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Article:
Akter, S., Mohiuddin Babu, M., Hossain, T.M.T. et al. (2024) Omnichannel management capabilities in international marketing: the effects of word of mouth on customer engagement and customer equity. International Marketing Review, 41 (1). pp. 42-73. ISSN: 0265-1335

https://doi.org/10.1108/imr-09-2022-0203

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The citation details are provided below:

Akter, S., Mohiuddin Babu, M., Hossain, T.M.T., Dey, B.L., Liu, H. and Singh, P., 2024. Omnichannel management capabilities in international marketing: the effects of word of mouth on customer engagement and customer equity. *International Marketing Review*, *41*(1), pp.42-73.

Omnichannel Management Capabilities in International Marketing: The Effects of Word of Mouth on Customer Engagement and Customer Equity

Abstract

Purpose: The main purpose of this study is to fill the research gap on how B2B global service firms integrate dynamic capabilities within their omnichannel management to influence positive word of mouth (WOM), customer engagement and customer equity.

Design: Drawing on the dynamic capability and WOM theories, a model has been developed that defines the subjects of the empirical test. The paper reports on data collected from 312 service-oriented global firms in Australia, through a cross-sectional survey. Data was analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

Findings: The findings suggest that content management (i.e., information consistency, source trustworthiness and endorsement) and concerns management (i.e., privacy, security and recovery) capabilities are the two significant antecedents of positive WOM within a B2B omnichannel setting in international marketing. The findings also confirm the key mediating role of customer engagement between positive WOM and customer equity.

Originality: The findings extend dynamic capability theory in the context of international marketing by linking WOM, customer engagement, and customer equity. The findings add further theoretical rigour by establishing the nomological chain between positive WOM and customer equity, in which, customer engagement plays a key mediating role.

Keywords International Dynamic Marketing Capabilities, Omnichannel Marketing, Positive WOM, Customer Engagement, Customer Equity.

Paper type: Research paper

1.0 Introduction

Over the last decade, the landscape of international marketing has been affected in an unprecedented way due to the changes in the global environment; these include the advent of cutting edge technology, the speed of globalization, the emergence of new markets, and COVID-19 pandemic (Dey *et al.*, 2020; Gnizy, 2019; Spyropoulou *et al.*, 2018; Acosta *et al.*, 2018). To survive and succeed, firms always need to respond to these changes, innovate and adapt while adopting dynamic capabilities. Furthermore, the firms, irrespective of size and industry, constantly need to re-evaluate and redevelop their international marketing capabilities, which are dynamic in nature (Morgan *et al.*, 2018). For example, the US-China trade war and pandemic induced global supply chain disruptions enforced companies across the world to resort to domestic supplies (Dey *et al.* 2022; Shih 2020). Concurrently, the rise of online retailers such as Amazon and Alibaba have led to the closure of many brick-and-morter retailers, triggering manufacturers to readjust their strategies while engaging with export markets (Seth, 2020).

Seamless business operations require firms to achieve multichannel integration or cross-channel retailing (Bendoly *et al.*, 2005; Cao and Li, 2015) and, recently, omnichannel retailing (Brynjolfsson *et al.*, 2013; Rigby, 2011; Verhoef *et al.*, 2015). Omni means "all", denoting all the available channels a firm utilizes (Rigby, 2011). Omnichannel marketing, the notion of integration between channels to provide a consistent service experience for customers, is central to the channel management for B2B companies in recent years (Brynjolfsson *et al.*, 2013; Hossain *et al.*, 2020; Lee *et al.*, 2019). In order to match up with customers' interactions with various channels/touchpoints, firms need to be agile in their retailing and distribution approach by adopting dynamic capabilities through an integration of both offline and digital channels (Bernon *et al.*, 2016). Dynamic capabilities are defined as an organisation's abilities

to integrate, create, reconfigure and leverage internal and external competencies to cope with the dynamic business environment (Ambrosini and Bowman, 2009). Despite, the importance of an integrated and dynamic approach to channel management, most companies manage their channels in silos by operating digital and physical channels separately, which may lead to customer dissatisfaction and frustration (Cui *et al.*, 2021; Eyuboglu *et al.*, 2017).

As a result, the potential of generating outcomes ,such as positive WOM, by leveraging the synergy between omnichannel retailing and dynamic capabilities has not been fully utilized (Akter *et al.*, 2021; Cui *et al.*, 2021; Sheth, 2021; Verhoef, 2021). Negative WOM may be caused by a failure to integrate all these channels to deliver a connected and seamless customer experience leading to adverse effects on customer engagement and customer equity. Whilst customer engagement (CE) refers to the ongoing interaction between the company and customers, customer equity refers to a long-term relationship between the two parties (Wang *et al.*, 2016). However, there is a paucity of research on how to manage WOM across channels in industrial markets despite its critical impact on CE and customer equity (Iankova *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, the current literature provides tenuous understanding of this important phenomenon in the case of global service business operations. Drawing on this knowledge gap, this paper puts seeks to address the following research questions:

RQ: How do service-oriented global firms integrate dynamic capabilities in their omnichannel to influence positive word of mouth, customer engagement, and customer equity?

To address the research questions, this study applies dynamic capability theory (DCT) to conceptualize omnichannel management as a dynamic channel management capability. Theoretically, this research identifies the omnichannel management capability as the dynamic capabilities in the international B2B context, which influences CE and customer equity

(Verbeke, 2022; Zahra *et al.*, 2022). The validated research model also illuminates the role of CE as a mediating variable to link between positive WOM and customer equity within the international B2B context. Practically, the findings provide actionable insights into industrial marketers on how to engage business customers across channels to enhance equity in a foreign market.

The paper is structured as follows. In section 2, we discuss the literature review identifying omnichannel management as a dynamic capability and examine its antecedents and its effects. In section 3, we introduce our conceptual model with hypothetical relationships. In section 4, we present our methods and findings of both the measurement and structural models. Finally, we discuss the theoretical and practical implications of our research findings with limitations and future research directions.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Omnichannel management

Over the years, the disruptive change in customers' decision-making process and preference for distribution channels has been significantly influenced by the exponential rise of the Internet, smartphones, and other mobile devices (Shankar *et al.,* 2010). As a result, customers expect and receive an enhanced and seamless shopping experience in terms of channel scope (increasing number of channels and touchpoints) and focus (the overall customer brand experience) (Picot-Coupey *et al.,* 2016). This has propelled the research in the distribution channel to progress toward multichannel integration or cross-channel retailing (Bendoly *et al.,* 2005; Cao and Li, 2015) and, recently, omnichannel retailing (Brynjolfsson *et al.*, 2013; Rigby, 2011; Verhoef *et al.,* 2015).

Omnichannel or multichannel integration is not just confined to the simultaneous use of multiple channels. The integration of all available channels bears major significance as it diminishes the distinction between online and offline channels and whether it is in a B2C or B2B context (Lazaris and Vrechopoulos, 2014; Lawrence *et al.,* 2019; Brynjolfsson *et al.*, 2013). Rigby (2011, p. 67) pioneered the term Omnichannel Retailing to address the integrated shopping experience through the rapid proliferation of digital retailing while defining the concept as "*an integrated sales experience that melds the advantage of physical stores with the information-rich experience of online shopping*". In a similar vein, Verhoef *et al.* (2015, p. 176) defined omnichannel management as *"the synergetic management of the numerous available channels and customer touchpoints, in such a way that the customer experience across channels and the performance over channels are optimized.*". The extent of Omnichannel extends to a global market as well, as evident by the examples of Nike, Decathalon (Kluge *et al.*, 2021). To facilitate integration of multiple distribution channels in the global market few dynamic marketing capabilities play an important role,such as market adaptation, marketing orientation, networking, and adaptation (Ortiz *et al.*, 2021).

2.1.1. Omnichannel in B2B sector

The growth and experience of omnichannel in B2C have inspired the B2B sector (Forrester Research, 2014). In the context of B2C, the multichannel and omnichannel retailing environment has been a very common phenomenon both in academic and practitioner literature. However, there has been a limited understanding in B2B service operations in international markets due to the lack agility in managing content (e.g., information, trust) and concerns (e.g., customer privacy and security) (Hossain *et al.*, 2020; Gallino and Rooderkerk, 2020; Lawrence *et al.*, 2019). For example, B2B service providers often struggle in integrating the online and offline channels to provide customized services (e.g., dynamic pricing) to targeted customers. This may be caused by the uncertain nature of both offline and online

channels in services management (Grewal *et al.* 2015; Mantrala and Albers 2012). Although B2B organizations deploy various resources to manage this uncertainity and negative WOM, there is scant literature on the seamless integration of channels in the context of international marketing (Hossain *et al.*, 2020; Iankova *et al.*, 2019).

2.1.2. Omnichannel management capability: A dynamic capability perspective in B2B sector

In order to address the research question of this study, we have identified omnichannel management capability as a dynamic marketing capability (DMC) as it is a key factor for the integration of channels in an international context (Ortiz *et al.*, 2021; Helfat *et al.*, 2009; Teece *et al.,* 1997). For example, Ferraris *et al.* (2020) identify the role of microfoundations as the antecedents of dynamic capabilities and strategic agility in emerging markets. Similarly, Chaudhary *et al.* (2022) explicate the role of dynamic channel management and digitalization as the drivers of dynamic servitization in international markets. For fast, nimble and adaptive channel management, DMCs emphasize strategic changes in the firms' marketing assets to achieve sustained market advantage and expansion, and overall performance (Barrales - Molina *et al.*, 2014; Mitręga, 2019; Schilke *et al.*, 2018; Mitrega *et al.*, 2021; Hoque *et al.*, 2022). DMCs enable firms to develop a dynamic resource mix to respond to the challenges of heterogeneous international markets (Buccieri *et al.*, 2020; Mitrega *et al.*, 2021).

For successful operation in international markets, firms need to have an international DMC (IDMC) in every area of marketing operations, including service provision channels, to address the changing nature of the global environment through the reconfiguration of resources (Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000; Peteraf *et al.,* 2013; Schilke *et al.*, 2018). IDMCs refer to the firms' abilities to understand international customers' expressed and latent needs so that the

firms can create, deploy, and upgrade organizationally embedded and return-generating resources in pursuit of positive WOM (Luo, 2000; Mitrega, 2019). This is an important factor with regard to the integration of multiple channels to provide a seamless service experience to the customers and enhance customer equity in a global context. In the context of international marketing, omnichannel management, as a dynamic marketing capability has received very limited research attention (Hossain *et al.*, 2020). Specifically, there are very few studies that have capitalized on DCT to address content and concerns across channels (Wilson and Daniel 2007; Daniel and Wilson, 2003; Eriksson *et al.*, 2022; Solem *et al.*, 2022).

Content management capability refers to information consistency, source trustworthiness, and endorsement in international markets (Hossain *et al.*, 2020). From the service providers' point of view, while designing a marketing system in an international market that comprises multiple channels, it has to be ensured that the customers receive the same information and service experience across different channels (Wu and Chang, 2016). Similar to B2C sellers, B2B sellers also want to integrate channels that ensure consistency and trustworthiness to the customers. Providing a reliable, consistent, and accurate service experience through omnichannel distribution would increase customers' satisfaction and their trust in the sellers (Madaleno *et al.*, 2007).

As a result, satisfied customers would endorse and recommend services to other customers, which will enhance the trusted beliefs of the community members' decisions. Customer endorsement instills confidence and trust in other customers (Lexmark, 2016; Quach *et al.*, 2020). For example, Southwest Airlines, in the B2C context, has relied on trustworthy and consistent information about its promise as a no-frills, low-cost airline to build customer trust over time (Pulido *et al.*, 2014). In the context of B2B, VIP.com, a leading e-commerce

marketplace in China, delivers a satisfactory omnichannel experience both for its retailers and customers. Using a geo-location push notification tool, the organization provides reliable, timely, and consistent information to the customers when a retailer posts a marketing offer (https://blog.hubspot.com). From the customers' point of view, managing the customer-generated-content (developed and shared by a satisfied customer) is often seen as more reliable than firm-generated content for both B2C and B2B contexts (Dickinger, 2011; Colicev *et al.*, 2019; Chih *et al.*, 2020).

Concerns management capability refers to customer privacy, customer security, and service recovery in international markets (Hossain *et al.*, 2020). The success of managing the omnichannel also stems from a firm's capability to manage concerns and issues, such as providing a secured channel of the transaction, offering protection of private information and managing communication lines to allow customers to conveniently and efficiently raise their service recovery issues to the firm (Hossain *et al.*, 2020). In an omnichannel context, firms need to develop the capability so that customers feel safe and secure about the usage of their confidential and private information before, during, and after the communication and transaction. While designing an effective and efficient delivery channel, the protection of customers' personal information bears critical importance since customers' personalized data have become quite abundant in international markets (Cortez and Johnston, 2017; Trim and Lee, 2019; Wedel and Kannan, 2016). For example, customer privacy in international marketing refers to the level of protection of personal information incorporated within all distribution channels, whereas security refers to the safe use of different channels of the organization (Montoya-Weiss *et al.*, 2003). The failure to deliver promised service and a lack of subsequent recovery mechanism may result in customer defection, lost opportunities, and negative word of mouth (Hollebeek, 2018). Omnichannel enables customers to conveniently

reach out to the service provider whenever and wherever a failure happens (Rosenmayer, 2018).

Overall, the nuances within the omnichannel management capability with regard to the content and concerns management capabilities are evolving and they necessitate in-depth understanding. Specifically, conceptualizing and validating the roles of these capabilities in international marketing is both a theoretical and practical challenge in a high velocity and competitive market, which inhibits the functions of ordinary capabilities (Magistretti *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, distinguishing the dynamic nature of content and concerns management capabilities will deepen and broaden our understanding of the effectiveness of omnichannel management capabilities in international marketing (Hossain *et al.*, 2020).

2.2 Effects of Omnichannel Management Capability in B2B environment

2.2.1 Positive Word of Mouth

In this research, WOM refers to information communication about the characteristics of services between different parties that are independent of the service provider via any channel (Anderson, 1998; Silverman, 2001). WOM information could be either positive or negative, while the golden rule of WOM marketing is to maximize the positive WOM and minimize the negative WOM (Allsop *et al.*, 2007; Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004). In a B2B service setting, positive WOM plays a vital role in facilitating the development and extension of the business and building the service brand reputation (Molinari *et al.*, 2008). To minimize the risks inherent in the intangible nature of service, customers tend to seek and evaluate information before making a purchase, particularly from non-company-controlled sources (e.g., WOM) (Roy *et al.*, 2019; Walsh *et al.*, 2009). WOM is therefore seen as an important information source, while positive WOM reduces the uncertainties and risks involved in service provision (Manes

and Tchetchik, 2018). In B2B marketing management, relationships and bonds between business partners help B2B firms to develop trustworthy networks (Lacey and Morgan, 2009) In the modern marketplace, WOM communication takes place via omnichannel (Lee *et al.*, 2019).

More precisely, WOM information is being communicated in the face-to-face setting and through various digital channels, such as professional social networking sites and review sites (Iankova *et al.*, 2019). For B2B service providers, it is important to improve the effectiveness of omnichannel management (Kingshott *et al.*, 2020). Aliedan (2021) highlights that WOM plays an irreplaceable role for B2B customers who participate in the international market and facilitates their internationalization because WOM helps B2B organizations to better understand market trends and industry competitiveness as well as rivals' methods and strategies, policies and regulatory frameworks, and business and social networks.

Therefore, the positive WOM in an omnichannel environment could be dependent on how well a service provider uses omnichannel to showcase their capabilities to inform their customers (i.e., content) and to solve the customers' concerns (i.e., concerns). Statistically the size of the B2B market is much larger than B2C market (www.statista.com). However, unlike the B2C market, the members of B2B are reluctant to share their trade issues beyond close community. In case of the internationalized B2B market, this community becomes relatively small. Therefore, sharing positive WOM about the service provider allows customers to recognize and reflect on their overall capabilities in satisfying customers' needs. Such recognition and reflection encourage customers to further engage with the same service provider and develop favorable perceptions about them (Aliedan, 2021; Youssef *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, WOM plays an important role in sustaining the effective use of omnichannel in B2B service firms, particularly when serving internationalized business customers.

2.2.2 Customer Engagement

Since the paradigmatic shift in marketing philosophy in the early 1990s (Berry and Parasuraman, 1991), which led to the increased seriousness of the relationship orientation over the traditional transaction-based approach, a number of conceptual areas have proliferated to theorize how organizations can develop, nurture, and sustain their interaction and ensuing business relations (Hollebeek, 2011; Kumar *et al.*, 2010). Customer engagement is a multi-dimensional concept comprising of cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social aspects (Islam and Rahman, 2016). With the advent of Web 2.0 technology and the consequent surge in social media, the importance and the relevance of customer engagement in marketing have increased (Carlson *et al.*, 2018).

In international marketing, customer engagement has gained traction in the last decade due to its strong link with cultural and organizational contexts (Srivastava and Sivaramakrishnan, 2022). Both B2C and B2B interactions in cross-cultural contexts may have variable implications, and accordingly, the impacts of organizational tactics such as customer loyalty programs on customer engagement (CE) outcomes are likely to be different (Nguyen *et al.*, 2014). Different international market environments exhibit unique characteristics in terms of culture, living standards, regulations, purchase behavior, etc., therefore shaping cross-market CE differentially (Burgess and Steenkamp, 2006). Furthermore, firms' dynamic marketing abilities to cultivate CE may differ depending on the prevailing institutional or infrastructural conditions (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2021; Mitrega, 2019).

Emanating from consumer trust theory (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), the concept of CE is rooted in commitment and trust and the ensuing relationship-building ethos (Pansari and Kumar, 2017), which again may vary depending upon cultural contexts. The core essence of engagement is imbued by sustained interactions between firms and their customers that define, refine, and reinforce product and service ideas which eventually contribute to firms' positioning and profitability. Customer engagement is defined as a psychological state resulting from interactive and co-creative customer experiences with a firm or its brands (Alexander *et al.*, 2018; Jakkola and Alexander, 2014; Brodie *et al.*, 2011).

Although there is some ambiguity about whether customer engagement is a psychological state or behavioral outcome (Alvarez-Milan, *et al.*, 2018), a strong body of literature regards this concept as a behavioral manifestation, driven by collaborative interaction and resource sharing between firms and their customers (Babu *et al.*, 2020; Gopalkrishna *et al.*, 2019). Following Hollebeek *et al.* (2016), this paper conceptualizes customer engagement from an interactive perspective that enables the authors to assess and posit the concept within the realm of the service ecosystem and differentiate the concept from more subjective issues such as customer and brand experiences.

A growing body of literature (Pansari and Kumar, 2017; Hollebeek *et al.*, 2016) highlights the association between customer engagement and the co-creation of value. The exchange of operant and operand resources is a crucial component of co-creative interaction between a firm and its customers. As such, interactive experience and the co-creation of value provide the conceptual foundation of customer engagement (Brodie and Hollebeek, 2011). Kumar *et al.* (2019) suggest that trust plays a salient role in the build-up to value-driven and co-creative customer experience that shapes the nature of customer engagement. While trust and

commitment constitute the impetus for engagement, the nature and mode of engagement are often defined by interaction, which again can be of a multifarious nature. While B2C interaction is strategically designed and can be controlled by a firm, customer-to-customer (C2C) interaction is considered a challenging mode that offers limited scope for controlling and maneuvering by a firm. As such, the role of C2C engagement, such as WOM, warrants conceptual scaffolding and empirical investigation. It is argued that digital technology-mediated B2C interaction is a game-changer in B2B contexts (Hollebeek, 2019; Hardwick and Anderson, 2019). However, there is a paucity of scholarly works that articulate the nomological interrelationship between customer engagement and WOM and its antecedents such as trust, endorsement, privacy, and security, particularly in the context of cross-national and cross-cultural marketing.

2.2.3 Customer Equity

Customer equity is defined as the sum total of the discounted LTVs (life time value) of a firm's entire customer group (Kim and Ko, 2012; Kumar and George, 2007; Lemon *et al.*, 2001). Customer equity is important for firms to develop a more holistic understanding of and strategic perspective toward customer value, brand equity, and customer-relationship management (Lemon *et al.*, 2001). Customer equity is measured by discounting the costs associated with customer acquisition, retention, and cross-selling from the customer LTV (Leone *et al.*, 2006). Kumar and Shah (2009) argued that customer equity is an aggregated measure of profitability, as it discounts the implicit costs associated with the customer LTV. With the increasingly customer-centric marketing approach that was undertaken due to market orientation (Narvar and Slater, 1990) and customer value (Bolton and Drew, 1991), customer equity started to gain importance in marketing scholarship (Rust *et al.*, 2006) because it is considered a key criterion for evaluating the core competence of companies.

Persson and Ryals (2010) determined that customer assets are the relationships that a firm has with its customers, where customer equity is the value of those customer assets. Customer equity is a useful tool for a firm to analyze how and to what extent they can make optimum use of the factors that they can control to enhance customer LTV. Kumar and George (2007) suggest a range of drivers for customer equity, including the acquisition, maintenance, and retention of customers. Customer equity drivers include value, brand, and relationship equity (Ou and Verhoef, 2017). Hence, a steady and improved relationship with customers can lead to customer equity (Zhang *et al.*, 2016).

3. Conceptual Model

This study proposes the research model in Figure 1 using DC, WOM, customer engagement and customer equity theories. It identifies content management capability and concerns management capability as the second-order dynamic capabilities, influencing the outcome constructs. Content management capability is reflected in information consistency, source trustworthiness and endorsement and concerns management capability is reflected in privacy, security and service recovery. The study proposes customer engagement as the key mediator between positive WOM and customer equity.

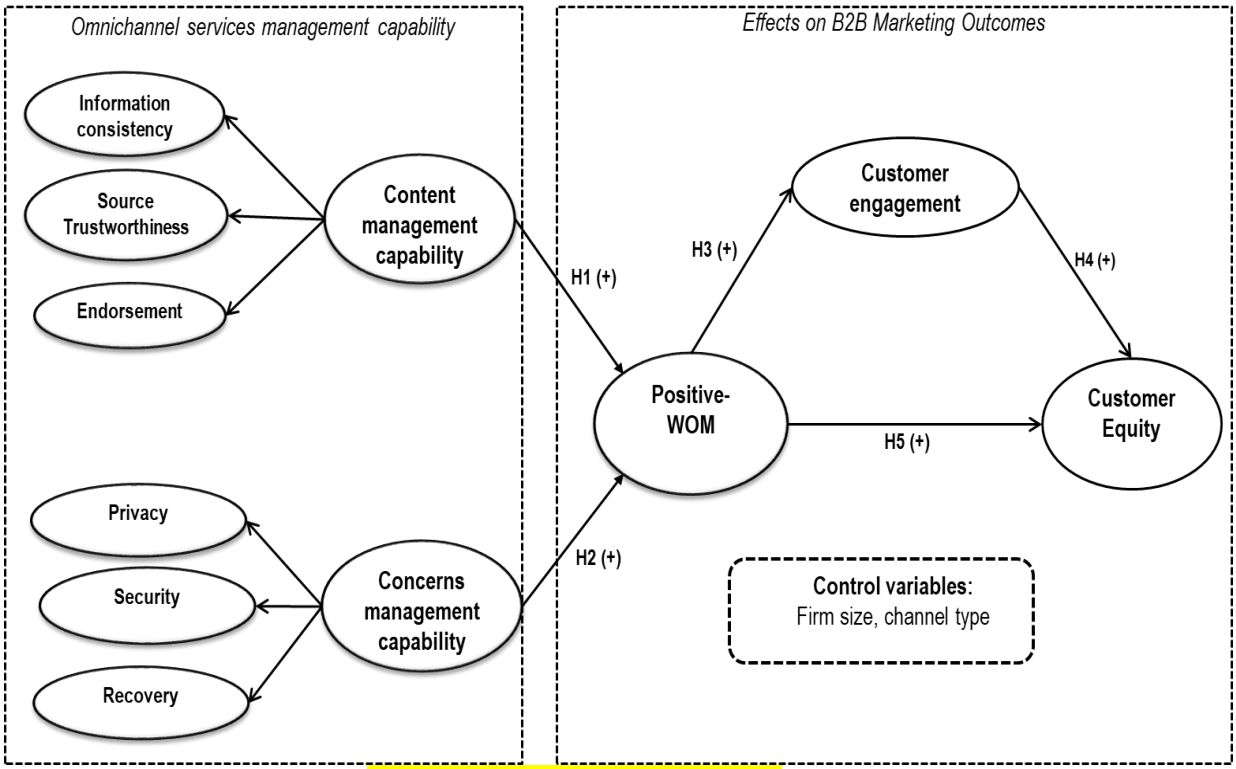

Figure 1: Research Model (Source: Authors' own creation)

3.1 Content management capability and positive WOM

St Amant (2008) pointed out that international businesses particularly value an organization's content management capability, which consists of information consistency, source trustworthiness and customer endorsement. Information consistency refers to the consistency of information provided by a service provider across various channels (Sousa and Voss, 2006). Content consistency allows customers to receive standardized information about the service provider and their services in either online or physical channels. Inconsistency in information across channels leads to customers' confusion and doubts about the service provider (Saghiri *et al.*, 2017). In contrast, providing consistent information through channels enables customers to have more faith in the content being communicated and to develop more substantial confidence in the firm (Quach *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, content consistency across channels helps smooth customers' information search process and build customer confidence, thereby

resulting in more supportive WOM for the focal firm (Butkouskaya *et al.*, 2021; Šerić *et al.*, 2020).

Source trustworthiness refers to experts who have an authenticity that significantly influences receivers' attitudes (López and Sicilia, 2014). It reflects the perception of the message recipients as to whether the information source is credible and persuasive (Chaiken, 1980; Pornpitakpan, 2004). While a message is being communicated, the source trustworthiness enhances the diagnosticity of the message and eases the recipients' information processing. Specifically, a trustworthy source enables a message to stand out and adds value to its persuasiveness (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2020). Through the lens of dynamic capabilities, in omnichannel communication, providing relevant and useful content from credible sources could win customers' positive WOM (Felin and Powell, 2016; Hossein *et al.*, 2020).

Customer endorsement refers to the message provided by the customers as the enhancement of trusted beliefs for other customers' decisions (Chih *et al.*, 2020). In omnichannel communication, the content could be either firm-generated or customer-generated (Demmers *et al.*, 2020). Extant evidence suggests that customer-generated contents are often seen as more reliable than firm-generated ones (e.g., Dickinger, 2011; Colicev *et al.*, 2019). Contents shared by a satisfied customer as an endorser who has experience with the service provider are valuable to potential customers, and they subsequently generate trust in the event of a lack of first-hand information and/or experience (Chih *et al.*, 2020). Customer endorsement, reflecting the firms' capability of managing customer-generated content, contributes to the development of an omnichannel persuasive environment and adds informative value to the content, which in turn, motivates customers to share positive WOM for the firm (See-To and Ho, 2014).

In sum, providing consistent information, identifying trustworthy sources, and having customer endorsement in the omnichannel environment demonstrate the firm's capabilities in influencing positive WOM. Therefore, we position content management capability as a higher-order construct capturing information consistency, source trustworthiness, and customer endorsement as subdimensions. Considering the emphasis international businesses place on organizational content management capabilities and the significant role played by WOM in the international business community (Aliedan, 2021; St Amant, 2008), we postulate the following:

Hypothesis 1: Content management capability positively influences WOM.

3.2 Concerns Management Capability and Positive WOM

In addition to providing relevant and useful content, addressing customer concerns through omnichannel could facilitate customers' positive WOM (Hennig-Thurar *et al.*, 2004). Çebi and Bayraktar (2003) also highlighted that when selecting service suppliers, companies that run international businesses pay particular attention to the supplier's problem-solving capability. Here, concern management manifests through addressing the following sub-dimensions: privacy, security, and service recovery.

Privacy refers to the protection of customers' personal information on multiple channels (Hossain *et al.*, 2020). When communication, service delivery, and customer support are provided through multiple channels, the service providers collect an immense amount of personal and financial information about the customers (Montoya-Weiss *et al.*, 2003). In contrast, when they are sure their privacy is protected, customers are more likely to praise the firm through WOM (Schoenbachler and Gordon, 2002).

Security refers to the safe use of different channels of the firm (Parasuraman *et al.*, 2005). Security goes beyond a specific channel, and it is essential in multichannel usage (Montoya-Weiss *et al.*, 2003). The provision of a secure environment boosts customers' confidence and trust, thereby increasing the customers' positive WOM sharing (Liu *et al.*, 2021).

Service recovery refers to offering open lines of communication that allow customers to conveniently and efficiently raise their service-related issues with the firm (Hossein *et al.*, 2020). After a service failure, service providers tend to make efforts to restore the service standards and re-establish customer satisfaction (McColl-Kennedy and Sparks, 2003). Successful service recovery could overturn customers' negative perceptions of the service provider and potentially stimulate positive WOM (Hart *et al.*, 1990). Meanwhile, service recovery offers opportunities for a service provider to gather customer feedback, thereby further improving the service quality (Liu *et al.*, 2019). Accepting customer feedback with an open mind reflects a firm's integrity and professionalism, which is often appreciated and praised by customers (Nasr *et al.*, 2004). Additionally, providing convenient and efficient service recovery systems through multiple channels allows customers to easily reach out to the service provider whenever and wherever a failure happens. This also eases customers' concerns about whom to contact and where to find them when things go wrong and to facilitate customers' positive WOM about the service provider (Roy, 2018).

From a perspective of international dynamic capabilities, to stimulate customers' positive WOM through addressing customers' concerns via all channels, a service firm should develop its capabilities in protecting customer privacy, providing a secure environment, and ensuring access to customer support (Landroguez *et al.*, 2011; Mathur, 2019). Concern-solving capability is particularly valued by firms operating internationally and is specifically required

in efficient omnichannel service management; it motivates customers to develop a positive WOM about the focal international firm (Çebi and Bayraktar, 2003; Hossain *et al.*, 2020). As such, proposing a higher-order concerns management construct consisting of privacy, security, and service recovery, this research hypothesizes the following:

Hypothesis 2: Concerns management capability positively influences positive WOM.

3.3 Positive word of mouth, customer engagement, and customer equity

Consumer engagement refers to the intensity of customer participation with a firm's products or services and the firm's different activities, which is initiated by the firm or the customer (Vivek *et al.*, 2012). Hollebeek (2011) coined the term "customer brand engagement" and refers to the state of the consumer's mind, which is brand-related and context dependent and is characterized by emotional, cognitive, and behavioral activities in terms of interaction with brands. Vivek *et al.* (2012) conceptualize four major components of customer engagement. Among these four components, customer influencer value (CIV) is related to the influence of WOM. CIV is based on how a customer's behavior can influence other customers in terms of increasing acquisition, retention, and share of wallet through WOM of existing customers. Vivek *et al.* (2012) argued that each time a customer voluntarily engages in WOM about the firm and its products, they influence CIV and, in turn, positively affect customer engagement towards the firm. Several other articles have shown the role of customer engagement and its relation to triggering positive WOM persuasion behaviors (Chan *et al.*, 2014; Christofi *et al.*, 2018). Hence, the relation between omnichannel capabilities, positive WOM, and customer engagement in the B2B context is an important avenue to explore. Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is postulated:

H3: Positive WOM influences customer engagement in the B2B context.

Customer equity is related to value creation resulting from profit, costs, cash flow, and customer relationships (Wang *et al.*, 2016). To capture the idea of customer equity, the existing research proposes three drivers: value equity, brand equity, and relationship equity (Lemon *et al.*, 2001; Leone *et al.*, 2006; Rust *et al.*, 2001; Rust *et al.*, 2004). Value equity, similar to customer perception of value, is a customer's estimation of the service's usefulness centered on an evaluation of what is offered relative to what is given (Rust *et al.*, 2004; Zeithaml, 1988).

Brand equity refers to customers' personal and intangible evaluation of a brand and has been discussed in much of the service quality literature (Ailawadi and Farris, 2017; Picot-Coupey *et al.*, 2016; Verhoef *et al.*, 2015). Finally, relationship equity refers to customers' evaluation of their affiliation with the company (Hennig-Thurau and Klee, 1997). Relationship equity results in the propensity of a consumer to return to the brand regardless of rational and irrational brand evaluations (Vogel *et al.*, 2008).

Drivers of customer equity have been conceptualized as important properties within omnichannel management (Hossain *et al.*, 2017; Keller, 2010). Besides, several studies have shown the relation between positive WOM and customer equity (Kim and Ko, 2012; Villanueva *et al.*, 2008). Villanueva *et al.* (2008) argued that a company's long-term success depends mainly on customers' contribution to overall customer equity. Marketing-induced customers add more short-term value, but WOM customers add nearly twice as much long-term value to the firm and, in the process, WOM makes a significant contribution to customer equity. Using social media marketing tactics, Kim and Ko (2012) showed that there is a significantly positive effect of WOM marketing on value equity, relationship equity, and brand equity for luxury goods. Hence, the relation between omnichannel capabilities, positive WOM, and customer equity in the B2B context needs to be explored. Thus, we posit the following:

H4: Customer engagement influences customer equity and its drivers (value equity, relationship equity and brand equity) in the B2B context.

H5: Positive word of mouth influences customer equity and its drivers (value equity, relationship equity and brand equity) in the B2B context.

4.0 Methodology

4.1 Measures and Instruments

The study applied a cross-sectional online survey using a professional market research firm to collect data from 312 respondents from a panel of service-oriented global firms in Australia. The respondents were a global service business. Past studies on omnichannel marketing, WOM, customer engagement, and customer equity were used to fit the research context. Based on past scales, the study measures content management using information consistency (Lee and Kim, 2010; Oh and Teo, 2010; Wu and Chang, 2016; Hossain *et al.*, 2020), trustworthiness(Chih *et al.*, 2020; Kim *et al.*, 2010) and endorsement (Chih *et al.*, 2020; Lim *et al.*, 2006), concerns management using privacy (Akter *et al.*, 2013; Kim *et al.*, 2012; Parasuraman *et al.*, 2005), security (Bansal and Zahedi, 2014), and recovery (Smith *et al.*, 2009) as hierarchical constructs (Wetzels *et al.*, 2009). Adapting past scales, the study also measures positive WOM (Yi and Gong, 2013) as an antecedent of customer engagement (Guesalaga, 2016; Mu, 2015; Park *et al.*, 2010) and customer equity consisting of value equity (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001), brand equity (Vogel *et al.*, 2008), and relationship equity (Rust *et al.*, 2004), which are provided in Appendix-1. To measure the constructs, the study used a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

4.2 Pre-test, Pilot Test and Data Collection

The study collected survey data in 2020 from Australia under an omnichannel research project. The population represents service-oriented global firms, as customers, of Commonwealth Bank Australia (CBA), who used a mobile app, website and physical branch of the bank in the previous three months. At the pre-test phase, the survey was conducted over 50 random samples to ensure rigor in designing the scale, specifically in terms of scale points, layout, format and phrasing. Accoridngly, the main survey instruments were designed. The questionnaire was sent to a panel of 1,049 B2B customers of CBA in September 2020, and 312 of them completed the survey. The sample included a range of Australian small and medium enterprises that have a global customer-base. Respondents' demographic profile represents diverse groups, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 Respondents' demographic profile

Gender		**Age**		**Annual income/revenue (in AUD)**	
Male	39.74%	Under 18 years old		Under $19,999	7.95%
Female	60.26%	18 - 24	15.23%	$20,000 – $39,999	13.25%
		25 - 34	27.48%	$40,000 – $59,999	12.91%
		35 - 44	23.51%	$60,000 – $79,999	12.58%
		45 - 54	13.91%	$80,000 – $99,999	14.23%
		55-64	12.58%	$100,000-$149,999	22.19%
		Over 64 years old	7.28%	$150,000+	16.89%
State				**Experience in export business in years**	
New South Wales			30%	1-3	12%
Victoria			27%	4-5	27%
Queensland			16%	6-10	45%
Western Australia			12%	More than 10	16%
South Australia			12%		
Tasmania			2%		
Northern Territory			1%		
Type of Business					
Consultancy			15%		
Content development			14%		
Logistics handling			11%		
Customer service management			20%		
IT services			21%		

Graphic designing (Web and Offline)	9%
Others	10%

(Source: Authors' own creation)

4.3 Data Analysis and evaluation of Measurement model

The study used SPSS AMOS (version 25.0) to analyze the data. The study argues that content management capability, concerns management capability and customer equity are the higher-order constructs. Thus, latent construct scores were calculated for their respective first-order constructs, that is, information consistency, source trustworthiness, endorsement, privacy, security, recovery, value equity, brand equity and relationship equity. In addition, the study calculated the latent scores of positive WOM and customer engagement. At first, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to test the constructs' reliability and validity. The maximum likelihood and Promax rotation method resulted in eleven first-order factors based on the eigen value ($\lambda > 1$), accounting for 67.45% of the cumulative variance.

Results from confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), performed on AMOS, confirmed the overall measurement model fit indices CMIN/DF= 1.88 (χ^2=732.88, df=390); *p=0.00* CFI= 0.95; TLI= 0.94; GFI= 0.91; RMSEA= 0.048; SRMR= 0.062. Table 2 shows that individual item reliability was satisfactory, as their respective loadings were greater than 0.65 ($p<0.001$). The study calculated that all the CAs were greater than 0.70 and the CRs were larger than 0.80. As part of convergent validity, the study estimated the average variance extracted (AVE) values, which are higher than 0.50, confirming convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). With regard to the control variables, firm size (Weights, 0.771, t-value = 1.689), and Channel Type (Weights, 0.356, t-value = 1.282), we calculated the variance inflation factors (VIF), which shows evidence of non-significant collinearity as VIF is less than 5.0 (firm size = 1.081 and Channel type = 1.090).

To establish discriminant validity, several approaches were adopted (Chin, 1998; Hair *et al.*, 2012). First, the analysis of patterns of item-to-item correlations, item-to-total correlation, and alpha-if-item-deleted indicate no visible issues to report (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). Second, as can be seen in Table 4, applying the criterion suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981), the study estimated between-construct correlations which demonstrated that each construct's AVE was greater than the square of its largest correlation with any construct (Hair *et al.*, 2014). Third, we checked the cross-loadings of first-order constructs, which indicated satisfactory results (Chin, 1998). Finally, we applied the HTMT criterion followed by Henseler *et al.* (2015), and all the values were less than 0.90.

Table 2: Measurement Model: Assessment of First-Order, Reflective Model

Reflective Constructs	Items	Loadings	CA	CR	AVE
Information consistency (INFO)	INFO1	0.775	0.883	0.892	0.732
	INFO2	0.766			
	INFO3	0.801			
	INFO4	0.795			
Source trustworthiness (TRUS)	TRUS1	0.792	0.895	0.893	0.761
	TRUS2	0.751			
	TRUS3	0.773			
	TRUS4	0.843			
Endorsement (ENDO)	ENDO1	0.779	0.891	0.893	0.793
	ENDO2	0.878			
	ENDO3	0.861			
Privacy (PRIV)	PRIV1	0.812	0.871	0.890	0.821
	PRIV2	0.821			
	PRIV3	0.751			
Security (SECU)	SECU1	0.791	0.931	0.914	0.817
	SECU2	0.772			
	SECU3	0.810			
	SECU4	0.824			
Recovery (RECO)	RECO1	0.791	0.905	0.913	0.794
	RECO2	0.822			
	RECO3	0.812			

	RECO4	0.775			
Positive WOM (PWOM)	PWOM1	0.731	0.929	0.891	0.894
	PWOM2	0.771			
	PWOM3	0.811			
	PWOM4	0.789			
Customer engagement (ENGA)	ENGA1	0.758	0.884	0.892	0.798
	ENGA2	0.828			
	ENGA3	0.851			
	ENGA4	0.812			
Value equity (VAEQ)	VAEQ1	0.732	0.871	0.871	0.742
	VAEQ2	0.752			
	VAEQ3	0.812			
	VAEQ4	0.776			
Brand equity (BREQ)	BREQ1	0.689	0.819	0.821	0.702
	BREQ2	0.812			
	BREQ3	0.755			
	BREQ4	0.836			
Relationship equity (REEQ)	REEQ1	0.713	0.843	0.801	0.721
	REEQ2	0.762			
	REEQ3	0.714			
	REEQ4	0.675			

(Source: Authors' own creation)

The study addressed CMV, first, by establishing a psychological separation between omnichannel dimensions (content and concerns validity) and outcome constructs (i.e., positive WOM, engagement, and equity) in order to identify causality. For that, the common latent factor (CLF) method was employed in AMOS, as suggested by Niros *et al.* (2022), which compares an unconstrained common method factor (CMF) model to a zero-constrained one. The comparison with the chi-square ($\chi 2$) test of the standardized regression weights between the models was found to be significant and indicated significant shared variance among the factors. Second, from a questionnaire design perspective, measurement scales were operationalized to reduce spurious responses by checking attention checkers, limited answer options, confusing items etc. Third, from a statistical perspective, we applied the marker variable technique (Lindell and Whitney, 2001), which produced a non-significant correlation

(r=0.041, p>0.05) between the marker variable and the constructs. Since we collected data from a research panel, non-response bias was investigated using a paired t-test between the first and last 40% of responses, and no significant differences were seen (Stanko, *et al.*, 2012). In addition, results of multiple t-tests showed that the responses were invariant irrespective of the respondents' various demographic factors. The study established content management capability (information consistency, source trustworthiness, endorsement), concerns management capability (privacy, security, recovery), and customer equity (value equity, brand equity and relationship equity) as the second-order constructs, as presented in Table 3 with the overall model fit indices CMIN/DF= 1.94 (χ2=343.95, df=178); p=0.00 CFI= 0.96; TLI= 0.95; GFI= 0.92; RMSEA= 0.058; SRMR= 0.07 (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988).

Table 3 Second-order Measurement model

Second-order constructs	**1st -2nd order reflective relationships**	**β**	**Standard deviation**	**t-value**
Content management capability (CONT)	Information consistency (INFO)	0.882	0.019	51.76
	Source trustworthiness (TRUS)	0.782	0.023	37.27
	Endorsement (ENDO)	0.792	0.021	33.53
Concerns management capability (CONC)	Privacy (PRIV)	0.842	0.017	58.32
	Security (SECU)	0.810	0.012	79.45
	Recovery (RECO)	0.725	0.035	15.34
Customer equity (EQUI)	Value equity (VAEQ)	0.771	0.024	38.29
	Brand equity (BREQ)	0.810	0.015	68.81
	Relationship equity (REEQ)	0.822	0.015	65.03

Note: 2nd-order CONT (4+4+3=11 items), CONC (3+4+4=11 items) and EQUI (4+4+4=12 items). (Source: Authors' own creation)

4.6 Structural Model

After confirming the adequacy of the measurement model through reliability (i.e., loadings), convergent validity (i.e., CA, CR and AVE), and discriminant validity (i.e., cross-loadings, Fornell and Larcker criterion, and HTMT), the study estimated the statistical parameters of the structural model (please see Figure 2 and Table 5). At this stage, the study calculated the beta coefficients and their corresponding significance level, R^2, and predictive validity to test the hypotheses and the overall nomological chain. The model shows an acceptable fit of the proposed structural model with CMIN/DF= 1.94 (χ^2=467.32, df=241), p=0.00, CFI= 0.95; TLI= 0.95; GFI= 0.91; RMSEA= 0.057; SRMR= 0.07.

The results show that the impact of content management capability on positive WOM (CONT-PWOM) is significant as the standardized path coefficient is 0.49 (p<0.001, t=8.213). Similarly, the influence of concerns management capability on positive WOM (CONC-PWOM) is significant, with a path coefficient of 0.24 (p<0.001, t=4.012). Thus, the findings support H1 and H2. The study also estimates the impact of PWOM on customer engagement and customer equity, which are significant, as the path coefficients are 0.681 for PWOM-ENGA (p<0.001, t=21.90), 0.294 for ENGA-EQUI (p<0.001, t=4.935), and 0.49 for PWOM-EQUI (p<0.001, t=8.124) links respectively. Thus, the findings support H3, H4, and H5 (see Table 5).

Table 4: Correlations and AVEs*

	INFO	TRUS	ENDO	PRIV	SECU	RECO	PWOM	ENGA	VAEQ	BREQ	REEQ
INFO	**0.814**										
TRUS	0.413	**0.871**									
ENDO	0.503	0.512	**0.841**								
PRIV	0.481	0.481	0.382	**0.873**							
SECU	0.521	0.426	0.441	0.481	**0.893**						
RECO	0.486	0.410	0.472	0.472	0.501	**0.922**					
PWOM	0.452	0.431	0.417	0.501	0.391	0.436	**0.913**				
ENGA	0.482	0.461	0.541	0.512	0.481	0.491	0.550	**0.904**			
VAEQ	0.443	0.516	0.423	0.453	0.515	0.521	0.431	0.460	**0.862**		
BREQ	0.571	0.412	0.531	0.501	0.441	0.460	0.541	0.471	0.475	**0.852**	
REEQ	0.452	0.447	0.461	0.431	0.482	0.534	0.439	0.546	0.439	0.465	**0.839**

**Square root of AVE on the diagonals.* (Source: Authors' own creation)

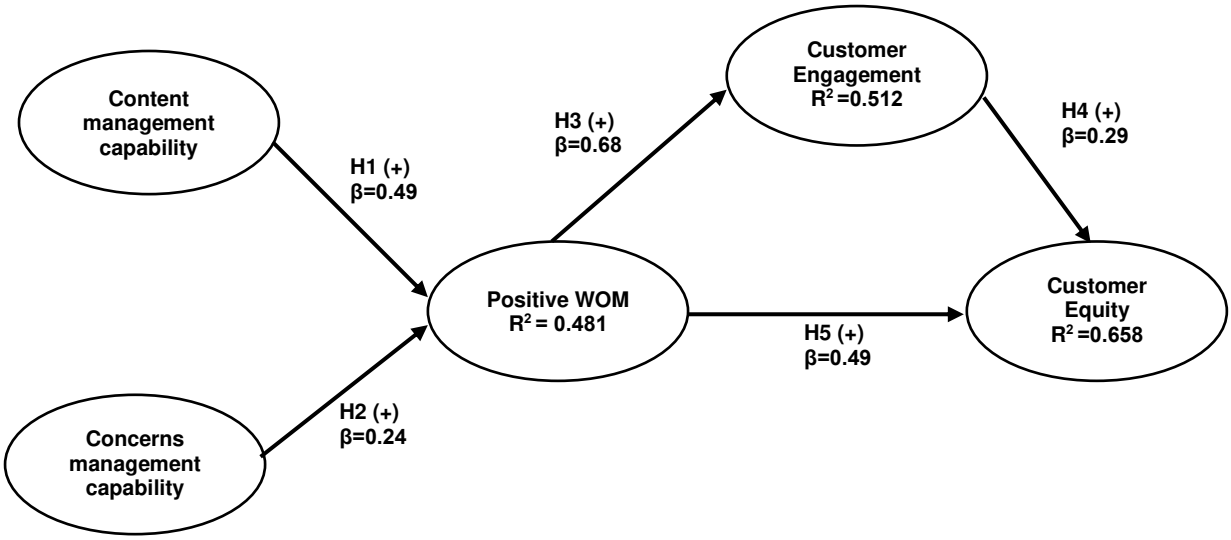

Figure 2: Structural model (Source: Authors' own creation)

Table 5: Results of the Structural Model

Hypotheses	Main Model	Path coefficients	Standard error	*t*-statistic
H1	CONT → PWOM	0.493	0.062	8.213
H2	CONC → PWOM	0.242	0.059	4.012
H3	PWOM → ENGA	0.681	0.029	21.90
H4	ENGA → EQUI	0.294	0.061	4.935
H5	PWOM → EQUI	0.487	0.052	8.124
H6	PWOM → ENGA → EQUI	0.238	0.048	4.921

(Source: Authors' own creation)

The study also estimates the indirect effect between PWOM-ENGA-EQUI following the recommendations of several scholars (e.g., Preacher and Hayes, 2008; Hayes, Preacher, Myers, Bucy and Holbert, 2011). The mediating effect of ENGA is supported as the product of path coefficients between PWOM-ENGA and ENGA-EQUI is 0.238, which is significant

($p<0.001$, $t=4.921$). Thus, the results support H6. The study also calculates the effects of two control variables - firm size and channel type - on the ultimate outcome construct (i.e., customer equity), which are not significant.

5 Discussion

This study confirms content management capability and concerns management capabilities as the dynamic, omnichannel management capabilities that enhance positive WOM, customer engagement, and customer equity in the global service delivery context. The findings based on 312 global service firms of Australia confirming information consistency ($\beta=0.882$, $p<0.000$), source trustworthiness ($\beta=0.782$, $p<0.000$), and endorsement ($\beta=0.792$, $p<0.000$) as the significant subdimensions of content management capability, whereas customer privacy ($\beta=0.842$, $p<0.000$), customer security ($\beta=0.810$, $p<0.000$), and service recovery ($\beta=0.725$, $p<0.000$) are confirmed as the critical subdimensions of concerns management capability. Although the findings provide support for all the subdimensions, the results identify that information consistency and privacy explain relatively more variances than the other subdimensions. Similarly, value equity ($\beta=0.771$, $p<0.000$), brand equity ($\beta=0.810$, $p<0.000$), and relationship equity ($\beta=0.822$, $p<0.000$) are significant subdimensions of customer equity, and among them, relationship equity explains most of the variance. The analysis of the structural model shows that content management capability ($\beta=0.493$) has relatively more influence on positive WOM than concerns management capability ($\beta=0.242$), and both antecedents jointly explain 48% of the variance. The findings also show that positive WOM ($\beta=0.680$) explains 51% of the customer engagement variance, and both positive WOM ($\beta=0.490$) and customer engagement ($\beta=0.290$) explain 66% of the variance of customer equity. In this nomological chain, customer engagement has emerged as a partial mediator

between positive WOM and customer equity, explaining 29% (a*b/a*b+c) of the variance of customer equity (Akter, D'Ambra, and Ray, 2011).

5.1 Theoretical Implications

The findings of our study have significant theoretical implications within the field of international marketing and B2B omnichannel management extending dynamic capabilities, and WOM theories.

First**,** the empirical findings of this study explored omnichannel management as an IDMC for service-oriented global firms and established its link with customer-based performance outcomes (WOM, customer engagement and customer equity). Although scholars acknowledge that omnichannel service management can positively influence customers across channels (e.g., Akter *et al.*, 2021; Cui *et al.*, 2021; Gölgeci *et al.*, 2019; Grossmann *et al.*, 2019; Sheth 2021; Verhoef *et al.*, 2015; Verhoef, 2021), there is limited knowledge about specific channel management capabilities and their overall effects on customer engagement and customer equity, particularly in the global service delivery context.

Second**,** this research has identified omnichannel management capability as a dynamic capability (Helfat *et al.*, 2009; Teece *et al.*, 1997; Scuotto *et al.*, 2022). Only a few studies have shown the relation between DCT and omnichannel transformation to capture the WOM dynamics (Wilson and Daniel, 2007; Daniel and Wilson, 2003; Hossain *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, this is one of the pioneering studies which have recognized omnichannel management as an IDMC, particularly in the global service delivery context, while enhancing its application in international context (Verbeke, 2022; Zahra *et al.*, 2022). Thus, the findings of our study extend the existing knowledge of IDMC and DCT by adopting content

management capability and concerns management capability as a firm's dynamic capabilities to establish positive WOM.

Third**,** the findings show that trustworthy, consistent and customer-endorsed (generated) content showcase a firm's content management capability while service recovery accessibility, privacy, and security of the system enhance the concerns management capabilities of the firm. These dynamic channel management capabilities enable a B2B firm to sense, shape, seize and reconfigure service opportunities in global market and respond to them through various WOM initiatives (Teece, 2007). As such, the dynamic integration of these channels allows firms to provide a seamless service experience, creates positive WOM, and influences customer engagement and equity through the omnichannel environment within a global service delivery context. As indicated by Morgan *et al.* (2018), international marketing capabilities are generally dynamic in nature; therefore, the study applies DCT to conventional customer-based outcomes in the context of global service firms. This is one of the pioneer studies that have capitalized on strategic capability (e.g., distribution channels' integration and agility) to manage the dynamism of the global service market environment to generate customer-based performance outcomes.

Fourth**,** the findings advance dynamic capabilities theory in international marketing by linking it with omnichannel service management and WOM concepts within the B2B environment (Chich *et al.*, 2020; Cui *et al.*, 2021; Grossmann *et al.*, 2019; Hossain *et al.*, 2020). Specifically, our findings show the ripple effects of omnichannel service management capabilities on positive WOM through information consistency, source trustworthiness, endorsement, privacy, security and service recovery. These findings extend our existing WOM knowledge (e.g., Lee *et al.*, 2019; Iankova *et al.*, 2019; Kingshott *et al.*, 2020) in the context of global firms'

omnichannel service environment. Although CE has emerged as a critical marketing outcome in the digital economy (Carlson *et al.*, 2018; Hollebeek *et al.*, 2019; Kumar *et al.*, 2019; Meire *et al.*, 2019), its relationship with positive WOM in an omnichannel environment received inadequate empirical attention. Moreover, in the context of global service business, there is very limited research on the relationship between CE and WOM in an omnichannel environment. Thus, our findings extend the CE literature by highlighting the importance of consistent interactions, trustworthy offerings, retention advocacy, and an ongoing commitment to alleviating concerns with the assurance of privacy and security of information.

Finally**,** the findings illuminate theoretical rigor by framing customer equity as an essential outcome of positive WOM and CE in the service oriented international marketing context. The findings on customer equity show how to enhance the aggregated measure of profitability through value, brand, and relationship dimensions through a global firm's omnichannel environment. These findings extend the current understanding of customer equity by framing it as the outcome of positive WOM (Kim and Ko, 2012; Villanueva *et al.*, 2008) through the influence of increased acquisition, retention, and share of wallet in the omnichannel setting. The findings of this research validate CE as a mediator between positive WOM and customer equity, which adds valuable knowledge to the global B2B channel management literature. Specifically, the findings advance our theoretical knowledge on the role of engagement across in-store, mobile, and online channels through various emotional, cognitive, and behavioral interactions to enhance customer equity. These findings extend the theory of customer equity (Kumar and George, 2007; Lemon *et al.*, 2001; Ou and Verhoef, 2017; Zhang *et al.*, 2016) through influence of positive WOM and CE in global omnichannel environment.

5.2 Managerial Contribution

The findings of this study offer a systematic insight into the impact of omnichannel management capabilities adopted by B2B marketers in generating WOM to enhance CE and equity. An integrated channel system is one of the crucial aspects of omnichannel management. In addition to traditional B2C organizations, omnichannel management has become an essential avenue for B2B managers to exploit, even in the context of the international market (Alonso-Garcia, Pablo-Martí and Nunez-Barriopedro, 2021a; 2012b). Numerous academic and industry research from Forrester, Accenture, Forbes, and Dun and Bradstreet and so on are based on omnichannel management and the importance of omnichannel engagement within B2B management (i.e., Dun and Bradstreet, 2019; Forrester Research Inc., 2015; Lievense, 2019; Walker, 2014). This research addresses the pressing issue in current managerial practice through the following managerial implications:

First**,** this paper suggests that both content management and concerns management capabilities should be regarded as the IDMC for the service-oriented global firms. To succeed in this fast and competitive environment, managers need to alter channel configurations, which is a higher-level orchestration of ordinary capabilities to achieve integration within channels. B2B managers need to demonstrate the capabilities to manage trustworthy, consistent, and customer-endorsed (generated) content while also managing various concerns, such as service failure and the security of the system.

Second**,** as current business customers are using several channels to complete a purchase, managers need to build an integrated information technology (IT) system which can integrate various channels to manage international customers' transaction data. However, in the current day omnichannel situation, since customers have the opportunity to use several channels during

a purchase, data should be collected from multiple channels, which is beyond one CRM system. According to Zhang *et al.* (2010), traditional data collection and analysis is still centered around the individual channel. Hence, firms need to develop the ability to collect transaction data across channels and analyze customer related performance outcomes from an omnichannel perspective.

Third**,** managers need to ensure the privacy and security of its channels to enhance trust within their clients irrespective of their geographical location. Strategies like two-factor authentication, installing physical security systems for physical channels, password protection, and overall, a secure multichannel system will ensure the privacy, security and recovery aspects of omnichannel usage. This is very common for large organizations due to their availability of resources; however, for the SMEs, this may require additional resources and an implementation plan.

Finally**,** managers need to ensure that their channels are easy to use and provide a consistent and seamless service experience to all their clients located in international markets. Making customers aware of all the features and benefits of using different channels and periodically improving channel performance should also be practiced. This will enable the busines's client's endorsement of the firm and its multichannel capabilities. The endorsement will increase business volume and overall trust in other customers.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study focused on service-oriented global B2B firms of Australia in modeling the effects of content management capability and concerns management capability, as IDMCs, on positive WOM in the omnichannel environment. One of the critical avenues for research extension is

to explore how these omnichannel management capabilities and positive WOM influence firm performance and competitive advantages in other industries. For example, platforms such as Amazon, Alibaba, Facebook, and Tencent have a large number of business customers using multiple channels to sell to and serve end customers. Future studies can overcome the limitations of this study about its contextual and single industry (SME) limitations. The data were collected from the service-oriented SMEs of Australia where the respondents only gave their response about banking related services. Future studies can extend our research in this context to measure the effects of omnichannel management capabilities on positive WOM, engagement, and equity. Data were collected from Australia using a cross-sectional study; thus, future studies can collect data from other emerging/developed economies to provide comparison and generalized findings. Although the study has identified two IDMCs as significant antecedents of positive WOM, a rigorous qualitative study in other contexts can present new constructs in an omnichannel environment.

6 Conclusion

This study addresses the research question on integrating dynamic omni-channel management capabilities to influence positive word of mouth, customer engagement, and customer equity. The novelty of the findings are illuminated through content management capability (i.e., information consistency, source trustworthiness and endorsement) and concerns management capability (i.e., privacy, security and recovery) to influence positive WOM in international marketing. In addition, the findings confirm the nomological chain between positive WOM-customer engagement-customer equity in which engagement was identified as a significant partial mediator in this context. These findings extend dynamic capabilities and WOM theory in the omnichannel context and guide managers to ensure the seamless integration of content

and to address concerns for better customer engagement and equity in the dynamic international marketing environment.

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Appendix 1: Survey Measures

2nd-order constructs	Type	1st-order constructs	Type	Item labels	Items	Sources
Content management capability	Molecular	Information consistency	Reflective	INFO1	CBA provides consistent information of their service features across multiple channels (website, mobile app and physical branch)	(Hossain *et al.* 2020; Lee and Kim 2010; Oh and Teo 2010; Wu and Chang 2016)
				INFO2	CBA provides consistent information of their service fees across multiple channels (website, mobile app and physical branch)	
				INFO3	CBA provides consistent information of their promotional offers across multiple channels (website, mobile app and physical branch)	
				INFO4	Overall, information across CBA's multiple channels is consistent	
		Source trustworthiness	Reflective	TRUS1	CBA delivers prompt service through its multiple channels (website, mobile app and physical branch)	(Chih *et al.* 2020; Kim *et al.* 2010)
				TRUS2	CBA delivers accurate service through its multiple channels (website, mobile app and physical branch)	
				TRUS3	CBA's multiple channels (website, mobile app and physical branch) are reliable	
				TRUS4	I trust CBA when availing services through its multiple channels (website, mobile app and physical branch)	
		Endorsement	Reflective	ENDO1	In our organization, big data analysts and line people in service systems meet frequently to discuss important issues both formally and informally.	(Chih *et al.* 2020; Lim *et al.* 2006)
				ENDO2	In our organization, big data analysts and line people from various service systems frequently attend cross-functional meetings.	
				ENDO3	In our organization, big data analysts and line people in service systems coordinate their efforts harmoniously.	
				ENDO4	In our organization, information is widely shared between big data analysts and line people so that those who make decisions or perform jobs have access to all available know-how in service systems.	
Concerns management capability	Molecular	Customer privacy	Reflective	PRIV1	My personal information across multiple channels of CBA (website, mobile app and physical branch) is protected	(Akter *et al.* 2013; Kim *et al.* 2012;
				PRIV2	My personal information across multiple channels of CBA (website, mobile app and physical branch) is not shared with others	

				PRIV3	My financial information across multiple channels of CBA (website, mobile app and physical branch) is not shared with others	Parasuraman *et al.* 2005)
		Customer security	Reflective	SECU1	I feel totally safe while providing personal/financial information about myself over CBA's multiple channels (website, mobile app and physical branch):	(Bansal and Zahedi 2014)
				SECU2	The level of my concern that someone would misuse my personal/financial information which I transmit on CBA's multiple channels (website, mobile app and physical branch) is:	
				SECU3	The level of my concern that CBA's multiple channels (website, mobile app and physical branch) is not a safe place to transmit personal/financial information is:	
				SECU4	CBA's multiple channels (website, mobile app and physical branch) have adequate security features	
				SECU5	Overall, I feel secure about using CBA's multiple channels (website, mobile app and physical branch)	
		Service Recovery	Reflective	RECO1	If there is any service problem, I can use multiple channels of CBA to report service failure (e g , website, telephone, mobile app, in person)	(Smith *et al.* 2009)
				RECO2	CBA provides the means whereby I can voice my complaints	
				RECO3	I am aware about the channels through which I can report service issues to CBA	
				RECO4	It is easy for me to notify CBA about problems I encounter through any channels	
Positive WOM	NA	NA	Reflective	PWOM1	If asked, I would say positive things about CBA's services to other people	(Yi and Gong 2013)
				PWOM2	If asked, I would recommend CBA's services to other people	
				PWOM3	If asked, I would encourage other people to use CBA's services	
Customer engagement	NA	NA	Reflective	ENGA1	CBA has the ability to provide reliable and timely responses to customers.	(Guesalaga 2016; Mu 2015; Park *et al.* 2010)
				ENGA2	CBA is able to emphasize on a customer from the customer's point of view.	
				ENGA3	CBA has the ability to connect and care to customers' circumstances sincerely.	
				ENGA4	We are able to immerse in customer reality.	
	M o.	Brand Equity	Reflective	BREQ1	CBA has a strong brand image	

Customer Equity				BREQ2	CBA has an attractive brand image	(Vogel *et al.* 2008)
				BREQ3	CBA has a unique brand image	
				BREQ4	CBA has a likable brand image	
		Relationship Equity	Reflective	REEQ1	The preferential treatment I get from CBA is important to me	(Rust *et al.* 2004)
				REEQ2	CBA knows a lot of information about me	
				REEQ3	CBA identifies me as a valuable customer	
				REEQ4	I would like to continue my relationship with CBA	
		Value Equity	Reflective	ENDO1	Using multiple channels of CBA saves my time	(Sweeney and Soutar 2001)
				ENDO2	Using multiple channels of CBA provides me value for money	
				ENDO3	Using multiple channels of CBA provides me convenience	
				ENDO4	Using multiple channels of CBA provides me pleasure	

(Source: Authors' own creation)