

Digital Innovation and Changing Identities

Investigating Organizational Implications of Digitalization

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Abstract

The emergence of digital technology represents a paradigmatic historical shift. As a process transforming sociotechnical structures, digitalization has had pervasive effects on organizing structures and business logics, as well as contemporary society as a whole. In recent years, these effects have been particularly salient in the content-based (e.g. music and imaging), and most recently the print-media (e.g. newspapers and magazines) industries. Facing dramatically declining sales of print media products, publishers have sought to leverage digital technology for innovation. However, the digital revenues still do not yet typically compensate for the decline in print media sales. This thesis explores the organizational implications of digitalization in the media domain. Scholars have increasingly stressed that digital technology has some distinct characteristics that have fundamental implications for innovation. This thesis examines aspects of these implications that have been far from fully explored, including the roles of digital technologies as enablers of process innovation (new methods, procedures or responsibilities), product innovation outcomes (which shift or expand an organization's domain) and associated changes in organizational cognition and identity. The thesis is based on four empirical investigations, reported in appended papers, of the evolution of digital platforms, the new content creation practices they enable, and how traditional print media firms have sought to innovate and reorient themselves in relation to these novel phenomena. The composite analysis illustrates how the distinct characteristics of digital technologies are complicit in transitions from stable to fragile product categories, highlights the need for a dynamic approach to identity orientation, and discusses and proposes key concerns in scholarly studies of digital innovation in organizations based on insights generated by the underlying studies.

Keywords

Digital innovation, digitalization, platforms, media industry, organizational identity.

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