product/service satisfaction (Morgan et al., 2004; Sima et al., 2024). Economic performance is measured by both perceptual data and actual transaction data (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Morgan et al., 2004). The perceptual data is measured by ROI, ROA, sales volume, and profit growth over three years (Morgan et al., 2004). The actual economic performance data includes annual sales growth and market share (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994). This multiple-item approach allows us to obtain better objective results (Bell et al., 2018; Bello & Gilliland, 1997; Cavusgil & Zou, 1994).

Organizational learning and business networking: In accordance with the guidance of existing research (Atuahene-Gima & Murray, 2007; Chung et al., 2015), our study adopts a seven-point Likert scale to measure exploratory learning and exploitative learning (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) (Table 2). Business networking is measured by evaluating senior managers' relationships with principals, manufacturers, distributors, competitors, and other key firms in the MCN industry (1 = very little; 7 = very extensive) (Mitrega et al., 2012; Wang & Chung, 2020).

Control variable: This study employs eight control variables, including firm size, year of MCN experience, industry type, current industry size, platform regulatory constraints, customer preference, technology breakthroughs, and extent of competition in the industry. Previous research has supported the role of firm size in the business performance of organizations. This can be measured by the number of employees (Uhlener et al., 2013; Weinzimmer et al., 2023). Existing research also confirms the effect of years of experience on business performance (Wood, 2006). Moreover, the industry sector is divided into product (coded as 1) and non-product (i.e., service and consulting) (coded as 0) categories (Li, 2021; TOPKLOUT, 2023). The industry size is related to the size of the MCN industry (1 = small; 7 = large). In addition, because live streaming platforms continue to introduce new laws and regulations, this study evaluates the regulatory constraints in the platforms by a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) (Si, 2021; TOPKLOUT, 2023). Likewise, previous research suggests that customer preference changes, technology breakthroughs, and cutthroat competition are key external factors that may influence business performance (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) (Schilke, 2014). Specifically, customer preference changes impact MCNs' engagement and conversions, requiring adaptation of content strategies and IT affordances. Technology breakthroughs influence how MCNs utilize IT affordances to enhance efficiency and competitiveness. Cutthroat competition heightens market pressures. These controls account for external factors that may influence MCN business outcomes, ensuring a precise analysis of IT affordances, organizational learning, and business networking on B2B performance (Chen et al., 2019; Morgan et al., 2004).

4.3. Common method bias assessment

Common method bias (CMB) is a critical methodological issue in B2B marketing research because it can significantly impact the objectivity of results (Chung et al., 2016). This research employs the double-respondent survey methodology to reduce CMB issues and improve the accuracy of collected data (Chung & Kuo, 2018; Hair et al., 2015). This research also integrates two scales of measurement items, including a self-evaluation seven-point Likert scale and a comparison seven-point Likert scale for performance data. This research technique can enhance the robustness and reliability of the results (Bell et al., 2018). The measurement of economic performance also combines perceptual data

(i.e., ROI, ROA, sales volume, and profit growth) and actual data (i.e., annual sales growth and market share). This combination also improves construct reliability and reduces the impact of CMB in our research (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Knight & Cavusgil, 2004).

4.4. Reliability and validity

The study analyses the validity and reliability using IBM AMOS 28.0 and SPSS Statistics 26.0 software. The relationship between the hypotheses and the structural model is initially evaluated by AMOS statistical analysis (Chung et al., 2015; Wang & Chung, 2020). The output results of the conceptual framework suggest a desirable fit of the framework: $\chi^2/df = 1.511$, NFI = 0.914, IFI = 0.969, TLI = 0.940, CFI = 0.968, and RMSEA = 0.049 ($p < 0.01$) (Blunch, 2012).

Our research further confirms the validity and reliability of the constructs using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) in IBM SPSS Statistics software (Blunch, 2012). CFA provides evidence of the fit of the structural framework, enabling the evaluation of the proposed hypotheses and the correlations among the measurement constructs (Table 1) (Blunch, 2012). The reliability of the constructs can be evaluated by Cronbach's Alpha, factor loading, and all variance-inflating factor (VIF) values. Cronbach's Alpha and the factor loadings in our study are all higher than 0.7, as shown in Table 3. All variance-inflating factor (VIF) values are less than 4.0, as outlined in the next section (Blunch, 2012; Chung et al., 2015). These values are within the proposed thresholds, suggesting strong validity and reliability of the constructs in our study. Our composite reliability (CR) values are higher than 0.7 and the average variance extracted (AVE) values are better than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2014; Hair et al., 2015). Taken together, high validity and reliability are confirmed in this study. Our research's correlation coefficient matrix as well as the reliability and validity assessments of all measurements are reported in Table 1 and Table 2.

4.5. Endogeneity tests

Although IT affordances are proposed as exogenous variables influencing MCN performance in the B2B live streaming context, concerns about endogeneity may arise due to potential issues, such as omitted variable bias or measurement errors (Jean et al., 2016; Zaefarian et al., 2017). As recommended by Jia et al. (2020), an instrumental variable (IV) approach is a widely used method in marketing research to address potential endogeneity. For this study, an appropriate IV was selected based on its ability to influence IT affordances adoption without directly impacting MCN performance. To solve the endogenous problem, we employed the IV method by introducing one variable: firm digital maturity (i.e., the extent to which an MCN has adopted digital tools and IT infrastructure). Firm digital maturity (measured on a scale of 1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) meets the two requirements of a valid IV. First, firm digital maturity is correlated with IT affordances (Kannan, 2017; Sun et al., 2025). Second, digital maturity itself does not directly impact MCN performance but rather influences it indirectly through IT affordances (Erdey et al., 2024; Yan et al., 2023). This ensures that the IV is not correlated with the error term in the model, preventing bias in the estimated relationships (Bascle, 2008; Hult et al., 2018). To test for endogeneity, this study employs a two-stage least squares (2SLS) regression technique (Jia et al., 2020). As reported in Appendix A, the results from this analysis confirm that endogeneity does not significantly affect the model, validating the robustness of our findings.

5. Results

Hierarchical regression analysis is used to test our research hypotheses (Blunch, 2012). A mean-centered method was employed to reduce the influence of multicollinearity, thereby increasing the accuracy of the results (Blunch, 2012; Chung & Kuo, 2018). The regression analysis

results are listed in Table 3 to Table 8. Regression analysis Model 1 was designed to contain eight control variables. Model 2 added moderators and independent variables, including business networking, organizational learning, and IT affordance constructs. Model 3 added the interaction values of IT affordances and each organizational performance resource. The dependent variables in our study include channel performance and economic performance, as explained above.

5.1. Results of channel performance

The results concerning channel performance are listed in Table 3 (self-evaluation channel performance) and Table 4 (competitor-centered channel performance). Our results show that all VIF values are less than 4.0, indicating that multicollinearity is not a concern in our study (Blunch, 2012; Chung & Kuo, 2018). IT affordances are suggested to have a positive effect on channel performance ($\beta = 0.154$, $p < 0.05$; $\beta = 0.149$, $p < 0.05$). These results support H1a. More, the regression results confirm the moderating role of organizational learning and business networking. Particularly, exploratory learning is revealed to have a positive and significant effect in the relationship between the IT affordances and channel performance of MCNs ($\beta = 0.218$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta = 0.207$, $p < 0.05$). This outcome indicates that H2a is supported. Moreover, the positive moderation effect of business networking in the IT affordances and channel performance of MCNs is also confirmed ($\beta = 0.152$, $p < 0.05$; $\beta = 0.215$, $p < 0.01$). This finding confirms H4a. In line with our hypotheses, the negative moderating effect of exploitative learning in the IT affordance and channel performance framework is confirmed ($\beta = -0.221$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta = -0.299$, $p < 0.001$). This result suggests that H3a is also supported.

5.2. Results of economic performance

The economic performance results of the study consist of both perceptual data and actual data (Butler et al., 2012; Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Sydney-Hilton & Vila-Lopez, 2019). The perceptual self-evaluated economic performance construct consists of sales volume, ROI, ROA, and profit growth (Table 5), while a competitor-centered scale economic performance is listed in Table 6 (Katsikeas et al., 2000; Klink et al., 2021; Morgan et al., 2004). The actual data is evaluated by annual sales growth and market share (Bhattacharya et al., 2022; Cavusgil & Zou, 1994). The actual economic performance results are shown in Tables 7 and 8. IT affordances are revealed to positively influence the economic performance of MCNs concerning the results of all economic performance indicators (self-evaluated: $\beta = 0.172$, $p < 0.01$; competitor-centered: $\beta = 0.139$; $p < 0.05$; sales growth: $\beta = 0.306$, $p < 0.001$; market share: $\beta = 0.208$, $p < 0.01$). These results support H1b. Further, the interactive effect of exploratory learning and IT affordance strategy has a positive and significant effect on all economic performance metrics (self-evaluated: $\beta = 0.168$, $p < 0.05$; competitor-centered: $\beta = 0.183$, $p < 0.05$; sales growth: $\beta = 0.209$, $p < 0.05$; market share: $\beta = 0.214$, $p < 0.05$). These results support H2b. Likewise, the interaction of business networking and IT affordance strategy is proven to positively influence the economic performance of MCNs (self-evaluated: $\beta = 0.132$, $p < 0.05$; competitor-centered: $\beta = 0.148$, $p < 0.05$; sales growth: $\beta = 0.145$, $p < 0.05$; market share: $\beta = 0.141$, $p < 0.05$). These results also suggest that H4b is supported in all forms of economic performance measurements. As expected, the integrative effect of exploitative learning and IT affordance strategy is confirmed to have a negative and significant influence on all economic performance metrics (self-evaluated: $\beta = -0.230$, $p < 0.01$; competitor-centered: $\beta = -0.285$, $p < 0.001$; sales growth: $\beta = -0.399$, $p < 0.001$; market share: $\beta = -0.260$, $p < 0.01$). These results suggest that H3b is also supported.

6. Discussion and research implications

Our study advances the theoretical development of DC theory,

Table 1
Correlation coefficients.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1. Year of MCN experience	1.000																	
2. Industry type	-0.110*	1.000																
3. Current industry size	0.008	-0.111*	1.000															
4. Platform regulatory constraints	-0.230**	0.018	0.192*	1.000														
5. Customer preference	-0.056	-0.082	0.289**	0.305**	1.000													
6. Technology breakthroughs	0.055	0.058	0.231**	0.060	0.332**	1.000												
7. Cutthroat competition	0.078	-0.033	0.313**	0.158**	0.263**	0.564**	1.000											
8. Firm size	0.000	-0.044	0.166**	0.123*	0.182**	0.114*	0.173**	1.000										
9. Business networking	-0.005	0.037	0.160**	0.200**	0.071	0.010	-0.021	0.144*	1.000									
10. Exploratory learning	-0.140**	-0.039	0.421**	0.237**	0.153**	0.119*	0.237**	0.214**	0.328**	1.000								
11. Exploitative learning	0.132**	-0.114*	0.352**	0.128*	0.251**	0.161**	0.289**	0.083	0.231**	0.310**	1.000							
12. IT affordance strategy	-0.139**	0.073	0.236**	0.149**	0.286**	0.313*	0.259**	0.219**	0.080	0.195**	0.146**	1.000						
13. Channel Performance - CPa	0.048	-0.038	0.016	0.118*	0.088	-0.070	-0.085	0.038	0.306**	0.114*	0.115*	0.039	1.000					
14. Channel Performance - CPb	0.000	0.014	0.208**	0.111*	0.034	0.011	0.068	0.143**	0.328**	0.270**	0.135**	0.115*	0.454**	1.000				
15. Economic Performance - EPa	0.108*	-0.015	-0.023	0.036	-0.008	-0.073	-0.166**	0.095*	0.331**	0.069	0.047	0.029	0.432**	0.380**	1.000			
16. Economic Performance - EPb	0.078	-0.020	0.013	0.095	0.023	-0.067	-0.175**	0.083	0.346**	0.106*	0.051	0.022	0.471**	0.370**	0.553**	1.000		
17. Economic Performance – sales growth	-0.046	0.164**	0.081	0.053	-0.140*	0.264**	0.208**	0.117**	-0.038	0.049	-0.002	0.305**	0.090	0.166**	0.131*	0.124**	1.000	
18. Economic Performance - market share	-0.006	0.120*	0.110*	-0.003	0.098*	0.050	0.011	0.217**	0.052	104*	-0.065	0.186**	0.087	0.170**	0.141**	0.188**	0.227**	1.000

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; CPa = channel performance internally oriented scale; CPb = channel performance competitor-centered scale; EPa = economic performance internally oriented scale. EPb = economic performance competitor-centered scale.

Table 2
Construct's information.

Model Constructs	Chinese MCN enterprises (N = 229)					
	Mean Values	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE	
Business Networking^a			0.88	0.89	0.55	
Senior managers at buyer firms	5.22	0.724				
	5.38	0.708				
Senior managers at supplier firms	5.38	0.708				
Senior managers at distributor firms (e. g., supply chain firms)	5.06	0.762				
	4.44	0.812				
Senior managers at competitor firms	4.44	0.812				
Senior managers at data analysis firms	4.53	0.731				
	4.96	0.727				
Senior managers at social media platform firms	4.96	0.727				
Senior managers at head-hunter firms (for influencers)	4.61	0.704				
	4.48	0.838				
Senior managers of other key firms (i.e., other than the above) within your industry	4.48	0.838				
Exploratory Learning^b			0.87	0.87	0.58	
In information search, we focus on acquiring knowledge of product/service strategies that involved experimentation and high market risks	5.58	0.801				
We prefer to collect information with no identifiable strategic market needs to ensure experimentation in the new product/service development	5.28	0.806				
Our aim is to acquire knowledge to develop a product/service that led us into new areas of learning such as new markets and technological experience	5.53	0.845				
We collect novel information and ideas that went beyond our current market and technological experience	5.31	0.821				
Our aim is to collect new information that forced us to learn new things in the new product/service development	5.57	0.776				
Exploitative Learning^b				0.92	0.89	0.97
Our aim is to search for information to refine common methods and ideas in solving problem in the new product/service development		4.83	0.841			
Our aim is to search for ideas and information that we can implement well to ensure productivity rather than those ideas that could lead implementation mistakes in the product/service development and in the marketplace		4.62	0.867			
We search for the usual and generally proven methods and solutions to new product/service development problems						
We search for the usual and generally proven methods and solutions to new product/service development problems		4.86	0.903			
We use information acquisition methods (e. g., survey of customers and competitors) that helped us understand and update the firm's current product/service and market experiences						
We use information acquisition methods (e. g., survey of customers and competitors) that helped us understand and update the firm's current product/service and market experiences		4.87	0.896			
We emphasize the use of knowledge related to our existing product/service experience		4.73	0.863			
IT Affordance strategy^b				0.96	0.96	0.97
Visibility Affordance				0.96	0.97	0.89
We demonstrate detailed pictures of the products on live streaming		5.70	0.879			
We utilize live streaming to make the product attributes visible to viewers		5.64	0.896			
We utilize live streaming to make information about how to use products visible to viewers		5.63	0.886			
We utilize live streaming to visualize products like in the real world		5.66	0.869			
Meta-voicing Affordance				0.97	0.94	0.76
We utilize live streaming to allow viewers to comment on products		5.64	0.909			
We utilize live streaming to allow viewers to react to streamers' feedback		5.60	0.920			
We utilize live streaming to allow viewers to share in streamers' opinions		5.61	0.877			
We utilize live streaming to allow viewers to join in streamers' communal discussions		5.55	0.908			
We utilize live streaming to allow viewers to share shopping experiences with streamers		5.45	0.899			
Guidance Shopping Affordance				0.92	0.76	0.50
Our streamers provide information on all alternative products they intend to buy	5.39	0.726				
Our streamers help viewers establish their product needs without any restrictions	5.41	0.900				
Our streamers help viewers identify which product attributes best fit their needs	5.42	0.775				
Our streamers provide personal product customization based on requirements	5.26	0.769				
Channel Performance						
CPa - Group one^d: rate the self-satisfaction concerning the firm's operation in the industry			0.75	0.72	0.52	
Quality of your firm's relationship with distributors	5.07	0.857				
Reputation of your firm	5.07	0.859				
Distributor loyalty to your firm	4.97	0.880				
Overall satisfaction with your total product/service offering	5.29	0.865				
CPb - Group two^d: rate the performance, as compared to the main competitors in the industry			0.88	0.87	0.62	
Quality of your firm's relationship with distributors	5.02	0.852				
Reputation of your firm	5.30	0.848				
Distributor loyalty to your firm	5.12	0.891				
Overall satisfaction with your total product/service offering	5.33	0.835				
Economic Performance - Perceptual						
EPa - Group one^d: rate the self-satisfaction concerning the firm's operation in the industry			0.75	0.72	0.52	
Sales volume	5.28	0.722				
ROI	5.02	0.807				

(continued on next page)

Table 2 (continued)

Guidance Shopping Affordance			0.92	0.76	0.50
ROA	4.72	0.807			
Profit growth	5.26	0.739			
Epa - Group one^d: rate the self-satisfaction concerning the firm's operation in the industry			0.75	0.72	0.52
Sales volume	5.28	0.722			
ROI	5.02	0.807			
ROA	4.72	0.807			
Profit growth	5.26	0.739			
EPb - Group two^e: rate the performance, as compared to the main competitors in the industry			0.90	0.89	0.67
Sales volume	4.93	0.836			
ROI	4.76	0.882			
ROA	4.79	0.904			
Profit growth	4.90	0.854			
Economic Performance - Actual					
Your firm's sales growth in the industry - Actual	18.66 %				
Your firm's approximate market share in the industry - Actual	13.73 %				

Notes: ^ameasured by seven-point scale (1 = Very little; 7 = Very extensive); ^bmeasured by seven-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree); ^cmeasured by seven-point scale (1 = Not achieved at all; 7 = Completely achieved); ^dmeasured by seven-point scale (1 = Not satisfied at all; 7 = Completely satisfied); ^emeasured by seven-point scale (1 = Much worse; 7 = Much better).

organizational learning theory, and organizational networking theory. Our research offers valuable contributions to research on MCNs, IT affordances, and B2B performance. Our study is among early research to reveal the significant and positive impact of IT affordances on the B2B channel and economic performance of MCNs. Our results also pioneeringly provide strong evidence for the positive contingent effect of exploratory learning in the IT affordances-B2B performance dyad. The positive interactive effect of business networking and IT affordances on MCNs' B2B performance is also revealed. On the contrary, our results suggest that the integration of exploitative learning and IT affordances has a negative effect on MCNs' B2B performance. As such, the findings of this research show the effect of IT affordances on B2B performance is important. Furthermore, our study is among early research to integrate the theoretical foundations of DC theory (Santos-Vijande et al., 2012; Teece et al., 1997), organizational learning theory (March, 1991; Zahra et al., 2006), and organizational networking theory (Burt & Soda, 2021; Mitrega et al., 2012), alongside the conceptualization of IT affordance and B2B performance (Volkoff & Strong, 2013), in the formulation of a research framework. By conceptualizing IT affordances as the DC of MCNs and investigating their interaction with organizational learning and business networking, our study provides novel insights into the IT affordances-B2B performance framework. Specifically, our findings reveal how organizational learning and business networking influence the relationship between IT affordances and B2B performance in the MCN industry. Additionally, this study provides actionable managerial implications for MCNs on how to strategically align IT affordances with managerial mechanisms (i.e., organizational learning and business networking) to achieve sustainable performance outcomes in highly dynamic industries (e.g., Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Dong et al., 2016).

6.1. Theoretical implications

Our research makes several theoretical contributions to the literature on IT affordances, DC theory, organizational learning theory, and organizational networking theory, as well as to the understanding of MCNs' B2B performance. First, our study advances the conceptualization of IT affordances within the context of B2B live streaming and MCN operations. We reveal the significant and positive impact of IT affordances, such as visibility, meta-voicing, and guidance shopping, on channel and economic performance. Unlike prior research that has predominantly focused on IT affordances in B2C settings (e.g., Dong & Wang, 2018; Moon, 2020), our findings demonstrate the relevance of IT affordances in the B2B context. This expands the theoretical scope of IT affordances from B2C to B2B live streaming research (Liao et al., 2023;

Mao et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022). Based on our results and those revealed in the literature, researchers can now consider using IT affordance in B2C research such as that concerning user engagements, consumer purchase intentions, and repurchase intention, as well as B2B research that is outlined in our research conceptualization (IT affordances and MCNs B2B performance) (e.g., Dong & Wang, 2018; Hua et al., 2024).

Second, our study contributes to the development of DC theory by illustrating how IT affordances, organizational learning, and business networking interact to drive B2B performance. By positioning IT affordances as DC, we demonstrate their role in enabling MCNs to transform operations in order to adapt to dynamic market conditions (D'Ambra et al., 2022; Teece et al., 1997). This perspective extends the understanding of how MCNs leverage IT affordances, not as static interface characteristics, but as DC that evolve in response to environmental changes. Our findings emphasize the importance of internal and external managerial perspectives, such as exploratory learning, exploitative learning, and business networking, in amplifying the effectiveness of IT affordances. This integrative aspect advances the theoretical understanding of how MCNs navigate complex business environments to achieve sustainable performance outcomes (Mitrega et al., 2012; Santos-Vijande et al., 2012). In light of our results and those reported in the literature, research may now consider DC theory with other complementary theoretical frameworks to further explore strategic management, customer value creation, and the development of born-digital and technology-driven ventures, as outlined in our study (Lee et al., 2001; Martelo et al., 2013; Sadreddin & Chan, 2023).

Third, our findings may also advance the theoretical development of organizational learning theory (Chung et al., 2015; March, 1991). Our study is among the pioneering groups that have shown the different roles of exploratory learning and exploitative learning in the IT affordance-B2B performance dyad. The former learning is suggested to have a positive, while the latter is confirmed to have a negative, contingent effect. As such, research concerning DC theory and organizational learning theory can now consider the role of organizational learning in social ties and competitive strategies, as well as MCN and B2B research (Barney, 1991; March, 1991).

Fourth, our study is also among the forefront of research to uncover the role of business networking in the IT affordance-B2B performance framework. By building on DC research (Do et al., 2022; Santos-Vijande et al., 2012), the outcome of our study contributes to the theoretical development of DC by highlighting the positive contingent role of business networking in the IT affordances-B2B performance conceptualization. Consequently, research concerning the DC view can now

Table 3
Regression results of channel performance – internally oriented scale.

Channel performance – internally oriented scale						
	M1 β	VIF	M2 β	VIF	M3 β	VIF
Control variables						
Year of MCN experience	0.131 #	1.095	0.107	1.210	0.118 #	1.277
Industry type	-0.089	1.109	-0.126 #	1.160	-0.107 #	1.176
Current industry size	-0.031	1.284	-0.131	1.785	-0.150 #	1.818
Platform regulatory constraints	0.145 *	1.251	0.032	1.388	0.028	1.412
Customer preference	0.148 #	1.467	0.131 #	1.598	0.108	1.621
Technology breakthroughs	-0.110	1.865	-0.156 #	1.930	-0.164 *	1.949
Cutthroat competition	-0.130	1.918	-0.052	2.128	-0.058	2.162
Firm size	-0.053	1.053	0.032	1.098	-0.031	1.098
Independent variables						
Exploratory learning			-0.002	1.765	-0.019	1.789
Exploitative learning			-0.036	1.660	-0.029	1.707
Business networking			0.375 **	1.421	0.365	1.528
IT affordance strategy (H1a, S)			0.154 *	1.333	0.187 **	1.551
Interactions						
IT affordance strategy \times Exploratory learning (H2a, S)					0.218 **	2.075
IT affordance strategy \times Exploitative learning (H3a, S)					-0.221 **	2.039
IT affordance strategy \times Business networking (H4a, S)					0.152 *	1.290
R ² value	0.091 **		0.235 **		0.293 **	
Adjusted R ² value	0.058 **		0.192 **		0.243 **	
R ² value change	0.091 **		0.144 **		0.058 **	
F value	2.732 **		5.499 **		5.862 **	

Notes: All beta values are standardized. # $p < 0.1$. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. All VIF values are less than 4.0. S = supported; NS = not significant. (N = 229)

consider employing business networking in the investigation of organizational resilience, innovation, B2B dark side operations, as well as those aspects outlined in this study (IT affordance, MCNs, and B2B performance) (Chung et al., 2016; Do et al., 2022). Taken together, our findings contribute to the theoretical development of these key frameworks by addressing whether the integration of organizational learning and business networking with IT affordance strategies enhances B2B performance in dynamic markets. By embedding these interactive mechanisms within a B2B live streaming ecosystem, our study bridges critical gaps in the literature, particularly in the underexplored context of MCNs and B2B live streaming.

Last, although our empirical focus is on MCNs operating within the B2B live streaming ecosystem, the theoretical insights developed

regarding IT affordances extend beyond this specific context. We conceptualize IT affordances as digitally enabled dynamic capabilities, such as visibility, meta-voicing, and guided shopping support, that can be enacted across a variety of B2B digital marketing environments (Faraj & Azad, 2012; Volkoff & Strong, 2013). For example, in industrial digital platforms, visibility affordances enable suppliers to provide real-time inventory and production data to business buyers, enhancing transparency and transactional trust (Elia et al., 2021; He & Zhang, 2022). Meta-voicing tools facilitate customer participation and feedback loops in co-developing marketing content or digital services (Majchrzak & Markus, 2013). Similarly, in B2B online professional service marketing, guidance shopping affordances help B2B customers navigate complex solution portfolios and configure offerings to match their specific

Table 4
Regression results of channel performance – competitor-centered scale.

Channel performance – competitor-centered scale						
	M1 β	VIF	M2 β	VIF	M3 β	VIF
Control variables						
Year of MCN experience	0.062	1.095	0.056	1.210	0.068	1.277
Industry type	-0.028	1.109	-0.072	1.160	-0.055	1.176
Current industry size	0.270 **	1.284	0.110	1.785	0.078	1.818
Platform regulatory constraints	0.064	1.251	-0.069	1.388	-0.065	1.412
Customer preference	-0.035	1.467	-0.026	1.598	-0.048	1.621
Technology breakthroughs	-0.120	1.865	-0.158 #	1.930	-0.172 *	1.949
Cutthroat competition	0.056	1.918	0.122	2.128	0.104	2.162
Firm size	-0.045	1.053	-0.039	1.098	-0.039	1.098
Independent variables						
Exploratory learning			0.170 *	1.765	0.153	1.789
Exploitative learning			-0.084	1.660	-0.071 *	1.707
Business networking			0.325 **	1.421	0.326 **	1.528
IT affordance strategy (H1a, S)			0.149 *	1.333	0.223 **	1.551
Interactions						
IT affordance strategy \times Exploratory learning (H2a, S)					0.207 *	2.075
IT affordance strategy \times Exploitative learning (H3a, S)					-0.303 **	2.039
IT affordance strategy \times Business networking (H4a, S)					0.220 **	1.290
R ² value	0.088 **		0.242 **		0.343 **	
Adjusted R ² value	0.055 **		0.200 **		0.296 **	
R ² value change	0.088 **		0.154 **		0.101 **	
F value	2.649 **		5.724 **		7.376 **	

Notes: All beta values are standardized. # $p < 0.1$. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. All VIF values are less than 4.0. S = supported; NS = not significant. (N = 229).

Table 5
Regression results of economic performance – perceptual internally oriented scale.

Economic performance – perceptual data - internally oriented scale						
	M1 β	VIF	M2 β	VIF	M3 β	VIF
Control variables						
Year of MCN experience	0.150 *	1.095	0.131 *	1.210	0.135 *	1.277
Industry type	-0.072	1.109	-0.124 *	1.160	-0.111 #	1.176
Current industry size	-0.060	1.284	-0.159 *	1.785	-0.178 *	1.818
Platform regulatory constraints	0.127 #	1.251	-0.017	1.388	-0.018	1.412
Customer preference	0.027	1.467	0.026	1.598	0.011	1.621
Technology breakthroughs	0.031	1.865	-0.029	1.930	-0.036	1.949
Cutthroat competition	-0.286 **	1.918	-0.167 *	2.128	-0.175 *	2.162
Firm size	-0.034	1.053	-0.013	1.098	-0.013	1.098
Independent variables						
Exploratory learning			0.010	1.765	-0.005	1.789
Exploitative learning			-0.131 #	1.660	-0.119 #	1.707
Business networking			0.466 **	1.421	0.466 **	1.528
IT affordance strategy (H1b, S)			0.172 **	1.333	0.215 **	1.551
Interactions						
IT affordance strategy × Exploratory learning (H2b, S)					0.168 *	2.075
IT affordance strategy × Exploitative learning (H3b, S)					-0.230 **	2.039
IT affordance strategy × Business networking (H4b, S)					0.132 *	1.290
R ² value	0.101 **		0.312 **		0.361 **	
Adjusted R ² value	0.068 **		0.274 **		0.315 **	
R ² value change	0.101 **		0.212 **		0.048 **	
F value	3.064 **		8.137 **		7.971 **	

Notes: All beta values are standardized. # p < 0.1. * p < 0.05. ** p < 0.01. All VIF values are less than 4.0. S = supported; NS = not significant. (N = 229).

requirements (Sun et al., 2018). These digital B2B examples underscore the broader theoretical applicability of our framework. Moreover, this study shows that, when IT affordances are combined with exploratory learning and business networking, they help firms stay flexible and perform better in B2B digital marketing. These findings can also be applied to other business settings that rely on digital technologies (He & Zhang, 2022). Consequently, this research contributes to the broader B2B digital marketing literature by demonstrating how IT affordances enhance interaction quality, support value co-creation, and foster marketing agility and responsiveness in dynamic digital environments (D’Ambra et al., 2022; Teece et al., 2016).

6.2. Managerial implications

The results of this study may offer managerial guidance for MCNs, as well as those organizations operating in the B2B digital sectors. The findings suggest several strategic actions that can help organizations enhance their B2B digital business performance.

Our study confirms that the implementation of IT affordances in B2B live streaming activities can promote channel performance and economic performance (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Morgan et al., 2004). MCNs and B2B managers are encouraged to prioritize investment in IT affordances, such as enhanced visibility tools, interactive meta-voicing feedback mechanisms, and guided decision-making systems in their digital marketing activities. These IT affordance tools directly improve

Table 6
Regression results of economic performance – perceptual competitor-centered scale.

Economic performance – perceptual data - competitor-centered scale						
	M1 β	VIF	M2 β	VIF	M3 β	VIF
Control variables						
Year of MCN experience	-0.199 **	1.095	0.183 **	1.210	0.183 **	1.277
Industry type	-0.054	1.109	-0.098	1.160	-0.084	1.176
Current industry size	0.085	1.284	-0.009	1.785	-0.031	1.818
Platform regulatory constraints	0.205 **	1.251	0.081	1.388	0.081	1.412
Customer preference	0.038	1.467	0.041	1.598	0.026	1.621
Technology breakthroughs	0.060	1.865	0.012	1.930	0.005	1.949
Cutthroat competition	-0.354 **	1.918	-0.257 **	2.128	-0.267 **	2.162
Firm size	-0.136 *	1.053	-0.119 *	1.098	-0.119 *	1.098
Independent variables						
Exploratory learning			0.031 **	1.765	0.014	1.789
Exploitative learning			-0.108	1.660	-0.090	1.707
Business networking			0.388 *	1.421	0.392 **	1.528
IT affordance strategy (H1b, S)			0.139 *	1.333	0.195 **	1.551
Interactions						
IT affordance strategy × Exploratory learning (H2b, S)					0.183 *	2.075
IT affordance strategy × Exploitative learning (H3b, S)					-0.285 *	2.039
IT affordance strategy × Business networking (H4b, S)					0.148 **	1.290
R ² value	0.155 **		0.305 **		0.372 **	
Adjusted R ² value	0.124 **		0.266 **		0.328 **	
R ² value change	0.155 **		0.150 **		0.068 **	
F value	5.020 **		7.853 **		8.384 **	

Notes: All beta values are standardized. # p < 0.1. * p < 0.05. ** p < 0.01. All VIF values are less than 4.0. S = supported; NS = not significant. (N = 229).

Table 7
Regression results of economic performance – annual sales growth.

Economic performance - actual sales growth						
	M1 β	VIF	M2 β	VIF	M3 β	VIF
Control variables						
Year of MCN experience	-0.176 **	1.097	-0.077	1.212	-0.089	1.282
Industry type	0.161	1.106	0.083	1.161	0.098 *	1.179
Current industry size	-0.143	1.274	-0.125	1.770	-0.151	1.803
Platform regulatory constraints	0.058	1.246	0.025	1.383	0.025	1.407
Customer preference	0.115	1.458	0.113	1.589	0.104	1.614
Technology breakthroughs	0.030	1.864	-0.047	1.930	-0.050 *	1.948
Cutthroat competition	0.154 #	1.912	0.208 *	2.130	0.196	2.165
Firm size	-0.051	1.053	-0.107 #	1.098	-0.108 #	1.098
Independent variables						
Exploratory learning			0.086	1.751	0.062	1.775
Exploitative learning			-0.284 **	1.668	-0.249 **	1.713
Business networking			-0.005	1.421	0.016 **	1.533
IT affordance strategy (H1b, S)			0.306 **	1.333	0.380 **	1.550
Interactions						
IT affordance strategy \times Exploratory learning (H2b, S)					0.209 *	2.078
IT affordance strategy \times Exploitative learning (H3b, S)					-0.399 **	2.039
IT affordance strategy \times Business networking (H4b, S)					0.145 *	1.298
R ² value	0.121 **		0.238 **		0.348 **	
Adjusted R ² value	0.089 **		0.195 **		0.302 **	
R ² value change	0.121 **		0.117 **		0.110 **	
F value	3.768 **		5.575 **		7.506 **	

Notes: All beta values are standardized. # $p < 0.1$. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. All VIF values are less than 4.0. S = supported; NS = not significant. (N = 229).

communication effectiveness, customer engagement, and ultimately lead to better channel performance and higher economic returns (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Morgan et al., 2004; Sun et al., 2019).

In addition to the direct implementation of IT affordances, the outcomes of our study indicate that MCNs and B2B firms can dynamically utilize their internal (organizational learning) and external (business networking) managerial perspectives when formulating their IT affordance strategies, as these may enhance the effect of these strategies on their B2B performance (Do et al., 2022; Teece et al., 1997). For example, executives of B2B digital firms can consider using their exploratory learning in their formulation of IT affordances as this can result in superior channel and economic performance. When firms promote experimentation, continuous knowledge acquisition, and

openness to new digital technologies, they enhance their adaptability and responsiveness to such exploratory learning processes. This, in turn, enables more effective enactment of advanced IT affordances, such as AI and VR, within B2B digital marketing and live streaming operations (Do et al., 2022; Hansen et al., 2019). Similarly, they can also develop their business networking as this can help the postulation of IT affordance strategy, and this integration can help MCNs to obtain their B2B performance goals (Do et al., 2022). By building and leveraging relationships with B2B platform providers, channel partners, and key B2B customers, firms can gain access to valuable external knowledge and resources. These external linkages contribute to strategic alignment, accelerate innovation, and support the dynamic integration of IT affordances into business processes (Teece et al., 1997; Vrontis et al., 2020).

Table 8
Regression results of economic performance – market share.

Economic performance - actual market share						
	M1 β	VIF	M2 β	VIF	M3 β	VIF
Control variables						
Year of MCN experience	-0.005	1.095	0.076	1.210	0.080	1.277
Industry type	0.212 **	1.109	0.140*	1.160	0.158 *	1.176
Current industry size	0.124 #	1.284	0.055	1.785	0.036	1.818
Platform regulatory constraints	-0.002	1.251	-0.086	1.388	-0.090	1.412
Customer preference	0.021	1.467	0.063	1.589	0.044	1.621
Technology breakthroughs	-0.016	1.865	-0.059	1.930	-0.075	1.949
Cutthroat competition	-0.219 *	1.918	-0.156 #	2.128	-0.162 #	2.162
Firm size	0.028	1.053	-0.020	1.098	-0.020	1.098
Independent variables						
Exploratory learning			0.260 **	1.765	0.241 **	1.789
Exploitative learning			-0.317 **	1.660	-0.303 **	1.707
Business networking			0.066	1.421	0.066	1.528
IT affordance strategy (H1b, S)			0.208 **	1.333	0.248 **	1.551
Interactions						
IT affordance strategy \times Exploratory learning (H2b, S)					0.214 *	2.075
IT affordance strategy \times Exploitative learning (H3b, S)					-0.260 **	2.039
IT affordance strategy \times Business networking (H4b, S)					0.141 *	1.290
R ² value	0.082 **		0.205 **		0.267 **	
Adjusted R ² value	0.048 **		0.161 **		0.215 **	
R ² value change	0.082 **		0.123 **		0.062 **	
F value	2.430 **		4.619 **		5.140 **	

Notes: All beta values are standardized. # $p < 0.1$. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. All VIF values are less than 4.0. S = supported; NS = not significant. (N = 229).

Despite these benefits, the findings also point to the potential risks of over-reliance on exploitative learning (Chung & Ho, 2021). Given the highly dynamic nature of live streaming e-commerce (Si, 2021), managers of MCNs and B2B firms are expected to be fully aware of the dark side of exploitative learning in the MCN industry (Atuahene-Gima & Murray, 2007; March, 1991). To mitigate this challenge, firms are advised to maintain a balance between exploitative and exploratory learning. Based on the study’s outcomes, it is important for them to continuously engage with novel B2B live streaming knowledge, capitalize on emerging trends, and develop innovative skills to foster exploratory learning (Hansen et al., 2019). Sustaining engagement with emerging trends, evolving platform features, and novel digital marketing techniques allows managers to continuously update the organization’s knowledge base and remain responsive to change (Atuahene-Gima & Murray, 2007; Hansen et al., 2019). Such a balanced learning posture strengthens the firm’s dynamic capabilities, thereby enhancing its ability to fully leverage IT affordances and sustain long-term B2B growth (Do et al., 2022; Teece et al., 1997).

Taken together, these implications underscore the importance of a holistic approach to digital strategy, where IT affordances, organizational learning, and business networking are jointly leveraged to strengthen B2B competitiveness in technology-intensive markets.

7. Limitations and future research directions

Our study has several limitations that need to be considered for improvement in future research. First, this study was conducted in the context of the Chinese MCN industry. The industrial and environmental

conditions of Chinese MCNs can be different from those of other countries (e.g., in regards to government policies and monetization management) (Si, 2021). To improve this limitation, further research can design a cross-cultural/country quantitative survey study to confirm the generalization of the results established in our study (Bell et al., 2018). Second, this research only focuses on three elements of IT affordance strategy, namely visibility, meta-voicing, and guidance shopping affordance. However, IT affordance strategy may obtain other dimensions such as triggered attending, social connecting, trading affordance, and role-taking affordance as outlined in the extant literature (Dong et al., 2016; Dong & Wang, 2018; Moon, 2020). Further research can explore these additional IT affordances and explore their impact on the varied B2B performance metrics outlined in our study (Trainor et al., 2014). Lastly, further research may also consider whether IT affordances can influence other aspects of the business operation of MCNs, such as innovation and business orientation (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004). An extension on the effect of IT affordances on other business outputs can significantly increase the research application of this vital strategy and its affiliated theory (Dong et al., 2016; Sun et al., 2021).

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Yiming Yang: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Henry F.L. Chung:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Supervision, Resources, Project administration, Conceptualization. **Jonathan Elms:** Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Resources. **Phoebe Fletcher:** Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Conceptualization.

Appendix A. Endogeneity testing – Two Stage Least Squared Analysis (2SLS)

Table A
2SLS results of channel performance.

Variables	Channel performance	Channel performance	Channel performance	Channel performance
	-internally oriented	-internally oriented	-competitor-centered	-competitor-centered
	(1st stage)	(2nd stage)	(1st stage)	(2nd stage)
<i>Control variables</i>				
Year of MCN experience	0.118 #	0.135 #	0.068	0.089
Industry type	-0.107 #	-0.119 #	-0.055	-0.070
Current industry size	-0.150 #	-0.161 *	0.078	0.064
Platform regulatory constraints	0.028	0.032	-0.065	-0.061
Customer preference	0.108	0.094	-0.048	-0.065
Technology breakthroughs	-0.164 *	-0.179 *	-0.172 *	-0.191 *
Cutthroat competition	-0.058	-0.066	0.104	0.094
Firm size	-0.031	-0.039	-0.039	-0.049
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Exploratory learning	-0.019	-0.032	0.153	-0.075
Exploitative learning	-0.029	0.353 **	-0.071 *	0.300 **
Business networking	0.365	-0.015	0.326 **	0.158 *
IT affordance strategy	0.187 **	0.271 **	0.223 **	0.327 **
<i>Interactions</i>				
IT affordance strategy × Exploratory learning	0.218 **	0.198 *	0.207 *	0.182*
IT affordance strategy × Exploitative learning	-0.221 **	-0.222 **	-0.303 **	-0.304 **
IT affordance strategy × Business networking	0.152 *	0.174 *	0.220 **	0.247 **

Table B
2SLS results of economic performance.

Variables	EP - internally oriented	EP - internally oriented	EP - competitor-centered	EP - competitor-centered	Sales growth	Sales growth	Market share	Market share
	(1st stage)	(2nd stage)	(1st stage)	(2nd stage)	(1st stage)	(2nd stage)	(1st stage)	(2nd stage)
<i>Control variables</i>								
Year of MCN experience	0.135 *	0.139 *	0.183 **	0.204 **	-0.089	-0.079	0.080	0.090
Industry type	-0.111 #	-0.114 #	-0.084	-0.099	0.098 *	0.091	0.158 *	0.151 *
Current industry size	-0.178 *	-0.181 *	-0.031	-0.044	-0.151	-0.157 *	0.036	0.030
Platform regulatory constraints	-0.018	-0.017	0.081	0.085	0.025	0.028	-0.090	-0.088
Customer preference	0.011	0.008	0.026	0.010	0.104	0.096	0.044	0.036
Technology breakthroughs	-0.036	-0.040	0.005	-0.014	-0.050 *	-0.059	-0.075	-0.085
Cutthroat competition	-0.175 *	-0.177 *	-0.267 **	-0.277 **	0.196	0.192 *	-0.162 #	-0.167 #
Firm size	-0.013	-0.015	-0.119 *	0.129 *	-0.108 #	-0.112 #	-0.020	-0.025
<i>Independent variables</i>								
Exploratory learning	-0.005	-0.004	0.014	0.019	0.062	0.064	0.241 **	0.243 **
Exploitative learning	-0.119 #	-0.120 #	-0.090	-0.094	-0.249 **	-0.251 **	-0.303 **	-0.305 **
Business networking	0.466 **	0.463 **	0.392 **	0.377 **	0.016 **	0.009	0.066	0.058
IT affordance strategy	0.215 **	0.237 *	0.195 **	0.296 **	0.380 **	0.427 **	0.248 **	0.297 *
<i>Interactions</i>								
IT affordance strategy × Exploratory learning	0.168 *	0.163 *	0.183 *	0.159 *	0.209 *	0.198 *	0.214 *	0.202 *
IT affordance strategy × Exploitative learning	-0.230 **	-0.230 **	-0.285 *	-0.286 **	-0.399 **	-0.400 **	-0.260 **	-0.261 **
IT affordance strategy × Business networking	0.132 *	0.138 *	0.148 **	0.174 **	0.145 *	0.157 *	0.141 *	0.154 *

Note: # $p < 0.1$. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$.

^a Instrumental variable: firm digital maturity (Sun et al., 2025).

^b Firm digital maturity is positively significant with IT affordance strategy but it not significant with channel performance and economic performance.

Appendix B. Regression results of environmental turbulence moderator

To address the necessity of dynamic adaptation and the relevance of dynamic capability theory (DC) in our framework, we incorporated external turbulence as a moderator. External turbulence captures the environmental dynamism that necessitates changes in IT affordances and organizational capabilities. Drawing from established constructs of environmental dynamism (e.g., Schilke, 2014), this variable captures the unpredictability and variability in the business environment that necessitates changes in organizational capabilities, such as IT affordances. The construct was measured using a validated scale ($\alpha = 0.76$, CR = 0.83, AVE = 0.50), where respondents rated their agreement with statements on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). Details are shown in Table C.

Table C
Measurement items of environmental turbulence moderator.

Model Constructs	Mean Values	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Environmental Turbulence			0.76	0.83	0.50
The modes of production/service change often and in a major way	5.36	0.849			
	5.38	0.708			
The environmental demands on us are constantly changing	5.51	0.883			
Marketing practices in our industry are constantly changing	4.70	0.802			
	4.44	0.812			
Environmental changes in our industry are unpredictable	4.88	0.811			
In our environment, new business models evolve frequently	4.81	0.710			
	4.96	0.727			

This moderator examines how external turbulence amplifies the necessity for IT affordances to evolve and dynamically adapt in response to volatile conditions. The results, presented in Table D and Table E, confirm that external turbulence significantly strengthens this relationship, supporting the theoretical foundation of dynamic capability theory (Teece et al., 1997). By incorporating external turbulence as a moderator, our study provides empirical evidence that IT affordances, as dynamic capabilities, are crucial for navigating unpredictable and fast-changing environments. This addition enhances the robustness of our theoretical model and aligns with recent recommendations in the capability theory literature (Forkmann et al., 2018).

Table D
Regression results of channel performance.

	Channel performance – internally oriented scale			Channel performance – competitor-centered scale		
	M1 β	M2 β	M3 β	M1 β	M2 β	M3 β
<i>Control variables</i>						
Year of MCN experience	0.131 #	0.112 #	0.064	0.062	0.070	0.042
Industry type	-0.089	-0.125 #	-0.147 *	-0.028	-0.070	-0.080
Current industry size	-0.031	-0.129	-0.211 **	0.270 **	0.119	0.043
Platform regulatory constraints	0.145 *	0.029	0.067	0.064	-0.077	-0.044
Customer preference	0.148 #	0.129 #	0.089	-0.035	-0.031	-0.064

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Table D (continued)

	Channel performance – internally oriented scale			Channel performance – competitor-centered scale		
	M1 β	M2 β	M3 β	M1 β	M2 β	M3 β
Technology breakthroughs	–0.110	–0.158 #	–0.202 **	–0.120	–0.164 *	–0.201 **
Cutthroat competition	–0.130	–0.053	–0.047	0.056	0.199	0.110
Firm size	–0.053	–0.031	–0.046	–0.045	–0.037	–0.047
Independent variables						
Exploratory learning		–0.001	–0.049		0.173 *	0.136 #
Exploitative learning		–0.042	0.034		–0.101	–0.041
Business networking		0.378 **	0.371 **		0.332 **	0.322 **
Environmental turbulence		0.031	–0.018		0.093	0.046
IT affordance strategy		0.151 *	0.264 **		0.140 *	0.269 **
Interactions						
IT affordance strategy × Exploratory learning			0.258 **			0.226 **
IT affordance strategy × Exploitative learning			–0.361 **			–0.385 **
IT affordance strategy × Business networking			0.129 *			0.206 **
IT affordance strategy × Environmental turbulence			0.320 **			0.211 **

Notes: All beta values are standardized. # $p < 0.1$. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. All VIF values are less than 4.0. S = supported; NS = not significant. (N = 229).

Table D

Regression results of (perceptual data) economic performance.

	Economic performance – internally oriented scale			Economic performance – competitor-centered scale		
	M1 β	M2 β	M3 β	M1 β	M2 β	M3 β
Control variables						
Year of MCN experience	–0.199 **	0.130 *	0.104	–0.199 **	0.172 **	0.130 *
Industry type	–0.054	–0.124 *	–0.129 *	–0.054	–0.09	–0.111 #
Current industry size	0.085	–0.160 *	–0.209 **	0.085	–0.015	–0.079
Platform regulatory constraints	0.205 **	–0.017	0.003	0.205 **	0.087	0.115 #
Customer preference	0.038	0.027	0.005	0.038	0.044	0.020
Technology breakthroughs	0.060	–0.029	–0.051	0.060	0.016	–0.012
Cutthroat competition	–0.354 **	–0.167 *	–0.169 *	–0.354 **	–0.256 **	–0.258 *
Firm size	–0.136 *	–0.013	–0.021	–0.136 *	–0.120 *	–0.013 *
Independent variables						
Exploratory learning		0.010	–0.020		0.029	–0.010
Exploitative learning		–0.130 #	–0.083		–0.095	–0.027
Business networking		0.466 **	0.466 **		0.382 **	0.390 **
Environmental turbulence		–0.008	–0.044		–0.068	–0.115 *
IT affordance strategy		0.173 **	0.254 **		0.146 *	0.256 **
Interactions						
IT affordance strategy × Exploratory learning			0.190 *			0.200 **
IT affordance strategy × Exploitative learning			–0.299 **			–0.393 **
IT affordance strategy × Business networking			0.121 *			0.131 *
IT affordance strategy × Environmental turbulence			0.145 *			0.207 **

Notes: All beta values are standardized. # $p < 0.1$. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. All VIF values are less than 4.0. S = supported; NS = not significant. (N = 229).

Table D

Regression results of (actual data) economic performance.

	Economic performance – sales growth			Economic performance – Market share		
	M1 β	M2 β	M3 β	M1 β	M2 β	M3 β
Control variables						
Year of MCN experience	–0.176 **	–0.066	–0.109 #	–0.005	0.067	0.039
Industry type	0.161	0.085	0.080	0.212 **	0.139	0.138 *
Current industry size	–0.143	–0.120	–0.175 *	0.124 #	0.049	0.000
Platform regulatory constraints	0.058	0.020	0.041	–0.002	–0.081	–0.065
Customer preference	0.115	0.109	0.095	0.021	0.066	0.041
Technology breakthroughs	0.030	–0.051	–0.069	–0.016	–0.066	–0.086
Cutthroat competition	0.154 #	0.206 *	0.201 *	–0.219 *	–0.154 #	–0.154 #
Firm size	–0.051	–0.105 #	–0.114 #	0.028	–0.022	–0.029
Independent variables						
Explorative learning		0.088	0.051		0.258 **	0.223 **
Exploitative learning		–0.296 **	–0.227 **		–0.306 **	–0.255 **
Business networking		0.000	0.021		0.061	0.063
Environmental turbulence		0.066	0.015		–0.060	–0.100
IT affordance strategy		0.300 **	0.411 **		0.214 **	0.293 **
Interactions						

(continued on next page)

Table D (continued)

	Economic performance – sales growth			Economic performance – Market share		
	M1 β	M2 β	M3 β	M1 β	M2 β	M3 β
IT affordance strategy \times Exploratory learning			0.223 **			0.242 **
IT affordance strategy \times Exploitative learning			–0.455 **			–0.340 **
IT affordance strategy \times Business networking			0.135 *			0.129 *
IT affordance strategy \times Environmental turbulence			0.139 *			0.146 *

Notes: All beta values are standardized. # $p < 0.1$. * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. All VIF values are less than 4.0.

S = supported; NS = not significant. (N = 229).

Data availability

The authors do not have permission to share data.

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