



DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION, OMNICHANNEL INTEGRATION, AND FOREIGN MARKET ENTRY: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT. This study examines how digital transformation contributes to foreign market entry through omnichannel integration and develops a sequential capability perspective linking these three constructs. A systematic literature review was conducted using 30 scholarly references identified through Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. The literature was systematically screened and synthesised based on its relevance to digital transformation, omnichannel integration, and foreign market entry. The findings support both proposed relationships. Digital transformation contributes to omnichannel integration by enabling shared information, interconnected processes, and coordinated customer interactions, although technological adoption alone is insufficient without organisational alignment. Omnichannel integration, in turn, facilitates foreign market entry by connecting digital and physical routes to customers, supporting market learning, and enabling progressive market development. The review further identifies omnichannel integration as the connecting capability that converts digital resources into coordinated foreign-market access. These findings suggest that firms should manage digital transformation, channel integration, and international expansion as interconnected strategic processes rather than separate initiatives. Future research should empirically validate the sequential model across industries, countries, and levels of digital maturity.

Keywords: Digital Transformation; Omnichannel Integration; Foreign Market Entry; Internationalisation; Digitalisation

Received: September, 2026

1st Revision: September, 2026

Accepted: October, 2026

DOI:

10.56633/mbisku.v3i2.1607

Introduction

Changes in global competition have made foreign market expansion increasingly important while simultaneously increasing the strategic complexity of international growth. Successful expansion is no longer determined solely by the selection of an attractive target country, but also by a firm's ability to combine international scale with local responsiveness and to develop business models capable of reaching customers across increasingly fragmented markets. Doherty et al. emphasise that successful global expansion requires firms to identify markets in which their competitive advantages can overcome local incumbents, while recent business-model developments indicate that digitalisation is reshaping how firms create, deliver,

and capture value across geographical boundaries.¹ Consequently, foreign market entry can increasingly be understood not merely as a decision concerning where to operate, but as an organisational process through which firms establish access, develop market presence, and coordinate activities in foreign markets.

Digital transformation provides an important strategic foundation for this process because it reshapes how firms organise resources, processes, customer interactions, and value creation. Rather than representing a narrow adoption of digital technologies, digital transformation involves changes in business strategy and organisational arrangements enabled by digital technologies.² In marketing, these changes facilitate the integration of data, digital platforms, communication, and customer activities, allowing firms to respond more dynamically to market requirements.³ Digital platform ecosystems further extend this capability by connecting firms with customers, partners, and complementary resources across wider networks.⁴ At the same time, the increasing economic and strategic value of data strengthens the ability of digital platforms to support market coordination and competitive positioning.⁵ Nevertheless, digital transformation alone does not necessarily guarantee effective access to foreign customers. Digital capabilities must be translated into concrete mechanisms through which firms can coordinate market interactions, distribution, communication, and customer experience across different points of contact.

Omnichannel integration provides such a mechanism by connecting online and offline channels into a coordinated system throughout the customer journey. Verhoef, Kannan, and Inman conceptualise the transition from multichannel to omnichannel retailing as a movement toward greater integration across channels, while Neslin subsequently positions omnichannel operations along a continuum in which customer interactions increasingly transcend individual channels.⁶ This integration encompasses not only the availability of multiple channels but also the coordination of information, transactions, communication, and customer experience across those channels.⁷ Digital technologies have become increasingly important in enabling such integration because they allow firms to connect customer data, channel activities, and market interactions more effectively.⁸ Cross-channel interactions may also influence customer responses, indicating that the performance of one channel cannot always be understood

¹ T Doherty, R., Mazhindu, A., Silberstein, M., & Röder, “The Growth Code: Go Global If You Can Beat Local,” *McKinsey & Company*, 2023, <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/the-strategy-and-corporate-finance-blog/the-growth-code-go-global-if-you-can-beat-local>; McKinsey & Company, “Six Breakthrough Business Models Reshaping Global Growth,” 2026, <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/six-breakthrough-business-models-reshaping-global-growth>.

² Anandhi Bharadwaj et al., “Digital Business Strategy: Toward a next Generation of Insights,” *MIS Quarterly* (Management Information Systems Research Center, University of Minnesota, 2013).

³ Marco Cioppi et al., “Digital Transformation and Marketing: A Systematic and Thematic Literature Review,” *Italian Journal of Marketing* 2023, no. 2 (2023): 207–88.

⁴ Andreas Hein et al., “Digital Platform Ecosystems: A. Hein et Al.,” *Electronic Markets* 30, no. 1 (2020): 87–98; Zoltan J Acs et al., “The Evolution of the Global Digital Platform Economy: 1971–2021,” *Small Business Economics* 57, no. 4 (2021): 1629–59.

⁵ Dirk Bergemann and Alessandro Bonatti, “Data, Competition, and Digital Platforms,” *American Economic Review* 114, no. 8 (2024): 2553–95.

⁶ Peter C Verhoef, Pallassana K Kannan, and J Jeffrey Inman, “From Multi-Channel Retailing to Omnichannel Retailing: Introduction to the Special Issue on Multi-Channel Retailing,” *Journal of Retailing* 91, no. 2 (2015): 174–81; Scott A Neslin, “The Omnichannel Continuum: Integrating Online and Offline Channels along the Customer Journey,” *Journal of Retailing* 98, no. 1 (2022): 111–32.

⁷ Shahriar Akter, Tasnim M Taufique Hossain, and Carolyn Strong, “What Omnichannel Really Means?,” *Journal of Strategic Marketing* (Taylor & Francis, 2021).

⁸ Zhihui Yang and Dongbin Hu, “Digital Technology-Empowered Omnichannel Integration: A Review and Research Agenda,” *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management* 52, no. 4 (2024): 407–24.

independently of the others.⁹ Omnichannel integration therefore represents more than an operational arrangement; it can function as an organisational mechanism through which digital capabilities are converted into coordinated market-facing activities.

The strategic importance of omnichannel integration becomes particularly evident when firms seek to expand beyond domestic markets. The development of e-commerce has increasingly moved from isolated online transactions toward integrated channel strategies in which digital and physical touchpoints complement one another.¹⁰ The broader evolution of electronic commerce similarly indicates a shift from conventional multichannel structures toward more integrated omnichannel customer experiences.¹¹ This development is especially relevant to firms pursuing international expansion because global reach requires mechanisms that enable customers in different markets to interact with the firm through multiple and interconnected channels. Do Vale, Collin-Lachaud, and Lecocq argue that the new retail model increasingly depends on omnichannel structures to support global reach.¹² From this perspective, omnichannel integration can reduce firms' dependence on a single market-access route while enabling them to combine digital reach with physical or locally embedded forms of interaction. It therefore provides a plausible connecting mechanism between the strategic potential of digital transformation and the practical realisation of foreign market access.

Foreign market entry, however, remains a multidimensional internationalisation process involving decisions concerning entry modes, resource commitment, market uncertainty, knowledge development, and the degree of involvement in foreign markets. Recent international business research shows that technological development and new business models have expanded the range of entry modes beyond conventional mechanisms, creating opportunities for firms to enter foreign markets through increasingly non-traditional pathways.¹³ Prior online market presence may also precede more substantial foreign-market activities, suggesting that digital channels can constitute an initial form of international market engagement.¹⁴ At the same time, export channel selection continues to influence international performance, indicating that the way firms organise market access remains strategically consequential.¹⁵ These developments complement the Uppsala perspective, which emphasises the progressive development of knowledge, experience, networks, and market commitment during internationalisation.¹⁶ Digital transformation may therefore broaden the pathways through which firms approach foreign markets, but its international value depends partly on whether digital capabilities can be integrated into an effective system of customer and channel interaction.

⁹ Venkatesh Shankar and Tarun Kushwaha, "Omnichannel Marketing: Are Cross-Channel Effects Symmetric?," *International Journal of Research in Marketing* 38, no. 2 (2021): 290–310.

¹⁰ Valeria Belvedere, Elisa Martina Martinelli, and Annalisa Tunisini, "Getting the Most from E-Commerce in the Context of Omnichannel Strategies," *Italian Journal of Marketing* 2021, no. 4 (2021): 331–49.

¹¹ Santiago Iglesias-Pradas and Emiliano Acquila-Natale, "The Future of E-Commerce: Overview and Prospects of Multichannel and Omnichannel Retail," *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research* 18, no. 1 (2023): 656–67.

¹² Guillaume Do Vale, Isabelle Collin-Lachaud, and Xavier Lecocq, "The New Retail Model: Global Reach Demands Omni-Channels," *Journal of Business Strategy* 43, no. 6 (2022): 339–49.

¹³ Keith D Brouthers et al., "Charting New Courses to Enter Foreign Markets: Conceptualization, Theoretical Framework, and Research Directions on Non-Traditional Entry Modes: Keith D. Brouthers et Al.," *Journal of International Business Studies* 53, no. 9 (2022): 2088–2115.

¹⁴ Sina Hardaker and Ling Zhang, "Testing the Water"—Prior-Online Market Entry in China," *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management* 49, no. 7 (2021): 1111–29.

¹⁵ Igor Kalinic and Keith D Brouthers, "Entrepreneurial Orientation, Export Channel Selection, and Export Performance of SMEs," *International Business Review* 31, no. 1 (2022): 101901.

¹⁶ Jan Johanson and Jan-Erik Vahlne, "The Uppsala Internationalization Process Model Revisited: From Liability of Foreignness to Liability of Outsidership," *Journal of International Business Studies* 40, no. 9 (2009): 1411–31.

Despite the growing body of research surrounding digital transformation, omnichannel integration, and foreign market entry, these streams have largely developed along different intellectual trajectories. Digital transformation research has concentrated on digital strategy, technological change, platforms, data, and digitally enabled marketing activities.¹⁷ Omnichannel research, in contrast, has primarily examined channel integration, customer journeys, cross-channel effects, and the coordination of customer experience.¹⁸ Foreign market entry research has focused more strongly on entry modes, internationalisation, expansion strategies, and export channels.¹⁹ Although these perspectives address complementary dimensions of international growth, relatively limited attention has been given to explaining how digital transformation may influence foreign market entry through the integration of multiple market-access channels. Practical discussions of global expansion similarly emphasise the alignment of markets, business models, organisational structures, and internationalisation strategies, but these insights have not been sufficiently integrated with the academic literature on digital transformation and omnichannel integration.²⁰ This separation creates an important research opportunity to synthesise the three streams and clarify the mechanism through which digital capabilities may be translated into foreign market access.

Addressing this gap, this study analyses the contribution of digital transformation to foreign market entry and examines omnichannel integration as the connecting mechanism through a systematic literature review. The novelty lies in bringing together three perspectives that have largely evolved independently: digital transformation as a strategic capability that reshapes value creation and market coordination; omnichannel integration as a mechanism for coordinating customer and channel interactions; and foreign market entry as an outcome and process of internationalisation. The systematic literature review approach provides a structured basis for identifying, comparing, and synthesising findings across these streams of research.²¹ The resulting synthesis proposes that the international value of digital transformation does not arise solely from expanding a firm's technological reach, but from its capacity to coordinate multiple channels into an integrated market-facing system. Accordingly, the study develops a conceptual explanation of how firms may convert digital capabilities into foreign market access and market development through omnichannel integration.

¹⁷ Bharadwaj et al., "Digital Business Strategy: Toward a next Generation of Insights"; Cioppi et al., "Digital Transformation and Marketing: A Systematic and Thematic Literature Review"; Hein et al., "Digital Platform Ecosystems: A. Hein et Al."

¹⁸ Neslin, "The Omnichannel Continuum: Integrating Online and Offline Channels along the Customer Journey"; Shankar and Kushwaha, "Omnichannel Marketing: Are Cross-Channel Effects Symmetric?"; Christiane Lehrer and Manuel Trenz, "Omnichannel Business: Electronic Markets–The International Journal on Networked Business," *Electronic Markets* 32, no. 2 (2022): 687–99.

¹⁹ Brouthers et al., "Charting New Courses to Enter Foreign Markets: Conceptualization, Theoretical Framework, and Research Directions on Non-Traditional Entry Modes: Keith D. Brouthers et Al."; Kalinic and Brouthers, "Entrepreneurial Orientation, Export Channel Selection, and Export Performance of SMEs"; Huifeng Bai, Julie McColl, and Christopher Moore, "Luxury Retailers' Entry and Expansion Strategies in China," *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management* 45, no. 11 (2017): 1181–99.

²⁰ Doherty, R., Mazhindu, A., Silberstein, M., & Röder, "The Growth Code: Go Global If You Can Beat Local"; NeoMarketWays, "Market Entry Framework McKinsey: Strategy, Structure and Practical Application.," 2026, <https://neomarketways.com/market-entry-framework-mckinsey/>; Roncucci & Partners, "Internationalisation 2026: Where to Go, How to Get There, and Why Do It (without Mistakes).," 2026, <https://www.roncucciandpartners.com/2026/03/31/internationalisation-2026-markets-entry-strategies-mistakes/>; Huifeng Bai et al., "Direction of Luxury Fashion Retailers' Post-Entry Expansion—the Evidence from China," *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management* 49, no. 2 (2021): 223–41.

²¹ Guy Paré and Spyros Kitsiou, "Methods for Literature Reviews," in *Handbook of EHealth Evaluation: An Evidence-Based Approach [Internet]* (University of Victoria, 2017); Andrew Booth et al., *Systematic Approaches to a Successful Literature Review* (SAGE Publications Ltd, 2022).

Literature Review

Digital Transformation

Digital transformation refers to the strategic integration of digital technologies into business strategy, organisational processes, capabilities, and value creation, extending beyond technology adoption by reshaping how firms organise resources, coordinate activities, interact with customers, and respond to market opportunities.²² In marketing, it integrates data, digital platforms, communication, and customer interactions to support more connected market activities,²³ while digital platform ecosystems extend these capabilities by connecting firms, customers, partners, and complementary resources across organisational boundaries.²⁴ The development of the global digital platform economy further demonstrates how digital capabilities support scalable activities across markets, with data and platforms strengthening coordination and competition.²⁵ These capabilities provide the foundation for *omnichannel integration* by enabling firms to connect information, processes, platforms, and customer interactions across touchpoints. Digital business strategy facilitates the redesign of previously separated activities,²⁶ while digital technologies enable continuity across customer journeys.²⁷ The value of e-commerce similarly increases when digital channels are integrated into broader omnichannel strategies rather than managed independently.²⁸ Digital transformation therefore provides the technological and organisational foundation for coordinated channel systems, making its strategic value dependent not simply on technology adoption but on the ability to reduce fragmentation across market activities.

Proposition 1 (P1): Digital transformation positively contributes to omnichannel integration.

Omnichannel Integration

Omnichannel integration represents the coordinated management of multiple channels as an interconnected system, reflecting a shift from separate touchpoints toward continuity throughout the customer journey.²⁹ It requires coordination of information, transactions, communication, and customer experience rather than merely offering several channels.³⁰ Verhoef and Akter, Hossain, and Strong further distinguish omnichannel management from the simple coexistence of multiple channels,³¹ while digital technologies enable cross-channel information flows and interactions that influence customer responses across touchpoints.³² Beyond customer experience, such integration can facilitate foreign market development by connecting digital access with other forms of customer engagement and distribution. Internationalisation theory emphasises knowledge accumulation, relationship development, and increasing commitment,³³ while prior online presence may precede subsequent foreign-market activities.³⁴ Export channel selection likewise affects international performance,³⁵ and emerging retail models demonstrate the importance of integrated channels for reaching geographically dispersed

²² Bharadwaj et al., "Digital Business Strategy: Toward a next Generation of Insights."

²³ Cioppi et al., "Digital Transformation and Marketing: A Systematic and Thematic Literature Review."

²⁴ Hein et al., "Digital Platform Ecosystems: A. Hein et Al."

²⁵ Acs et al., "The Evolution of the Global Digital Platform Economy: 1971–2021."

²⁶ Bharadwaj et al., "Digital Business Strategy: Toward a next Generation of Insights."

²⁷ Yang and Hu, "Digital Technology-Empowered Omnichannel Integration: A Review and Research Agenda."

²⁸ Belvedere, Martinelli, and Tunisini, "Getting the Most from E-Commerce in the Context of Omnichannel Strategies."

²⁹ Verhoef, Kannan, and Inman, "From Multi-Channel Retailing to Omni-Channel Retailing: Introduction to the Special Issue on Multi-Channel Retailing."

³⁰ Neslin, "The Omnichannel Continuum: Integrating Online and Offline Channels along the Customer Journey."

³¹ Peter C Verhoef, "Omni-Channel Retailing: Some Reflections," *Journal of Strategic Marketing* 29, no. 7 (2021): 608–16.

³² Yang and Hu, "Digital Technology-Empowered Omnichannel Integration: A Review and Research Agenda."

³³ Johanson and Vahlne, "The Uppsala Internationalization Process Model Revisited: From Liability of Foreignness to Liability of Outsidership."

³⁴ Hardaker and Zhang, "'Testing the Water'—Prior-Online Market Entry in China."

³⁵ Kalinic and Brouthers, "Entrepreneurial Orientation, Export Channel Selection, and Export Performance of SMEs."

customers.³⁶ Omnichannel integration can therefore serve as a connecting mechanism through which firms coordinate customer access, market interaction, and relationship development across national boundaries.

Proposition 2 (P2): Omnichannel integration positively contributes to foreign market entry.

Foreign Market Entry

Foreign market entry refers to the process through which firms establish and develop business activities beyond the domestic market, involving market knowledge, relationships, resource commitments, and increasing involvement rather than a single geographical decision.³⁷ Technological development has expanded the range of entry possibilities through digitally enabled and non-traditional modes,³⁸ while prior online presence and subsequent physical expansion illustrate how foreign-market development can unfold progressively.³⁹ Within this perspective, foreign market entry represents the strategic outcome of a capability-building process in which digital transformation establishes the technological and organisational foundation, while omnichannel integration converts these capabilities into coordinated market access and customer engagement. Such coordination supports internationalisation by helping firms develop customer relationships, acquire market knowledge, and adjust commitment as foreign-market experience accumulates.⁴⁰ The conceptual logic therefore positions digital transformation as the enabling capability, omnichannel integration as the connecting mechanism, and foreign market entry as the subsequent strategic outcome, providing the basis for examining how digital transformation contributes to foreign market entry through omnichannel integration.

Research methods

This study employs a literature review to examine the relationship between digital transformation, omnichannel integration, and foreign market entry.. The literature search was conducted through Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar using combinations of keywords including “digital transformation,” “digital technology,” “omnichannel integration,” “omnichannel,” “foreign market entry,” “internationalisation,” and “digital channels.” The review followed systematic searching, screening, selection, extraction, and synthesis procedures, consistent with Paré and Kitsiou.⁴¹ The search strategy was guided by the research objective and the conceptual relationships under examination, following Booth et al.⁴² Titles, abstracts, keywords, and substantive content were screened for relevance. The final corpus comprised 30 scholarly references addressing digital transformation, omnichannel integration, foreign market entry, internationalisation, and their interrelationships.

Studies were included when they addressed at least one focal construct and provided theoretical, empirical, or review-based evidence relevant to the proposed relationships. Peer-reviewed journal articles were prioritised, while seminal theoretical works and authoritative scholarly sources were retained when necessary for conceptual foundations. Studies were excluded when they were unrelated to the focal constructs, focused solely on technical issues without business or market implications, duplicated other records, or lacked sufficient substance for synthesis. The selected studies were then compared and synthesised to identify recurring arguments, complementary findings, and conceptual

³⁶ Do Vale, Collin-Lachaud, and Lecocq, “The New Retail Model: Global Reach Demands Omnichannels.”

³⁷ Johanson and Vahlne, “The Uppsala Internationalization Process Model Revisited: From Liability of Foreignness to Liability of Outsidership.”

³⁸ Brouthers et al., “Charting New Courses to Enter Foreign Markets: Conceptualization, Theoretical Framework, and Research Directions on Non-Traditional Entry Modes: Keith D. Brouthers et Al.”

³⁹ Hardaker and Zhang, ““Testing the Water”–Prior-Online Market Entry in China”; Bai, McColl, and Moore, “Luxury Retailers’ Entry and Expansion Strategies in China”; Huifeng Bai, Julie McColl, and Christopher Moore, “Motives behind Retailers’ Post-Entry Expansion-Evidence from the Chinese Luxury Fashion Market,” *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 59 (2021): 102400.

⁴⁰ Jan Johanson and Jan-Erik Vahlne, “The Internationalization Process of the Firm—a Model of Knowledge Development and Increasing Foreign Market Commitments,” in *International Business* (Routledge, 2017), 145–54.

⁴¹ Paré and Kitsiou, “Methods for Literature Reviews.”

⁴² Booth et al., *Systematic Approaches to a Successful Literature Review*.

gaps. This procedure follows Oztemel and Gursev, who highlight the value of systematic literature analysis in organising dispersed research into meaningful conceptual patterns.⁴³

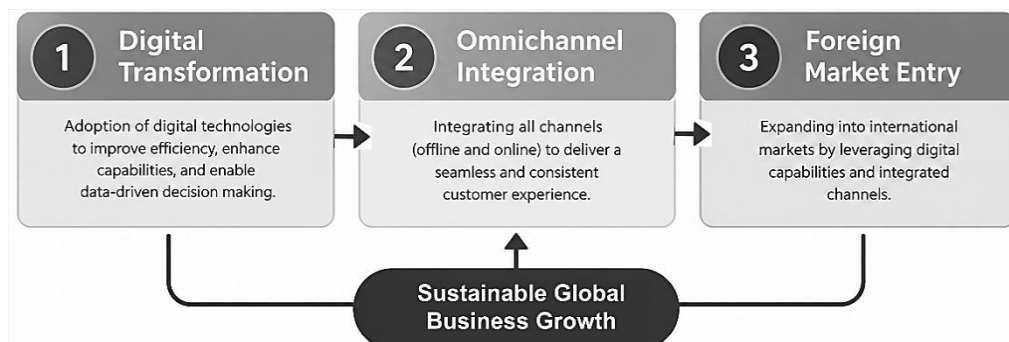


Figure 1. Conceptual Research Framework

The conceptual framework positions digital transformation as the antecedent capability, omnichannel integration as the connecting organisational mechanism, and foreign market entry as the strategic outcome. Digital transformation provides the technological and organisational foundation for integrating information, processes, and customer interactions across channels. Omnichannel integration converts these capabilities into coordinated market access by connecting digital and physical channels, enabling firms to reach, serve, and learn from customers across geographic boundaries. Foreign market entry represents the strategic deployment of these coordinated capabilities in foreign markets. Thus, the framework proposes that the value of digital transformation for foreign market development is realised through the firm's ability to integrate and leverage multiple channels effectively.

Results And Discussion

Digital Transformation

The literature synthesis reveals a consistent relationship between digital transformation and omnichannel integration. Digital transformation is understood not simply as the adoption of individual technologies, but as an organisational capability involving digital platforms, data, processes, information systems, and strategic coordination. These capabilities enable firms to connect previously separated channels and coordinate customer interactions across online and offline touchpoints. Across the ten studies presented in Table 1, the literature shows a progressive shift from viewing digital technologies and platforms as tools for connecting business activities toward recognising their role in integrating multiple channels. Overall, the evidence supports the proposition that digital transformation provides the technological and organisational foundation for developing effective omnichannel integration.

Table 1. Literature Evidence for Proposition 1

No.	Author (Year) / Journal	Research Findings	Difference from the Current Study
1	Bharadwaj et al. (2013) / MIS Quarterly	Digital business strategy integrates digital technologies with business strategy and enables firms to restructure processes, resources, and organisational activities around digital capabilities.	Establishes the strategic foundation of digital transformation but does not specifically examine omnichannel integration.
2	Hein et al. (2020) / Electronic Markets	Digital platform ecosystems enable the coordination of actors, resources, and activities through shared digital infrastructures, supporting integration across organisational boundaries.	Focuses on platform ecosystems rather than the integration of customer-facing channels.
3	Acs et al. (2021) / Small Business Economics	The evolution of the global digital platform economy demonstrates how digital platforms	Examines the development of the global platform economy rather than the specific relationship

⁴³ Ercan Oztemel and Samet Gursev, "Literature Review of Industry 4.0 and Related Technologies," *Journal of Intelligent Manufacturing* 31, no. 1 (2020): 127–82.

		increase scalability, connectivity, and the reach of digitally enabled business activities.	between digital transformation and omnichannel integration.
4	Cioppi et al. (2023) / Italian Journal of Marketing	The systematic and thematic review shows that digital transformation is reshaping marketing technologies, processes, capabilities, and customer-oriented activities.	Provides a broad marketing perspective on digital transformation without specifically testing its contribution to omnichannel integration.
5	Bergemann & Bonatti (2024) / American Economic Review	Digital platforms and data create strategic value by improving information availability, coordination, and firms' ability to manage competitive activities.	Focuses on data, competition, and digital platforms rather than channel integration in omnichannel settings.
6	Lehrer & Trenz (2022) / Electronic Markets	The diffusion of digital technologies has facilitated the emergence of omnichannel businesses through integrated processes and information systems that connect digital and physical channels.	Directly links digital technology with omnichannel business but does not frame digital transformation as the antecedent within the sequential model proposed here.
7	Yang (2024) / International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management	Digital technology plays a vital role in enabling omnichannel integration. The review identifies digital transformation as one of the major themes within research on technology-enabled omnichannel integration.	Specifically reviews digital technology and omnichannel integration but does not develop the relationship to foreign market entry.
8	Belvedere et al. (2021) / Italian Journal of Marketing	E-commerce creates greater value when integrated with other online and offline channels, demonstrating the importance of coordinating digital channels with existing distribution structures.	Examines e-commerce integration within omnichannel strategies rather than digital transformation as the broader enabling capability.
9	Alsaad et al. (2021) / Journal of Information Technology	The diffusion of B2B e-commerce is influenced by technological and environmental conditions, demonstrating how digital capabilities and pressures facilitate the adoption and diffusion of digitally enabled business activities.	Addresses global B2B e-commerce diffusion rather than specifically examining omnichannel integration.
10	Alsaad et al. (2018) / Technology Analysis & Strategic Management	Global B2B e-commerce usage is associated with the complexity of trading systems and competitive pressures, highlighting the role of digital infrastructure and strategic conditions in business digitalisation.	Focuses on B2B e-commerce adoption rather than the integration of multiple customer channels.

The evidence in Table 1 reveals a coherent progression across the literature. Earlier studies establish that digital capabilities reshape business strategy, organisational processes, platforms, and information flows,⁴⁴ while subsequent research extends this foundation into marketing and commerce by showing how digital transformation influences customer-facing activities and the coordination of digital and physical operations.⁴⁵ Studies on digital commerce further indicate that digital infrastructure and strategic conditions shape firms' ability to adopt and develop digitally enabled business activities.⁴⁶ More focused omnichannel research makes the relationship increasingly explicit by identifying

⁴⁴ Bharadwaj et al., "Digital Business Strategy: Toward a next Generation of Insights."

⁴⁵ Cioppi et al., "Digital Transformation and Marketing: A Systematic and Thematic Literature Review."

⁴⁶ Abdallah Alsaad et al., "What Drives Global B2B E-Commerce Usage: An Analysis of the Effect of the Complexity of Trading System and Competition Pressure," *Technology Analysis & Strategic Management* 30, no. 8 (2018): 980–92.

integrated processes and information systems as central to omnichannel business⁴⁷ and digital technology as a key enabler of omnichannel integration.⁴⁸

Taken together, the findings provide convergent support for Proposition 1. The relationship does not imply that every form of digital adoption automatically produces omnichannel integration. Rather, the literature indicates that integration emerges when digital technologies are embedded in organisational processes, information systems, platforms, and strategic coordination. Digital transformation therefore functions as an enabling capability through which firms can connect previously fragmented channels and develop more integrated customer-facing operations. Accordingly, the reviewed evidence supports P1: Digital transformation positively contributes to omnichannel integration.

Omnichannel Integration

The second stream of evidence examines how omnichannel integration facilitates foreign market entry by connecting customer access, information, and market relationships. By coordinating digital and physical channels, firms can reach foreign customers, observe market responses, and develop market presence more flexibly. The ten studies presented in Table 2 focus on channel coordination, customer journeys, market access, and internationalisation, providing a basis for positioning omnichannel integration as a connecting capability in foreign market development.

Table 2. Literature Evidence for Proposition 2

No.	Author (Year) / Journal	Research Findings	Difference from the Current Study
1	Verhoef et al. (2015) / Journal of Retailing	The transition from multichannel to omnichannel retailing emphasises the integration of customer interactions across multiple channels and the creation of a seamless customer experience.	Focuses on the evolution and management of omnichannel retailing rather than foreign market entry.
2	Neslin (2022) / Journal of Retailing	The omnichannel continuum explains how firms integrate online and offline channels throughout the customer journey, strengthening coordinated customer access and interaction.	Concentrates on customer journey integration and does not examine international market entry as an outcome.
3	Verhoef (2021) / Journal of Strategic Marketing	Omnichannel retailing requires firms to coordinate channels and customer experiences as an integrated system rather than managing each channel independently.	Provides a strategic reflection on omnichannel retailing without linking integration directly to foreign market entry.
4	Akter et al. (2021) / Journal of Strategic Marketing	Omnichannel represents more than the simultaneous use of multiple channels; its strategic meaning lies in integrating channels and creating continuity across customer interactions.	Clarifies the concept of omnichannel but does not examine its implications for internationalisation.
5	Shankar & Kushwaha (2021) / International Journal of Research in Marketing	Cross-channel effects demonstrate that customer responses in one channel can influence activity in other channels, highlighting the strategic importance of coordinating channels.	Examines cross-channel effects rather than the role of integration in foreign market entry.
6	Belvedere et al. (2021) / Italian Journal of Marketing	Integrating e-commerce with existing online and offline channels enables firms to obtain greater value from digital	Examines omnichannel integration in e-commerce rather than its contribution to foreign market entry.

⁴⁷ Lehrer and Trenz, "Omnichannel Business: Electronic Markets–The International Journal on Networked Business."

⁴⁸ Yang and Hu, "Digital Technology-Empowered Omnichannel Integration: A Review and Research Agenda."

		commerce and coordinate customer-facing activities.	
7	Iglesias-Pradas & Acquila-Natale (2023) / Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research	The development of e-commerce is moving from multichannel towards omnichannel models, with increasing integration between digital and physical customer touchpoints.	Provides an overview of multichannel and omnichannel development but does not specifically examine foreign market entry.
8	Hardaker & Zhang (2021) / International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management	Prior online market entry can provide firms with an initial presence in a foreign market before deeper physical market involvement, suggesting that digital channels can facilitate international market development.	Examines prior online entry into China rather than an integrated omnichannel system.
9	Kalinic & Brouthers (2022) / International Business Review	Export channel selection influences international performance, demonstrating the strategic importance of selecting and managing appropriate channels when firms expand internationally.	Focuses on export channel selection and performance rather than omnichannel integration.
10	Do Vale et al. (2022) / Journal of Business Strategy	The international expansion of retail businesses increasingly requires integrated channels because global reach depends on firms' ability to combine different routes to customers and markets.	Discusses global retail reach through omnichannel strategies but does not develop the sequential relationship proposed in the present study.

The evidence points to two complementary insights. First, omnichannel research establishes that integration improves the continuity and coordination of customer access across channels.⁴⁹ Second, internationalisation studies indicate that digital and physical channels provide alternative pathways for establishing foreign market presence and developing market relationships.⁵⁰ This connection is important because foreign market entry does not necessarily require immediate physical establishment. Online presence can precede deeper market involvement, while channel selection can influence international performance.⁵¹

Taken together, the evidence suggests that omnichannel integration can reduce fragmentation in reaching foreign customers by coordinating different routes to market. Its contribution to foreign market entry therefore lies not merely in increasing the number of available channels, but in expanding and coordinating market access. This interpretation is consistent with the internationalisation perspective, in which market knowledge and relationship development accumulate through interactions with foreign markets.⁵² Omnichannel integration can facilitate these interactions by creating connected touchpoints through which firms engage customers and learn from market responses.

Although the individual studies do not uniformly test omnichannel integration as a direct determinant of foreign market entry, their findings converge around mechanisms involving market access, customer engagement, channel coordination, and international market development. The present review connects these dispersed strands of literature by positioning omnichannel integration as the capability that translates coordinated channel management into foreign market access. Overall, the reviewed literature supports the proposed relationship between omnichannel integration and foreign market entry, indicating that coordinated channel capabilities can strengthen firms' ability to access and develop foreign markets

⁴⁹ Verhoef, Kannan, and Inman, "From Multi-Channel Retailing to Omni-Channel Retailing: Introduction to the Special Issue on Multi-Channel Retailing"; Neslin, "The Omnichannel Continuum: Integrating Online and Offline Channels along the Customer Journey."

⁵⁰ Hardaker and Zhang, "'Testing the Water'—Prior-Online Market Entry in China"; Do Vale, Collin-Lachaud, and Lecocq, "The New Retail Model: Global Reach Demands Omni-Channels."

⁵¹ Hardaker and Zhang, "'Testing the Water'—Prior-Online Market Entry in China."

⁵² Johanson and Vahlne, "The Uppsala Internationalization Process Model Revisited: From Liability of Foreignness to Liability of Outsidership."

Foreign Market Entry as the Internationalisation Outcome

Foreign market entry represents the stage at which firms extend their activities beyond domestic markets and begin to establish a presence among foreign customers. This process can take different forms, ranging from online market presence and export channels to physical expansion and emerging non-traditional entry arrangements, with varying degrees of commitment. Table 3 brings together ten studies that illuminate this process through market knowledge, business relationships, channel choices, entry modes, and commitment. Rather than treating foreign market entry as a single strategic decision, the literature portrays it as an evolving process in which firms progressively develop access, knowledge, relationships, and commitment within foreign markets.

Table 3. Literature Evidence on Foreign Market Entry

No.	Author (Year) / Journal	Research Findings	Difference from the Current Study
1	Johanson & Vahlne (2009) / Journal of International Business Studies	Internationalisation is described as a gradual process involving the development of foreign market knowledge, relationships, and increasing commitment.	Establishes the foundational internationalisation perspective but predates the development of contemporary digital and omnichannel business models.
2	Brouthers et al. (2022) / Journal of International Business Studies	Technological development and changing business models have created non-traditional foreign market entry modes that expand the strategic alternatives available to firms.	Focuses on conceptualising non-traditional entry modes rather than examining omnichannel integration as a preceding capability.
3	Hardaker & Zhang (2021) / International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management	Prior online market entry can provide an initial foreign market presence and potentially precede deeper physical market involvement.	Examines online entry into China rather than the broader role of integrated online and offline channels.
4	Bai et al. (2017) / International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management	Luxury retailers employ different entry and expansion strategies when entering the Chinese market, reflecting the importance of market-specific strategic choices.	Focuses on luxury retail entry and expansion in China rather than digitally enabled channel integration.
5	Bai et al. (2021) / Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	Post-entry expansion is influenced by retailers' motives and strategic responses to opportunities within the foreign market.	Concentrates on post-entry expansion rather than the capability preceding the initial market entry decision.
6	Bai et al. (2021) / International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management	The direction of post-entry expansion varies according to market opportunities and the strategic development of retailers after entering China.	Examines the direction of expansion rather than the role of omnichannel integration in facilitating entry.
7	Kalinic & Brouthers (2022) / International Business Review	Export channel selection is strategically associated with international performance, demonstrating the importance of channel decisions in foreign market activities.	Focuses on export channel selection and performance rather than integrated omnichannel capabilities.
8	Brennan & Garvey (2009) / Research in International Business and Finance	Knowledge plays an important role in internationalisation by supporting firms' understanding of foreign markets and influencing their international development.	Emphasises knowledge as a driver of internationalisation without incorporating digital or omnichannel mechanisms.
9	Do Vale et al. (2022) / Journal of Business Strategy	Global retail expansion increasingly relies on combining channels to achieve broader market reach and respond to changing customer access patterns.	Connects global reach with omnichannel strategies but does not position omnichannel integration within a sequential literature model.

10	Zou & Cavusgil (2002) / Journal of Marketing	Global marketing strategy involves coordinated strategic decisions across markets and can influence firms' international performance through the effective deployment of marketing resources.	Provides a broad global marketing perspective rather than focusing specifically on digital transformation and omnichannel integration as antecedents of market entry.
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The literature portrays foreign market entry as an increasingly flexible process rather than a bounded decision concerning geographical expansion. The Uppsala perspective emphasises the accumulation of knowledge and relationships as firms increase their international commitment,⁵³ while later studies show that online channels and non-traditional entry modes can reshape how international activities are initiated.⁵⁴ Retail research likewise presents entry and post-entry expansion as dynamic processes influenced by strategic choices and market opportunities.⁵⁵ Foreign market entry can therefore be gradual, digitally initiated, channel dependent, and responsive to accumulated market experience.

This perspective also highlights the importance of mechanisms that enable firms to reach foreign customers, generate market knowledge, maintain relationships, and adjust their level of commitment as international activities develop. Channel choice can influence international performance,⁵⁶ while knowledge remains fundamental to internationalisation.⁵⁷ Omnichannel integration can bridge these requirements by coordinating different routes through which firms access and engage foreign markets.

Viewed collectively, the literature positions foreign market entry as the outcome of an evolving internationalisation process involving capabilities, channels, knowledge, and market relationships. The present review extends this understanding by connecting foreign market entry with digital transformation and omnichannel integration. Rather than treating technology, channel management, and internationalisation as separate streams, the synthesis presents a sequential relationship in which digital capabilities support channel integration, while integrated channels create a more flexible basis for foreign market access. Foreign market entry thus emerges as the strategic outcome of the proposed conceptual framework.

Digital Transformation as the Enabling Capability for Omnichannel Integration

The findings indicate that digital transformation contributes to omnichannel integration when digital technologies are embedded within organisational processes, information systems, and strategic decision-making. Rather than treating digital transformation as technology adoption alone, the literature positions it as a broader capability that reshapes business strategy and organisational activities.⁵⁸ This capability becomes particularly relevant in marketing and commerce, where digital technologies support the coordination of customer-facing activities across different channels.⁵⁹ Omnichannel integration therefore represents an important organisational expression of digital transformation because it converts digital resources into coordinated interactions across online and offline touchpoints.⁶⁰

The mechanism underlying this relationship is the reduction of fragmentation. Digital platforms, shared data, and integrated information systems allow information and activities to move across

⁵³ Johanson and Vahlne.

⁵⁴ Hardaker and Zhang, "Testing the Water"—Prior-Online Market Entry in China"; Brouthers et al., "Charting New Courses to Enter Foreign Markets: Conceptualization, Theoretical Framework, and Research Directions on Non-Traditional Entry Modes: Keith D. Brouthers et Al."

⁵⁵ Bai, McColl, and Moore, "Luxury Retailers' Entry and Expansion Strategies in China"; Bai, McColl, and Moore, "Motives behind Retailers' Post-Entry Expansion-Evidence from the Chinese Luxury Fashion Market."

⁵⁶ Kalinic and Brouthers, "Entrepreneurial Orientation, Export Channel Selection, and Export Performance of SMEs."

⁵⁷ LOUIS Brennan and DAVID Garvey, "The Role of Knowledge in Internationalization," *Research in International Business and Finance* 23, no. 2 (2009): 120–33.

⁵⁸ Bharadwaj et al., "Digital Business Strategy: Toward a next Generation of Insights"; Cioppi et al., "Digital Transformation and Marketing: A Systematic and Thematic Literature Review."

⁵⁹ Cioppi et al., "Digital Transformation and Marketing: A Systematic and Thematic Literature Review."

⁶⁰ Lehrer and Trenz, "Omnichannel Business: Electronic Markets—The International Journal on Networked Business"; Yang and Hu, "Digital Technology-Empowered Omnichannel Integration: A Review and Research Agenda."

organisational units and customer-facing channels more consistently.⁶¹ However, digitalisation does not automatically produce integration. Firms may operate multiple digital and physical channels while customers still encounter inconsistent information, service, or processes. The strategic value of digital transformation consequently depends on the firm's ability to connect technologies with shared processes, interoperable information, and cross-channel coordination. Omnichannel integration thus extends digital transformation from technological capability into coordinated market-facing capability.

Omnichannel Integration as the Connecting Mechanism for Foreign Market Entry

The findings further suggest that omnichannel integration can facilitate foreign market entry by coordinating different routes through which firms reach customers, gather information, and develop market relationships. Omnichannel research emphasises continuity across customer touchpoints, while internationalisation research increasingly recognises online channels and non-traditional entry arrangements as flexible pathways into foreign markets.⁶² This connection is important because foreign market entry is not necessarily initiated through immediate physical establishment. Digital channels can provide initial access, while other channels and local arrangements can be incorporated as market involvement develops.⁶³

The relevance of omnichannel integration also extends beyond market reach. Internationalisation depends on the accumulation of knowledge and relationships as firms learn from foreign markets and adjust their commitment over time.⁶⁴ Connected channels can support this process by generating information from customer interactions and enabling firms to respond across different touchpoints. Social media interactions within digital commerce likewise demonstrate how digitally connected customer engagement can support business activities and market access.⁶⁵ Channel selection may influence international performance, while broader coordination among channels can expand opportunities to reach and engage customers.⁶⁶ Omnichannel integration therefore functions as a connecting capability between digital access and sustained foreign market participation. It does not eliminate differences in regulation, consumer behaviour, logistics, or local relationships, but can improve the flexibility with which firms respond to these differences.

Theoretical Contribution: A Sequential Capability View of Digital Internationalisation

The main theoretical contribution of this review is the integration of three literature streams into a sequential capability relationship. Digital transformation provides the technological and organisational foundation, omnichannel integration converts that foundation into coordinated market activity, and foreign market entry represents its application beyond the domestic market. This formulation addresses the fragmentation between research on digital transformation, omnichannel management, and internationalisation by identifying the organisational mechanism that connects them.

This perspective also distinguishes digital reach from international presence. Digital technologies may make foreign customers accessible, but access alone does not guarantee sustained international participation. Firms still need to coordinate customer interactions, generate market knowledge, develop relationships, and adapt their operations as foreign-market involvement increases.⁶⁷ Omnichannel integration provides a mechanism for connecting these activities, allowing firms to move from fragmented digital access toward more coordinated international market development.

⁶¹ Hein et al., "Digital Platform Ecosystems: A. Hein et Al."

⁶² Verhoef, Kannan, and Inman, "From Multi-Channel Retailing to Omni-Channel Retailing: Introduction to the Special Issue on Multi-Channel Retailing"; Hardaker and Zhang, "'Testing the Water'—Prior-Online Market Entry in China."

⁶³ Do Vale, Collin-Lachaud, and Lecocq, "The New Retail Model: Global Reach Demands Omni-Channels"; Brouthers et al., "Charting New Courses to Enter Foreign Markets: Conceptualization, Theoretical Framework, and Research Directions on Non-Traditional Entry Modes: Keith D. Brouthers et Al."

⁶⁴ Johanson and Vahlne, "The Uppsala Internationalization Process Model Revisited: From Liability of Foreignness to Liability of Outsidership."

⁶⁵ Sora Baltasar et al., "The Influence of Social Media on the Success of Dropshippers in the E-Commerce Business Model," *Journal of Investment Development, Economics and Accounting* 2, no. 1 (2025): 6–22.

⁶⁶ Kalinic and Brouthers, "Entrepreneurial Orientation, Export Channel Selection, and Export Performance of SMEs."

⁶⁷ Brennan and Garvey, "The Role of Knowledge in Internationalization"; Johanson and Vahlne, "The Uppsala Internationalization Process Model Revisited: From Liability of Foreignness to Liability of Outsidership."

Taken together, the framework suggests that digital internationalisation is better understood as a capability-building process than as a direct technology-to-market outcome. Digital transformation creates capability potential; omnichannel integration organises that potential into coordinated market activity; and foreign market entry reflects the deployment of these capabilities in international markets. This sequential perspective extends established internationalisation thinking by showing how digital capabilities acquire international strategic value through organisational and channel integration.

Managerial Implications

The findings suggest that managers should view digital transformation as organisational change rather than technology acquisition. Investments in e-commerce platforms, customer relationship systems, analytics, mobile applications, and digital communication should therefore be assessed by their ability to connect organisational processes and customer interactions. The priority is not to maximise the number of digital channels, but to develop shared data and process architectures that support coordinated operations and customer engagement.

Omnichannel integration should be treated as a cross-functional responsibility involving marketing, sales, logistics, customer service, information systems, finance, and international business. Common performance indicators should assess continuity across the customer journey rather than channel performance in isolation. This approach can help firms distinguish genuine improvements in market access and customer engagement from unnecessary channel complexity.

For foreign market expansion, managers can use omnichannel integration to support a staged and evidence-based entry process. Digital channels can initially be used to test demand, identify customer segments, observe customer behaviour, and assess market attractiveness before greater physical commitment. Stronger market signals can then guide connections with distributors, local partners, physical outlets, or other forms of market presence, allowing firms to increase commitment as market knowledge develops.

Finally, cross-channel data should be treated as a source of foreign-market intelligence rather than separate operational information. Integrating search behaviour, digital engagement, transactions, enquiries, returns, service interactions, and physical purchases can reveal emerging demand, differences across markets, and channel-specific problems. Omnichannel integration can therefore move beyond customer experience toward a market-learning capability that supports faster and more informed international decisions.

Conclusion

This systematic literature review shows that digital internationalisation is better understood as a sequential capability process linking digital transformation, omnichannel integration, and foreign market entry. The first proposition is supported by the reviewed literature, as digital transformation provides the technological and organisational foundation for integrating information, processes, and customer interactions across channels. However, digital investment alone is insufficient because effective integration depends on interoperable systems, shared information, governance, and organisational coordination.

The second proposition is also supported by the reviewed literature. Omnichannel integration facilitates foreign market entry by connecting digital and physical routes to customers, supporting market learning, and enabling firms to develop foreign-market presence progressively. Nevertheless, integration does not replace market knowledge, local relationships, or appropriate entry modes. Its strategic value lies in increasing the firm's flexibility to coordinate alternative routes to foreign customers and adapt as market knowledge develops.

The principal contribution of this review is to position omnichannel integration as the connecting capability between digital transformation and foreign market entry. This extends existing literature by explaining how digital capabilities can be converted into coordinated market access rather than assuming that digitalisation directly produces internationalisation. The proposed framework therefore reframes digital internationalisation as a process in which digital transformation creates capability potential, omnichannel integration converts that potential into market capability, and foreign market entry represents its strategic deployment.

Future research should empirically test this sequential relationship, particularly through longitudinal and cross-country studies. Research should also examine boundary conditions such as firm size, digital maturity, industry characteristics, international experience, institutional differences, and market uncertainty. Such studies would strengthen empirical validation of the proposed framework and clarify when omnichannel integration is most effective in converting digital capabilities into sustainable foreign-market presence.

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