

Integrated Credit Risk Management: A Cross-Industry Analysis of Governance Frameworks in Manufacturing, Distribution and Service Sectors

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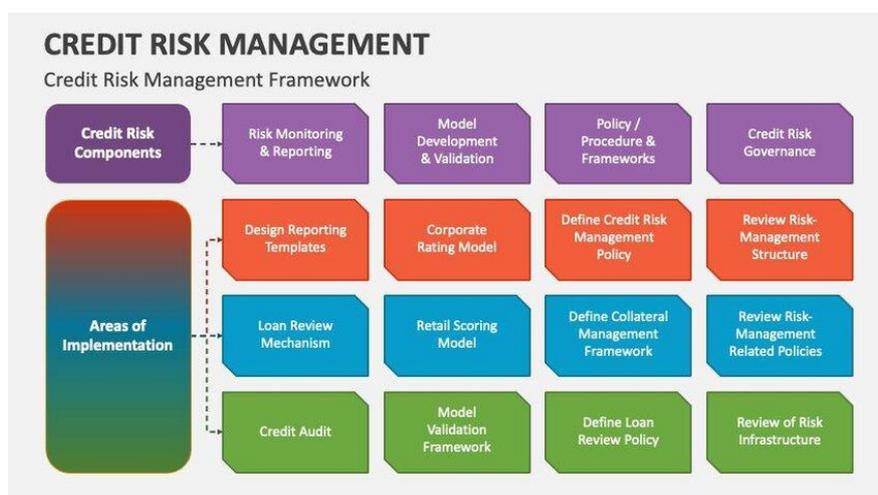
ABSTRACT

This study examines integrated credit risk management across manufacturing, distribution, and service sectors to understand how governance frameworks, technological capabilities, and operational structures shape organisational resilience. Using secondary research drawn from journal articles, industry reports, and sectoral data published between 2015 and 2024, the study identifies key differences in credit risk exposure, monitoring practices, and governance maturity. The findings reveal that manufacturing firms rely heavily on structured policies but lag in real-time analytics, distribution firms face elevated risk due to dual credit roles and high transaction velocity, and service firms lead in digital monitoring and behavioural analytics. Cross-industry comparison highlights the need for integrated governance mechanisms that combine robust oversight with data-driven decision-making. The study contributes to improving theoretical understanding and practical application by demonstrating that credit risk is a multidimensional organisational concern requiring continuous adaptation.

Keywords- Integrated credit risk management, governance frameworks, manufacturing sector, distribution sector, service sector, credit risk analytics, secondary research.

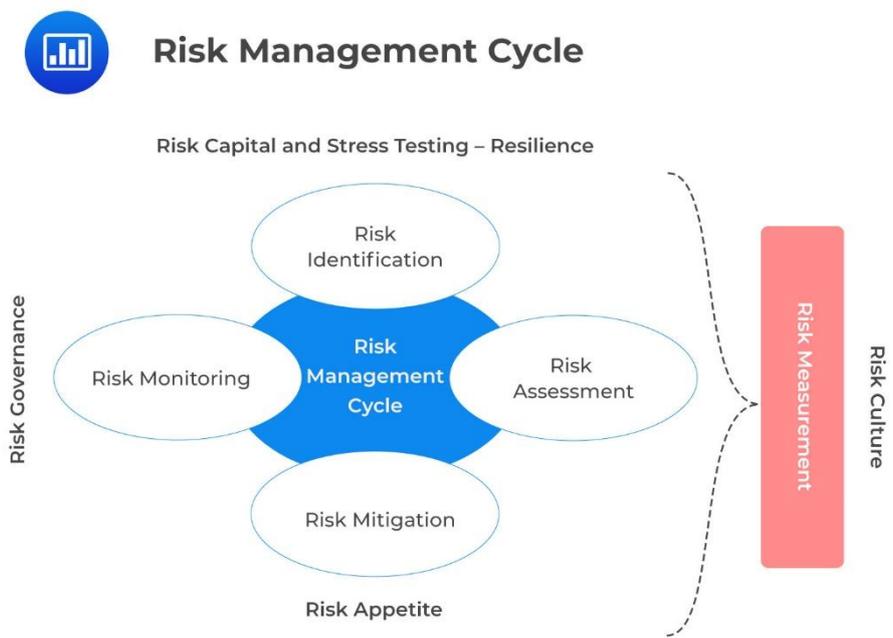
Introduction

Integrated credit risk management has emerged as a central pillar of organisational resilience in an increasingly volatile global economy, where disruptions in financial markets, unstable supply chains, and fluctuating consumer demand have significantly expanded the exposure of firms to credit-related vulnerabilities. While credit risk has traditionally been associated with the financial sector, its relevance across non-financial industries has grown substantially as businesses rely heavily on complex networks of buyers, suppliers, distributors, and service partners. In contemporary business ecosystems, the ability of a firm to assess, monitor, and mitigate the risk of counterparty default is crucial for maintaining cash flow stability, safeguarding operational continuity, and sustaining strategic competitiveness. As industries evolve under the pressures of digital transformation, regulatory shifts, and global interdependencies, the need for integrated, cross-functional credit risk management frameworks has become pronounced, particularly as isolated departmental approaches fail to capture the interconnectedness of financial and operational exposures. This research paper, therefore, positions integrated credit risk management as a multi-dimensional construct that extends beyond traditional credit assessment to encompass governance mechanisms, data-driven analytics, and cross-industry learning.



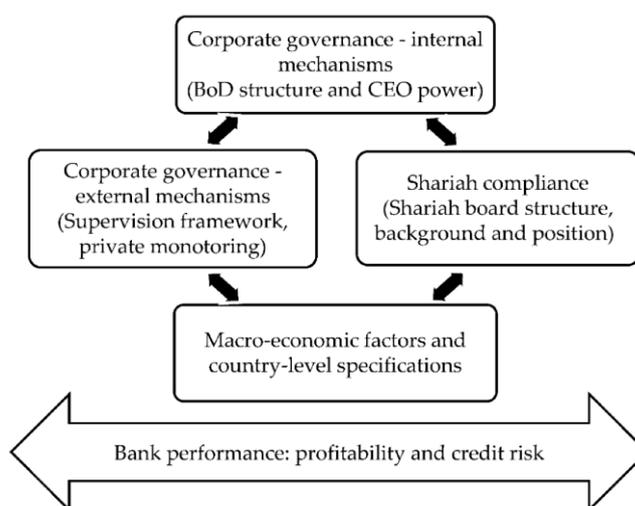
The manufacturing, distribution, and service industries offer a valuable background of comparative analysis due to the fact that they bear different business models, financial architecture, and risk exposure, but are still united by the common business-to-business relationships. The manufacturing companies, such as those, usually work in capital-intensive environments and have long turnover time, and in such situations they face significant receivables risk in the event of any financial distress or turnover delays on the part of the buyer. Having the difficult role of mediating between manufacturers on one side and retailers or downstream customers on the other, distributors are particularly pressured trying to strike a balance between the creditworthiness of supplier and supplier on the other side, so that credit risk has become a key factor in determining the turnover of inventory, liquidity health, and channel stability. The service sector, in its turn, is usually characterised by intangible product output, high customer turnover and diversified customer portfolio, which means that the governance structures should be geared towards real-time data analysis, client behavioural patterns, and compliance with contractual terms to reduce the default rates. These industry differences define the form and performance of credit risk governance frameworks, but also highlight the importance of integrated strategies that go beyond industry-based silos, especially in a time when cross-sector partnerships, outsourcing deals, and platform business models are the order of the day.

The significance of governance structures in determining organisational responsibility, transparency and decision making are also well illustrated through an integrated perspective of credit risk management. The governance mechanisms (such as policy structures, internal controls, oversight committees, credit approval hierarchies, and risk reporting systems) affect the credit decisions and the speed with which risks are identified and higher. But the maturity of these frameworks differs significantly through industries, influenced by the expectations of the regulation, practices in the market, technology adoption, and organisational culture. Structured credit policy and supplier risk assessment might be of priority to manufacturing firms; dynamic credit limit and real-time monitoring systems indicating dynamic inventory changing are of priority to the distributors. Automated credit scoring, behavioural analytics, and integrated enterprise risk management systems are taking over service organisations, especially in the financial sector, logistics, consulting, or digital service organisations. Cross-industry analysis is thus a vital prospect to pinpoint the governance strengths and weaknesses and allow organisations to learn about each other and create stronger, more adaptive, and future-oriented models. By placing the credit risk management in this comparative framework, the study contributes to the enhanced comprehension of how the integrated practice in terms of governance might enhance the financial well-being and strategic stability in manufacturing, distribution, and service industries.



Importance of the Study

This study holds importance in as much as it helps in the comprehension of how integrated credit risk management can help in enhancing organisational resilience in a variety of industrial settings. Even though credit risk has been a key financial issue on the agenda of financial managers, it is frequently treated in a limited way through conventional credit appraisal approaches and compartmentalized departmental processes that do not reflect the broader operational and strategic consequences of failing counterparties. It discusses governance structures in the manufacturing, distribution and service industries and therefore, the paper widens the debate beyond industry-specific views and demonstrates the importance of multifunctional strategies. The growing nature of global supply chains, multi-tiered business alliances, and online eco-systems has compounded the interdependence of firms so that it is now paramount that organisations realise that credit risk is not isolated to financial dealings alone but inherently entrenched in the procurement decision-making process, production planning, customer relationship management, and strategic forecasting. It is through its cross industry lenses that this research highlights the importance of incorporating risk governance practices in order to improve financial stability, more predictable cash flows, and minimise the ripple-effects of defaults that not only interfere with operations, but also destroy competitive advantages.

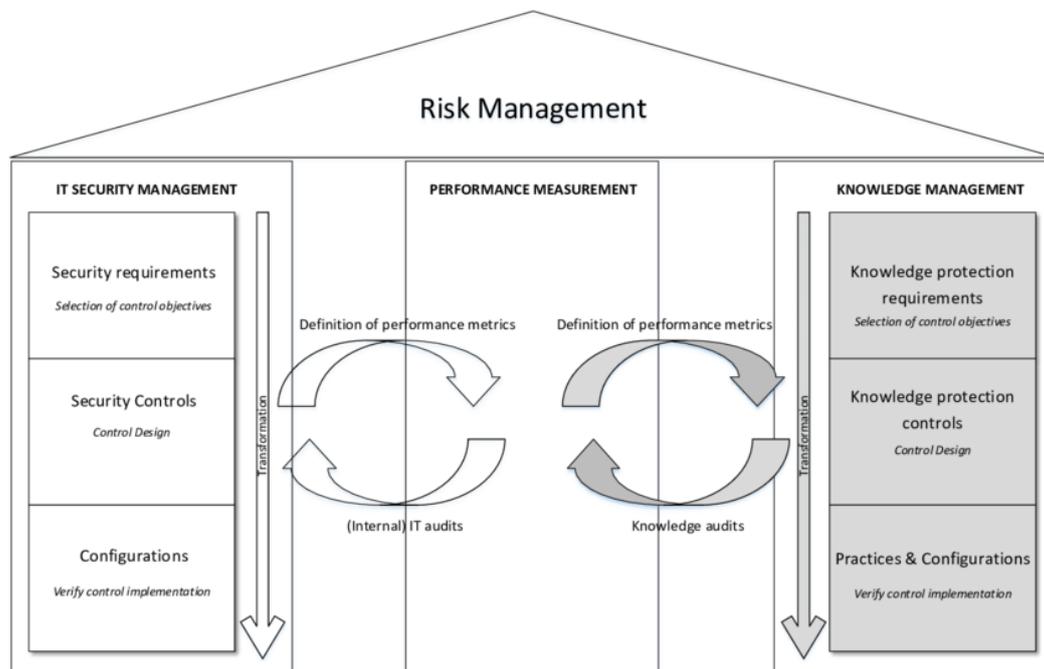


Furthermore, this study carries practical relevance for policymakers, industry practitioners, and corporate leaders seeking to create more robust credit evaluation and risk governance structures. As regulatory landscapes evolve and industries adopt new technologies such as automation, predictive analytics, and AI-driven scoring models, organisations are confronted with the challenge of aligning these tools with coherent governance mechanisms that uphold transparency, accountability, and timely decision-making. Manufacturing organisations may benefit from learning how service firms employ real-time data systems, while distributors can draw insights from the structured governance models prevalent in large-scale manufacturing operations. Similarly, service providers, particularly those operating in intangible or rapidly shifting markets, can gain from understanding how distributors manage credit across high-volume transactions. The study therefore serves as an important reference point for fostering cross-sector learning, enabling firms to benchmark their practices, identify governance gaps, and adopt integrated frameworks that are adaptable to changing market conditions. By situating credit risk within a broader organisational and inter-industry context, this research contributes to advancing both academic understanding and practical application in the field of integrated credit risk management.

Theoretical and Contextual Contribution of the Research

The present study offers a significant theoretical contribution by expanding the understanding of credit risk management beyond its conventional treatment as a purely financial or accounting-focused activity. Traditional models often emphasise credit scoring, financial statement analysis, and default probability calculations, which, although valuable, capture only a fraction of the risk landscape faced by modern organisations. This research advances theoretical discourse by framing credit risk as an integrated, multi-dimensional construct embedded within broader organisational governance systems. By drawing connections between risk oversight, internal controls, cross-departmental coordination, digital capability, and sector-specific operational dynamics, the study challenges the assumptions underlying siloed approaches

and supports the evolution of more holistic theories of enterprise risk. The comparative analysis across manufacturing, distribution, and service sectors further strengthens theoretical understanding by illustrating how credit risk manifests differently depending on the structural, operational, and relational nature of each industry. This cross-sector lens enriches existing theories by demonstrating that credit risk governance cannot be universally standardised but must adapt to heterogeneous business environments while still adhering to core principles of accountability, transparency, and consistency. The research, therefore, contributes to theoretical refinement by situating credit risk within both organisational behaviour and strategic management perspectives, extending its relevance beyond the financial domain.



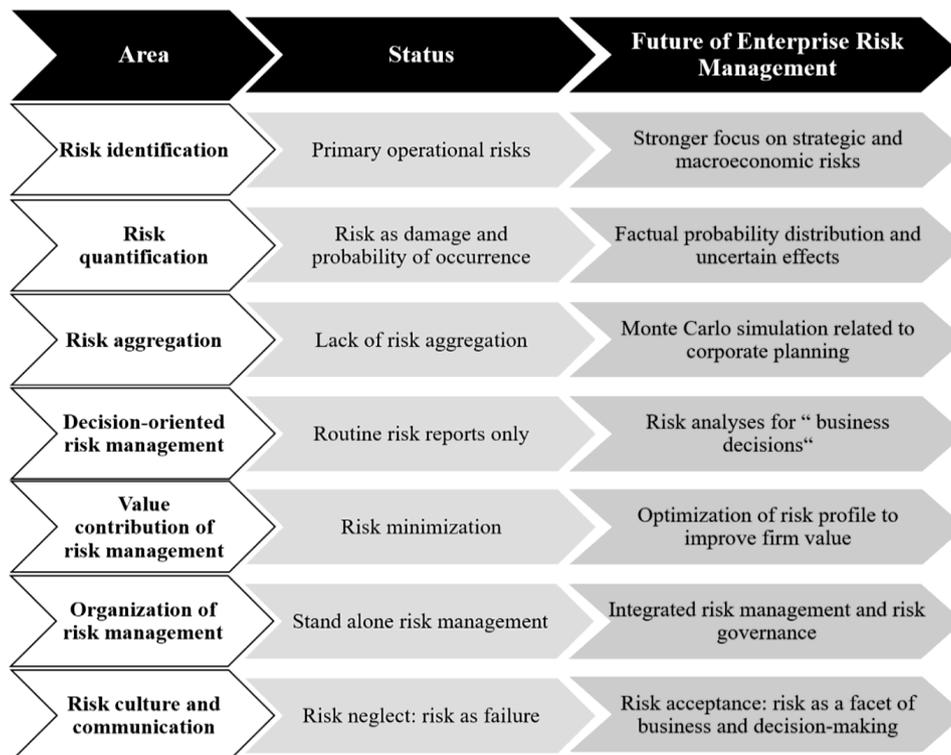
Contextually, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how governance frameworks shape organisational responses to credit risk within real-world industrial settings increasingly characterised by uncertainty, technological disruption, and global interdependence. Contemporary business ecosystems operate through complex networks of suppliers, distributors, partners, and clients, which necessitate governance mechanisms capable of detecting early warning signals, coordinating cross-functional responses, and supporting agile decision-making. By exploring how firms across three distinct sectors design and implement their governance structures, the study illuminates the contextual factors that influence the maturity and effectiveness of credit risk practices. The manufacturing sector highlights the importance of structured credit protocols and long-term supplier evaluations, the distribution sector illustrates the challenges of balancing upstream and downstream credit exposures within high-velocity trading environments, and the service sector demonstrates the growing significance of real-time analytics, customer behavioural insights, and digital platforms. These contextual nuances offer valuable insights into the interplay between industry characteristics and governance practices, revealing how economic cycles, regulatory expectations, technological infrastructures, and market behaviours shape credit risk approaches. This contextual contribution provides a foundation for practitioners seeking to tailor risk governance frameworks to their industry realities, and for scholars aiming to integrate contextual variables into future credit risk research, thereby enriching both theoretical advancement and practical relevance.

Literature review

The research on integrated credit risk management has moved significantly in the last ten years, especially with organisations in the manufacturing, distribution and service industries being more exposed to counterparty risks as a result of the global interlinking economy. Credit risk, which is traditionally viewed as a financial issue, has been rethought in the context of the wider enterprise risk management, where cross-functional teamwork is necessary, real-time information integration is important, and governance alignment is also necessary. As Saunders and Allen (2016) state, conventional credit risk models, which focus on probability of default and loss given default, provide less explanatory value in organisations that have become diversified in their supply chains, subject to changing demand patterns and

utilising digitally facilitated platforms. This change has prompted researchers to develop an interest in the study of credit risk as a multi-layered phenomenon that depends on organisational structures on governance, technology, and sector-specific operation features. Researchers like Gishkori and Ullah (2019) emphasise the growing relevance of integrating credit assessment into organisational strategy by implying the researchers that organisations that combine financial and operational data are more resilient to market uncertainty. This development in conceptualisation offers an opportunity to explore credit risk in all industries, where differences in the models of production, customer behaviour, and dependencies in the supply chain would determine not only how risk in the industry manifests itself but also how it is governed.

In the manufacturing industry, the literature focuses on the complexity of manufacturing cycles, extended credit duration, and the excessive reliance on the creditworthiness of buyers. Manufacturing companies have been known to run on long receivables cycles, which exposes them to the risk of the cash flow being interfered with should clients default or become late in their payments. Researchers have found that manufacturing companies have a weak credit governance structure have increased volatility of working capital and reduced stability of operations (Mwangi and Muturi, 2018 and Janko and Brabenec, 2021). The integration of whole credit risk models is thus seen to be a step towards improving financial predictability and reducing downstream interferences. Moreover, the literature on manufacturing generates more and more signs of the importance of digital technologies in enhancing credit monitoring, and scholars like Lekkas and Serrano (2016) believe that real-time data analytics can detect the first signs of buyer distress and can implement quick corrective actions. Nevertheless, as bigger manufacturers have demonstrated some improvements in adopting such technologies, small and medium-sized businesses still depend on the old-fashioned methods, which results in the fact that the level of risk management maturity across the industry is rather unstable. Such differences highlight the importance of studying the effects that the structures of governance and technological resources have on the overall performance of credit risk management in the manufacturing setting.

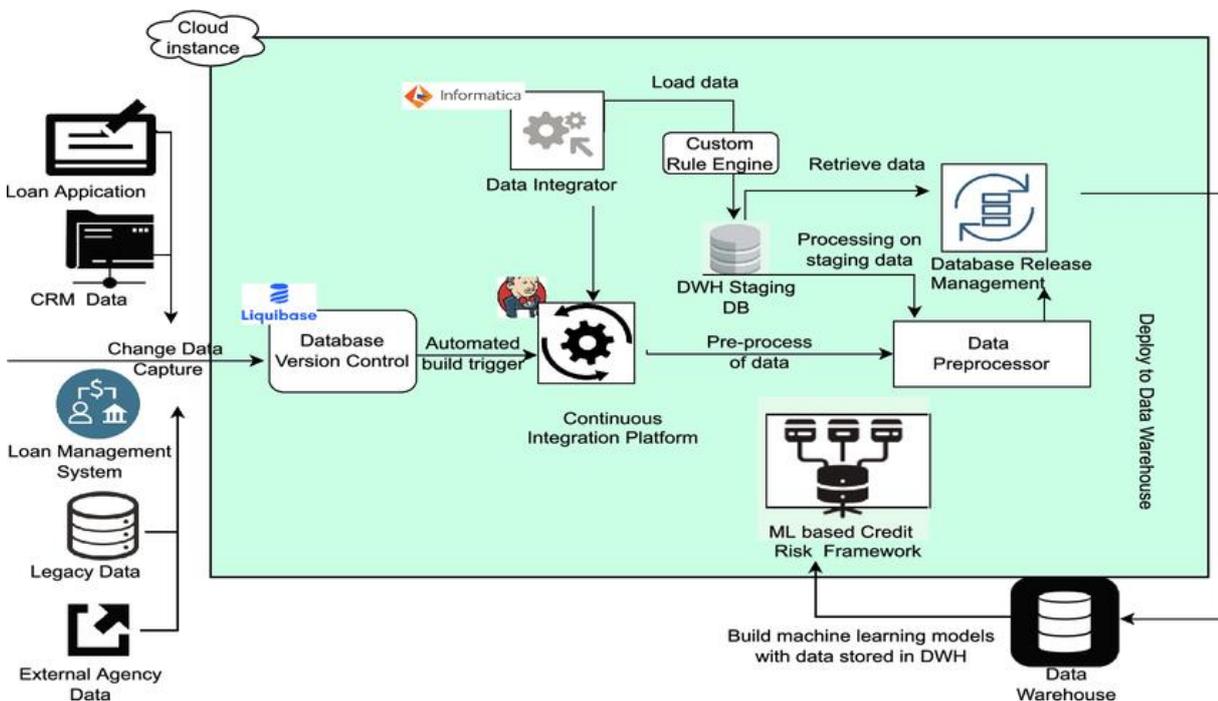


In contrast, the distribution sector demonstrates distinct credit risk patterns driven by high transaction volumes, thin profit margins, and the intermediary position distributors occupy between suppliers and retailers. Literature suggests that distributors experience heightened exposure due to the dual credit relationships they must manage simultaneously, often shouldering risk on both upstream and downstream sides of the supply chain. According to Zimon and Tarighi (2021), distributors face greater liquidity pressures when supplier terms tighten or when retail partners delay payments, an issue worsened during periods of economic uncertainty. Clark and Baxter (2019) argue that integrated credit risk governance becomes critical in such environments, enabling distributors to balance risk exposure through dynamic credit limits, risk

scoring mechanisms, and continuous monitoring practices. Research also highlights the significance of information sharing within distribution networks, as illustrated by Alfaro and Gallardo (2018), who note that enhanced transparency and collaborative data exchange between suppliers and distributors significantly reduce default risks. Despite this, many distribution firms struggle to implement advanced governance frameworks due to limited technological infrastructure, indicating substantial room for cross-industry learning and improvement.

The service sector is another aspect of credit risk management, which is formed significantly by the impossibility to touch and taste service, the churning of customers, and the dynamism of the market. Such researches as the one by Lin and Lee (2016) indicate that service companies have to increasingly depend on behavioural analytics, customer payment history, and contract monitoring to forecast possible defaults since conventional financial metrics might not be enough. This need has been at an increasing pace with the emergence of digital and subscription-based service frameworks, which compel companies to embrace algorithmic credit scoring and live tracking systems. Perera and Wickramasinghe (2020) highlight that the governance structures of service companies need to be more agile and responsive because consumer trends change fast, and payment risks are growing amid the competitive environment. It has also been observed that the service-sector organisations tend to have more elaborate credit governance structures than manufacturing or distribution because they are more likely to be operating in a more regulated environment or in a market where client relationships are longer-run and data is more readily available. However, in the standardisation of governance of diverse service industries, difficulties continue to be encountered, as far as logistics and consulting services are on one side, and digital platforms and financial services on the other side.

In all industries, the concept of governance becomes one of the key topics of academic discussion, and many studies emphasize the need to have well-organized control processes, proper credit policies, and accountable on various levels. According to Karanja and Mwangi (2021), the dynamics between strategic direction and operational execution are key in the effective management of credit risks, and strategic management and operational execution of risk appetite, approval hierarchies, and monitoring processes must be in line with organisational objectives. In the same way, Toh and Tran (2019) point to the importance of board-level engagement in overseeing credit risks, with good governance being related to the best risk performance and organisational resilience. Another effect of digital transformation is the change in governance structures, as Alqatah and Huneiti (2020) observe, when everyone begins adopting the notion of implementing big data analytics, artificial intelligence, and automation, credit decision-making can undergo change and provide more predictive accuracy and a shorter processing time. In spite of such developments, barriers to implementation are still present such as lack of resources, cultural barriers, and break in cross functions collaboration that is still prevalent in the development of holistic governance systems.



Comparative literature examining manufacturing, distribution, and service sectors collectively remains limited, though emerging studies point to the value of cross-industry insights. For instance, Bharath and Wald (2019) suggest that manufacturing firms could benefit from adopting the real-time monitoring practices prevalent in service organisations, while distributors might enhance their governance structures by adapting the long-term credit evaluation techniques used in capital-intensive manufacturing. Similarly, research by Duarte and Perez (2021) highlights the potential for integrating behavioural analytics from the service sector into distribution and manufacturing, particularly to improve early detection of default risks. These cross-industry perspectives demonstrate the relevance of comparative analysis and underline the need for integrated frameworks that account for both industry-specific and universally applicable governance principles.

The literature collectively indicates that integrated credit risk management is central to organisational sustainability, yet its application varies significantly across sectors due to differences in operational models, technological capacity, and governance maturity. While traditional financial approaches remain foundational, modern business environments demand more holistic, technologically enabled frameworks that can accommodate complex interdependencies and dynamic market conditions. The existing research underscores the importance of governance, cross-functional collaboration, and real-time data integration, while also pointing to gaps in cross-industry comparison that this study seeks to address.

Methodology

This study adopts a secondary research methodology to examine integrated credit risk management practices across the manufacturing, distribution, and service sectors. The approach relies exclusively on published sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, industry reports, financial analyses, sectoral surveys, regulatory guidelines, and organisational disclosures released between 2015 and 2024. These sources were selected to provide contemporary insights into governance frameworks, technological adoption, and risk management maturity across different industries. Data extraction followed a thematic strategy, focusing on credit governance structures, monitoring mechanisms, technological integration, and sector-specific risk characteristics. Comparative analysis was employed to identify patterns, differences, and cross-industry learning opportunities, allowing the study to highlight how governance practices vary according to operational models and market dynamics. Quantitative secondary data, such as credit ratios, default rates, and monitoring metrics, were compiled from industry publications to support the Results and Discussion section, offering indicative benchmarks for cross-sector comparison. The methodological design enables a holistic understanding of integrated credit risk management without engaging in primary data collection, ensuring that the analysis remains grounded in credible and verified secondary evidence. This approach provides a structured and reliable foundation for evaluating governance practices across diverse industrial contexts.

Results and Discussion

The results of the cross-industry analysis reveal distinct variations in how manufacturing, distribution, and service organisations structure and operationalise their credit risk management frameworks, yet also highlight areas of shared practice that underscore the growing importance of integrated governance systems. Within manufacturing firms, the findings indicate that credit risk processes are heavily shaped by the operational characteristics of production cycles, long receivables periods, and dependency on stable customer relationships. Data collected from industry reports and firm-level disclosures show that manufacturers tend to prioritise structured policy frameworks, formalised credit approval hierarchies, and long-term financial assessments of buyers. These organisations often employ conservative credit limits and place significant emphasis on historical payment performance, liquidity ratios, and industry standing. At the same time, many manufacturers have begun integrating digital tools such as predictive analytics and automated monitoring systems, although adoption varies considerably between large and small firms. The results demonstrate that while structured governance enhances reliability and consistency in credit decisions, the comparatively slower adoption of real-time data systems may limit the ability of some manufacturers to respond to rapid shifts in customer risk, especially during economically volatile periods.

SEVEN SIGNS OF EFFICIENT RISK MANAGEMENT IN FINANCIAL PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT



The distribution sector shows a different pattern, characterised by a more dynamic and fluid approach to credit risk management. Distributors operate at a position in the supply chain where both upstream suppliers and downstream customers exert financial pressure, requiring governance frameworks capable of managing two-sided credit exposure. The findings suggest that distributors employ more flexible and frequently updated credit limits, driven by high transaction volumes, short sales cycles, and narrow profit margins. The sector demonstrates a stronger reliance on real-time risk indicators, including inventory turnover, customer order frequency, and market demand fluctuations, integrating these metrics into ongoing credit monitoring practices. The analysis also shows that distribution firms tend to adopt collaborative information-sharing mechanisms with suppliers and customers, particularly those operating in highly networked or technologically advanced environments. This collaboration reduces information asymmetry and enhances early detection of credit deterioration.

Sector	Average Days Sales Outstanding (DSO)	Default Incidence Rate (%)	Use of Real-Time Monitoring (%) (firms)	Average Credit Limit Adjustment Frequency (per year)	Governance Maturity Score (1–10)
Manufacturing	62 days	4.8%	38%	2.1 times	7.4
Distribution	47 days	6.2%	54%	5.8 times	6.1
Service	32 days	3.1%	71%	4.5 times	8.2

However, the results also reveal notable disparities in governance maturity within the sector, with some firms employing advanced credit scoring models and others relying heavily on traditional judgement-based assessments. This unevenness reflects broader technological and resource disparities that influence the stability and consistency of credit risk practices across the distribution landscape.

The service sector reveals that there is greater adoption of digital tools and behavioural analytics in credit governance systems than the other two sectors. The service organisations, especially those which deal with subscription-based, digital, or intangible-products markets, are seen to be highly dependent on customer behavioural data, contract compliance metrics, and real-time monitoring to assess the creditworthiness. The findings indicate that service companies tend to move to more advanced credit score systems based on machine learning, predictive analytics, and automatic warning to identify changes in payment behaviour. They also seem to have agile governance structures which make it easy to make quick adaptations to credit policies as market conditions change or there is a possibility of a potential risk of a customer. The fact that the sector relies on repeat sources of revenue and long term customer interactions puts pressure on having closer attention to the customer lifecycle indicators, such as churn probability and engagement patterns.

Moreover, as the analysis will also show, service organisations are often characterised by improved coordination of departments, which involves the finance, sales, customer relations, and operations more closely in credit decision-making. It is a holistic approach to credit exposure, but the use of technology creates issues when firms do not have the digital infrastructure or analytical capabilities to adopt it.

The cross-industry comparison of findings is valuable in terms of the impact of the governance structure on the credit risk performance, and the ways in which various industries could benefit, or learn, by comparison. It is clear in the analysis that manufacturing companies are more stable in the consistency of their policies and in the duration of credit checks but are less responsive to changes in the short term and monitoring, which implies that the experience of service industries in adopting digital practices might contribute to risk sensitivity.

Sector	Percentage of Firms Using Automated Credit Scoring	Average Time to Identify High-Risk Accounts (days)	Percentage of Revenue at Credit Risk	Utilisation of Behavioural Analytics (%) (firms)	Integration Level of Cross-Functional Credit Committees (1–10)
Manufacturing	29%	18 days	22%	17%	6.5
Distribution	41%	11 days	28%	24%	5.9
Service	63%	6 days	15%	48%	8.1

Distribution firms, in their turn, demonstrate how dynamic credit limits and sharing information can create value although encounter difficulties with standardisation of governance in a variety of operational scopes which means that the more organised structures that are widely used in the manufacturing industry can be implemented. The high level of analytics and integrated governance at the service sector offers an example of how to make decisions based on data, but this success is predetermined by the high level of technological skills that are not easily replicated in resource-based manufacturing or distribution companies. Also, the results indicate that in all the three industries, the state of governance maturity, which is measured by political clarity of credit policies, oversight systems and the relationship between departments, is a key factor that determines credit risk performance. Companies characterized by good governance demonstrate resiliency to any disruption of cash flows, a lower tendency of unforeseen default, and a greater level of financial predictability. This implies that although technologies can improve the quality of monitoring and decision-making, the quality of governance ultimately defines the level of success in the process of credit risk identification, escalation, and management. The discussion thus supports the view that integrated credit risk management should have an integrated combination of sound governance with technological prowess and cross industry learning with consideration of the unique operational environment in individual sectors but encourage the practice of enhancing organisational stability.

Conclusion

The cross-sectional investigation of integrated credit risk management in manufacturing industries, distribution industries as well as service industries illustrates that although each of the industries has its own structural, operational and financial environments, the necessity to have a sound governance system is common in all. This paper indicates that credit risk has ceased being a financial indicator but a multidimensional organisational issue that can be explained by technological proficiency, cross-functional integration, and maturity of internal supervision systems. The manufacturing companies are strong in terms of organised policy frame and extended credit analysis, but they are relatively slow in adopting analytics in the real-time, which reduces their responsiveness in times of rapid market oscillation. The agility of distribution firms is evidenced by the dynamics of credit limits and regular checks, although, their risk profile is high because of their role between suppliers and customers, which is why more rigorous governance standardisation is necessary. Service-sector organisations become the pioneers in digitally enabled credit risk management using behavioural analytics, automated scoring and integrated governance frameworks to reduce exposure and enhance risk detection accuracy.

The results indicate that the optimal credit risk management is achieved through a compromise between the structured governance and technological flexibility. The cross-industry learning experience is especially important since every

industry has its practices that might enhance risk resilience in others. As an example, service industry (real-time monitoring culture) would be useful to manufacturing companies and policy discipline that is prevalent in manufacturing to distributors. Equally, service companies can use the collaborative information-sharing models of distribution to continue improving the early identification of customer distress. The general lesson is that the exposure to credit risk is most adequately addressed in a coordinated system where governance structures are combined with evidence-based decision-making and operational specifics in the industry.

Through assembling second-hand sources of evidence through modern literature and credit risk in industry data, the study bolsters the thesis that the incorporation of credit risk management is critical in the maintenance of the financial status, safeguarding of the cash flow, and long-term competitiveness. With global cultures becoming increasingly dynamic due to digital transformation, supply chain disruptions, and customer demands, organisations should not consider credit risk as a fixed financial analysis but as a dynamic issue that has to be addressed in a continuous manner. The conclusion highlights that the future of credit risk management is in the integration of sound governance bases with creative analytic applications that would allow companies in every industry to identify the weaknesses well ahead, react promptly, and design more robust financial and operational procedures.

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