

Market Expansion Through B2B Business Model Transformation into Vendor-Owned Digital Marketplaces

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ABSTRACT

Traditional business-to-business (B2B) vendor models rely on direct relationships, long-term contracts, and established distribution channels. These models provide stable transactions but limit market reach, increase dependence on a few buyers, and slow responses to changing demand. Prior studies explain why firms adopt digital platforms, but rarely how an established vendor redesigns its business model into its own marketplace, or how relationship-based channels can coexist with it. **This study examines market expansion strategies through the transformation of traditional B2B vendor models into vendor-owned digital marketplaces, in which the vendor acts as platform owner rather than as a participant in a third-party marketplace. It uses a qualitative descriptive approach supported by a structured literature review and conceptual analysis.** The review followed a structured procedure of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and synthesis, and the selected studies were analyzed using thematic synthesis. **The analysis shows that** successful transformation requires more than adopting a digital platform. It depends on enabling capabilities, namely organizational readiness (including digital skills), digital infrastructure, process integration, customer data management, and digital marketing capability, and on channel governance that protects existing B2B relationships. The study proposes a staged hybrid framework of six constructs and six propositions, and identifies risks such as channel conflict, integration cost, and insufficient demand. **Integrating traditional B2B strengths with** digital marketplace capability creates a more flexible, scalable, and market-oriented business model. Market expansion emerges from capability-based transformation, not platform adoption alone. The propositions require empirical validation through survey-based or comparative case studies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Digital technologies have transformed how organizations create, deliver, and capture value, affecting internal processes, market structures, customer expectations, and competitive dynamics [1]. Digital marketplaces connect sellers, buyers, and suppliers within an integrated ecosystem, which makes the shift from conventional arrangements to digital platforms a strategic concern for firms seeking wider market access [2]. In

Indonesia, this shift is reflected in national e-commerce statistics and in the promotion of industrial digitalization through Making Indonesia 4.0 [3].

Traditional Business-to-Business (B2B) vendor models depend on direct relationships built through long-term contracts, personal networks, and established distribution channels [4]. This model provides stable transactions but limits customer reach, creates dependence on a few buyers, raises acquisition costs, and slows responses to changing demand. Digital marketplaces offer an alternative by allowing firms to display products, process transactions, and collect market data across regions [5].

However, transforming a vendor model into a marketplace is not merely technology adoption. It changes value creation, customer relationships, revenue mechanisms, and organizational capabilities, and poor management may cause channel conflict. A hybrid model that combines established relationships with marketplace scalability is therefore more realistic, especially for manufacturing and industrial firms that rely on distributors and direct negotiation.

This study distinguishes two vendor roles in a digital marketplace. As a participant, the vendor lists its products on a marketplace governed by a third party and does not control platform rules, fees, or data. As an owner, the vendor builds and operates its own multi-sided marketplace connecting distributors, resellers, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and partner suppliers, and controls governance, pricing rules, and data [6]. This study focuses on the owner role, because the research gap concerns how an established vendor redesigns its business model into a marketplace. Hereafter, ‘digital marketplace’ refers to a vendor-owned marketplace, a narrower case of the general definition in Section 2.4.

This study examines the limits of conventional B2B vendor models, the expansion opportunities of digital marketplaces, the capabilities needed for the transition, and the integration of existing B2B relationships into marketplace mechanisms [7]. Its novelty lies in three aspects. First, market expansion is treated as the outcome of a capability-based transformation, not of platform adoption. Second, a hybrid architecture retains relationship-based channels for strategic customers while the marketplace reaches new segments. Third, market expansion, vendor management, business model transformation, and marketplace development are integrated into one staged framework, which prior studies usually examine separately [8]. As a conceptual study, it is relevant to SDG 8 through wider market access (Section 4.3), SDG 9 through digital capability and infrastructure in industrial firms (Section 4.4), and SDG 17 through platform-based partnerships among suppliers, distributors, and buyers (Section 4.5), although it does not measure their attainment.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The results in this section are derived from a thematic synthesis of previous studies, not from primary empirical data. Cited statements reflect evidence from the reviewed literature, while interpretations and propositions reflect the authors’ conceptual analysis.

2.1. Market Expansion Strategy

Market expansion is a firm’s effort to increase market coverage by reaching new customer segments, entering new geographic areas, or developing alternative distribution channels. In the digital era, it is no longer determined only by physical networks, because digital technologies improve market visibility and customer acquisition. Digitalization and business models are closely linked through technological innovation and strategic management [9], so digital technologies are strategic resources rather than mere operational tools [10].

For B2B firms, direct selling and vendor networks create stable relationships but limit the speed and scale of acquisition. Digital platforms facilitate interaction among organizations and create new network-based value [11]. In this study, market expansion is the strategic outcome of transforming a B2B vendor model into a scalable digital marketplace.

2.2. B2B Vendor Business Model

B2B models involve larger transaction values, longer purchasing processes, negotiated prices, and long-term relationships. Traditional vendors rely on sales representatives, referrals, distributors, and contracts, which build trust and loyalty but create dependence on limited customers and high relationship-management costs. Technological, organizational, and environmental determinants of digital platform adoption in B2B markets have been identified [12]. B2B marketing is increasingly digitally mediated, with digital interactions complementing rather than replacing conventional relationships, as shown by a review of 106 studies from 2016 to 2025 [13]. The challenge is thus to preserve relational strengths while building scalability [14].

2.3. Business Model Transformation

Business model transformation is the systematic modification of how an organization creates, delivers, and captures value. Digitalization drives business model change, so technology must support new forms of value creation [15]. Digital platform adoption contributes to business model innovation through capability reconfiguration, as found in a study of 325 manufacturing SMEs [16].

For B2B vendors, this means changes in inventory management, pricing, customer service, digital marketing, order processing, payment, and logistics, along with new employee skills in platform management and data analytics. The shift to a marketplace is therefore a strategic reconfiguration of the whole business system [17].

2.4. Digital Marketplace

In general, a digital marketplace is a platform where multiple participants search, compare, communicate, and transact, unlike a company website that only provides information [18]. It reduces information barriers and connects parties without prior relationships. In this study, the term refers to a marketplace built, owned, and governed by the transforming vendor (the owner role in Section 1). Adoption is shown to depend on technological readiness, organizational characteristics, and the external environment, while organizational knowledge and readiness are stressed in moving offline B2B networks online [19, 20, 21].

Digital platform capability depends on the ability to identify and allocate resources [22]. Marketplaces therefore serve both as transactional channels and as strategic infrastructure for market development. Two vendor roles must be distinguished, as compared in Table 1. This study adopts the owner role.

Table 1. Comparison of Vendor Roles in a Digital Marketplace

Dimension	Vendor as participant (third-party marketplace)	Vendor as owner (own marketplace)
Control of rules, pricing, fees	Set by the platform provider	Set by the vendor through channel governance
Data ownership	Largely held by the platform	Held by the vendor
Sides served	Vendor sells to marketplace buyers	Vendor, distributors, resellers, suppliers, and buyers
Core capabilities	Listing and order fulfillment	Platform administration, onboarding, transaction processing, analytics
Main risks	Platform dependence, fee pressure	Integration cost, supplier participation, insufficient demand
Treatment in this study	Optional interim pilot channel only	Focus of the framework

2.5. Integration of B2B and Digital Marketplace Channels Firms need not abandon traditional channels.

Established customers still require customized prices, contracts, and personal account management, whereas new or smaller customers prefer easy discovery and fast digital ordering. Digitalization has changed B2B customer journeys and increased interest in omni-channel approaches [23].

The transformation can thus be seen as a shift from a closed vendor network to a hybrid architecture, namely Traditional B2B Vendor Model → Business Model Transformation → Digital Marketplace Capability → Market Expansion, in which broader market access is the mechanism through which marketplace capability produces expansion, not a separate element of the chain. This transformation is enabled by organizational readiness (including digital skills), digital infrastructure, process integration, customer data management, and digital marketing capability, and is conditioned by channel governance and contextual conditions. This sequence is a simplified representation, and the relationships among its elements are elaborated later as constructs and propositions [24].

2.6. Digital Marketplace Transformation and Market Expansion

Digital platforms reduce market boundaries set by geography, salesforce capacity, and acquisition cost, but adoption does not automatically create growth. Platform value depends on how firms reconfigure their

capabilities [25], and B2B platform research confirms the role of technological, organizational, and environmental factors. Market expansion is therefore an outcome of strategic transformation, not a direct result of technology [26].

2.7. Research Gap

Previous studies can be grouped into three streams. The first examines B2B platform adoption and its determinants [27]. The second examines business model innovation and capability reconfiguration, mostly in SMEs [28]. The third examines industrial platforms and ecosystems [29, 30, 31]. Table 2 shows that these streams have three limitations. First, they explain *why* firms adopt platforms, but not *how* an established vendor redesigns its whole business model into a marketplace. Second, they rarely link transformation to market expansion outcomes. Third, they seldom address how relationship-based channels and the marketplace coexist, including channel conflict. This study addresses these limitations with a staged hybrid framework that integrates market expansion, vendor management, business model transformation, and marketplace development [32].

Table 2. Comparison of Previous Studies and Remaining Gaps

Study	Focus	Limitation
[33]	Digitalized platforms integrating B2B (Business to Business) and B2C (Business to Consumer) models	Explains customer value creation, not how a vendor transforms its business model for expansion
[34]	B2B platform adoption by SMEs and large firms	Focuses on adoption pathways and pitfalls, not hybrid channel integration
[35]	Platforms and SME business model innovation	Capability reconfiguration through existing platforms, not building a vendor's own marketplace
[36]	Digital ambidextrous capabilities and SME transformation	Links capabilities to performance, not to market expansion or channel governance
[37]	Industrial platforms in Industry 4.0	Ecosystem-level cooperation, without a vendor-level staged strategy
[38]	Review of industrial digital platforms	Review and research agenda, without an operational framework
This study	Vendor-to-marketplace transformation	Staged hybrid framework linking capabilities, channel governance, and market expansion

3. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach combined with a structured literature review and conceptual analysis, because it seeks to understand strategic changes in business models and capabilities rather than test causal relationships. The literature was drawn from Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar for the period 2022–2026, using the search string and selection criteria in Table 3. Titles and abstracts were screened against these criteria, followed by a full-text assessment, and studies that did not address B2B vendors, platforms, or business model change were excluded. The remaining studies were synthesized into a transformation framework and compared on four criteria, namely research focus, unit of analysis, treatment of existing channels, and link to market expansion outcomes. This comparison was used to identify the gaps.

Table 3. Literature Review Protocol

Element	Description
Databases	[Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar]
Period	2022–2026
Search string	("B2B" OR "business-to-business") AND ("business model transformation" OR "business model innovation") AND ("digital marketplace" OR "digital platform") AND ("market expansion" OR "capability reconfiguration")
Inclusion criteria	Peer-reviewed journal articles, conceptual studies, or systematic reviews; written in English; addressing B2B digital platforms, marketplaces, business model transformation, or market expansion
Exclusion criteria	B2C-only studies; non-peer-reviewed sources; studies without full-text access; studies unrelated to business model or platform change

Conceptual analysis compared the traditional B2B vendor model (direct relationships, negotiated transactions, limited networks) with the digital marketplace model (broader access, platform-based interaction, digital transactions, scalable reach) across market reach, sales channel, customer acquisition and marketing, product visibility, transactions and pricing, customer interaction, customer data, market information, and scalability. The analytical sequence is Traditional B2B Vendor Model → Business Model Transformation → Digital Marketplace Capability → Market Expansion, with organizational readiness (including digital skills), digital infrastructure, process integration, customer data management, and digital marketing capability as enabling capabilities, and with channel governance and contextual conditions as moderating factors. Findings were analyzed using thematic synthesis in five steps. First, key information from each selected study was extracted into a data matrix. Second, relevant text segments were coded inductively. Third, codes were grouped into candidate themes by similarity. Fourth, themes were reviewed against the coded segments and merged or renamed into five final themes, namely (1) limits of the relationship-based vendor model, (2) the marketplace as an access mechanism, (3) capability reconfiguration, (4) channel coexistence and conflict, and (5) firm size, customer base, and risk. Fifth, the themes were linked to framework constructs, namely business model transformation, market expansion, enabling capabilities, channel governance, and contextual conditions, respectively. The sixth construct, digital marketplace capability, was derived by integrating themes (2) and (3), because the marketplace works as an access mechanism only when capabilities have been reconfigured. A proposition was formulated when a relationship recurred across several of the reviewed studies [39]. The resulting comparison of the two models is presented in Table 4.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Characteristics and Limitations of the Traditional B2B Vendor Model

In the traditional model, long-term relationships and negotiated transactions are maintained, and customers are acquired through direct sales, referrals, and distributors. Trust is built through these mechanisms, but market reach is limited by network size and sales force capability, and customer data is fragmented. The main limitation is therefore low scalability rather than relationship quality, which is consistent with evidence that B2B relationships are changed, not replaced, by e-marketplaces.

4.2. Transformation toward a Digital Marketplace Model

Transformation is not simply moving a product catalog online, because it requires redesigning customer acquisition, transaction mechanisms, distribution channels, and data management. The transformation follows the sequence from the traditional vendor model to business model transformation, digital marketplace capability, and market expansion, with integration of sales, customer relationship management, and inventory treated as an implementation stage. Standardized digital transactions improve efficiency and reach but may reduce the personalization that sustains trust with strategic customers. Transformation may therefore fail when the marketplace replaces relational channels instead of complementing them.

4.3. Digital Marketplace as a Market Expansion Mechanism

Digital marketplaces support expansion through four mechanisms. First, they provide greater market visibility beyond geographic and time limits. Second, they reduce geographical barriers, allowing sales to other cities, regions, or countries without physical sales operations. Third, they enable customer segment diversification, such as serving small businesses, retailers, and resellers, which reduces dependence on a few large buyers. Fourth, they make acquisition more efficient through search, categories, digital advertising, and recommendations, which lets sales teams focus on consultation and account development. Conceptually, these mechanisms can be grouped into three dimensions of expansion, namely geographic expansion, customer segment expansion, and digital channel expansion. Expansion should therefore be measured not only by sales but also by accessibility, customer diversity, and channel capacity. These benefits are conditional because platform adoption does not automatically create growth. Wider visibility may also expose the vendor to price comparison and new competitors, and reach may not convert into sales without adequate logistics and service capacity.

Table 4. Business Model Transformation from B2B Vendor to Digital Marketplace

Dimension	Traditional B2B vendor	Digital marketplace	Expected impact
Market reach	Limited to existing networks and areas	Wider geographic and customer reach	Market expansion
Sales channel	Direct sales and distributor network	Integrated marketplace channel	Channel diversification
Customer acquisition and marketing	Direct sales, relationship-based referrals, promotion	Digital search, online promotion, data-driven marketing	Faster acquisition
Product visibility	Limited to existing customers	Continuous digital exposure	Greater awareness
Transactions and pricing	Manual, negotiated, customized	Digital, partially automated, standardized and negotiated	Improved efficiency
Customer interaction	Personal, relationship-based	Hybrid digital and personal	Greater flexibility
Customer data	Fragmented	Centralized, data-driven	Better decisions
Market information	From direct interaction only	From digital customer and transaction data	Market responsiveness
Scalability	Dependent on salesforce	Technology-supported	Growth potential

This transformation changes each area of the vendor business model, as summarized in Table 4. The largest shifts are found in customer reach, acquisition, and customer data, where limited networks, relationship-driven selling, and fragmented records are replaced by wider digital access, search-based acquisition, and integrated data. Transactions and scalability change as well, but interaction becomes hybrid rather than fully digital, so personal relationships remain part of the model. Each expected impact is therefore conditional on the capabilities and governance discussed in the following sections.

4.4. Organizational Readiness and Digital Capabilities

Transformation depends significantly on organizational readiness, including management commitment, employee competencies, process standardization, digital infrastructure, and adaptability. Employees accustomed to direct transactions need skills in digital customer service, content management, promotion, and data interpretation. In this study, these digital skills are treated as the human-capital component of organizational readiness and not as a replacement for other enabling capabilities. Customer data management concerns the quality, integration, and governance of customer and transaction data, and digital marketing capability concerns the ability to attract and convert buyers through digital channels, whereas digital skills determine whether staff can operate both. Marketplace operations also require accurate product databases, updated inventory, integrated order management, payment processing, logistics coordination, and secure data management; without them, a marketplace adds complexity rather than efficiency. Transformation is therefore a capability-building process, not merely a technology project. The outcome also differs across organizations. Prior research shows that platform adoption leads to business model innovation only when capabilities are reconfigured, and that adoption pathways and pitfalls differ between SMEs and large firms. Firms with limited resources may face data quality, skill, and system integration barriers, while large firms with many distributors face greater risk of channel conflict.

4.5. Hybrid B2B and Digital Marketplace Strategy

A hybrid model is a more appropriate approach than eliminating traditional mechanisms. Strategic B2B customers keep personalized service, negotiated pricing, account management, and contracts, while the marketplace offers standardized access to new customers, smaller buyers, and dispersed markets, all supported by an integrated system for data, inventory, customer management, and analytics. This preserves relational advantages while gaining scalability. It also reduces channel conflict, which may arise if online prices or terms differ from existing agreements, provided firms apply clear pricing policies, customer segmentation, account classification, and channel governance. The hybrid model is not free of trade-offs. Maintaining two channels increases coordination cost, and price transparency on the marketplace may weaken negotiated pricing with strategic customers. Previous studies also differ in emphasis: some show that digital interactions complement conventional B2B relationships [38], while others warn that adoption does not automatically create growth [40]. This suggests that hybrid strategies succeed mainly when governance and capabilities are in place.

4.6. Proposed Market Expansion Strategy

The transformation can be implemented in five stages:

- Business model assessment: evaluate customer segments, channels, revenue sources, processes, and digital readiness.
- Digital marketplace development: product digitization, platform selection, digital catalog, payment, order management, and logistics integration.
- Market channel integration: connect the marketplace with sales, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), inventory, and distribution.
- Digital customer acquisition: search visibility, digital content, online promotion, reviews, and campaigns.
- Data-driven market development: analyze transaction and behavior data to identify new opportunities.

Market expansion is therefore proposed to result from progressive capability development and not from simply joining a platform. Unlike existing frameworks that describe platform adoption or business model innovation in general, the proposed stages link each capability (assessment, platform development, channel integration, digital acquisition, and data-driven development) to a specific expansion outcome, and embed channel governance to protect existing B2B relationships. This makes the framework distinctive for established vendors, especially in manufacturing and industrial sectors.

4.7. Conceptual Framework and Propositions

The linear sequence discussed earlier is refined into a framework with six constructs, as shown in Figure 1 and defined in Table 5. Business model transformation is the independent construct, and digital marketplace capability is the focal capability that the transformation produces. Enabling capabilities strengthen the link between the two (P2), channel governance and contextual conditions moderate the link between digital marketplace capability and market expansion (P5 and P6), and market expansion is the outcome. Each construct is defined, operationalized, and anchored in the literature in Table 5. The same six constructs and chain are used throughout this article, and broader market access is treated as the mechanism of the P4 link, not as a separate construct.

The enabling capabilities are not treated as independent. Organizational readiness and digital infrastructure are proposed as foundational, because process integration, customer data management, and digital marketing capability depend on them. Process integration and customer data management are proposed to reinforce each other, while digital marketing capability mainly supports customer acquisition in the customer segment and digital channel dimensions of market expansion. This ordering of relative importance is a conceptual proposal, and the resulting propositions are presented in Table 6. They are derived from the literature synthesis and can be tested through survey research or comparative case studies.

The proposed framework links business model transformation to market expansion through marketplace capability, as illustrated in Figure 1. Foundational capabilities support enabling capabilities, which in turn condition the first link, while channel governance and contextual conditions condition the second link. The relationships are formulated as propositions P1 to P6 and presented in the following sections.

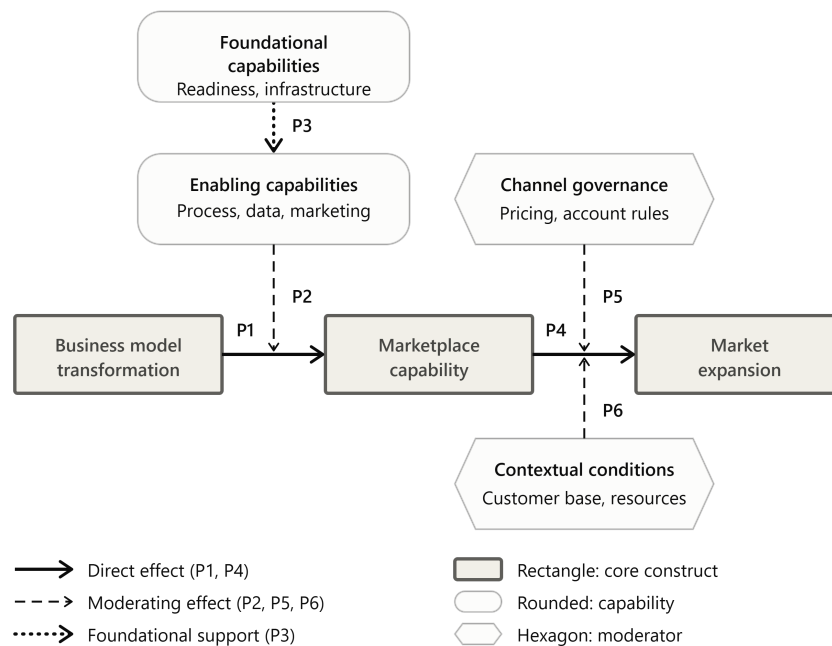


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of vendor-owned digital

Business model transformation builds marketplace capability (P1), which drives market expansion (P4), as shown in Figure 1. Enabling capabilities strengthen the first link (P2) and rest on organizational readiness and digital infrastructure (P3), while channel governance and contextual conditions shape the second link (P5 and P6).

4.8. Potential Benefits and Challenges

Table 5 summarizes the main opportunities and challenges identified in the analysis.

Table 5. Potential Benefits, Risks, and Trade-Offs

Potential Benefits	Challenges
Wider geographic and customer reach	Channel conflict with existing customers
Greater product visibility and faster acquisition	Added operational complexity without adequate systems
Diversified customer segments and revenue sources	Weakened established business relationships
Integrated data for evidence-based decisions	Need for digital skills and management commitment
Scalable, more efficient transactions	Need for infrastructure, security, and governance

As shown in Table 5, each potential benefit of the marketplace is paired with a challenge that must be managed, so the benefits are conditional and not automatic. For example, wider reach and diversified segments increase the risk of channel conflict, while integrated data and faster acquisition require digital skills, adequate systems, and governance to deliver value.

Table 6. Propositions of the Conceptual Framework

No.	Proposition	Basis
P1	Business model transformation positively influences digital marketplace capability.	Capability reconfiguration links platform adoption to business model change
P2	The influence in P1 is stronger when enabling capabilities are stronger.	Adoption alone does not create growth
P3	Organizational readiness and digital infrastructure are foundational and strengthen process integration, customer data management, and digital marketing capability.	Conceptual analysis of organizational readiness
P4	Digital marketplace capability positively influences market expansion in geographic, customer segment, and digital channel dimensions.	Expansion mechanisms of digital marketplaces
P5	The influence in P4 is stronger when channel governance is stronger.	Channel conflict risk in hybrid strategies
P6	The influence in P4 is stronger for vendors with many small and dispersed buyers than for vendors with few large buyers.	Adoption pathways differ between SMEs and large firms; conceptual analysis of customer base structure

As shown in Table 6, the core sequence runs from business model transformation to digital marketplace capability (P1) and from this capability to market expansion (P4), while enabling capabilities (P2 and P3) strengthen the first link and channel governance and customer base structure (P5 and P6) condition the second. Because these propositions are derived from the literature and not tested empirically, they should be examined through survey-based studies or comparative case studies.

Beyond these challenges, marketplace transformation involves additional risks and trade-offs that require explicit evaluation, as summarized in Table 7.

Table 7. Risks and Trade-Offs of Marketplace Transformation

Risk	Description	Mitigation
Channel conflict	Online prices or terms differ from negotiated agreements with existing customers	Pricing policy, account classification, channel governance
Operational complexity	Added processes and systems without adequate readiness	Staged rollout and process standardization
Integration cost	Costs of connecting the marketplace with CRM, inventory, payment, and logistics systems	Phased integration and modular systems
Provider dependence	Reliance on third-party technology and service providers	Clear contracts and exit terms
Data governance and security	Centralized customer and transaction data raises privacy, ownership, and cybersecurity risks	Access control, data policies, security audits
Supplier participation	Suppliers may resist price transparency or lack digital capability	Incentives, onboarding support, quality and dispute rules
Insufficient demand	New segments may be too small or slow to justify the investment	Pilot launch, demand indicators, break-even thresholds

Several of the risks in Table 7 are interrelated. Platform dependence and integration costs tend to rise together because deeper integration with a single platform raises switching costs. Data governance becomes more demanding as customer, supplier, and transaction data are centralized, since weak controls expose the vendor and its partners to security and compliance risks. Supplier participation is not automatic, because

suppliers may fear price transparency and prefer direct relationships. Most importantly, a marketplace may not generate sufficient demand to justify the investment, particularly when strategic customers keep buying through negotiated channels and new segments are small or hard to reach. The transformation should therefore be treated as a staged investment, in which pilot launches, demand indicators, and break-even thresholds determine whether further investment is warranted. This reasoning is a conceptual interpretation and requires empirical examination.

5. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The framework offers practical guidelines for managers of established B2B vendors. First, the transformation should be managed as a staged investment, starting with a pilot and with demand indicators and break-even thresholds set in advance. Second, capabilities such as management commitment, digital skills, accurate product databases, and integrated order and payment systems should be built before the marketplace is scaled. Third, existing relationships should be protected through channel governance, in which strategic accounts keep negotiated pricing and personal account management while new or smaller buyers use standardized marketplace pricing. Fourth, customer and transaction data should be integrated with CRM, inventory, and logistics systems in phases and protected through access control and security audits. Finally, supplier and distributor participation should be secured through incentives and onboarding support, and vendors with many small and dispersed buyers are likely to gain more from the marketplace than those with a few large buyers.

6. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine how a traditional B2B vendor can expand its market by transforming into a vendor-owned digital marketplace, and the analysis answers its four objectives as follows. First, the traditional vendor model maintains trust through direct relationships, but its main limitation is low scalability, because market reach depends on the salesforce and existing networks, buyers are concentrated, and customer data is fragmented. Second, a digital marketplace offers four expansion mechanisms, namely wider market visibility, reduced geographic barriers, diversification of customer segments, and more efficient acquisition. These benefits are conditional, because wider visibility also brings price comparison, and reach does not convert into sales without logistics and service capacity.

Third, the capabilities required are organizational readiness (including digital skills), digital infrastructure, process integration, customer data management, and digital marketing capability, which together enable the vendor to operate a marketplace. Fourth, existing B2B relationships can be integrated through a hybrid model in which strategic customers keep negotiated pricing, contracts, and account management, while the marketplace serves new, smaller, and dispersed buyers under clear channel governance. Taken together, the answer to the central question is that market expansion results from a staged, capability-based transformation guided by governance and validated through pilot launches, demand indicators, and break-even thresholds, and not from joining or building a platform alone. The transformation is also conceptually aligned with SDG 8, because customer segment diversification extends market access to small businesses and resellers, with SDG 9, because it depends on digital infrastructure and innovation in industrial firms, and with SDG 17, because it relies on governed partnerships among suppliers, distributors, and buyers. These links are conceptual and were not measured in this study.

Future research should address the limitations discussed earlier. First, propositions P1 to P6 should be tested through survey-based studies with structural equation modeling or through comparative case studies, particularly the moderating roles of enabling capabilities, channel governance, and customer base structure. Second, studies should examine how channel conflict and price transparency evolve after launch, and how supplier and distributor participation, data governance, and cybersecurity can be sustained in a vendor-owned marketplace. Third, longitudinal research should measure financial performance, return on investment, customer adoption, and platform engagement, together with geographic, customer segment, and digital channel expansion. Such studies may also assess SDG-related outcomes, such as SME participation and employment effects. Finally, comparisons across industries, firm sizes, and national contexts, including emerging markets, would show how far the framework holds under different levels of readiness and infrastructure.

7. DECLARATIONS

7.1. About Authors

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7.2. Author Contributions

Conceptualization: AR, NZ and LB; Methodology: AR; Software: NZ; Validation: LB; Formal Analysis: AR; Investigation: AR and LB; Resources: NZ; Data Curation: NZ and LB; Writing-Original Draft Preparation: AR and LB; Writing-Review and Editing: LB; Visualization: LB; All authors, AR, NZ, and LB, have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

7.3. Data Availability Statement

This study used publicly available documents. The search protocol is reported in Table 3, and the resulting themes are described in the Methodology section. The list of included studies and the coding matrix are available from the corresponding author upon request.

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The authors did not receive any funding for the research, writing, or publication of this article.

7.5. Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The authors confirm that there are no conflicts of interest, financial or personal, that could have affected the results reported in this paper.

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