

Research on Organizational Digital Identity: Evolution and Future Prospect

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Abstract: In the context of digital transformation, research on organizational digital identity has progressively extended into various fields, including brand management, social media interaction, and innovation strategy, emerging as a significant focus of contemporary academic inquiry. Despite its growing importance, there is currently a lack of comprehensive literature reviews in this domain. This paper seeks to systematically organize and analyze the existing economic and management literature, with a particular focus on the thematic development and research trajectory of organizational digital identity. Additionally, it explores the evolution of this area under the influence of the integration of digital technologies into enterprise management. Through bibliometric analysis using CiteSpace, this study identifies three distinct stages in the evolution of organizational digital identity research: the embryonic stage (2015-2017), the development stage (2018-2022), and the accelerating stage (2023-2025). These stages encompass five primary research topics: brand identity, management, social media, intermediary, and innovation. By systematically reviewing and visually analyzing the relevant literature, this paper aims to provide valuable insights and inspiration for future research on digital identity.

Keywords: Organizing Digital Identity; Organizational Identity; Digital Identity; Digital Transformation; Literature Review.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the development and application of digital technologies have been reshaping the organizational identity of enterprises [1], particularly within the context of digital transformation. On one hand, technological innovations compel enterprise members to reassess and redefine their core values and market positioning. On the other hand, these changes in organizational identity reflect how enterprises can innovate their roles and functions by integrating digital resources, optimizing business processes, and restructuring their organizational frameworks to adapt to the evolving technological landscape [2]. Thus, the identification, updating, and application of organizational digital identity in this digital era holds significant theoretical and practical value.

Organizational digital identity can be regarded as a distinctive characteristic and value proposition presented by enterprises within the digital landscape. Through the use of digital tools, such as platforms, social media, and virtual communities, this digital identity serves not only as a crucial means for organizations to communicate their image to external audiences but also as a foundation for internal members to share cognitive frameworks and behavioral patterns. A review and analysis of the existing literature reveals that current research on organizational digital identity primarily focuses on topics such as brand identity, management, social media, intermediary, and innovation, collectively contributing to a multidimensional framework for understanding organizational digital identity.

While previous research has yielded some advancements, the theoretical foundations and practical applications of organizational digital identity remain underdeveloped, as the field is still in its early stages. Existing literature predominantly focuses on the relationships between digital technology, digital innovation, digital transformation, and organizational identity, often overlooking a clear and comprehensive exploration of the concept of organizational digital identity itself. Therefore, this article aims to

systematically review the current state of research on organizational digital identity, starting from the context of digital transformation. The goal is to provide a thorough analysis of the research trends, paradigms, and future directions in this field. This not only deepens our understanding of organizational digital identity but also fosters the integration of theory and practice, thereby enabling organizations to more effectively build and manage their digital identities throughout the digital transformation process.

2. Conceptual Framework and Research Context of Organizational Digital Identity

Organizational identity is a key concept in organizational research [3], addressing the fundamental question of "who are we?" within businesses [4]. It encompasses labels and a series of interrelated meanings, with changes in organizational identity occurring through two primary mechanisms: alterations in labels or shifts in the meanings associated with those labels [5]. When a company's strategy shifts, its organizational identity can undergo rapid transformation in response to changes in the external environment [6]. In the digital era, enterprises can leverage digital technologies to more effectively adapt to market fluctuations, enhance innovation capabilities, and cultivate distinctive organizational identities within the dynamic and continuously evolving digital landscape.

To review the current state of research on organizational digital identity, this study employs CiteSpace software to perform a bibliometric analysis of 196 relevant articles published in core journals indexed in the Web of Science (WOS) database. By examining the research characteristics, emerging trends, and the evolution of knowledge in this field, the study systematically explores the research paradigm and outlines the future directions for organizational digital identity.

2.1. High Frequency Keyword Analysis for Organizational Digital Identity Research

The analysis of Table 1 reveals that the most frequently occurring high-frequency keywords (appearing more than 10 times) related to digital identity research include terms such as identity, technology, management, work, innovation, organizations, social media, performance, perspective, business, model, strategy, and digital transformation. A more detailed analysis suggests a notable correlation between organizational digital identity and "digital transformation," highlighting the theoretical link between the two areas. Particularly, after undergoing digital transformation, it

becomes essential for organizations to clarify their identity—specifically, "what kind of organization are we?" [4]. Additionally, the high-frequency appearance of the keywords "technology" and "innovation" underscores the inseparable relationship between technological innovation and organizational identity. For instance, Tripsas (2009) demonstrates that organizations may encounter technological challenges that diverge from expectations linked to their identity when adopting new technologies. When faced with identity-challenging technologies, identity-driven beliefs may influence their interpretation, potentially leading to the overlooking of valuable technological opportunities that challenge the existing organizational identity [7].

Table 1. Extracting high-frequency keywords related to organizational digital identity research

Number	Keywords	Quantity	Mediator Centrality	Year
1	identity	61	0.52	2015
2	technology	24	0.07	2019
3	management	23	0.1	2016
4	work	20	0.17	2017
5	innovation	20	0.2	2016
6	organizations	18	0.08	2019
7	social media	15	0.03	2015
8	performance	15	0.09	2016
9	perspective	11	0.13	2018
10	business	10	0.12	2017
11	model	10	0.1	2016
12	strategy	10	0.04	2019
13	digital transformation	10	0.08	2022

2.2. Cluster Analysis of Keywords in Organizational Digital Identity

The clustering of keywords associated with the field of organizational digital identity is presented in Figure 1. Research in this area can be broadly categorized into five thematic clusters: brand identity, management, social media, intermediary, and innovation. A detailed examination of these themes follows:

(1) Brand identity. The cluster of keywords in this context includes work, performance, model, behavior, social identity, knowledge, identification, and commitment. Organizational identity, considered both an asset and a resource [8], can significantly influence external brand perceptions [9]. In particular, a brand's digital identity plays a pivotal role in enabling consumers to identify and distinguish between competing brands. In the digital age, businesses can enhance their brand image by leveraging various digital marketing tools and technologies. These strategies allow companies to build stronger connections with customers, thereby positively influencing purchasing decisions [10]. For instance, in the realms of search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing, social media engagement, and personalized advertising, businesses can effectively design and execute digital marketing strategies that not only increase brand visibility and awareness but also communicate the brand's core values and unique attributes, ultimately establishing a

robust digital identity.

(2) Management. Clustered keywords include management, strategy, legitimacy, evolution, community, power, entrepreneurship, market, and governance. Organizational identity, as the core essence of an organization, both guides and constrains its actions [7]. For instance, Clegg (2007) argues that the primary purpose of identity formation in new organizations is to gain legitimacy [11]. This process encourages new organizations to develop identities that are isomorphic to their institutional environments, while also addressing strategic requirements that compete with those of other organizations [4]. Furthermore, an organization's identity is closely intertwined with its development strategy. Simões and Sebastian (2017) found that organizations can leverage their identity to shape sustainable strategies, with a symbiotic relationship between the two, manifesting in various patterns [12].

(3) Social media. Cluster keywords include identity, social media, construction, impact, self, identity work, consequences, imagery, movements, gig economy, networks, and more. The rise of social media has had a profound impact on organizations, shifting their roles from having a clearly defined identity to one that is more fluid and ambiguous [13]. Prior research has demonstrated that a company's social media activities can significantly enhance stakeholder engagement through dialogue and interaction, optimizing communication channels between the organization and its

customers. This, in turn, supports the development of a company's digital identity [14]. Specifically, this interactive model facilitates the transparency of information and the establishment of immediate feedback mechanisms, allowing businesses to respond swiftly to customer needs and market fluctuations in a dynamic environment. Additionally, effective social media strategies enable companies to shape and reinforce their unique digital identities by highlighting their personality, innovation, and organizational culture through ongoing content creation and active participation in social networks. Consequently, social media plays an essential role in fostering the construction and evolution of corporate digital identities.

(4) Intermediary. The cluster of keywords includes innovation, boundary, firms, science, media, affordances, challenges, and others. Organizational identity serves as a crucial link across various fields and levels [15]. It not only functions as a conduit for the transmission of organizational information but also plays an essential role in bridging the gap between organizations and consumers, thereby fostering trust.

(5) Innovation. The cluster of keywords includes technology, organizations, digital transformation, capability, and transformation. This perspective highlights how

organizations can foster the dynamic development and optimization of their organizational identity through innovative practices and the effective utilization of digital technologies in the digital age. Previous research has indicated that the process of adaptation and innovation is shaped by the complex interplay between collective identity and the nature of digital work and innovation. As organizations confront digital challenges, their collective identity evolves over time, with innovation playing a pivotal role in this transformation. Consequently, businesses must learn to effectively leverage the digital space for both innovation and adaptation [16]. Furthermore, digital transformation fundamentally alters how individuals work within organizations, and this shift in working practices may itself be a result of changes in organizational identity. In other words, companies should view identity adaptation as a prerequisite for the introduction of new technologies, rather than merely as a consequence of transformation [1]. This approach underscores that, during digital transformation, organizations must first reassess and redefine their core values, mission, vision, and strategic positioning to ensure that the adoption of new technologies aligns with the organization's overall development goals.

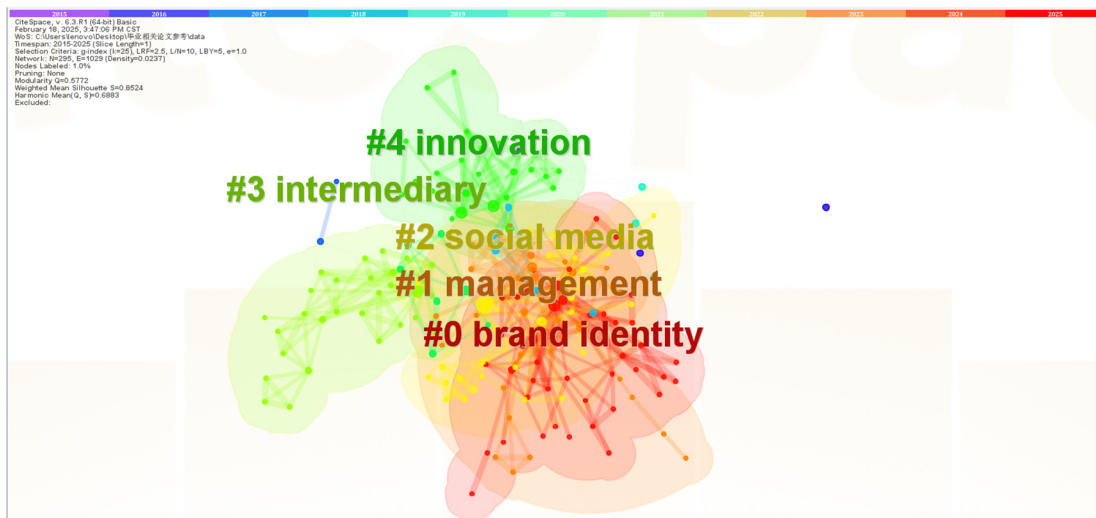


Fig 1. Cluster Analysis of Keywords Related to Organizational Digital Identity Research

2.3. Evolutionary Analysis of Organizational Digital Identity Research.

Over time, research on organizational digital identity has evolved to encompass a broader range of topics. Key areas of focus include organizational identity, digital photograph, organizational, digital transformation, and construction.

Between 2015 and 2017, research on organizational identity was both pioneering and long-lasting. During this period, digital technologies had been widely developed and applied within enterprises, with some studies examining the impact of digital advancements, such as digital photograph. However, the primary focus remained on general organizational identity, with limited attention given to the emerging concept of organizational digital identity, which was in the embryonic stage. From 2018 to 2022, research began to explore the intersection of organizational studies and digital transformation, with increasing emphasis on the integration of digital technologies into traditional enterprises, in the development stage. Moving into the 2023-2025 period, the focus of research is expected to shift from digital

transformation to organizational structure, reflecting a deeper consideration of organizational digital identity in light of structural changes. In this accelerating phase, the close integration of digital technologies with traditional enterprises can not only optimize resource allocation and enhance operational efficiency, but also lead to fundamental changes in strategic thinking and business models. These changes are crucial for adapting to a rapidly evolving market and capitalizing on the opportunities presented by digitalization. Consequently, this shift has sparked a re-examination and cognitive reconstruction of organizational identity, driven by the embedding of digital technology within enterprises in contemporary research.

3. Main Research Conclusion and Future Prospects

This study employed the CiteSpace visualization analysis tool and utilized data from core journals within the Web of Science database to examine the evolution of research on organizational digital identity. The following exploratory

their digital identities. Future research should investigate strategies for organizations to construct and evolve their digital identities through dynamic adaptation and continuous innovation, thereby sustaining competitive advantages.

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