Managing digitalized touchpoints in B2B customer journeys

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ABSTRACT

Business-to-business (B2B) suppliers need to develop specific capabilities to successfully manage digitalized touchpoints in B2B customer journeys. As digitalization leads to shifts in touchpoints, new demands arise regarding a supplier's ability to manage these touchpoints. Developing capabilities for managing digitalized touchpoints is becoming a key aspect for suppliers in designing and managing attractive B2B customer journeys. Although extant research has highlighted the importance of managing touchpoints in the form of capabilities, this area has received surprisingly little research attention. Similarly, the B2B context in customer journeys remains under-researched. The present study investigates supplier capabilities for the management of digitalized touchpoints in B2B customer journeys. Through an exploratory in-depth case study, this research identifies seven key supplier capabilities for the management of digitalized touchpoints in B2B customer journeys: preparing customer resources, integrating customer resources, enabling collective actions, supporting customer actions, balancing activation levels, hybridizing environments, and merging digital environments. These capabilities are structured around a theoretically derived conceptualization of touchpoints as consisting of resources, actions, and environments. From a capability perspective, this study also demonstrates the key role of touchpoint control, as well as approaching touchpoints as sequences to ensure consistency across, and seamlessness between transitions of, touchpoints.

1. Introduction

The concept of customer journeys is increasingly recognized as a central element in marketing (Homburg & Tischer, 2023; Steward, Narus, Roehm, & Ritz, 2019; Witell et al., 2020). A key building block in a customer journey is the notion of touchpoints, considered here as the interactions, or engagements, between a supplier and a customer (Homburg, Jozić, & Kuehnl, 2017; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Because touchpoints are pivotal for, and embedded in, customer journeys, it becomes important for a supplier to be able to manage these (Durmusoglu, McNally, & Chen, 2022; Hodgkinson, Jackson, & West, 2021). Poorly managed touchpoints can, for example, lead to excessive resource usage as well as bad customer experiences. A supplier's ability to manage touchpoints becomes especially challenging in business-to-business (B2B) contexts, where customer journeys are characterized by greater complexity, a broader array of stakeholders and touchpoints, as well as longer engagement timelines (Meyer & Schwager, 2007; Witell et al., 2020; Zolkiewski et al., 2017). These characteristics put added demands on the management of touchpoints but also highlight the need for further insights into B2B customer journeys (Purmonen,

Jaakkola, & Terho, 2023; Rusthollkarhu, Toukola, Aarikka-Stenroos, & Mahlamäki, 2022).

While existing research underscores the significance of touchpoints within the customer journey, and the competitive edge that can be gained through their effective management in the form of capabilities (e.g., Aichner & Gruber, 2017; Dhebar, 2013; Gao, Fan, Li, & Wang, 2021; Homburg et al., 2017), there is a notable lack of studies delving into the specific supplier-oriented capabilities necessary for managing these touchpoints (Homburg & Tischer, 2023; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Maechler, Sahni, & van Oostrum, 2016). This is especially so in the face of advancing digitalization. Digitalization, describing the process by which digital technologies are influencing business processes (see, e.g., Li, Kannan, Viswanathan, & Pani, 2016), not only introduces new opportunities but also compounds the complexity of managing touchpoints (Marino & Lo Presti, 2018; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2015). For example, both the diversity and number of touchpoints in a customer journey typically tend to increase as firms introduce digital technologies (De Keyser, Verleye, Lemon, Keiningham, & Klaus, 2020; Larivière et al., 2017). This leads to an additional emphasis on understanding suppliers' touchpoint management capabilities related to a new digital reality

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(Ritter & Pedersen, 2020; Volberda, Khanagha, Baden-Fuller, Mihalache, & Birkinshaw, 2021).

Since digitalization permeates most sectors, managing digitalized touchpoints has indeed emerged as a critical endeavor for B2B firms aiming to design and actualize valuable customer journeys (cf. Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). Although there are broader calls for enriching our understanding of the overall B2B customer journeys (De Keyser et al., 2020; McColl-Kennedy, Zaki, Lemon, Urmetzer, & Neely, 2019), a particular emphasis has been placed on the need to explore how suppliers can effectively manage touchpoints in B2B settings (Gao et al., 2021; Witell et al., 2020). Furthermore, while the influence of digitalization on touchpoints has been recognized (Larivière et al., 2017; Lundin & Kindström, 2023), a more comprehensive understanding of how B2B suppliers can effectively manage so-called 'digitalized touchpoints' (Straker, Wrigley, & Rosemann, 2015) is lacking. This study aims to address this shortcoming by exploring supplier-oriented capabilities for the management of digitalized touchpoints in B2B customer journeys.

Taking a starting point in an in-depth case study of a B2B manufacturing firm, our research offers three principal contributions. Firstly, we significantly extend the literature by delineating key capabilities essential for managing digitalized touchpoints within B2B customer journeys, thus adding depth to prior investigations (Maechler et al., 2016; Mora Cortez & Johnston, 2017). Our analysis reveals how suppliers can strategically manage not only individual touchpoints but also sequences of touchpoints (cf. Kranzbühler, Kleijnen, Morgan, & Teerling, 2018) in order to create more valuable B2B customer journeys and to effectively guide customer interactions. Secondly, we offer an extensive discussion on the nature of B2B touchpoints, developing a nuanced framework for their management that addresses the unique complexities of B2B environments, a dimension lacking in existing research. This provides a platform for firms to prioritize their touchpoint efforts more effectively and to design value-creating touchpoints. Lastly, our study adds to the overall discussion on customer journey management by approaching it from a more granular perspective—focusing on touchpoints—thereby responding to recent calls for more research in this domain (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Witell et al., 2020). In this, we expand on existing customer journey literature by emphasizing the supplier's role (cf. Rusthollkarhu et al., 2022), among other things pinpointing the opportunity for suppliers to act more proactively in their customer interactions.

To build our contributions, we start by defining touchpoints and their management in B2B customer journeys as they become increasingly digitalized. Following this, we forward our qualitative case study approach and methodology. Our findings are then presented and anchored in our theoretical framing. We conclude by discussing the theoretical and managerial implications of our findings, acknowledging the study's limitations, while also proposing avenues for future research.

2. Managing digitalized touchpoints in B2B customer journeys

The present study's focal area is suppliers' management of digitalized touchpoints in B2B customer journeys. Similar to previous studies exploring B2B customer journey management (see, e.g., Durmusoglu et al., 2022; Homburg et al., 2017; Homburg & Tischer, 2023; Rusthollkarhu et al., 2022), this research uses the capability perspective as a lens for exploring this area. Previous research has investigated managerial capabilities relating to the overall customer journey (Durmusoglu et al., 2022), but the management of touchpoints themselves remains under-explored (see, e.g., Durmusoglu et al., 2022; Homburg et al., 2017; Homburg & Tischer, 2023; Rusthollkarhu et al., 2022). Whereas customer journey management takes a broader perspective, including stimuli beyond and potentially also outside touchpoints (see e.g., Lundin & Kindström, 2023; Purmonen et al., 2023), touchpoint management instead takes a more granular perspective on how customer experiences can be managed s on stimuli within individual touchpoints (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020).

In keeping with previous research, we define capabilities as "capacities to perform a particular activity in a reliable and at least minimally satisfactory manner" (Helfat & Winter, 2011: 1244). In other words, a capability has an objective, or a purpose, and a functionality (Helfat & Martin, 2015; Herhausen, Miočević, Morgan, & Kleijnen, 2020), and can be perceived as consisting of activities (see e.g. Helfat & Winter, 2011). In our study, we approach touchpoint management as a set of supplier-oriented operational capabilities, i.e. capabilities residing within the supplier focused on managing touchpoints (Homburg et al., 2017; Homburg & Tischer, 2023). Previous research has indeed found that suppliers need to develop specific operational capabilities for managing touchpoints (e.g., Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Operational activities are focused on "how we earn a living now" (Winter, 2003; p 992), in contrast to driving change. Especially in B2B customer journeys, suppliers need such capabilities in order to manage digitalized touchpoints (Mora Cortez & Johnston, 2017). A capability perspective thus provides an established platform for investigating what touchpoint management in digitalized B2B customer journeys entails and provides a point of leverage for this study (Herhausen et al., 2020)

Different ways of classifying touchpoints have been proposed to cope with an increasing number of touchpoints and the challenges in managing them. While overall classifications are useful, few studies consider the dimensions within a touchpoint, that is, the components constituting a touchpoint. To understand the nature of B2B customer journeys, and following previous literature (e.g., McColl-Kennedy et al., 2019; Pagani & Pardo, 2017), we take the view that customers integrate resources through various actions in different contexts at multiple touchpoints. To be able to 'zoom-in' on touchpoints (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020), we propose a conceptualization of touchpoints in B2B customer journeys consisting of three key dimensions, *resources, actions,* and an *environment.*

Throughout the B2B customer journey, resources are exchanged as part of a touchpoint (Payne, Storbacka, & Frow, 2008). Such resources can include knowledge, data, skills, labor, infrastructure, and time (Harmeling, Moffett, Arnold, & Carlson, 2017; Hollebeek, Kumar, Srivastava, & Clark, 2022; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2019; Pansari & Kumar, 2017). Thus, resources are a key constituent in understanding touchpoints. Furthermore, multiple types of actions are often performed at touchpoints (Homburg et al., 2017; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016), such as searching for information about products or services, or even using a product. These actions are carried out at different touchpoints to accomplish various goals (Homburg et al., 2017; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Purmonen et al., 2023). In B2B customer journeys, touchpoints are typically perceived as more purposeful and outcome-driven compared to B2C settings (Marcos-Cuevas, Nätti, Palo, & Baumann, 2016). The actions carried out at touchpoints are thus another key dimension of understanding touchpoints. Finally, it is important to consider the contextual conditions within which the touchpoints are situated (Bolton et al., 2018; De Keyser, Lemon, Klaus, & Keiningham, 2015; McColl-Kennedy et al., 2019). Interactions along a customer journey take place in an 'interaction space' that functions as an enabler of resource exchanges and action flows between the customer and supplier (Aichner & Gruber, 2017; Barann, Hermann, Heuchert, & Becker, 2020; Singh, Nambisan, Bridge, & Brock, 2021; Roy & Bhatia, 2019). This is referred to as the touchpoint environment, which represents a third key dimension of a touchpoint.

Taken together, the three dimensions all need to be addressed when managing customer touchpoints. Accordingly, we propose a structuring framework of touchpoint management as three sets of capabilities; managing *resources,* managing *actions,* and managing *environments* (see Fig. 1).

We consider a touchpoint as being digitalized when the use of digital technologies influences how a customer interacts with a supplier (Lundin & Kindström, 2023) and drives changes to resources, actions, and environments. Our conceptualization provides a framework for understanding touchpoints in more detail, enabling us to provide more
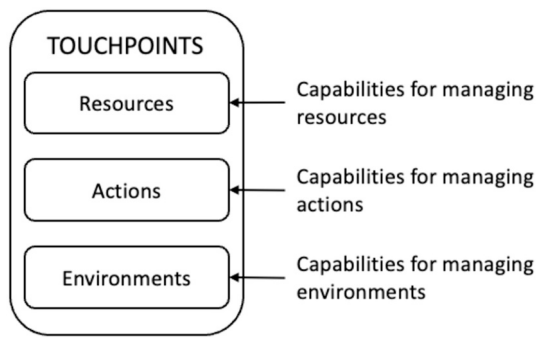
Fig. 1. Touchpoint management as capabilities to manage the three dimensions.

nuanced insights into the needed capabilities for managing digitalized touchpoints.

2.1. Managing touchpoint resources

Our first dimension involves the management of resources at touchpoints. At touchpoints, customers integrate and assess different resources, typically provided by the supplier (Hung, Lee, & Hu, 2023; Ordenes, Theodoulidis, Burton, Gruber, & Zaki, 2014). Different types of customer resources may also be needed throughout the B2B journey, for example depending upon the position of the touchpoint along the journey (Barann et al., 2020) or the involved roles (Witell et al., 2020). From a touchpoint management perspective, a supplier needs to be able to identify needed customer resources as well as encourage their use (Harmeling et al., 2017; Hollebeek, Srivastava, & Chen, 2019). However, stimulating customer activity may also place added demands on the supplier to provide supporting resources (Witell et al., 2020).

Digitalization opens up the potential to include an array of new resources, typically data-driven, which can create added opportunities to gather and use information at touchpoints (Kannan & Li, 2017). By collecting and using increasingly more data, the involved actors may also, for example, be able to leverage other resources more efficiently (Harmeling et al., 2017; Hollebeek, 2019). However, the amount of data available can also introduce complexity (Kannan & Li, 2017), thus driving the need for new capabilities.

2.2. Managing touchpoint actions

The second dimension involves action management. The B2B customer journey illustrates the customer's process of moving toward their goals by performing series of actions at touchpoints (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Hamilton, Ferraro, Haws, & Mukhopadhyay, 2021). Since B2B relationships include multiple interactions, and since the customer entity includes multiple individuals representing various roles at different levels, multiple goals are present (Witell et al., 2020). A failure to support these customer actions and goals may lead to bad customer experiences (Witell et al., 2020). The actions also reflect how active the customer is at touchpoints (De Keyser et al., 2020). Through the customer journey, customers' level of participation, i.e. their actions, can range from low to high depending on the nature of the specific touchpoint (De Keyser et al., 2020). For instance, customers play a more active role in touchpoints where they cocreate offerings with the supplier (Witell et al., 2020).

From a management perspective, a supplier can have greater influence over a customer's actions with a higher degree control of a touchpoint (Witell et al., 2020). Through this control they can guide customer actions by, for instance, providing proactive recommendations in real-time (Purmonen et al., 2023). Increasingly active customers however perform activities by themselves, especially in digitalized customer journeys, such that a customer holds the supplier less responsible for the touchpoint (Witell et al., 2020). In such situations, a supplier has fewer opportunities to influence and has less control over, the customer's actions and experience (Yakhlef & Nordin, 2021). Being able to manage a customer's actions thus becomes increasingly relevant at digitalized touchpoints to mitigate this potential loss of control (Witell et al., 2020).

2.3. Managing touchpoint environments

Our third key dimension revolves around the management of environments. The touchpoint environment provides the 'space' for interactions in the customer journey and defines the boundaries for how the customer can interact with the supplier (De Keyser et al., 2020). Digital environments such as search engines, websites, digital service platforms, internet of things (IoT) enabled equipment, and social media are becoming more commonplace in B2B customer journeys (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016; Wang, Malthouse, Calder, & Uzunoglu, 2019). Although there is an increasing prevalence of interactions taking place within digital environments, B2B interactions typically also continue to take place in physical environments (e.g., sales meetings, consultative discussions, service delivery, or traditional repair of products; Aichner & Gruber, 2017; Wang et al., 2019). These physical environments still play an important role in B2B contexts and digital technologies can here work to support these physical environments (Ives, Palese, & Rodriguez, 2016). However, advanced digital technologies, such as IoT-enabled equipment and automation, also have the potential to completely replace some physical environments (Grewal & Roggeveen, 2020).

From a supplier's perspective, the increasing number of potential digital environments adds flexibility but also complexity to touchpoints and customer journeys (Singh et al., 2021). This emphasizes the importance of understanding how to manage the influx of multiple digitalized environments. Previous research has highlighted the need to understand the interplay between touchpoints with different environments (Bolton et al., 2018), such as how different touchpoint environments interact and whether different types of environments drive different outcomes (De Keyser et al., 2020).

3. Methodology

The goal of this research is to explore supplier-oriented capabilities for the management of digitalized touchpoints. A qualitative case study approach is deemed appropriate for this research due to the ability to provide in-depth insights into complex phenomena, facilitating a nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play in touchpoint management (De Keyser et al., 2020; Edmondson & Mcmanus, 2007). This methodology is well-suited for exploring areas where existing theory is nascent, allowing for the examination of the phenomenon in its real-life context using in-depth and rich data (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2009).

Our analysis is guided by an abductive reasoning process, wherein we iterate between empirical observations and the theoretical framework in order to generate novel theoretical insights (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). This abductive orientation enables us to draw upon existing theories while remaining open to emerging patterns and themes that extend beyond current conceptualizations.

3.1. Case selection and research context

To investigate the management of digitalized touchpoints in B2B customer journeys, a deliberate and theoretically informed selection process was employed to identify a suitable focal supplier firm, herein referred to as 'DigiCo'. This selection adhered to a purposeful and theoretically grounded sampling strategy designed to ensure that the chosen case would provide relevant insights into the focal phenomenon (Eisenhardt, 2021; Gibbert et al., 2008).

The criteria for DigiCo's selection were defined to align with the study's objectives: (a) a clear B2B operational context; (b) significant

experience with digitalization, particularly regarding customer interactions (such as through digital solutions and systems); (c) established, long-term customer relationships highlighting the relevance of the customer journey concept and touchpoint management; (d) a portfolio of products and services emphasizing multiple different touchpoints, including digitalized touchpoints; and (e) accessibility to key informants. The industrial manufacturing sector, with its complex digitalization challenges, was seen as an especially relevant context for this study (cf. Volberda et al., 2021).

The selected firm, DigiCo, is a large, market-leading global manufacturer headquartered in Sweden. It has a turnover of more than €4 billion, with over 15,000 employees worldwide and a presence in over 100 markets. DigiCo manufactures and offers premium complex products for various industrial contexts and provides a range of related services, including digital services. The portfolio lends itself well to exploring touchpoint management because the nature of its products and associated services typically necessitates multiple touchpoints, involving multiple individuals spread over an extended period of time.

To increase our understanding of the research context, and the interactions between supplier and customer in B2B journeys, four customer organizations were incorporated as embedded cases within the empirical framework. For these customers, DigiCo's products are at the core of their businesses and operations, which permits the study to emphasize the customer journey and associated touchpoints. These customer firms were selected in collaboration with DigiCo based on their digital maturity and the nature of their interactions with DigiCo.

3.2. Data collection

The primary data collection method employed in this study was in-depth interviews, chosen for their capacity to provide rich, detailed insights into the complexities of managing digitalized touchpoints in B2B customer journeys. This approach was particularly suited to our research objectives, requiring participants who were not only knowledgeable about digitalization and customer interactions but also willing to share their experiences (Gioia et al., 2013; Zeithaml et al., 2020).

Initial respondents at DigiCo were identified with the assistance of DigiCo's senior management. To add to the depth and breadth of insights, a snowball sampling technique was also utilized, enabling a continuous identification of additional relevant participants whose roles spanned various functions such as marketing, sales, production, research and development, and service. This breadth facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study and increased the reliability of our findings through data triangulation across multiple sources and viewpoints (Dubois & Gibbert, 2010). All respondents had multi-year experience relative to their respective roles as well as working within DigiCo.

Regarding the customer perspective, one senior manager from each

of the four customer organizations was interviewed. These individuals were selected based on their extensive experience and strategic insight into their respective businesses, digitalization, and interactions with DigiCo, ensuring a relevant perspective on the customer-supplier dynamic.

A total of 27 interviews were conducted, 23 with DigiCo, and one each with the four customers (see Table 1). The interviews lasted between 60 and 120 min.

Our empirical inquiry employed a semi-structured interview guide, designed around the theoretical framing of customer journeys and touchpoints. Open-ended questions were incorporated to prompt respondents to articulate their experiences and perceptions in their own words, thereby mitigating biases associated with leading questions and so-called 'active listening' (McCracken, 1988). This approach facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the subject matter (Kvale, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

All interviews were conducted, and recorded, via Microsoft Teams. During the interviews comprehensive field notes were also taken by the researchers. Following each interview, the researchers involved (two researchers were present at each interview) convened to consolidate their notes and reflect on preliminary observations. These notes were subsequently added to a case-study database that featured raw data (e. g., quotations), preliminary analyses, and initial interpretations, contributing to the reliability of these findings (Yin, 2009) as well as enabling audit trails (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In addition to primary data, our study leveraged secondary data sources, including public information from social media, company websites, podcasts, digital newsletters, and annual reports, as well as internal documents such as technical descriptions and presentation materials. These sources provided a backdrop of DigiCo's operational context and digital practices, increasing our understanding of the firm's digitalization efforts and customer interaction strategies.

3.3. Data analysis

Our research process was abductive in character, intertwining our theoretically grounded research purpose with an empirically driven, inductive analysis. This systematic 'combining' (Dubois & Gadde, 2002) facilitated the generation of novel theoretical insights by allowing for an interplay between empirical data and theoretical constructs (Sætre & Van De Ven, 2021). The analytical process was guided by the theoretical framework, including our touchpoint conceptualization (see Fig. 1).

Through a systematic exploration of supplier activities— in line with our working definition of capabilities —we engaged in a process of combining inductive empirical findings with extant literature. Through this process we refined emergent categorizations, enabling us to derive distinct supplier-oriented capabilities and ensuring that they were both grounded in reality as well as theoretically robust. Our continuous

Table 1
List of respondent roles – DigiCo and the four customers.

Manager Technical Service
Vice-President – Research and Development
Business Developer
Global Portfolio manager
Global Product Portfolio Manager
Global Product Line Manager
Chief Technology Officer
Product Manager – Business Development
Marketing Manager – Digital Business
Communications Manager – Digital Business
2 x Customer Experience Manager
Global Communications & Brand Manager
2 x Business Line Manager
2 x Product Manager
6 x Sales Engineer
Customer 1–4 – Senior manager (Chief Operating Officer or corresponding responsibility)

linking back to our theoretical framing throughout the analysis phase worked toward increasing the validity and credibility of our findings (Dubois & Gibbert, 2010; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

We employed a step-wise coding process, as recommended by Gioia et al. (2013), to identify and categorize the relevant capabilities—that is, the activities and processes underpinning the management of digitalized touchpoints in our B2B context. Initial coding resulted in the formation of first-order categories, directly derived from the empirical data (illustrative quotes are provided in Appendix A). These categories were then merged into second-order themes, i.e. supplier-oriented capabilities, using our touchpoint conceptualization as an analytical lens (see Fig. 2). This coding exercise included checks for internal consistency within categories and exclusiveness between them, ensuring the distinctiveness and clarity of our final capability set.

To enhance robustness, the evolving concepts were regularly discussed among the research team with attention being paid to interrater reliability to ensure that the concepts emerging from the data were consistent (as proposed by Elliott, 2018). Moreover, the research process incorporated so-called 'member checks' with individual respondents as well as multiple validation workshops with DigiCo. This process helped to minimize any empirical misunderstandings and validate preliminary analyses, increasing the trustworthiness of our study (Dubois & Gibbert, 2010; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

4. Capabilities for the management of digitalized touchpoints: Empirical findings

Our study identifies seven key capabilities for the management of digitalized touchpoints in B2B customer journeys. These capabilities are structured according to the three dimensions of our conceptual framework and the identified empirical activities, which provides transparency and enables us to detail the capabilities and their focus. Table 2 outlines each dimension and its associated capabilities (see also Appendix A for illustrative quotations pertaining to the capabilities). In this way, we forward a set of capabilities, which focuses on each of the three dimensions that together drive the management of digitalized touchpoints in B2B customer journeys.

4.1. Managing digitalized touchpoint resources

4.1.1. Preparing customer resources

As a first key capability for the management of digitalized touchpoint resources, a supplier needs to be able to prepare customers, increasing their digital readiness and enabling them to engage at digitalized touchpoints. In digitalized B2B customer journeys, customers may need to develop new resources to be able to take advantage of new digitalized touchpoints (Gebauer, Fleisch, Lamprecht, & Wortmann, 2020; Larivière et al., 2017). To sure that customers have the appropriate resources for engaging at digitalized touchpoints, DigiCo continuously assesses the digital level of the customers' resources. For instance, DigiCo evaluates the customers' networking resources such as Wi-Fi by comparing these with requirements from DigiCo. DigiCo then can prepare customers ensuring that they can become engaged at digitalized touchpoints.

The ability to prepare multiple different types of roles for digital engagements becomes emphasized in digitalized B2B journeys since the potential number of involved actors increases (Lundin & Kindström, 2023). For instance, with new digitalized touchpoints emerging, multiple managers at DigiCo highlighted the importance of being able to engage end-users (typically operators) early in the customer journey to
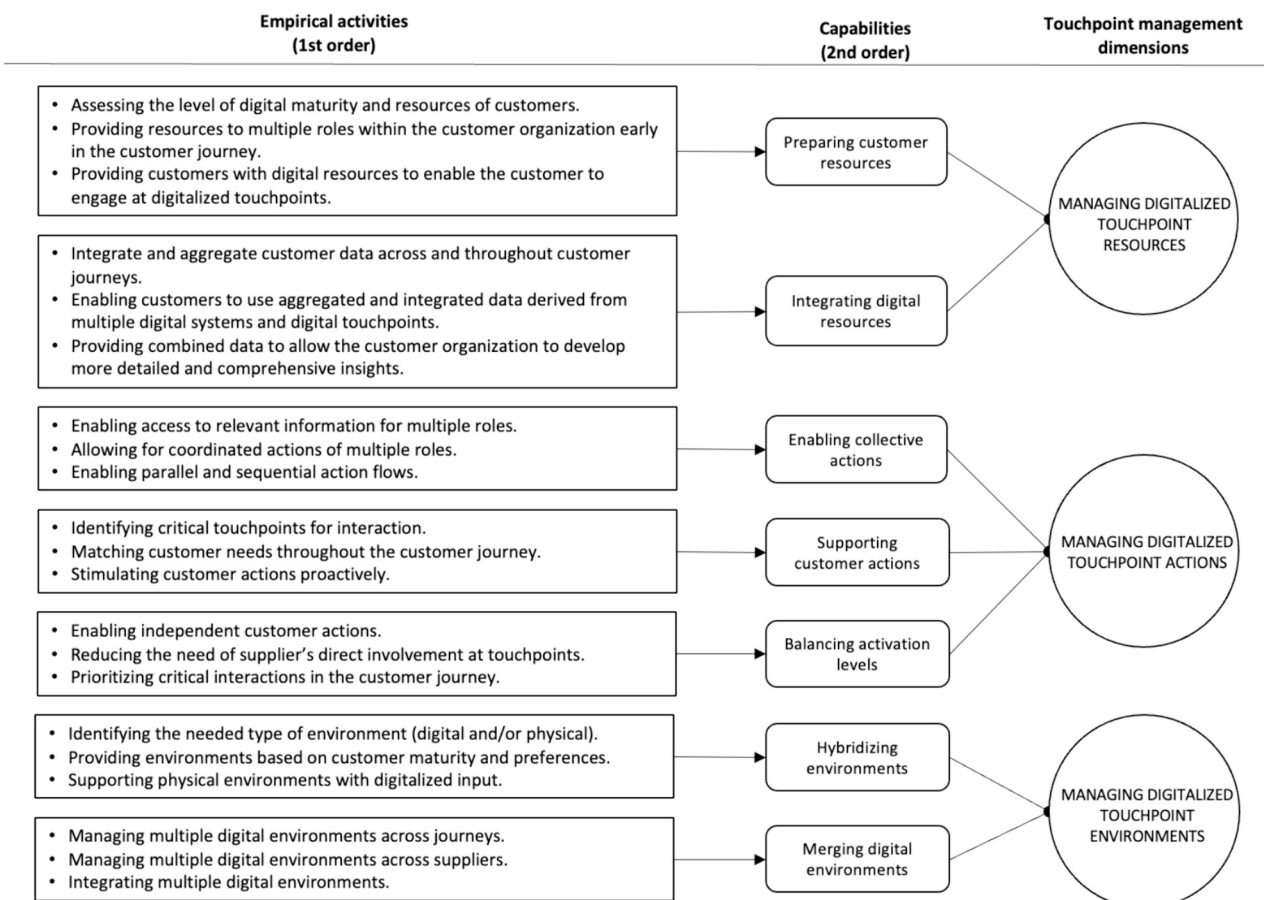

Fig. 2. The data structure.

Table 2
Supplier capabilities for the management of digitalized touchpoints in B2B customer journeys.

	Description	Potential outcomes
Managing digitalized touchpoint resources		
Preparing customer resources	Assessing customers' currently available resources and ensuring that they can access needed digitalized resources.	Stimulating engagement at touchpoints.
Integrating digital resources	Aggregating and integrating resources located at different parts of the customer journey.	Leveraging data to enable efficiency and value at touchpoints.
Managing digitalized touchpoint actions		
Enabling collective actions	Affording the customer organization a collective perspective of their actions to allow for smoother sequences of individual actions independent of the role performing it and a reduced number of actions needed to fulfill a goal.	Increasing consistency across and seamless transitions between touchpoints, reducing complexity in B2B customer journeys.
Supporting customer actions	Providing directed support that are relevant (related to the customer's decision-making process), timely (related to the customer's position in the customer journey), and appropriate for the customer's maturity level.	Enabling contextualized touchpoints, guiding customers' actions in the desired direction to fulfill their goals.
Balancing activation levels	Allow the customer organization have access to certain touchpoints, such that the customer can take actions independent of the supplier.	Stimulate engagement at touchpoints. Increasing customer control of touchpoints.
Managing digitalized touchpoint environments		
Hybridizing environments	Providing appropriate environments (digital or physical) according to customers' preferences and their ability to use them.	Allowing efficient transitions between touchpoints.
Merging digital environments	Merging digital environments where actions and resources intersect or overlap in touchpoints controlled by both the supplier and external actors.	Enabling consistency across touchpoints, seamless transition between touchpoints controlled by different actors.

enable these users to develop the needed digital resources. To accomplish this DigiCo provides training for end-users through their digital platforms much earlier in the customer journey than before. Through this training, DigiCo prepares its customers by enabling end-users to develop the resources needed to fully engage in the coming digitalized touchpoints. Enabling users in this way is decisive for future value creation (cf. Kleinaltenkamp, Karpen, Plewa, Jaakkola, & Conduit, 2019) because it stimulates increased engagement at digitalized touchpoints. To complement this, DigiCo has also launched a digital platform on which they, among other things, provide content about new features and upcoming updates. The capability of preparing customer resources enables a supplier to ensure that a customer can become engaged at digitalized touchpoints throughout the B2B customer journey.

4.1.2. Integrating digital resources

A second identified capability is the ability to integrate digital resources, derived from multiple digitalized systems and platforms, including digitalized touchpoints. For instance, DigiCo enables customers to continuously monitor the use of their equipment, gathering large amounts of data. The customers can subsequently use these resources to improve their future usage of the products or services. A supplier can enable this by integrating such usage data with multiple

other sources of data, which can create new valuable insights for customers. Combining and integrating data becomes important for taking full advantage of the potential value emanating from the available breadth of digital resources. Otherwise, only a portion of all the available data may be used: it is the integration of digital resources that can lead to new insights. Integrating data facilitates more accurate and updated information, which can allow for new value-creation opportunities as well as more customized customer journeys. For instance, DigiCo's customers have access to integrated digital resources through a digital fleet management platform. Through this platform, customers have access to insights such as the efficiency of their equipment, including external actors to the dyad. Accordingly, these insights can allow for improvements in the usage rate of the customers' processes.

Digitalized touchpoints provide a multitude of opportunities to gather and disseminate data across and throughout B2B customer journeys. By providing and integrating digital resources a supplier can make it possible for a customer to better make use of digitalized touchpoints and the increased amount of data as well as to build a more comprehensive understanding of the digitalized customer journey.

4.2. Managing digitalized touchpoint actions

4.2.1. Enabling collective actions

An important aspect of managing touchpoint actions is enabling collective customer actions at digitalized touchpoints by allowing the customer organization, and the multiple roles they entail, to have a shared perspective of the customer journey and the inherent touchpoints. With multiple roles active in different parts of a B2B customer journey, managing customer experiences can be challenging due to different needs and the range of actions performed (Purmonen et al., 2023). The complexity of the multiple roles involved is emphasized by increasing levels of digitalization since more roles tend to be part of digitalized journeys (Lundin & Kindström, 2023). A supplier needs to be able to support collective actions performed by these different roles to increase consistency across the touchpoints as well as through the entire customer journey.

At DigiCo, an example of enabling multiple customer actions is the digital product monitoring system. In this system, different customer roles have access to all relevant, as well as consistent, information. Instead of individuals having different starting points when taking actions, the individuals involved can instead act based on consistent and shared information. DigiCo can furthermore enable consistent collective actions in that one role can seamlessly take action where a previous action, carried out by another role, ended. Through enabling these shared insights a supplier can make it possible for a customer to perform multiple actions in parallel as well as sequentially. In this, enabling collective actions can improve efficiency in the overall sequences of actions and touchpoints. Finally, this collective understanding can also mitigate potential inconsistencies across touchpoints (Homburg & Tischer, 2023), thereby minimizing the impact of individual actions that cause deviations from the desired journey (Barann et al., 2020). If a supplier has the capability to enable collective customer actions, they can enable increased consistency across, and seamless transitions between, touchpoints, leading to more valuable customer journeys (Jaakkola & Terho, 2021).

4.2.2. Supporting customer actions

The ability to support a customer's actions involves providing relevant and timely support depending on what a customer does, and where, in a digitalized customer journey. In an increasingly competitive digital landscape, suppliers that are able to support a customer's actions by providing proactive updates and generating data-driven insights will have a competitive edge (Homburg et al., 2017). This becomes particularly relevant in B2B relationships due to the inherent multiplicity of different actors' goals (Witell et al., 2020).

Through the increased access to digital resources (i.e. data),

digitalized customer journeys and touchpoints open up new opportunities for suppliers to proactively match customer demands and support their actions. A supplier can also better pinpoint where a customer is in the customer journey, as well as understand which touchpoints are 'critical', and can thus focus on interactions that are more decisive for the overall customer experience (cf. Holmlund et al., 2020; Homburg et al., 2017). By leveraging digital usage data gathered from a digital telematics solution, DigiCo's sales representatives are, for example, able to access detailed information regarding a particular customer's current needs and particular actions in a given situation (and at a specific location in the customer journey), such that they can support those actions more effectively. DigiCo managers furthermore emphasize the importance of proactively being able to support a customer's actions to stimulate certain responses. For instance, in the latter part of the customer's journey when customers tend to require more service, supporting actions related to service processes can be vital for a supplier to enable a more efficient service encounter.

By supporting customers' actions at specific times and places throughout the customer journey suppliers can provide added value in the customer journey by guiding customer actions in the desired direction.

4.2.3. Balancing activation levels

The ability to balance activation levels is becoming vital for the management of digitalized touchpoints. Digitalized journeys facilitate increasingly active customers (Lundin & Kindström, 2023), which can be a pathway to more desirable customer experiences, particularly in B2B settings (Beckers, van Doorn, & Verhoef, 2018). However, increasingly active customers typically also tend to place higher demands on suppliers in terms of resources and involvement in the touchpoints (Witell et al., 2020), and being able to balance the levels of activation, across both customer journeys and touchpoints, becomes a key aspect of touchpoint action management.

At digitalized touchpoints, a supplier can easily enable customers to take independent actions since the need for the supplier's resources and direct involvement is typically reduced at those touchpoints. Physical touchpoints tend to require additional touchpoints as well as different types of resource exchanges, while resources can be made available anytime with digitalized touchpoints. For instance, through DigiCo's digital solutions, the customer organization has access to multiple digital resources, such that the customer can learn how to take independent actions without the supplier's direct input. By taking independent actions, the customer can increase their perceived control of certain touchpoints since the supplier is less active at the touchpoint (Witell et al., 2020). Since a supplier allows increased levels of customer control of these touchpoints, they can consequently reallocate potentially scarce resources and shift their focus to the direct management of more critical touchpoints. Hence, through balancing activation levels, customer engagement at digitalized touchpoints can be optimized, enabling the supplier to focus attention on the touchpoints that demand more direct interaction.

4.3. Managing digitalized touchpoint environments

4.3.1. Hybridizing environments

Hybridizing environments (digital and physical), including providing appropriate hybrid environments according to customers' preferences and abilities to use them, is a key capability to manage environments. Throughout a digitalized journey, a customer typically transitions between multiple types of environments—digital and physical—as they move between touchpoints. This is even more pronounced for B2B journeys because they are longer and more complex than B2C journeys, as well as typically not completely digital (Zolkiewski et al., 2017). Consequently, customer journeys can involve a multitude of environments, such as a website, a digital ordering system, as well as physical contexts. A supplier needs to be able to manage this 'hybrid'

portfolio of both digital and physical environments.

Although digitalization opens up new digital opportunities, not all actions or resource exchanges can or should take place in a digital environment depending on, for instance, customer preferences or prohibitive costs. DigiCo's managers emphasize the importance of understanding why a particular action should take place digitally and what the consequences are. The choice of environment also depends upon the customer and their capabilities, their relationship with DigiCo, and their desired outcome. For instance, at touchpoints located in the early phases of a customer journey, DigiCo makes use of several different types of environments. Here, for example, they mix traditional physical environments, such as showroom visits, with digital social media environments, such as LinkedIn, to interact with customers.

When hybridizing environments, a supplier considers the breadth of digital and physical environments as well as the interplay between them. For example, a DigiCo customer highlighted that the ability to access a particular digital environment before a physically oriented service process was valuable. By acknowledging the interplay between different types of environments, the total number of touchpoints needed can also be reduced, and by considering the transition between different environments, a supplier can more easily design efficient touchpoint sequences. When it has the capability of hybridizing digital and physical environments, a supplier considers the breadth of environments to be used to ensure that the interplay between the environments will enable more efficient transitions between touchpoints.

4.3.2. Merging digital environments

The second key capability is the merging of digital environments where actions and content intersect or overlap. As touchpoints become digitalized, a B2B customer might need to move across a multitude of different digital environments provided by different actors and even across different customer journeys (Lundin & Kindström, 2023). DigiCo's customers mentioned the difficulties of handling multiple digital environments and emphasized the need for DigiCo to collaborate with other actors to provide more integrated environments. If this were accomplished, two or more digital environments whose touchpoints include actions and resources that intersect and overlap across multiple journeys could be merged. A customer could then access resources provided by multiple actors simultaneously and perform concerted actions in the same merged digital environment. By merging environments, suppliers can facilitate consistency across touchpoints independent of the actor who controls the touchpoint.

Merged digital environments that can gather and aggregate data from touchpoints controlled by multiple actors make it possible for a supplier to keep track of the complete portfolio of their customers' active equipment, including equipment from other suppliers. Merging digital environments can even enable a supplier to monitor touchpoints that they do not control themselves. For instance, DigiCo can observe when equipment from a competing supplier is nearing the end of its life and proactively initiates sales-oriented touchpoints. Hence, in addition to increased consistency across touchpoints, the merging of multiple digital environments also enables DigiCo to keep better track of its customers.

A supplier also needs to be able to merge digital environments that are fully controlled by the supplier itself. In many digitalization efforts, there is a tendency to build multiple different digital environments without acknowledging their impact on the customers' processes. DigiCo has recognized this and merged several of its digital environments into one overarching environment, or digital platform, partly because customers are reluctant to add too many new digital environments. By merging environments, a supplier can allow for more seamless transitions between touchpoints, as resources and actions related to the same process are merged in a unified digital environment (cf. Jaakkola & Terho, 2021). Merging digital environments where the resources and actions of the touchpoints intersect facilitates better consistency across touchpoints and more seamless transitions between touchpoints.

5. Implications and future research

This study provides insights into the management of digitalized touchpoints in B2B customer journeys by operationalizing it as a set of capabilities. We add to existing literature by taking a supplier perspective on touchpoints, identifying seven capabilities to manage digitalized resources, actions, and environments, which together frame the management of digitalized touchpoints. We also provide guidance as to future research in the field of B2B customer journeys as well as for B2B managers in strategizing for customer journeys.

5.1. Theoretical implications

Previous research has called for more research on the capabilities needed by suppliers when managing touchpoints (see e.g. Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Homburg et al., 2017; Witell et al., 2020), especially in digitalized contexts (De Keyser et al., 2020). We address this research gap by presenting a set of supplier-oriented capabilities for managing digitalized touchpoints structured around our proposed conceptualization of touchpoints as consisting of three dimensions. Prior research has demonstrated what a well-designed customer journey might look like (see, e.g., Homburg et al., 2017; Jaakkola & Terho, 2021; Kuehnl, Jozic, & Homburg, 2019; Singh et al., 2021), but surprisingly little is known about how a journey can be sustained and managed over time, leaving the realm of supplier capabilities—and the role of digitalization—rather underexplored. We posit that the identified capabilities provide a starting point for extending the knowledge of customer journey management in an increasingly digital reality.

As one of the first investigations in this key area, in addition to identifying the actual capabilities needed to manage each dimension of a digitalized touchpoint (see Fig. 3), our study also reveals two key emerging characteristics emanating from the management of digitalized customer journeys: *touchpoint sequencing* and *touchpoint control.* Well-designed touchpoint sequences and maintaining touchpoint control are imperative for effective customer journeys (Jaakkola & Terho, 2021; Witell et al., 2020).

By addressing touchpoints in sequences, our first characteristic, rather than as single, individual entities (Kranzbühler et al., 2018), our identified capabilities allow suppliers to enable consistency across digitalized touchpoints such that a customer can receive a more unified experience throughout the customer journey (Jaakkola & Terho, 2021). Touchpoint sequencing enables the customer organization to access relevant and timely information depending upon their position in the journey. For instance, by managing the actions at touchpoints through enabling collective actions, suppliers can enable customers, independent of where the different roles in the organization are, to have a collective and consistent perception of the touchpoints.

However, enabling consistency by managing the actions at touchpoints may depend on the digitalized environments and their management. Our study finds that, unlike most B2C customer journeys, a B2B customer's specific journey with a supplier often overlaps with journeys managed by other external actors, including competing suppliers. The potential diversity of digital environments that this entails can result in increased complexity, with users needing to manage multiple environments. By recognizing intersected resources and actions in these environments, a supplier can facilitate better consistency across touchpoints in sequences. We extend current knowledge by arguing that a supplier, through the capabilities, can approach touchpoints as sequences also to increase consistency across touchpoints, regardless of the actor controlling the touchpoint (Jaakkola & Terho, 2021).

Previous research has discussed the importance of customers experiencing seamless transitions between touchpoints (Gasparin et al., 2022; Homburg et al., 2017; Jaakkola & Terho, 2021), such that in a touchpoint sequence, future touchpoints can pick up where a previous touchpoint concluded (Singh et al., 2021). Ensuring seamlessness is becoming more important as touchpoints become digital (De Keyser et al., 2015; Gasparin et al., 2022; Homburg et al., 2017). In this regard, extant research has stressed the need for a better understanding of the interplay between touchpoints with different environments (Bolton et al., 2018), such as how different touchpoint environments interact and whether different types of environments drive different outcomes (De Keyser et al., 2020). Within digitalized customer journeys, the interplay—or hybridization in our identified capabilities—of digital and physical environments is a key aspect in the touchpoint sequences that has been largely overlooked by previous research (Bolton et al., 2018; De Keyser et al., 2020; Gasparin et al., 2022). We suggest that a supplier should not necessarily strive to provide fully digital B2B customer journeys but instead create a portfolio of environments to be deployed as needed and establish synergies between different types of environments such that a customer can seamlessly transition between touchpoints.

Regarding our second key characteristic, prior research has argued that touchpoint control is fundamental to the design of valuable customer experiences (Witell et al., 2020), and this is further emphasized by the introduction of digitalization (Yakhlef & Nordin, 2021). In discussing capabilities, this study expands the current knowledge of touchpoint control, which is a crucial factor in managing touchpoints, showing how a supplier can balance and prioritize the need for control of a touchpoint. We find that the increased access to digital resources through digitalized touchpoints, allows a supplier to obtain an understanding of which touchpoints are critical and which ones it can
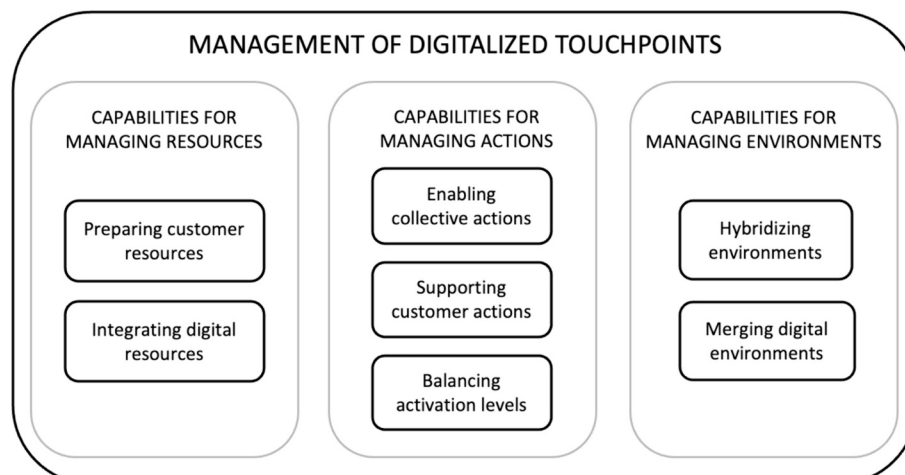

Fig. 3. Summary of the identified key capabilities to manage digitalized touchpoints.

influence. Through this, a supplier can reduce control over certain, less critical touchpoints but emphasize control over touchpoints that offer more opportunities to influence the customer's actions and experience.

Previous studies have suggested that firms should emphasize the design of touchpoints that are under a supplier's control (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). Our identified capabilities facilitate this by allowing a supplier to build collective knowledge through increased levels of data, which serves as a foundation for designing controllable touchpoints. The ability to gather and access data about customers, as they move through touchpoints is important because touchpoint design and control necessitates an understanding of how customers progress throughout their journey (Rusthollkarhu et al., 2022). Thus, depending on the customer and its journey, a supplier will have a better understanding of which touchpoints that need to be managed. The supplier can also decide what aspects of a touchpoint to direct their efforts toward. In addition, some of the capabilities may be directed toward specific customers and journeys, while other capabilities can be used to manage multiple journeys simultaneously and continuously such as leveraging customer resources.

5.2. Managerial implications

Digitalization is making inroads into all aspects of business and is changing how customers interact with suppliers and their offerings. In this study, we argue that suppliers must develop capabilities to manage the digitalized touchpoints that customers encounter during their customer journeys. Based on this research, several managerial implications can be derived.

First, our proposed conceptualization of a touchpoint provides a structure that enables marketing managers to understand and map touchpoints and evaluate their roles and performance. This creates a starting point that can be used to design more valuable touchpoints, leading to better customer experiences. Among other things, this can inform determinations of which touchpoints dimensions that should be managed as well as how and where resources should be allocated throughout the B2B customer journey.

Second, our identified capabilities provide a foundation for managers to understand what is needed to move forward in their activities to manage digitalized touchpoints and evaluate their current digital readiness. By mapping an existing organization against our proposed set of capabilities, digital marketing managers can prioritize and create a roadmap for future initiatives.

Third, besides managing aspects within touchpoints, our findings highlight the importance of approaching touchpoints not only as single, individual entities but also as components of one or more sequences. Suppliers need to focus on how customers interact in touchpoints and how customers transition between them to enable a seamless experience as they move through a customer journey. Because past experiences affect future experiences and since B2B customer experiences increasingly take place in sequences of touchpoints, rather than in single individual touchpoints, addressing touchpoints as sequences becomes key.

Finally, the research reported here also acknowledges that B2B customers are typically involved in multiple simultaneous journeys with multiple digital environments. For suppliers to succeed, they must approach this reality in a structured manner and make allowances to manage this increasing complexity. Managers should track touchpoints driven by external actors to develop an understanding of how they might influence the customer experience and plan future initiatives to manage these touchpoints.

5.3. Limitations and future research

As with all research, this study is not without limitations, but these limitations also pave the way for potential future research. Our study is built on an in-depth case study of a B2B firm and four of its customers. While a case study can provide in-depth insights it also calls for more empirical studies in multiple contexts to broaden the initial knowledge base that our exploratory focus provides. The number of respondents on the customer side of the dyad also represents a potential limitation since the customers' perspective on touchpoints can add nuances to the supplier's management of touchpoints. However, since this study focused on supplier capabilities to manage touchpoints, this limitation is not believed to adversely affect our findings to any great extent and instead represents a possible direction for future extensions. One aspect relevant to touchpoint management is the level of a customer's digital maturity and internal capabilities. In our study, we have focused on the supplier's operational capabilities as a pivotal first step, but it is equally important to understand what is needed on the customer side—that is, which customer capabilities are required to capture the opportunities provided by increasing levels of digitalization. Related to this is the fact that customers may have different requirements concerning digitalized customer journeys. For example, a customer may not be receptive to new ways of digitally interacting with the supplier, which may lead to the customer and supplier developing different perspectives on the nature of their relationship, resulting in poor customer experiences (Witell et al., 2020). Future research could emphasize the implications of customer relationships and whether touchpoint management needs to change to align with the different levels of digital interest and maturity exhibited by customer firms.

The choice of context was made to drive our emphasis on digitalized touchpoints in B2B customer journeys, but there might be idiosyncrasies that can be further understood by investigating a range of empirical contexts, such as professional services. One key aspect to be included in future research is the degree to which customer journeys and their touchpoints are digitalized. Investigating potential differences in how varying degrees of digital density influence touchpoints and their management is an interesting avenue for future research. Similarly, the starting point of our research was chosen based on its relevance to our aim of investigating a traditional B2B manufacturing firm, but it is reasonable to assume that customer journeys will exhibit different characteristics for other types of firms. Offering advanced capital-intensive products typically necessitates multiple touchpoints throughout a long and complex customer journey, while other less complex offerings could influence the types of capabilities required to manage touchpoints. Specifically, we highlight the management of purely digital offerings as a promising future avenue. In addition, more transactionally oriented relationships and markets offer additional opportunities to obtain novel insights, as opposed to our emphasis on longer-term relationships.

As a final note, future research efforts could use our conceptualization of touchpoint management to explore how different capabilities may be applied in different parts of the customer journey to manage the overall customer experience. Further attention could also be paid to the interplay between the different dimensions of a touchpoint. For instance, further details around how the management of different dimensions may be used in combinations to create more valuable touchpoints. Touchpoint management is a fruitful area of research for enhancing knowledge about customer experiences as well as guiding practitioners in managing their customer journeys.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Lisa Lundin: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Daniel Kindström:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

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Appendix A

Capability	Illustrative quotes from the interviews
Managing digitalized touchpoint resources	
Preparing customer resources	# 1: We start with the digital maturity of the customers; if they haven't started their digitalization journey yet, we can recommend things the customers can do. For example, if a customer uses old technology, we usually say that they need to digitalize their organization. We have a pyramid that we are looking at [to access the customer's level of digital maturity]. For example, if there is no communication, such as Wi-Fi [in the customer's digital infrastructure], we do not go further with the customers.
	# 2: We started working with training in-house, but switched to customers because there was a big demand. Most often, the customers get in touch regarding training when, for instance, they have newly hired operators who need training, or when they have noticed that they have low production levels and need help. The courses and training are often aimed at making the users start using the systems or services. We want to reduce the complexity and improve the usage of the products and services. We don't need to make money from the training; we just want them to create value.
	# 3: The podcast has been the most successful campaign we have ever done. It's a small industry, and the users talk a lot to each other and become engaged. The podcast has, for instance, been shared on social media. Some customers even use it for training purposes for all their users. We work a lot with references to show what the [products and services] can do, etc., but maybe not as much for the users. We should make use of this more.
Integrating digital resources	# 4: The data flow has to be opened up, or you build in a lot of inefficiency. An openness is required; it may cost you, but it would allow others to gain access to the data.
	# 5: …we looked at and digitally collected [usage data] to better understand where the customer lost time, and how we could help them to improve [their process] … The digital systems make use of [usage data] to present things in a customer-specific way, such as how they utilize the products.
	# 6: [The digital fleet management solution] is a customer platform in which we have started to combine everything that helps customers organize their fleet.
Managing digitalized touchpoint actions	
Enabling collective actions	# 7: Community-driven communication within the customer is relevant. They can collaborate in [the digital fleet management solution] digitally.
	# 8: The use of digital technology ends up per individual to adapt. It is important to have a set of values and standardization.
	# 9: Often, you have operators and then a person in the office who can see all the info [about the usage of the products] and obtain an overall perspective and a better understanding of the equipment.
Balancing activation levels	# 10: We are dependent on the resources of other actors. We may need to use digital technology instead of calling.
	# 11: Digital technologies enable more time, and you can start working on other things and stay one step ahead. You can have much more foresight and work more strategically, plan resources and time for how long things will take.
	# 12: The customers have become much more active, such that they initiate touchpoints on their own and outside our journey, which we have to adapt to.
	#13: It is difficult to keep up with training for all individuals at a customer, then it can be good to send out a link to the portal so they can prepare online before we arrive. During physical meetings, we only have time to train a few [of the customer's representatives]. By interacting digitally with the customers before we arrive, deployment becomes easier and faster.
Supporting customer actions	# 14: The customer journey is not linear, and it becomes important to find the critical touchpoints or stages where, for example, the customer jumps out often …
	# 15: Historically speaking, we have mainly been involved in the beginning [of a customer journey], but it is important that we are involved in the entire journey and that we create content that provides positive reinforcement even after a purchase … we need to have different types of content to match the customer's needs or stopping points along the journey.
	# 16: We want to work proactively with user data to make upsells. First customer relationship management (CRM), and then add an additional layer of user data.
	# 17: We want to be more effective with the customer and reach out to the customer before they reach us—be a little more proactive.
	# 18: In the life cycle of a product, there is a time [when maintenance and repair become important], and as the customer approaches this time, we must be there, selling things or offering services to provide added value to the product.
Managing digitalized touchpoint environments	
Hybridizing environments	# 19: We use multiple ways to reach customers initially, such as LinkedIn, but in the end, we want to have physical contact … building relationships can be more difficult in purely digital formats.
	# 20: Firms must become much more demanding regarding digitalization initiatives and be clear about what should be achieved with, for example, a particular project … it is important to digitalize such that it has an impact on the basic processes in the firm … this must be looked at, and not what technology should be used.
	# 21: It would have been good to be able to help the customers remotely and have much more information before we go out, so we know what to take with us, etc.
	# 22: [On the service platform] the organization can see if a service is coming up and contact the customer …. It is also useful for the salespeople, as they digitally access the status of products, how it [i.e., a product] operated the last week, to catch up before they contact the customers.
Merging digital environments	# 23: There are several different systems to be managed, and it can be difficult. An integrated system is needed with all our types of machines [from DigiCo but also our four other suppliers].
	# 24: [DigiCo's service platform] could be a possibility, but we do not only have [the product from DigiCo]—we also have three or four types of products from other suppliers that need to be coordinated.
	# 25: The systems are not interconnected; they must be interconnected with existing systems in use.
	# 26: In the [digital fleet management solution], customers can enter all [products], including competitors … [we] can for example see if a customer uses a [product] from a competitor and when it is approaching the end of life …. Through [The digital fleet management solution], we can keep track of the customers' [products], both our own and competitors.

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