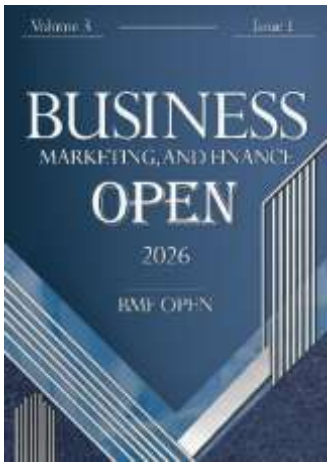
The Effect of B2B Business Model Adoption on Investor Valuation: Evidence from Iranian Private and Public Corporations

Younes Parvareh[1,*], Peyman Sayadi[2], Leila Sadeghkhani[3], Edris Najafi[4] and Kiasa Darabi[5]



[1] Department of Accounting, Ker.C., Islamic Azad University, Kermanshah, Iran;
[2] Department of Accounting, Ker.C., Islamic Azad University, Kermanshah, Iran;
[3] Department of Accounting, Ker.C., Islamic Azad University, Kermanshah, Iran;
[4] Department of Accounting, Ker.C., Islamic Azad University, Kermanshah, Iran;
[5] Department of Accounting, Ker.C., Islamic Azad University, Kermanshah, Iran;

* Correspondence: Younes.parvareh@iau.ac.ir

Citation: Parvareh, Y., Sayadi, P., Sadeghkhani, L., Najafi, E., & Darabi, K. (2026). The Effect of B2B Business Model Adoption on Investor Valuation: Evidence from Iranian Private and Public Corporations. *Business, Marketing, and Finance Open*, 3(2), 1-22.

Received: 17 September 2025
Revised: 13 January 2026
Accepted: 20 January 2026
Published: 01 March 2026

Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Published under the terms and conditions of Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License.

Abstract: This study aimed to examine the effect of business-to-business (B2B) business model adoption on investor valuation among Iranian non-financial corporations and to determine whether this relationship differs between privately controlled and state/publicly affiliated firms. This quantitative longitudinal study used panel data from 120 non-financial corporations listed on the Tehran Stock Exchange during 2010–2024. After excluding incomplete firm-year observations, the final dataset comprised 1,706 observations. Investor valuation was primarily measured using the market-to-book ratio, with Tobin's Q employed as an alternative robustness measure. B2B business model adoption was identified at the firm-year level based on corporate disclosures concerning customer composition, revenue structure, sales channels, and principal business activities. Firm size, profitability, financial leverage, sales growth, and liquidity were included as control variables. Firm fixed-effects regression models with year fixed effects and firm-clustered robust standard errors were used to estimate the relationship between B2B adoption and investor valuation. Additional robustness analyses employed lagged B2B indicators, alternative valuation measures, and interaction models for ownership structure. B2B business model adoption had a significant positive effect on investor valuation in the fully adjusted fixed-effects model ($B = 0.278$, $SE = 0.081$, $p < .001$). Profitability, firm size, sales growth, and liquidity were positively associated with valuation, whereas financial leverage had a significant negative effect. Robustness analyses confirmed a positive effect of B2B adoption on Tobin's Q ($B = 0.164$, $SE = 0.048$, $p < .001$). Lagged B2B adoption also significantly predicted subsequent market-to-book valuation ($B = 0.241$, $SE = 0.086$, $p < .01$) and Tobin's Q ($B = 0.137$, $SE = 0.052$, $p < .01$). The interaction between B2B adoption and private ownership was positive and significant ($B = 0.191$, $SE = 0.088$, $p < .05$), indicating a stronger valuation effect among privately controlled firms. B2B business model adoption is positively associated with investor valuation among Iranian listed corporations, and this effect is stronger in privately controlled firms, suggesting that investors value the relational, revenue-stability, and strategic characteristics of B2B-oriented business models.

Keywords: B2B business model; investor valuation; firm value; fixed-effects regression; ownership structure; Tehran Stock Exchange; private corporations; public corporations.

1. Introduction

Business model configuration has become an increasingly important determinant of how firms create, deliver, and capture value in competitive markets. Among the various forms of commercial organization, business-to-business (B2B) models occupy a particularly important position because they structure economic exchanges

between firms, institutional buyers, distributors, industrial customers, and other organizational actors rather than primarily targeting individual consumers. In B2B markets, transactions are often characterized by longer sales cycles, higher contract values, stronger interorganizational dependence, more complex decision-making processes, and greater reliance on relational continuity. These characteristics create a distinctive strategic environment in which the quality of business relationships, technological capability, market orientation, service delivery, and customer integration can materially influence firm performance. Recent research has increasingly emphasized that B2B firms are not simply differentiated by the identity of their customers; rather, they operate through specific value creation mechanisms that can affect revenue predictability, customer retention, competitive positioning, innovation capability, and ultimately the economic value attributed to the firm by investors [1, 2].

The transformation of B2B markets has accelerated considerably with the expansion of digital technologies, data-driven sales systems, artificial intelligence, and platform-based customer engagement. Traditional B2B relationships, which were once heavily dependent on direct sales forces and personal account management, are increasingly being supplemented or replaced by digitally integrated customer journeys, automated sales processes, customer relationship management platforms, and predictive analytics. Digitalization has changed not only the operational execution of B2B transactions but also the broader logic through which firms identify opportunities, interact with customers, and manage value creation across the customer life cycle. Research on B2B customer journeys shows that digital transformation can improve accessibility, information exchange, customer experience, and coordination across multiple touchpoints, while also creating new managerial challenges related to channel integration, data use, organizational adaptation, and customer expectations [3, 4]. These developments suggest that adoption of a B2B-oriented model may increasingly represent a strategic organizational capability rather than merely a sales-market classification.

One of the core economic characteristics of B2B models is their potential to support relatively stable and recurring revenue streams through long-term contracts, repeated organizational purchases, and deeper customer relationships. Compared with purely transactional consumer markets, B2B settings often involve greater switching costs, stronger mutual dependence, and more intensive relationship-specific investments. These mechanisms can make customer retention and relationship quality especially important determinants of future cash flows. Berenguer-Contri et al. demonstrated that economic satisfaction in B2B contexts is strongly influenced by relationship quality and value co-creation, emphasizing that firms can strengthen commercial outcomes when customers participate more actively in the generation of value [2]. Similarly, the service-dominant logic perspective suggests that sustained B2B partner loyalty depends on collaborative value creation and the quality of ongoing exchange relationships rather than on isolated transactions alone [5]. From an investor perspective, such characteristics may be valuable because more durable customer relationships can improve revenue visibility, reduce uncertainty in expected cash flows, and strengthen the perceived resilience of the firm's business model.

Trust is another central feature of B2B exchange and may contribute to valuation indirectly through customer loyalty and reputational capital. In many industrial and organizational markets, purchasing decisions involve substantial financial commitments, operational dependencies, and long-term strategic consequences. As a result, buyers frequently evaluate not only product characteristics but also supplier reliability, information quality, technical competence, and relational credibility. Evidence from online B2B communities indicates that community trust plays an important role in strengthening brand loyalty, reinforcing the notion that trust remains a critical economic asset even when B2B interactions become increasingly digitalized [6]. Greater trust may reduce transaction costs, lower customer acquisition costs, improve contract renewal rates, and create barriers to

competitive substitution. These effects can increase the durability of firm-level competitive advantage and may therefore influence the way external investors assess the quality and sustainability of expected future performance.

At the same time, B2B business models are becoming more technologically sophisticated. Artificial intelligence, sales automation, advanced analytics, and digitally integrated customer relationship management systems are increasingly used to improve lead generation, customer segmentation, account prioritization, demand forecasting, and buyer engagement. Recent conceptual and empirical research suggests that artificial intelligence can reshape the B2B sales process by supporting decision-making, improving customer targeting, and increasing salesforce productivity [7]. In parallel, digital sales automation can improve buyer engagement by enhancing the perceived value of interactions and reducing friction throughout the B2B exchange process [8]. These developments imply that B2B adoption can be associated with organizational capabilities that are increasingly relevant to long-term competitiveness, particularly when firms integrate technology with relationship-based selling and customer-specific value propositions.

The capacity to benefit from such technologies, however, depends strongly on organizational readiness. Firms differ considerably in their ability to absorb, deploy, and institutionalize emerging technologies. Research has shown that the technology readiness of B2B firms can enhance AI-based customer relationship management capabilities, with broader implications for both commercial performance and social sustainability [9]. Similar arguments have been advanced regarding the mediating role of information and communication technology capabilities and the moderating role of industry dynamism in determining whether B2B firms can translate technological readiness into stronger AI-enabled customer relationship management capacity [10]. This is particularly important because firms operating in dynamic markets may require a higher degree of technological flexibility, data infrastructure, and managerial adaptation in order to realize the performance benefits associated with B2B digitalization.

Artificial intelligence has also become increasingly relevant for B2B marketing capability and broader organizational performance. In the Iranian context, research has examined how applications of artificial intelligence can affect organizational performance through the mediating role of B2B marketing capabilities, reinforcing the importance of marketing-related technological capability as a mechanism connecting digital transformation to firm outcomes [11]. Similarly, an integrated artificial intelligence framework developed for B2B marketing among small and medium-sized enterprises in Tehran highlights the growing strategic role of AI in knowledge generation, logical analysis, and business performance improvement [12]. These findings are particularly relevant to the present study because they suggest that B2B orientation in Iran is increasingly intertwined with technology-intensive organizational processes rather than being limited to conventional wholesale or industrial selling.

B2B firms are also using increasingly sophisticated analytical approaches to understand and manage customers. Customer segmentation represents one important application because organizational buyers vary in size, purchase history, relationship value, industry characteristics, and network position. New segmentation methods combining firmographic information, recency-frequency-monetary measures, and graph-based models demonstrate the potential for more precise identification of valuable B2B customer groups [13]. Similarly, customer churn analysis has become strategically important because the loss of a major organizational customer can have a disproportionately large effect on firm revenues. Research on feature selection in B2B customer churn analysis illustrates the growing use of predictive analytics to identify factors associated with customer defection and to improve retention strategies [14]. Such capabilities may improve the economic attractiveness of a B2B model by reducing revenue volatility and enhancing the firm's ability to manage high-value customer relationships.

The strategic relevance of B2B business models is also linked to service innovation. In increasingly competitive markets, B2B firms must often move beyond the sale of standardized products and develop digitally enabled services, integrated solutions, and customer-specific offerings. Recent evidence suggests that service innovation can enable B2B firms to transition toward new digital-intensive business models through entrepreneurial transformation [15]. This process may generate new sources of competitive advantage by increasing differentiation, expanding customer lifetime value, and creating recurring or service-based revenue streams. From a valuation perspective, investors may respond positively when such business model changes improve scalability, strengthen customer lock-in, or enhance the firm's capacity to generate future growth.

The relationship between marketing capability and investor valuation is particularly relevant to understanding why B2B adoption may affect capital-market outcomes. Investor valuation does not depend exclusively on current accounting performance; it also reflects expectations regarding future growth, risk, competitive advantage, and the sustainability of cash flows. Marketing-related capabilities can therefore become value-relevant when investors perceive them as indicators of future economic performance. Homburg et al. showed that marketing excellence is associated with investor valuations, demonstrating that the market can recognize and price organizational capabilities that improve customer value creation and competitive effectiveness [16]. This finding provides an important theoretical bridge between B2B strategy and capital-market valuation. If B2B adoption strengthens customer relationships, revenue predictability, marketing efficiency, technological capability, and market positioning, then these effects may be reflected in higher market valuations even after accounting for conventional financial indicators.

Nevertheless, the relationship between B2B orientation and valuation is not necessarily uniform across all firms. B2B models may also introduce specific risks. Heavy dependence on a small number of organizational customers can increase concentration risk, bargaining asymmetry, and vulnerability to contract termination. Sales cycles may be lengthy, customer acquisition costs may be substantial, and customized service requirements may reduce standardization and scalability. Moreover, technological transformation can create implementation costs, organizational resistance, and integration challenges. Digitalizing the B2B customer journey, for example, requires firms to coordinate online and offline touchpoints while preserving relationship quality and customer responsiveness [4]. Therefore, investors may evaluate B2B adoption differently depending on whether the firm demonstrates the complementary capabilities needed to convert interorganizational relationships into sustained economic value.

The institutional environment can further shape this relationship. In emerging and transition economies, capital markets often operate under conditions of greater macroeconomic volatility, regulatory uncertainty, ownership concentration, and heterogeneous corporate governance. These factors can influence both business model choices and investor responses. Iran provides a particularly relevant context because listed firms operate within a market characterized by substantial differences in ownership structure, including privately controlled firms and corporations with varying degrees of state or public-sector affiliation. These ownership differences may influence strategic autonomy, access to institutional contracts, managerial incentives, disclosure practices, financing conditions, and investor perceptions of risk. As a result, the market valuation effects of B2B adoption may differ between privately controlled and publicly affiliated corporations.

The distinction between private and publicly affiliated ownership is especially important in B2B settings because state-connected firms may enjoy privileged access to large institutional or governmental buyers, while private firms may face stronger competitive pressure to develop market-based customer relationships and commercial

capabilities. Investors may therefore interpret B2B adoption differently depending on the governance structure of the firm. In a private corporation, a shift toward B2B activities may be seen as evidence of deliberate strategic repositioning, stronger account management, improved revenue quality, or successful entry into institutional markets. In a state-affiliated corporation, similar B2B activity may partly reflect structural access to government-related customers or regulated markets, potentially reducing the informational content of the business model change itself. This distinction creates an important empirical question concerning whether ownership structure moderates the relationship between B2B orientation and investor valuation.

Existing research has provided extensive evidence on individual components of B2B performance, including marketing strategy, relationship quality, customer loyalty, value co-creation, customer journey digitalization, artificial intelligence, sales automation, customer segmentation, and technology readiness. B2B marketing strategy and ICT-supported marketing capabilities have been shown to influence the relationship between market orientation and organizational performance [1]. Value co-creation has been linked with partner loyalty [5], while relationship quality has been connected to economic satisfaction [2]. Digital customer journeys have been examined as mechanisms through which firms modernize interactions with organizational buyers [3], and trust has been shown to reinforce brand loyalty in online B2B communities [6]. Together, these studies provide strong evidence that B2B capability can affect operational and relational outcomes.

A growing stream of research has also examined the technological infrastructure supporting these outcomes. Technology readiness and AI-enabled customer relationship management have been associated with improved organizational capabilities [9, 10]. Artificial intelligence has been conceptualized as a transformative force in B2B sales [7], while AI-based marketing capabilities have been linked with organizational performance in Iranian business settings [11]. Digital sales automation has similarly been connected to buyer engagement through perceived value [8]. At a more operational level, customer segmentation and churn prediction methods have demonstrated how analytical systems can improve B2B customer management [13, 14]. These findings collectively suggest that contemporary B2B models are embedded within a broader ecosystem of technological and relational capabilities.

Despite this growing literature, relatively limited attention has been directed toward the direct capital-market consequences of B2B business model adoption. Much of the existing research focuses on marketing outcomes, customer satisfaction, relationship quality, loyalty, technology use, or operational performance rather than investor valuation. Even studies demonstrating that marketing excellence can influence investor valuations do not directly establish whether adopting a B2B-oriented model generates a valuation premium at the firm level [16]. This gap is important because investor valuation represents an integrated assessment of expected future performance, risk, growth, and strategic quality. A business model may improve customer-level or operational metrics without necessarily being rewarded by capital markets. Conversely, investors may attribute value to B2B characteristics because of their implications for recurring revenues, customer retention, contract stability, and information-rich customer relationships.

The gap is even more pronounced in emerging markets, where empirical studies examining the valuation implications of B2B business models remain scarce. Research conducted in Iran has increasingly addressed artificial intelligence, B2B marketing, and organizational performance [11, 12], but little evidence is available on whether capital-market investors assign a valuation premium to firms that adopt B2B-oriented models. Furthermore, studies rarely distinguish between privately controlled and state/publicly affiliated corporations when assessing this relationship. Such a distinction is particularly relevant in the Tehran Stock Exchange because ownership structure

may affect governance quality, information transparency, access to institutional customers, financing conditions, and market expectations.

A longitudinal perspective is also necessary because cross-sectional comparisons alone cannot adequately distinguish the effect of business model orientation from persistent differences among firms. Companies that operate primarily in B2B markets may systematically differ from consumer-oriented firms in technology, industry structure, asset intensity, management quality, or competitive position. A panel-data framework with firm fixed effects offers an important methodological advantage because it focuses on within-firm changes over time while controlling for unobserved characteristics that remain relatively stable. This makes it possible to examine whether changes toward a B2B-oriented model are associated with changes in investor valuation within the same corporation, rather than relying solely on differences across firms.

Accordingly, integrating insights from relationship marketing, value co-creation, digital transformation, artificial intelligence, customer analytics, and investor valuation creates a strong theoretical basis for expecting a positive association between B2B adoption and firm market value. B2B models may enhance customer retention, increase revenue predictability, strengthen relational capital, improve the use of customer information, support digital service innovation, and provide opportunities for technology-enabled scaling [8, 15]. At the same time, the strength of these benefits may depend on the firm's ownership and governance context. Examining these relationships in Iranian listed corporations therefore contributes both to the B2B strategy literature and to the broader literature on how non-financial strategic characteristics are incorporated into investor valuation.

The aim of this study was to examine the effect of B2B business model adoption on investor valuation among Iranian non-financial corporations listed on the Tehran Stock Exchange during 2010–2024 and to determine whether this relationship differed between privately controlled and state/publicly affiliated corporations.

2. Methods and Materials

This study employed a quantitative, longitudinal, explanatory research design based on firm-level panel data to examine the effect of business-to-business (B2B) business model adoption on investor valuation among Iranian corporations. The longitudinal panel design was selected because the research objective required simultaneous investigation of cross-sectional differences among firms and changes within individual firms over time. In particular, the use of repeated firm-year observations made it possible to determine whether changes in the extent to which a company relied on a B2B-oriented business model were systematically associated with changes in its market valuation after controlling for observable firm characteristics and unobservable time-invariant firm-specific factors. The empirical analysis was conducted using firm fixed-effects regression models, which were considered appropriate for minimizing omitted-variable bias arising from persistent organizational characteristics such as corporate culture, historical reputation, managerial orientation, industry positioning, technological capabilities, and other relatively stable firm-specific attributes that could influence both business model configuration and investor valuation.

The statistical population consisted of non-financial enterprises registered on the Tehran Stock Exchange during the period from 2010 to 2024. Financial institutions, including banks, insurance companies, investment companies, financial intermediaries, and other firms operating primarily within the financial services sector, were excluded because their financial structure, regulatory environment, leverage patterns, accounting practices, and valuation mechanisms differ substantially from those of non-financial corporations. The study period was selected to provide a sufficiently long time horizon for identifying changes in corporate business models, market valuation, ownership

conditions, and firm-level economic performance. The final sample comprised 120 non-financial enterprises for which adequate financial, ownership, operational, and market information was available during the study period. The resulting panel dataset consisted of repeated annual observations for the sampled companies, although the exact number of firm-year observations could vary because of missing information, changes in listing status, temporary trading interruptions, or incomplete disclosure for specific variables in individual years. Firms were included when sufficient information was available to identify their principal customers and revenue structure, determine the orientation of their business model, calculate the dependent valuation measures, and construct the required financial control variables.

The principal explanatory variable was the adoption of a B2B business model. B2B business model adoption was conceptualized as the degree to which a firm's primary commercial activities, revenue generation mechanisms, and customer relationships were directed toward other businesses, organizations, government entities, distributors, industrial customers, or institutional buyers rather than predominantly toward individual final consumers. Classification was based on information disclosed in corporate annual reports, board of directors' reports, notes accompanying financial statements, descriptions of principal activities, revenue segmentation, customer composition, sales channels, and publicly disclosed descriptions of the company's commercial operations. A firm-year was classified as B2B-oriented when the firm's principal revenue-generating transactions and customer relationships were predominantly organizational rather than consumer-based. Where sufficient quantitative information concerning customer or revenue composition was available, the classification was supported by the proportion of sales attributable to organizational customers. Where such numerical disclosure was unavailable, classification was based on systematic evaluation of the firm's stated customer segments, contractual structure, distribution arrangements, and principal commercial activities. This approach allowed the B2B variable to vary over time when a company materially altered its customer structure or business model during the observation period rather than assuming that business model orientation remained permanently unchanged.

Investor valuation constituted the principal outcome of the study and was operationalized using market-based indicators that reflected investors' assessment of the economic value and future prospects of each company. The primary valuation measure was based on the firm's market value relative to its underlying accounting or asset base, thereby capturing the premium or discount assigned by capital-market participants to the company beyond its recorded financial resources. Market capitalization was calculated using the market price of outstanding shares and the number of shares outstanding at the relevant fiscal year-end. Where necessary, alternative valuation specifications based on market-to-book measures were used to assess the robustness of the findings. Higher values of the dependent valuation indicator were interpreted as representing stronger investor valuation, subject to the characteristics of the specific measure employed. The longitudinal structure of the data therefore permitted investigation of whether the adoption or increased use of a B2B-oriented commercial model was associated with a systematic change in the valuation assigned to the firm by capital-market investors.

To reduce the possibility that the estimated effect of B2B business model adoption merely reflected differences in company fundamentals, a set of firm-level control variables was incorporated into the empirical models. These variables included firm size, profitability, financial leverage, firm growth, liquidity, firm age, and selected indicators of asset and operating structure where appropriate. Firm size was measured using the natural logarithm of total assets to reduce skewness arising from substantial differences in organizational scale. Profitability was measured using return on assets, calculated as net income relative to total assets, because profitable firms would generally be expected to receive more favorable market valuations. Financial leverage was calculated as total

liabilities relative to total assets and was included to control for differences in financial risk and capital structure. Firm growth was measured using the annual change in sales revenue, while liquidity was represented by an accounting-based liquidity indicator such as the current ratio. Firm age was calculated from the establishment or listing history of the company, depending on data availability and the specification of the model. These controls were selected because firm valuation may simultaneously reflect operational performance, financial risk, organizational scale, growth expectations, and financial flexibility, all of which could otherwise confound the estimated relationship between business model orientation and investor valuation.

The study relied on secondary archival data obtained from publicly available corporate and capital-market records. Financial information was extracted primarily from audited annual financial statements, accompanying notes, annual reports, and reports of boards of directors disclosed through Iran's official corporate reporting and securities-market information systems. These documents provided the accounting data necessary for constructing firm size, profitability, leverage, liquidity, growth, asset structure, and other firm-specific financial variables. Market information, including year-end share prices, market capitalization, outstanding shares, and relevant trading information, was obtained from official Tehran Stock Exchange market records and associated securities-market databases. Information was cross-checked across available sources where necessary to improve the accuracy and consistency of the final longitudinal dataset. Financial observations were aligned with each company's fiscal year to ensure that market and accounting information represented comparable reporting periods.

A structured data-extraction framework was developed to ensure consistent collection of information across firms and years. For each firm-year observation, the framework contained identification variables, fiscal-year information, accounting variables, market valuation indicators, ownership characteristics, operational information, and business model indicators. Financial variables were collected directly from audited statements whenever possible rather than relying exclusively on summarized third-party datasets. Particular attention was given to changes in accounting classifications, capital increases, stock adjustments, corporate restructuring, mergers, and changes in fiscal-year reporting that could affect intertemporal comparability. Observations were subsequently reviewed for inconsistencies, duplicate records, implausible values, and discontinuities that might result from reporting changes rather than genuine economic changes.

The measurement of B2B business model adoption required an additional content-based assessment of corporate disclosures. Annual reports, descriptions of principal activities, revenue notes, customer disclosures, sales segmentation information, strategic reports, and company descriptions were examined to determine the predominant customer-market orientation of each enterprise. A standardized coding protocol was used to distinguish B2B-oriented operations from predominantly business-to-consumer operations. Indicators of B2B orientation included reliance on industrial buyers, corporate clients, wholesalers, distributors, governmental organizations, contractors, manufacturers, institutional purchasers, or other organizational customers; long-term commercial contracts; customized production or service arrangements for corporate clients; and revenue structures dominated by interorganizational transactions. Conversely, direct sales to individual end users, household consumers, or mass consumer markets were regarded as evidence of a stronger business-to-consumer orientation. The classification was conducted at the firm-year level so that significant changes in business model orientation could be incorporated into the longitudinal analysis.

To enhance measurement reliability, business model classification was based on multiple pieces of disclosed evidence whenever available rather than on a single corporate description. Quantitative revenue segmentation was given priority when companies explicitly reported sales by customer category or market type. When detailed

customer-level revenue information was unavailable, qualitative evidence from corporate activity descriptions, customer groups, contractual arrangements, product-market relationships, and distribution channels was used. Cases with ambiguous business model orientation were reviewed using the broader set of available annual corporate disclosures before final coding. This procedure was intended to reduce classification error and provide an operational definition of B2B adoption that was sufficiently consistent for longitudinal econometric analysis.

Prior to estimation, all variables were examined for missing values and extreme observations. Firm-year observations with insufficient information for the dependent variable, principal B2B indicator, or essential financial controls were excluded from the corresponding regression specification. Continuous financial variables were inspected for highly influential outliers, particularly variables such as market valuation, sales growth, profitability, and leverage, which commonly exhibit extreme values in corporate panel datasets. Where required, extreme continuous observations were winsorized at appropriate lower and upper percentiles to reduce the disproportionate influence of exceptional observations while preserving the maximum possible number of firm-year records. Monetary variables requiring comparison across time were transformed or expressed as ratios, logarithms, or standardized accounting measures where appropriate to minimize distortions associated with differences in firm scale and changes in nominal monetary values over the study period.

The empirical analysis was conducted using panel-data econometric techniques. Descriptive statistics were first calculated for the study variables to summarize the distribution and central tendency of investor valuation, B2B business model adoption, and the firm-specific control variables. The distribution of continuous variables was evaluated using the mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum, and relevant percentile values. Pairwise correlations were subsequently examined to provide an initial assessment of relationships among the variables and to identify potentially problematic correlations among explanatory variables. Multicollinearity was further assessed using variance inflation factors and related diagnostic indicators. These preliminary analyses were conducted before estimation of the multivariate panel models.

The primary hypothesis was tested using firm fixed-effects regression. The fixed-effects estimator uses within-firm variation across time and therefore evaluates whether changes in B2B business model orientation within a particular company are associated with corresponding changes in investor valuation. This approach controls for unobserved characteristics that differ across companies but remain relatively stable throughout the observation period. Such characteristics may include long-standing corporate reputation, founder characteristics, organizational identity, geographic positioning, industry-specific technological capabilities, historically established supply-chain relationships, and other persistent factors that may influence both business model selection and market valuation. Controlling for these unobserved characteristics was particularly important because firms adopting B2B models may systematically differ from consumer-oriented firms in ways that cannot be fully captured using conventional financial control variables.

The baseline empirical specification modeled investor valuation as a function of B2B business model adoption together with firm size, profitability, leverage, growth, liquidity, firm age where estimable, and other theoretically relevant firm-level characteristics. Firm fixed effects were incorporated to absorb time-invariant heterogeneity, while year fixed effects were included to control for macroeconomic and capital-market shocks common to all sampled enterprises in a given year. The inclusion of year effects was particularly important because the 2010–2024 observation period encompassed substantial variation in inflation, exchange-rate conditions, economic growth, capital-market performance, regulatory conditions, and other macroeconomic factors capable of influencing corporate market values independently of company-specific business models. The coefficient associated with B2B

adoption therefore represented the estimated within-firm change in investor valuation associated with B2B business model orientation after accounting for observed financial characteristics, persistent company-specific heterogeneity, and common time-related shocks.

Because the study involved repeated observations for the same firms, the assumption of independent regression errors could not automatically be maintained. Standard errors were therefore adjusted at the firm level to account for heteroskedasticity and within-firm serial correlation across years. This procedure produced more reliable statistical inference when disturbances were correlated within the same company over time. Additional panel-data diagnostics were performed to examine the appropriateness of the econometric specification. The fixed-effects approach was compared with alternative panel estimators where appropriate, and specification tests were used to evaluate whether unobserved firm-level effects were correlated with the explanatory variables. The fixed-effects model was retained as the principal estimator when this correlation was theoretically or statistically supported. Potential heteroskedasticity, serial correlation, and cross-sectional dependence were also considered when selecting robust inference procedures.

Several supplementary analyses were conducted to assess the stability of the estimated relationship between B2B business model adoption and investor valuation. Alternative definitions of investor valuation, including market-to-book-based specifications, were employed to determine whether the results depended on a single valuation proxy. Alternative specifications of B2B orientation were also considered where the availability of corporate disclosures permitted the construction of more detailed measures of the intensity of organizational customer dependence. Models with different combinations of control variables were estimated to assess whether the main B2B coefficient remained stable after alternative adjustments for financial performance, size, capital structure, and growth. Lagged specifications were additionally considered because capital-market participants may require time to recognize and incorporate the economic implications of changes in a firm's business model. In these models, B2B orientation in the preceding period was used to predict subsequent investor valuation, thereby reducing concerns regarding simultaneous determination and providing a more temporally ordered assessment of the relationship.

Additional analyses examined whether the relationship between B2B adoption and investor valuation differed across ownership structures. Firms were classified according to relevant ownership characteristics, allowing comparison between privately controlled and publicly or state-affiliated corporations where sufficient ownership information was available. Interaction specifications were used to determine whether ownership type moderated the valuation consequences of B2B business model adoption. This analysis was intended to address the possibility that investors interpret B2B strategies differently depending on governance structure, ownership concentration, state affiliation, managerial incentives, access to institutional contracts, and perceived political or commercial risk. Where statistically appropriate, separate fixed-effects models were also estimated for major ownership categories to assess the consistency of the principal findings across organizational contexts.

Potential endogeneity was considered when interpreting the regression estimates because firms with higher expected valuations or stronger economic prospects may be more capable of adopting B2B-oriented strategies, while business model changes may themselves influence subsequent valuation. In addition to firm and year fixed effects, the use of lagged explanatory variables and extensive firm-level controls was intended to reduce this concern. The longitudinal structure of the dataset also provided a stronger basis for examining temporal relationships than a purely cross-sectional design. Nevertheless, the coefficients were interpreted primarily as conditional within-firm associations unless the assumptions required for stronger causal interpretation were satisfied by the robustness analyses.

Statistical significance was evaluated using two-tailed hypothesis tests, with a probability level of less than 0.05 considered statistically significant. Regression coefficients, robust standard errors, test statistics, probability values, and confidence intervals were examined jointly when interpreting the magnitude and precision of the estimated relationships. Particular emphasis was placed not only on statistical significance but also on the direction, consistency, and economic magnitude of the B2B business model coefficient across alternative specifications. The analytical strategy was therefore designed to determine whether B2B business model adoption was systematically associated with investor valuation after accounting for observable corporate characteristics, persistent firm-specific heterogeneity, macroeconomic time effects, and alternative explanations for changes in firm market value.

3. Findings and Results

The final analytical sample consisted of 120 non-financial corporations listed on the Tehran Stock Exchange and observed over the 2010–2024 period. After exclusion of firm-year observations with incomplete information on market valuation, B2B business model status, or the principal financial control variables, the final panel included 1,706 firm-year observations. The panel was therefore slightly unbalanced, although the majority of firms contributed observations for most of the study period. Of the 120 firms, 78 firms, equivalent to 65.0% of the sample, were classified as privately controlled corporations, whereas 42 firms, representing 35.0%, were classified as state-controlled, public-sector-affiliated, or otherwise publicly controlled corporations based on their dominant ownership structure. With respect to business model orientation, 67 firms exhibited a predominantly B2B-oriented business model during at least part of the study period, while 53 firms remained predominantly non-B2B or consumer-oriented throughout most of the observation period. Because business model classification was performed at the firm-year level, changes in customer orientation were observed in a subset of companies during the study period. Across all firm-year observations, approximately 56% were classified as B2B-oriented observations. The sampled firms represented a broad range of non-financial sectors, including petrochemicals and chemicals, basic metals, machinery and industrial equipment, food and beverages, pharmaceuticals, cement and construction materials, automotive and components, information and communication-related activities, and other manufacturing and service industries. The average firm had been listed for more than a decade, and substantial heterogeneity was observed in organizational size, profitability, leverage, growth, and market valuation, supporting the use of panel-data methods that explicitly controlled for firm-specific heterogeneity.

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the principal variables included in the empirical analysis. Investor valuation, measured primarily by the market-to-book ratio, had a mean of 2.47 and a standard deviation of 1.38, indicating considerable dispersion in the market premium assigned to listed firms relative to their accounting book values. The mean value of the B2B adoption indicator was 0.56, showing that more than half of the firm-year observations were associated with a predominantly B2B business model. The sampled firms also exhibited substantial variation in size, profitability, leverage, growth, and liquidity, which justified the inclusion of these characteristics as controls in the multivariate models.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables

Variable	Observations	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Investor valuation (Market-to-Book Ratio)	1,706	2.47	1.38	0.54	7.86
Alternative valuation measure (Tobin's Q)	1,706	1.91	0.74	0.71	4.82
B2B business model adoption	1,706	0.56	0.50	0.00	1.00
Firm size (Ln total assets)	1,706	15.72	1.36	12.41	19.28
Profitability (ROA)	1,706	0.118	0.091	-0.142	0.391

Financial leverage	1,706	0.574	0.184	0.148	0.927
Sales growth	1,706	0.237	0.316	-0.438	1.184
Liquidity (Current Ratio)	1,706	1.42	0.69	0.38	4.26
Firm age, years	1,706	27.64	11.53	6.00	58.00

The descriptive results show that substantial heterogeneity existed across the sampled corporations. The mean market-to-book ratio of 2.47 indicates that, on average, investors valued firms at more than twice their accounting book value, although the relatively large standard deviation of 1.38 demonstrates considerable cross-firm and intertemporal variation in valuation. Tobin's Q produced a mean of 1.91, similarly suggesting that the market generally valued the sampled firms above the replacement or accounting value of their underlying assets. B2B adoption had a mean of 0.56, indicating that 56% of the firm-year observations were classified as predominantly B2B-oriented. The average logarithm of total assets was 15.72, while the wide range from 12.41 to 19.28 demonstrated substantial differences in organizational scale. Mean return on assets was 11.8%, although the minimum value was negative, indicating that some corporations experienced accounting losses during individual years. Mean leverage was 57.4%, suggesting that debt and other liabilities represented a substantial share of corporate financing. Average annual sales growth was 23.7%, but the high standard deviation and broad range reflected both contractionary and high-growth periods across firms. The average current ratio of 1.42 indicated a generally adequate level of short-term financial capacity, although considerable variation was again evident. Collectively, these distributions demonstrate that the sample contained meaningful variation in both the explanatory and outcome variables, providing an appropriate empirical basis for panel regression analysis.

Prior to estimating the panel regression models, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated among the continuous variables and the B2B indicator to examine the direction and magnitude of bivariate relationships. Variance inflation factors were also calculated to evaluate whether multicollinearity could materially distort the regression estimates.

Table 2. Correlation Matrix and Multicollinearity Diagnostics

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	VIF
1. Investor valuation	1.000							—
2. B2B adoption	0.214**	1.000						1.18
3. Firm size	0.128**	0.193**	1.000					1.52
4. Profitability	0.341**	0.106**	0.154**	1.000				1.31
5. Financial leverage	-0.279**	-0.071**	0.246**	-0.318**	1.000			1.47
6. Sales growth	0.187**	0.082**	0.097**	0.221**	-0.119**	1.000		1.16
7. Liquidity	0.153**	0.047	-0.181**	0.269**	-0.406**	0.105**	1.000	1.39

The correlation analysis revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between B2B business model adoption and investor valuation ($r = 0.214$, $p < .01$), providing preliminary evidence that firms operating with a predominantly organizational customer base tended to receive higher market valuations. Profitability displayed the strongest positive bivariate relationship with investor valuation ($r = 0.341$, $p < .01$), while leverage was negatively related to valuation ($r = -0.279$, $p < .01$). Firm size, sales growth, and liquidity were also positively correlated with investor valuation. Importantly, the correlations among the explanatory variables were moderate and well below levels generally regarded as indicative of serious multicollinearity. The strongest absolute correlation among independent variables was observed between financial leverage and liquidity ($r = -0.406$), which remained below commonly applied concern thresholds. The variance inflation factors ranged from 1.16 to 1.52 and

were therefore substantially lower than the conventional threshold of 5.00. These findings indicated that multicollinearity was not a material concern and that the explanatory variables could be incorporated simultaneously into the panel regression models.

The primary hypothesis was examined using firm fixed-effects regression models with year fixed effects and firm-clustered robust standard errors. Table 3 reports a sequence of regression specifications. Model 1 includes only the B2B adoption indicator and year effects. Model 2 adds firm size, profitability, and leverage. Model 3 further incorporates sales growth and liquidity and represents the principal fully adjusted specification.

Table 3. Firm Fixed-Effects Regression of B2B Business Model Adoption on Investor Valuation

Variable	Model 1 B (SE)	Model 2 B (SE)	Model 3 B (SE)
B2B business model adoption	0.361*** (0.092)	0.294*** (0.084)	0.278*** (0.081)
Firm size	—	0.143** (0.057)	0.129** (0.055)
Profitability (ROA)	—	2.418*** (0.376)	2.263*** (0.369)
Financial leverage	—	-1.037*** (0.251)	-0.921*** (0.247)
Sales growth	—	—	0.286*** (0.083)
Liquidity	—	—	0.118** (0.049)
Firm fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Firm-clustered robust SE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,706	1,706	1,706
Firms	120	120	120
Within R^2	0.184	0.327	0.361
F-statistic	7.93***	18.46***	19.72***

The fixed-effects regression results provided consistent support for a positive relationship between B2B business model adoption and investor valuation. In Model 1, which controlled for firm and year fixed effects but did not include additional financial covariates, B2B adoption was positively associated with the market-to-book ratio (B = 0.361, SE = 0.092, $p < .001$). This coefficient indicates that a within-firm transition toward a predominantly B2B business model was associated with an average increase of approximately 0.36 units in the market-to-book ratio. After introducing firm size, profitability, and leverage in Model 2, the B2B coefficient decreased to 0.294 but remained positive and highly significant (SE = 0.084, $p < .001$), indicating that the relationship could not be explained solely by differences in financial performance, scale, or capital structure. In the fully adjusted Model 3, B2B adoption continued to exhibit a significant positive coefficient of 0.278 (SE = 0.081, $p < .001$). Thus, after accounting for observable financial characteristics, unobserved time-invariant firm-specific factors, and common annual shocks, adoption of a B2B-oriented business model was associated with a 0.278-unit increase in investor valuation. Among the control variables, profitability had a particularly strong positive effect (B = 2.263, $p < .001$), while financial leverage had a significant negative effect (B = -0.921, $p < .001$). Firm size, sales growth, and liquidity were also positively associated with valuation. The within R^2 increased from 0.184 in the baseline specification to 0.361 in the fully adjusted model, indicating that the complete set of explanatory variables accounted for approximately 36.1% of the within-firm variation in investor valuation. Overall, the results strongly supported the central hypothesis that B2B business model adoption is positively associated with investor valuation.

To evaluate whether the main result was sensitive to alternative measurement and model specifications, several robustness tests were performed. The first specification replaced the market-to-book ratio with Tobin's Q as the dependent variable. The second used the one-year-lagged B2B adoption indicator to assess whether B2B orientation predicted subsequent investor valuation. The third simultaneously employed lagged B2B adoption and Tobin's Q.

All models included the complete set of financial control variables, firm fixed effects, year fixed effects, and firm-clustered robust standard errors.

Table 4. Robustness Tests of the Relationship Between B2B Adoption and Investor Valuation

Variable	Model 1: Tobin's Q B (SE)	Model 2: Lagged B2B → Market-to-Book B (SE)	Model 3: Lagged B2B → Tobin's Q B (SE)
B2B adoption	0.164*** (0.048)	—	—
Lagged B2B adoption	—	0.241** (0.086)	0.137** (0.052)
Firm size	0.074** (0.029)	0.117* (0.056)	0.068* (0.031)
Profitability	1.214*** (0.216)	2.108*** (0.392)	1.161*** (0.229)
Financial leverage	-0.531*** (0.143)	-0.873*** (0.258)	-0.498*** (0.151)
Sales growth	0.151** (0.050)	0.263** (0.089)	0.141** (0.053)
Liquidity	0.066* (0.030)	0.109* (0.051)	0.061* (0.031)
Firm fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,706	1,580	1,580
Firms	120	120	120
Within R^2	0.338	0.346	0.327

The robustness analyses reinforced the principal finding. When Tobin's Q was used instead of the market-to-book ratio, contemporaneous B2B adoption remained positively and significantly associated with firm valuation (B = 0.164, SE = 0.048, $p < .001$). This result demonstrates that the positive valuation effect was not dependent on a single market valuation proxy. The lagged specifications also produced statistically significant effects. Lagged B2B adoption positively predicted the following year's market-to-book ratio (B = 0.241, SE = 0.086, $p < .01$), indicating that the market valuation effect persisted when temporal ordering was introduced into the model. Similarly, lagged B2B adoption significantly predicted subsequent Tobin's Q (B = 0.137, SE = 0.052, $p < .01$). Although the lagged coefficients were somewhat smaller than the contemporaneous estimates, their persistence indicates that the association between B2B orientation and investor valuation cannot be attributed exclusively to simultaneous measurement of business model configuration and market value. The signs and significance of the control variables were also highly stable across specifications. Profitability remained positively associated with valuation, leverage retained its negative relationship, and size, growth, and liquidity generally remained positive predictors. Taken together, these results demonstrate that the central B2B effect was robust across alternative valuation measures and temporally lagged explanatory specifications.

The study further examined whether the valuation effect of B2B business model adoption differed between privately controlled and state/publicly controlled corporations. An interaction term between B2B adoption and private ownership was introduced into the fixed-effects model. Because ownership structures exhibited some changes over the study period due to privatization, ownership transfers, and changes in controlling shareholders, sufficient within-firm variation was available for estimation. Additional subgroup models were also estimated separately for private and public/state-affiliated firms.

Table 5. Ownership Structure as a Moderator of the Effect of B2B Adoption on Investor Valuation

Variable	Full Sample Interaction Model B (SE)	Private Corporations B (SE)	Public/State-Affiliated Corporations B (SE)
B2B adoption	0.173* (0.086)	0.362*** (0.097)	0.164* (0.081)
Private ownership	0.108 (0.092)	—	—

B2B adoption × Private ownership	0.191* (0.088)	—	—
Firm size	0.126* (0.055)	0.151* (0.064)	0.092 (0.073)
Profitability	2.216*** (0.367)	2.481*** (0.445)	1.872*** (0.512)
Financial leverage	-0.906*** (0.244)	-1.012*** (0.301)	-0.736* (0.358)
Sales growth	0.278*** (0.082)	0.311** (0.101)	0.224* (0.111)
Liquidity	0.113* (0.048)	0.139* (0.059)	0.081 (0.066)
Firm fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,706	1,109	597
Firms	120	78	42
Within R^2	0.369	0.389	0.312

The ownership analysis showed that the positive effect of B2B business model adoption on investor valuation was stronger among privately controlled corporations than among state-controlled or publicly affiliated firms. In the full-sample interaction model, the main effect of B2B adoption remained positive and statistically significant (B = 0.173, SE = 0.086, $p < .05$), representing the estimated effect for the reference ownership category. More importantly, the interaction between B2B adoption and private ownership was positive and significant (B = 0.191, SE = 0.088, $p < .05$). This indicates that the valuation premium associated with B2B orientation was significantly greater when the firm was privately controlled. The subgroup analyses provided consistent evidence. Among private corporations, B2B adoption was associated with a 0.362-unit increase in the market-to-book ratio (SE = 0.097, $p < .001$), whereas among state/publicly affiliated corporations, the corresponding coefficient was 0.164 (SE = 0.081, $p < .05$). Thus, although B2B orientation was positively valued by investors in both ownership categories, the magnitude of the association was more than twice as large among privately controlled firms. The private-firm model also demonstrated somewhat greater explanatory power, with a within R^2 of 0.389 compared with 0.312 for the public/state-affiliated subgroup. These findings indicate that ownership structure conditions the way in which capital-market investors respond to B2B business models and suggest that the perceived value of B2B orientation is amplified when accompanied by private ownership and the governance, efficiency, and incentive structures typically associated with it.

Diagnostic evaluation supported the appropriateness of the fixed-effects specification used in the primary analysis. Comparison of pooled ordinary least squares, random-effects, and fixed-effects models indicated substantial firm-specific heterogeneity. The test for the joint significance of firm effects was statistically significant, demonstrating that pooled estimation would not adequately account for unobserved differences across corporations. The Hausman specification test also rejected the null hypothesis that the unobserved firm-specific effects were uncorrelated with the explanatory variables, supporting the use of fixed-effects estimation rather than random effects. The Hausman test yielded $\chi^2(6) = 29.84$, $p < .001$. Accordingly, the fixed-effects estimator was retained as the principal model throughout the analysis.

Additional residual diagnostics indicated the presence of both heteroskedasticity and within-firm serial dependence, which justified the use of firm-clustered robust standard errors in all principal regression models. A modified Wald test for groupwise heteroskedasticity was significant, $\chi^2(120) = 486.72$, $p < .001$. The Wooldridge test for first-order serial correlation in panel data was also statistically significant, $F(1,119) = 18.63$, $p < .001$. Consequently, conventional homoskedastic standard errors were not used for statistical inference. Examination of cross-sectional dependence suggested a modest degree of common contemporaneous correlation across firms,

which was expected given that all corporations operated within the same national macroeconomic and capital-market environment. The inclusion of year fixed effects absorbed a substantial proportion of such common shocks, including inflationary episodes, exchange-rate fluctuations, broad capital-market movements, and changes in regulatory or macroeconomic conditions.

The stability of the B2B coefficient across multiple model specifications further strengthened the empirical findings. The estimated effect remained positive regardless of whether valuation was represented by the market-to-book ratio or Tobin's Q, whether contemporaneous or lagged B2B adoption was examined, and whether the model was estimated for the full sample or separately by ownership structure. No specification produced a negative coefficient for the B2B variable. Moreover, the effect remained statistically significant after controlling for firm size, profitability, leverage, sales growth, liquidity, firm fixed effects, and year fixed effects. The persistence of the relationship across these alternative estimations reduced the likelihood that the principal result was driven by a specific measurement choice, a limited subset of firms, or a single econometric specification.

Overall, the empirical findings provide strong support for the proposition that adoption of a B2B business model is positively associated with investor valuation among Iranian non-financial corporations listed on the Tehran Stock Exchange. The fixed-effects estimates indicate that changes toward B2B-oriented commercial structures were followed by higher market valuation within the same firms, even after controlling for conventional financial determinants of firm value and unobserved time-invariant organizational characteristics. The robustness analyses confirmed that this relationship persisted across alternative measures of market valuation and lagged specifications. Furthermore, the ownership analysis demonstrated that the valuation premium attributable to B2B adoption was substantially stronger among privately controlled corporations than among state-controlled or publicly affiliated enterprises. Taken together, the results suggest that capital-market investors attach positive value to B2B business model characteristics, but that the magnitude of this valuation response depends partly on the institutional and ownership context in which the business model operates.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrated that adoption of a B2B business model was positively associated with investor valuation among non-financial corporations listed on the Tehran Stock Exchange. The fixed-effects regression results showed that the relationship remained statistically significant after controlling for firm size, profitability, financial leverage, sales growth, liquidity, firm-specific unobserved characteristics, and year-specific macroeconomic effects. The positive coefficient obtained for B2B adoption indicates that, within the same firm, movement toward a stronger B2B orientation was associated with a higher market-to-book valuation. This result suggests that investors may interpret B2B-oriented business models as signals of more stable revenue structures, stronger customer relationships, improved market positioning, and greater capacity to generate sustainable economic value. The robustness analyses further confirmed that this association was not dependent on a single valuation indicator, because B2B adoption also remained positively related to Tobin's Q. Moreover, the lagged models showed that prior B2B orientation significantly predicted subsequent investor valuation, indicating that the observed relationship persisted even when a temporal separation was introduced between business model adoption and market valuation.

The principal finding is consistent with the broader literature showing that marketing-related organizational capabilities can be recognized and priced by capital markets. Homburg et al. demonstrated that marketing excellence is positively related to investor valuation, suggesting that investors do not respond exclusively to

accounting outcomes but also incorporate strategically relevant marketing capabilities into their assessments of future firm value [16]. The present findings extend this perspective by indicating that B2B business model adoption itself may constitute a value-relevant strategic characteristic. A B2B orientation can potentially improve the quality and predictability of future cash flows through stronger customer relationships, recurring transactions, long-term contracts, and deeper integration with organizational buyers. These features may reduce uncertainty regarding future revenues and enhance investors' expectations about firm resilience, thereby contributing to higher market valuation.

The positive valuation effect may also be explained through the relational characteristics of B2B exchange. In B2B markets, value is frequently generated through long-term cooperation, customization, mutual dependence, and collaborative problem solving. Berenguer-Contri et al. found that value co-creation and relationship quality contribute significantly to economic satisfaction in B2B relationships [2]. Similarly, Rendy et al. showed that value co-creation plays an important role in sustaining partner loyalty in B2B settings [5]. These findings support the interpretation that firms operating through B2B models may possess relational assets that enhance the durability of customer relationships and lower the likelihood of abrupt revenue loss. Investors may therefore assign higher valuations to B2B firms when such relational advantages are perceived as sources of stable and defensible future income.

Trust represents another mechanism that may contribute to the higher investor valuation observed among B2B-oriented firms. The findings of Sethi et al. indicate that trust in B2B communities contributes to brand loyalty and strengthens the continuity of commercial relationships [6]. In organizational markets, where transactions are often larger and more complex than in consumer markets, trusted supplier relationships can function as important intangible assets. Firms that develop high levels of customer trust may face lower customer acquisition costs, higher retention rates, and stronger opportunities for cross-selling and contract renewal. These characteristics can improve revenue quality and reduce perceived business risk. The positive association between B2B adoption and investor valuation identified in this study may therefore partly reflect the capital market's recognition of the relational capital embedded in stable organizational customer networks.

The findings are also compatible with research emphasizing the strategic role of digitalization in modern B2B markets. Lundin and Kindstrom showed that digital transformation is reshaping B2B customer journeys and changing how firms interact with customers across multiple stages of the buying process [3]. Andersson et al. similarly identified both opportunities and challenges associated with digitalization of the B2B customer journey, emphasizing the increasing importance of integrated digital touchpoints and coordinated customer experiences [4]. These developments are relevant because B2B business models that effectively integrate digital customer interaction may become more scalable, information-rich, and efficient. Investors may respond positively to such firms because digitalized B2B structures can lower transaction costs, improve customer responsiveness, and strengthen competitive positioning. Consequently, the positive valuation premium observed in this study may reflect not only the nature of the customer base but also the technological capabilities that increasingly accompany contemporary B2B operations.

Artificial intelligence and data-driven customer management provide a further explanation for the results. Rodriguez and Peterson emphasized the growing role of artificial intelligence in B2B sales processes, particularly in relation to customer identification, targeting, engagement, and decision support [7]. Mohammad et al. likewise found that digital sales automation can enhance buyer engagement through the mediating effect of perceived value in B2B exchanges [8]. Firms that adopt B2B models may therefore benefit from greater opportunities to use

advanced customer analytics, automation, and predictive systems because organizational customer relationships often generate structured transactional data and repeated interactions. These capabilities can improve sales efficiency, forecasting accuracy, and customer lifetime value, all of which are potentially relevant to investor assessments of future growth and profitability.

The importance of technological readiness also helps explain why B2B adoption may be associated with superior valuation. Rahman et al. showed that the technology readiness of B2B firms enhances AI-based customer relationship management capability and contributes to broader organizational outcomes [9]. Ebrahimpour similarly emphasized the role of technology readiness, ICT capacity, and industry dynamism in strengthening AI-enabled customer relationship management among B2B firms [10]. These findings suggest that effective B2B adoption increasingly requires firms to possess complementary technological and organizational capabilities. Investors may therefore interpret successful B2B orientation as an indicator that the firm has developed the infrastructure needed to manage complex customer relationships, utilize data, and respond to environmental changes. This interpretation is particularly plausible in markets where technological adaptability is increasingly important for sustaining competitive advantage.

The Iranian evidence on AI-supported B2B capabilities also aligns with the present results. Cherāgh Sahr et al. found that artificial intelligence applications can influence organizational performance through B2B marketing capabilities [11]. Safapour-Moghaddam and Moghaddam-Nia similarly emphasized the role of integrated AI frameworks in knowledge generation and logical analysis of B2B marketing for improving business performance among firms in Tehran [12]. These studies support the proposition that B2B orientation in the Iranian context can be linked to increasingly sophisticated marketing and knowledge-management systems. The positive valuation effect identified in this study may therefore reflect investor expectations that firms adopting B2B models possess stronger analytical, technological, and relational capabilities than firms relying primarily on conventional consumer-market structures.

The findings concerning profitability, leverage, growth, and firm size were also consistent with expectations. Profitability showed a strong positive relationship with investor valuation across the estimated models, indicating that investors placed higher values on firms that generated stronger returns from their asset base. At the same time, leverage was negatively associated with valuation, suggesting that higher levels of financial risk reduced investors' willingness to assign valuation premiums. Sales growth and firm size were positively related to market valuation, implying that investors rewarded both expansion potential and organizational scale. Importantly, however, the B2B coefficient remained significant after all of these financial variables were included. This indicates that the positive effect of B2B orientation was not merely a reflection of the fact that B2B firms were larger, more profitable, or faster growing. Rather, the business model itself appeared to contain additional information relevant to investor valuation.

The robustness findings provide further confidence in this interpretation. When Tobin's Q was used as an alternative dependent variable, B2B adoption continued to exhibit a positive and statistically significant association with valuation. This consistency is important because market-to-book ratios and Tobin's Q capture somewhat different aspects of market valuation. The persistence of the relationship across both measures reduces the likelihood that the result was driven by idiosyncrasies in a single valuation metric. Furthermore, lagged B2B adoption positively predicted subsequent market-to-book ratios and Tobin's Q values. These lagged effects suggest that the market response to B2B adoption may unfold over time as investors receive additional information about the firm's customer relationships, contract stability, growth prospects, and operational performance.

This temporal pattern is consistent with the argument that the economic benefits of B2B adoption may require time to become visible. B2B business model transformation can involve restructuring sales processes, developing digital customer journeys, implementing CRM platforms, enhancing data analytics, and creating new service offerings. Perez-Moure et al. showed that service innovation and entrepreneurial transformation can lead B2B firms toward new digital-intensive business models [15]. Such transformations may not immediately translate into higher firm value because their benefits emerge gradually through improved customer engagement, increased service intensity, and enhanced revenue quality. The significant lagged effects found in the present study are therefore consistent with the view that investors respond progressively as evidence accumulates regarding the economic consequences of the new business model.

The results concerning customer analytics provide additional support for this interpretation. Hadid et al. demonstrated the strategic usefulness of advanced B2B customer segmentation based on firmographic, RFM, and graph-based data [13]. Sancar and Uzun-Per similarly illustrated the importance of identifying relevant predictors in B2B customer churn analysis [14]. These analytical approaches are directly relevant to firm value because improved segmentation and churn prediction can help firms allocate resources more effectively, identify high-value customers, reduce attrition, and strengthen customer lifetime value. A B2B-oriented firm capable of using these tools may develop a more predictable and defensible revenue base, which may in turn be reflected in investor valuation. The positive association observed in this study is therefore consistent with a broader shift toward analytically managed B2B customer portfolios.

Another important finding was that ownership structure moderated the relationship between B2B adoption and investor valuation. The positive effect of B2B orientation was significantly stronger among privately controlled corporations than among state-controlled or publicly affiliated firms. This suggests that investors may interpret B2B adoption differently depending on the governance and ownership context in which it occurs. Among private firms, a transition toward B2B activities may be interpreted as a market-driven strategic choice associated with stronger managerial incentives, greater responsiveness to customer needs, and more disciplined allocation of resources. In contrast, B2B relationships in state-affiliated firms may sometimes reflect institutional arrangements, privileged access to public customers, or historically established commercial structures rather than purely competitive market positioning. As a result, the informational value of B2B adoption for investors may be lower in publicly affiliated corporations.

The stronger effect in privately controlled firms can also be interpreted in light of the performance orientation emphasized in the B2B marketing literature. Jagodič and Milfelner showed that B2B marketing strategy, ICT-supported marketing, and service quality contribute to the market orientation–performance relationship [1]. Such capabilities may be more strongly rewarded in organizational settings where managerial decision-making is closely tied to profitability, customer retention, and competitive performance. In privately controlled firms, the adoption of B2B strategies may therefore generate clearer signals regarding market orientation and commercial effectiveness. This may explain why investors assigned a larger valuation premium to B2B adoption in the private-firm subsample.

Overall, the findings indicate that B2B business model adoption should be viewed as a strategically meaningful determinant of investor valuation rather than simply as a descriptive characteristic of the customer base. The results suggest that B2B orientation can create value through multiple interconnected mechanisms, including relationship quality, value co-creation, customer loyalty, trust, digitalization, technological readiness, AI-enabled customer management, service innovation, and analytical management of customer portfolios. These mechanisms are

consistent with the broader body of B2B research and provide a plausible explanation for why investors may assign higher valuations to firms that adopt organizationally oriented commercial models. At the same time, the stronger effect observed among privately controlled firms shows that the valuation consequences of B2B adoption are conditioned by governance and ownership structure. The study therefore contributes to the literature by linking business model orientation directly to capital-market valuation in an emerging-market context and by showing that ownership conditions the strength of this relationship.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study was based exclusively on non-financial corporations listed on the Tehran Stock Exchange, and the results may therefore not be directly generalizable to unlisted firms, small and medium-sized enterprises, financial institutions, or corporations operating in other national markets. Second, the classification of B2B business model adoption relied partly on publicly disclosed information in annual reports and related corporate documents, which may not always provide complete information about customer composition or the intensity of B2B activities. Third, although the fixed-effects design, year controls, lagged specifications, and extensive financial covariates reduced several sources of endogeneity, the observational nature of the study does not permit a definitive causal interpretation. Reverse causality may still be possible if firms with improving market valuations are more capable of restructuring their business models. Fourth, the study used market-based valuation indicators that may be influenced by broader capital-market sentiment, speculative activity, macroeconomic volatility, and investor behavior beyond firm fundamentals. Finally, the analysis focused on overall B2B adoption and ownership structure and did not directly measure potentially important mechanisms such as customer concentration, contract duration, digital maturity, service intensity, innovation capability, or the quality of interorganizational relationships.

Future studies should extend the analysis by examining the mechanisms through which B2B adoption influences investor valuation. Researchers could directly test the mediating roles of customer retention, recurring revenue, relationship quality, digital maturity, innovation intensity, marketing capability, and revenue predictability. It would also be valuable to distinguish between different forms of B2B models, including industrial supply relationships, platform-based B2B models, service-based models, government-oriented contracting, subscription structures, and digital-intensive B2B services. Future research could compare listed and unlisted firms, examine other emerging markets, or conduct cross-country studies to determine whether institutional quality and capital-market development alter the valuation consequences of B2B adoption. Stronger causal designs could also be employed by exploiting identifiable business model transitions, regulatory changes, privatization events, major customer acquisitions, or other exogenous shocks. In addition, future studies should examine nonlinear effects, because excessive dependence on a limited number of organizational customers may increase concentration risk even when moderate B2B orientation is beneficial. Incorporating customer-level and contract-level data would further improve understanding of how the structure and quality of B2B relationships are translated into firm value.

Managers should regard B2B business model development as a strategic value-creation decision rather than merely a sales-channel choice. Firms seeking to increase investor valuation should strengthen the characteristics that make B2B models economically attractive, including stable customer relationships, repeat purchasing, contractual continuity, digital customer management, service quality, and transparent revenue structures. Managers should also communicate the economic implications of B2B strategies more clearly to investors by providing credible information about customer retention, contract duration, customer concentration, recurring revenues, market expansion, and technological capabilities. Privately controlled firms may be particularly well positioned to translate B2B adoption into higher market valuation, but state-affiliated corporations can also

strengthen the market response by improving governance quality, transparency, managerial accountability, and market-oriented decision-making. Firms should avoid excessive dependence on a small number of organizational customers and should instead diversify their B2B portfolios while investing in customer analytics, digital sales capabilities, and relationship management systems. Ultimately, the value of B2B adoption is likely to depend not simply on serving organizational customers, but on the firm's ability to transform those relationships into predictable, scalable, and defensible sources of long-term economic value.

Authors' Contributions

Authors equally contributed to this article.

Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

Acknowledgments

Authors thank all participants who participate in this study.

Conflict of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

Funding/Financial Support

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

References

[1] G. Jagodič and B. Milfelner, "The role of B2B marketing strategy, ICT B2B marketing support, and service quality in market orientation - Performance relationship: evidence from three European countries," *Cogent Business & Management,* vol. 9, no. 1, 2022, doi: 10.1080/23311975.2022.2128252.

[2] G. Berenguer-Contri, I. Gil-Saura, and M. E. Ruiz-Molina, "How to generate economic satisfaction in B2B contexts? The role of value co-creation and relationship quality," *Journal of Industrial and Business Economics,* vol. 51, pp. 189-209, 2024, doi: 10.1007/s40812-023-00287-9.

[3] L. Lundin and D. Kindstrom, "Digitalizing customer journeys in B2B markets," *Journal of Business Research,* vol. 157, p. 113639, 2023, doi: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.113639.

[4] S. Andersson, U. Aagerup, L. Svensson, and S. Eriksson, "Challenges and opportunities in the digitalization of the B2B customer journey," *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing,* vol. 39, no. 13, pp. 160-174, 2024, doi: 10.1108/JBIM-12-2023-0714.

[5] A. P. Rendy, Budiyanto, and Suhermin, "The Role of Value Co-Creation in Sustaining Partner Loyalty in B2B Business: A Service-Dominant Logic Approach," *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science,* 2023, doi: 10.20525/ijrbs.v12i9.3056.

[6] A. R. Sethi, S. Dash, A. Mishra, and D. Cyr, "Role of community trust in driving brand loyalty in large online B2B communities," *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing,* vol. 39, no. 2, pp. 256-272, 2024, doi: 10.1108/JBIM-10-2022-0469.

[7] M. Rodriguez and R. Peterson, "Artificial intelligence in business-to-business (B2B) sales process: a conceptual framework," *Journal of marketing analytics,* 2024, doi: 10.1057/s41270-023-00287-7.

[8] A. A. S. Mohammad *et al.*, "Digital Sales Automation and Buyer Engagement: Investigating the Mediating Role of Perceived Value in B2B Exchanges," (in English), *Discover Artificial Intelligence,* 2026, doi: 10.1007/s44163-025-00830-8.

[9] M. S. Rahman, S. Bag, S. Gupta, and U. Sivarajah, "Technology readiness of B2B firms and AI-based customer relationship management capability for enhancing social sustainability performance," *Journal of Business Research,* vol. 156, p. 113525, 2023, doi: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.113525.

[10] S. Ebrahimpour, "The Effect of B2B Firms' Technology Readiness on AI-Based Customer Relationship Management Capacity with the Mediating Role of ICT Capacity and the Moderating Role of Industry Dynamism: A Study of B2B Firms," presented at the Fourth International Congress on Management, Economics, Humanities, and Business Development, 2025.

[11] R. Cherāgh Sahr, M. Sasanpour, and M. H. Bahrani, "Investigating the Extent of the Impact of Artificial Intelligence Applications on Organizational Performance with the Mediation of Business-to-Business (B2B) Marketing Capabilities (Case Study: Jānbo Chain Stores)," *Scientific Journal of New Research Approaches in Management and Accounting,* vol. 8, no. 28, pp. 1252-1283, 2024.

[12] M. Safapour-Moghaddam and E. Moghaddam-Nia, "Presenting an Integrated Artificial Intelligence Framework for Knowledge Generation and Logical Analysis of B2B Marketing to Improve Business Performance in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Tehran," in *Fifth National and Second International Conference on New Business Management Models under Unstable Conditions*, Tehran, 2023.

[13] A. B. Hadid, S. Bouguelia, and H. Kheddouci, "A New Method of B2B Customer Segmentation Based on Firmographic Data, and RFM and Graph Models," in *2024 IEEE International Conference on e-Business Engineering*, 2024, pp. 81-86, doi: 10.1109/ICEBE62490.2024.00021.

[14] S. Sancar and M. Uzun-Per, "Feature Selection in Customer Churn Analysis: Case Study in B2B Business," in *IEEE International Conference on E-Business Engineering*, 2022, doi: 10.1109/ICEBE55470.2022.00053.

[15] H. Perez-Moure, J. F. Lampon, M. E. Velando-Rodriguez, and L. Rodriguez-Comesana, "Transforming B2B service innovation: The path toward new digital-intensive business through entrepreneurship," *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing,* vol. 41, no. 13, pp. 76-102, 2026, doi: 10.1108/JBIM-11-2024-0856.

[16] C. Homburg, M. Theel, and S. Hohenberg, "Marketing Excellence: Nature, Measurement, and Investor Valuations," *Journal of Marketing,* vol. 84, no. 4, pp. 1-22, 2020, doi: 10.1177/0022242920925517.